

THE LIFE OF THE
BLESSED PAUL OF THE CROSS,
Founder of the Congregation
Of the Barefooted Clerks
Of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ
Published in 1853

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PREFACE

The following Life of the Blessed Paul is from the Italian of the Venerable Monsignor Strambi,¹ which is considered a classical work in its own department. It is brought out at the present time because of the approaching solemnity of the public Beatification. Monsignor Strambi prefaces his work:

To write the lives of the servants of God is to draw out the character or to paint in lively colors the portrait of a bright and noble virtue, that may serve for the example and model of

¹ Bishop Vincent Mary Strambi was canonized in 1950.

copies deeply impressed with similar acts of virtue, in order that those who read them may be encouraged to imitate the servant of God, and by imitating his virtuous and praiseworthy actions, may at last in some way resemble our Lord and Master Jesus Christ Himself, the first and most perfect exemplar of every virtue. In the memorials remaining to us of the servants of God, in the traces they have left, stamped and imprinted with so much labor and merit in the royal road of perfection, it seems that they are ever repeating, with their whole hearts inflamed with ardent love of the glory of their Lord, *“Be you imitators of me, as I also am of Christ”* (I Cor. 4:16).

No one, then, can believe that in this age, amidst the vast mass of useless and pernicious literature now inundating the Christian world, it is unprofitable to write books, which may with greater easiness insinuate in us the practice of true virtue, the most precious treasure of the soul, and draw us more effectually to the imitation of Jesus our Divine Redeemer, of whom everyone, desirous of saving his soul, ought to trace within himself a clear and faithful likeness.

As there have now been so many lives of servants of God written, it may appear superfluous, or perhaps even tedious, to add a new one to the number. But if it is useful for various writers to publish the virtuous and edifying life of even one servant of God, in order that, being by different authors, and the saint’s actions being written in various styles, each one may suit his own taste by reading the author that pleases him most, and being thus led on according to their particular inclination even those may obtain a share in so great a benefit, who would otherwise be most disinclined to such a course of reading at once so valuable and so full of profit – why, is it not an action worthy of praise to write and publish for the first time the life of a servant of God, whom the Lord in these latter days has raised up in His Church for the edification of all, and the guide of many? Is not this, then, a devout way of following the loving Providence of our Lord to bring into sight these fresh examples of virtue, whom He, by the communication of His Spirit, is continually raising up in holy Church, ever the fruitful mother of Christian heroes, and placing as on a lofty mount the virtue of these really great men and women, who are in the house of God, as lamps burning, and resplendent to give light to others? Is it not a particular advantage and consolation to souls to set before them a new and secure model of perfection in a servant of God, who has a genius of virtue altogether his own, as much and peculiarly his own, as that of any of the saints and servants of God whose lives have been hitherto written? For although all the saints have that glorious train of the virtues united to charity, as to their mistress and Queen, and have

practiced, at various times, one or other of them with great perfection, yet each one, according to the special grace given him by God, has practiced them in a manner distinct and different from the rest. Whence, as you will not find two faces exactly alike in every feature, so you will scarcely discover two virtuous and holy souls entirely alike in the same path of virtue, and which have, if I may say so, the same air and features. Well may the Church sing of each one of her holy confessors in the antiphon, which with sweetest jubilee chants their praises; “There was not found one equal to him who kept the law of the most high” (V. D. Thom. I. 2. qu. LXVI, art. 2. ad 12. S. Fran. di Sales, Tratt. dell amor di Dio. par. II.1.I.c.7).

If, then, everyone has a peculiar and distinct way of practicing virtue and adorning himself, as in a richly embroidered vestment, with holy perfection, it will certainly be a great consolation to souls who are in the pursuit of virtue, and are making, in union with God, the acquisition of holy perfection, to be able to discern and distinguish amongst these noble exemplars of virtue by selecting that one who is most conformed to their own spirit and inclination. It will therefore be better for those who profess the same Institute and manner of living, consecrated to intimate conversation with God and the salvation of their neighbor, as this our servant of the Lord, to profit by this, and closely follow his footsteps, by copying and tracing in themselves from him, rather than from others, those beautiful features which may form a picture so complete and graceful as to engage even the love of God Himself. These are the motives which have induced us to present our readers the Life of the Ven. Fr. Paul of the Cross.

This servant of the Lord was a man of the most sublime prayer and union with God, of the most lively zeal in the salvation of souls, and of the utmost tenderness, compassion, and love, in contemplating the bitter passion and most cruel death of our Divine Redeemer, into whom he was truly transformed by love. He lived the whole time he was on this earth truly as a pilgrim, detached from everything, or rather as disgusted with this exile, which he looked upon with compassion and contempt. He kept his heart in heaven, where he desired to hold an uninterrupted conversation. The vanity of this world obscured not that clear and penetrating ray of the loving faith which was always his guide, and which rather, by passing from one communication of light and love to another, made him taste of the truth of the faith, with extreme tranquillity, safety, and sweetness. Admirable were the discourses he made us, all full of penetration, life, and efficacy. When he spoke, God alone was on his lips; and when he was silent, divine love seemed to be

breathed forth from him. So great was the abundance of charity diffused through his spirit, that, wherever he was, he always took delight in his Best-beloved alone. Forsaking his country, parents, and father's house, he undertook long and disastrous journeys, he gave himself up to the most austere rule of penance, more admirable than imitable, and in the midst of the greatest difficulties, opposition, persecution, calumny, and contempt, he undertook, regardless of fatigue and toil, to execute the design of a new Congregation, inspired him by God. He knew no other rule of acting but the most holy will of God; he loved nothing, he desired and saw nothing in anything but God alone. An enemy to his last moments of that worldly prudence condemned by St. Paul, he traveled on with the simplicity of a dove, but not without due regard to that true prudence, which is in accordance with the heart of God and comes from God Himself, the author of all virtue. Exterior occupations, and they were many and difficult, deprived him not of that interior solitude, where in the sanctuary of his heart he enjoyed God or sought lovingly and eagerly for God alone.

Because of the favor he found in his sight, God put him to the severest and most difficult proofs of his virtue by a long and grievous illness, the malignity, calumny, and treachery of man; by dreadful and frequent vexations from evil spirits, internal abandonments, horrible desolations, crosses, and the most terrible mental agony. In the midst of all these troubles, which from all sides impetuously raged as a furious tempest against his soul, and in their bitterness penetrated its inmost depth, the servant of God always seemed entirely resigned and constant in the fulfillment of the Divine Will. It was a marvelous thing to see him, in such distress himself, comfort and console, with an admirable and almost miraculous efficacy, those who ran to him for direction, aid, and consolation, in paths the most hazardous in the spiritual journey. But above all was it edifying to see that the servant of God, possessing the most rare and precious gifts of the sublimest virtue and intimate conversation with God, had an esteem of himself the most lowly and most abject that can be imagined. In fine, in this blessed soul were united all humility, simplicity, and union of spirit with God. Oh, how delightful was it to hear him speak of God and of perfection; terms he used were so appropriate and intelligible, that without any difficulty he made all comprehend ideas the most subtle and profound, and in such a way that anyone could easily perceive that God had given him the peculiar grace of speaking aptly on subjects the most sacred and venerable. His mode of conducting souls was full of tenderness and

compassion, sweetness and long-suffering. Whence the most inveterate sinners, hearing the good news from others, were encouraged to go to him to get cured of their noisome wounds. His virtue was not of the terrible and austere kind, but gentle, courteous, and full of sweetness. His conversation was joyous, cheerful, and most simple. He avoided the slightest appearance of sadness, or that gravity which might make him an object of admiration, as far as his exterior only was concerned; but sweetly, affably, and most heartily did he talk of God and the things of the Spirit, and he understood so well and so naturally how to enliven his discourse that everyone remained at the same time edified and contented.

To so many gifts of grace, the Lord bountifully united many and various gifts of nature by granting him a lively, penetrating and universal genius, a memory as happy in retaining as in learning, a heart magnanimous, generous, and ready for any great undertaking, a bearing modest and devout; whence it seemed that the Lord, as is generally his way, had left nothing out that might tend to the perfection of this work which his omnipotent hand had designed for his glory. Whatever we here say will be admitted on reading this history, which we have undertaken to write. And the picture we here present is but a sketch of the ordinary and everyday course of the virtues and gifts God had imparted to him, as the reader will easily perceive on glancing through these pages, which are formed and composed simply on the notices deposed on solemn oaths in the Processes, with the addition of a few other things which, having seen with our own eyes, we have a full and secure certainty of. Any person of good sense may safely believe what he here reads, everything being sustained by certain and indisputable facts.

No one who has the Lord's spirit, or possesses true doctrine with some degree of Christian humility, will be surprised when he reads in this life of the sublimest graces, limited to an innocent and penitential life, and admirable virtue, because he knows well that the loving right hand of the Most High, which has continually formed in His Church perfect and holy souls, is and will always be admirable in its illimitable and infinite powers. But if anyone, full of the spirit of the world, refuses to believe anything because not having experienced it in his own person, he therefore cannot imagine it in others, let him remember that our God, because He is infinite Goodness, performs a work most worthy of Himself whenever He communicates Himself so lovingly to a soul whom He has created in His own image and likeness and redeemed with the precious blood of His own only begotten Son; it is no wonder, however, that the man, who lives

in obedience to his senses understands not the sovereign riches of the Spirit of God, a Lord always great, liberal, and munificent in his holy works.

The fruit, which is expected from whoever reads this history in a spirit free from prepossession and prejudice, ever a hindrance to embracing truth, will more than justify the design, and console the desire of him who undertook it, to fulfil the most holy will of God, on whom be benediction, honor, and glory, for ever and ever.

So far Bishop Strambi. Our readers will be glad to have a faithful translation of the Pope's Brief for the Beatification.

POPE PIUS IX

FOR THE FUTURE MEMORY OF THE THING

There is nothing which is more suitable and fit to enkindle in souls the fire of divine love, and to bring men back to the way of justice, from which they have miserably strayed, than the constant meditation of those most bitter torments which Christ our Lord suffered for our salvation, having been made obedient for us unto death, even to the death of the cross. This remembrance of the Passion of our Lord, as just as it is salutary, the Ven. servant of God, Paul of the Cross, Founder of the new Congregation of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, endeavored to excite among men, desiring both for himself and his children no other knowledge but that of Jesus Christ and him crucified, while by the splendor of his eminent virtues and by his apostolic labors, he shed luster on the Catholic Church. Born at Ovada, a town in the Diocese of Acqui in the year 1694, from his very childhood he gave sure and brilliant indications of his future sanctity; for showing an aversion to the amusements and delights with which children are ordinarily captivated, he took delight in giving himself to prayer, in obeying his parents, in giving alms to the poor, in fasting, and in meditating continually on the sufferings of Christ in his passion. He passed his youth in exercises and literary studies, shining out among his fellows as a bright example of all virtues, and especially of continence, from the observance of which neither the offer of a most honorable marriage, nor that of a very rich inheritance, could withdraw him. Thus making noble advances in the way of perfection, and inflamed with a desire of promoting the glory of God, he thought of instituting a new religious society, which might at once be a defense to the Church and exert all its strength for the salvation of souls. With the

consent, therefore, of the Bishop of Alexandria, whom he had for his director, he put on a mean dress of black, to which he fastened the emblems of our Lord's passion, and with bare feet and uncovered head sought the retirement of a narrow cell, where, severely tormenting himself in all his members, he prepared himself by the exercise of every kind of virtue and by assiduous prayer to draw up the Rules of the new society. When he had finished them, he went to Rome to obtain the approbation of them from the Apostolic See; but he left Rome without effecting his purpose, and retired to Monte Argentario² with his brother and lived there with him for two consecutive years, devoting himself assiduously, amid his austerities, to the study of the Holy Scripture. From Monte Argentario he removed to Gaeta, where both by word and example he excited the faithful to enter upon the path of virtue. Having returned to Rome to obtain the approbation of his Rules, he exhibited in that city such illustrious proofs of sanctity, that he was promoted to the sacred order of Priesthood by Benedict XIII himself, who then held the Apostolic See, together with his brother, the imitator of his virtues, and also deserved to receive from Clement XII, who succeeded Benedict XIII in the Sovereign Pontificate, the office of Missionary Apostolic by letters in the form of a Brief. He then again retired to Monte Argentario, and there, though the Rule was not as yet approved, he built the first house of the new Congregation in the year 1737; and at length he obtained from Benedict XIV the confirmation, by apostolic authority, of the Rule which he had drawn up; which Rule, having been once or twice slightly altered by the venerable Founder, as it had seemed expedient, was first ratified and confirmed by Clement XIV and afterwards by Pius VI. There were not wanting illustrious men who embraced the new Institute, and by the power of divine grace, the religious society began to increase and spread itself, and the venerable servant of God, though against his will, was by common suffrage elected Superior General. In this office he outstripped his companions in his ardor for suffering and prayer, in humility of heart, love of poverty, charity to God and his neighbor, and, in a word, in all virtues, and in observance of regular discipline; and thus by his example he spurred them on, as it were, to run with alacrity along the way of perfection. Although he was continually occupied with the cares of governing his religious society and of founding everywhere new houses for it, yet he never left off preaching the word of God, burning as he did with a wondrous

² In the time of St. Paul of the Cross, Monte Argentario was spelled Monte Argentaro.

desire of the salvation of souls. He conducted, therefore, sacred missions and traversed many dioceses, inveighing with such zeal against the prevailing licentiousness, that an immense multitude of people lost in sin were brought to a sense of the shamefulfulness of their past lives and converted to a mode of life becoming their Christian profession. Weakened as he was by his apostolic labors, he never, even to his last hour, remitted anything of his austere manner of life, so that, worn out as much by austerities as by old age, he fell into a severe sickness and joyfully died at Rome on the 18th of October, 1775. The fame of his sanctity, which had spread far and wide during his life, increased still more after his death, and a judicial enquiry into his virtues, as is usual, having been instituted, Pius VII, our predecessor of glorious memory, on the 18th of February, 1821, by a solemn decree pronounced that they had reached the heroic degree. A consultation was next held upon the miracles, which were said to have been wrought by God at his intercession, to manifest his eminent virtue; and we, having received the votes of the consultors and the opinions of the cardinals of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, declared that two of those miracles were true ones, approving the first of them on the 25th of February, 1851, and the other on the 2nd of August of the current year, 1852. Finally, on the 24th of August of the current year, the cardinals appointed to take cognizance of sacred rites were assembled in our presence, and having received the votes of the consultors, were unanimously of opinion that the venerable servant of God, Paul of the Cross, might be declared BLESSED whenever it should seem good to us, with all the usual indulgences, until his solemn canonization be celebrated. We, therefore, moved by the prayers of the whole Congregation of Discalced Clerks of the most holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to the opinion, and with the consent of the aforesaid cardinals, by our apostolic authority give permission, by virtue of these letters, for the aforesaid servant of God, Paul of the Cross, Priest and Founder of the Congregation of Discalced Clerks of the most Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, to be in future honored with the title of Blessed, and for his body and relics, or remains, to be exposed to the public veneration of the faithful, though not so as to be borne in solemn processions. Moreover, by the same authority we grant permission that his Office and Mass may be annually recited from the common of a confessor not a bishop, with proper prayers approved by us, according to the Rubrics of the Roman Missal and Breviary. This Office, however, we only permit to be recited in Rome and its district, as well as in all churches in which the Congregation of the most holy Cross

and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, or the Nuns of that Institute, are established, by all the faithful, both secular and regular, who are bound to recite the canonical hours on the 16th day of November; and with respect to Masses, by all priests who go to those churches in which the feast is celebrated. Lastly, we grant that in the first year from the date of these letters, the solemnities of the beatification of the servant of God, Paul of the Cross, may be celebrated in the above-mentioned churches of the city and of the Congregation, with Office and Masses of the rite of a greater double; and we command this to be done on a day to be appointed by the Ordinary, and after the said solemnities have been performed according to custom in the Vatican Basilica. All apostolical constitutions and orders, all decrees prohibiting worship, and all other things to the contrary notwithstanding. We desire also that copies, though printed, of these letters, provided they be signed by the secretary of the above-mentioned Congregation of Sacred Rites and authenticated by the seal of the prefect, may have the very same credit given to them, even in judicial investigation, as would be given to the signification of our will by the production of these very letters.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman, the 1st day of October, 1852, the seventh year of our Pontificate.

A. CARD. LAMBRUSCHINI

In the place + of the seal.

Romana seu Alexandrina et Aquen

**Of the Beatification and Canonization of the Venerable Servant of God,
Father Paul of the Cross,
Professed Priest and Founder of the Congregation of Discalced Clerks
of the Most Holy Cross and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

COLLECT

O Lord Jesus Christ, who hast chosen the Blessed Paul to honor the mysteries of Thy Passion,

and to incite us to remember it, and hast through him gathered together a new family in Thy Church, mercifully grant, that walking in his footsteps, we may deserve to reap the fruit of the same Passion. Who livest and reignest, etc.

SECRET

May that Holy Spirit inflame us, O Lord, as we offer this sacrifice to Thee, by whom Thou didst fortify the blessed Confessor, Paul, for glorious conflicts, in order to propagate in the hearts of the faithful the memory of Thy Passion. Who livest and reignest in the unity of the same Spirit, etc.

POSTCOMMUNION

We have received, O Lord, the heavenly Sacrament, the perpetual memorial of Thy Passion, and we suppliantly beseech Thee that, by the merits and example of the Blessed Confessor Paul, we may draw waters in joy from Thy fountains, and the memory of Thy Passion may remain ever in our hearts. Who livest, etc.

DECREE

Since, according to ancient custom and the practice of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, in the apostolic letter shortly to be expedited in the form of Brief for the formal beatification of the venerable servant of God, Father Paul of the Cross, professed Priest and Founder of the Congregation of Discalced Clerks of the most holy Cross and Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, there ought to be inserted proper prayers in honor of the beatified, to be recited in the Office and Mass from the Common by all those to whom permission for this purpose is granted in the above named Brief. Our most holy Lord Pope Pius IX, the Supreme Pontiff, at the most humble prayers of the Rev. Fr. Antony of St. James, General Superior of the said Congregation and Postulator of the Cause, laid before him by me, the undersigned pro-secretary of the same Congregation of Sacred Rites, has now, by word of mouth approved the above proper prayers in honor of the Blessed Paul, after they had first, by His Holiness' command, been diligently revised according to custom, and has allowed them to be recited by all, to whom the Office and Mass of the beatified have been granted, as soon as the formal beatification shall have been completed. 8th

day of September, 1852.

A.C. Lambruschini, Pref. C.S.R.

In the place + of the Seal.

Dom. Gigli, Pro-secretary, C.S.R.

In all things it agrees with the original. Witnessed by me at the Segretaria of the
Congregation of Sacred Rites, 20th of October, 1852.

Dom. Gigli, Pro-secretary, C.S.R.

In the place of the Seal.

London

The Oratory

The Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas

MDCCCLIII

INTRODUCTION

by the late Father Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

The following life of the venerable Father Paul of the Cross, Founder of the Congregation of Passionists, was written originally in Italian by another venerable servant of God, Father Vincent of St. Paul, at that time a religious of the same Congregation, but afterwards better known under his secular name as Bishop Strambi of Macerata and Tolentino, and since his death declared venerable by the Holy See. He was a man celebrated for his learning, zeal, and piety; beloved by all good Christians of his time, especially by Pope Leo XII, who called him in his old age from Macerata to Rome, that he might give him help and light in the government of the universal Church. It is believed that this good bishop, on occasion of this Pope falling dangerously ill, offered his own life as a sacrifice to God for the preservation of that of the Holy Father, and died

of an apoplectic seizure a few days after the offering had been made, while the Pope was recovering from his attack. The virtues and great actions of this holy bishop will be better known in this country when his life, which has been published in Italian, is translated, as it will be, into English. This short notice will suffice to let our readers know something of the author of the Life which is now presented to them; and we have introduced it as we think that the work itself will acquire new merit and value in their eyes from a knowledge of the merits of the writer. None but a saint is qualified to draw the picture of a saint. It required a soul full of divine unction and of the love of God, such as that of the venerable Bishop Strambi to enable him to give to the Life of the venerable Father Paul that captivating sweetness and warmth, that touching and instructive character which ought to distinguish it, and which will be seen throughout the following pages. This work may be considered not only as the history of a single holy man, but also as a school of holiness, as an emporium, wherein will be found collected whatever may lead to the instruction and edification of every one who reads it; but, especially whatever may be reckoned necessary to form a skillful guide of souls, one capable of training them to the highest degree of perfection and sanctity. There is no virtue requisite for a soul, which aspires to perfection of which this life does not furnish a pattern and a rule. The venerable Father Paul, as he was himself a model of all heroic virtues, was an eminent guide to others in the same path, which he himself trod; and no one was better qualified than Bishop Strambi, as a skillful judge, to apprehend perfectly the various beauties of his character, and to dispose and arrange them in the best form for instruction. From this consideration the pious and accomplished editor of this Life relinquished the idea which he at first entertained of omitting or abridging certain parts of it for the sake of brevity. After mature reflection he determined to give it entire; considering that we have but few books in the English language for the guidance of those who are engaged in the spiritual direction of souls, and that this collection, which will be found here of the admirable instructions given by the venerable Father Paul to various persons, would be of the greatest use in this respect.

Having said thus much of the Life of which a translation is here given and of its author, we think it well to add some account of the Congregation of the most Holy Cross and Passion of our Lord, established by the venerable Father Paul of the Cross, of its Rules, its spirit, and its establishment in Italy and in some other parts of the world, but especially here in England.

It would be superfluous to say anything in this preface of the first establishment of the Congregation in Italy as the reader will find some account of this in the Life of the venerable Founder itself. Between the year 1775, which was the time of his death, and the year 1810, several houses, *ritiri* (retreats) as they are called, were opened in Italy; but at the time of the French Revolution, that impetuous torrent swept them all away. Religious Orders were suppressed by order of Napoleon who was the despot of Europe wherever his power extended; and for the poor Passionists who had no houses outside of Italy, this suppression was total, as the whole of that country was under his tyrannical sway. But in the year 1814, the arm of God reached that proud man and brought him low; while the object of his persecution, Pius VII, was, to the joy of all good men, brought back to the possession of his rights, all the powers of Europe, Catholic or Protestant, contributing to the work. It is well known that our English government played a distinguished part in his restoration. After his happy return to Rome, Pius VII began to consider how he might best repair the immense losses which the Church had suffered in the late persecution; and one of the measures which appeared to his enlightened mind to be of the greatest importance was the speedy restoration of the religious Orders. It is to us a most interesting fact that the first of these which attracted his attention was the Congregation of the Passionists, although it was the smallest of all. The Passionists were the first to enjoy the singular happiness of putting on once more their religious habit, and to fill with joy the hearts of all the devout people of Italy by the sight of it. The date of this bright event was the sixteenth of June, 1814. The ten religious of our body who happened to be then in Rome were quickly assembled in their former house of Saints John and Paul, and took immediate measures for gathering again together their dispersed brethren. The whole number was not great; several of the ancient members had died since their separation, and some did not return to the Congregation, so that at the first they had not sufficient subjects to open all the former houses. But after a while, not only this was effected, but new ones also were founded in the kingdoms of Naples and Sardinia, in Tuscany and elsewhere; but what must interest us the most is their establishment here in England. This kingdom had, from the first, been one of the principal objects of interest to the Congregation. The venerable Founder, full of the Spirit of God, like all God's faithful servants, was continually praying for the salvation of all mankind. But England always was the country of his predilection. It might almost appear to those who knew him well as if he had no heart, no

feeling but for England. England was always in his thoughts; England was constantly the subject of his discourse; England was always before him in his prayers. For the space of not less than fifty years, he prayed for England without intermission, as will be seen in his Life.

It is a wonderful phenomenon that he should have persevered thus long in one prayer, though he never could have seen the semblance of any fruit from it. In fact, he died before any visible encouragement of hope for England had been granted. From all outward appearances, he might conclude that his prayer was rejected; and some might say, if his prayer was offered in a right way, how is this to be reconciled with the promises of Our Lord, "*Ask and it will be given to you...seek and you will receive*" (Mt. 7:8). We shall find no difficulty in explaining this, if we remember that He who said, "Ask and you shall receive," did not say you shall receive as soon as you begin to ask or in answer to your first prayer. It is enough to make the promise good that the grace be given at some time, when it will but please Almighty God. Although the venerable Father left this world without having seen any effect produced by his prayers for England, he now sees very cheering effects already brought about by them. But even during his life, he was not left wholly without encouragement. It is related that Almighty God, to show him that these, his prayers, were acceptable in His sight and to move him to perseverance in them, showed him the effects of them in a vision. This fact was thus related by the confessor of the venerable Father. One day, whilst he was celebrating Mass in one of our churches situated in the Diocese of Viterbo under the invocation of St. Michael the Archangel in Monte Fogliano, he remained longer than usual at the altar and stood motionless at the time of communion for about half an hour. During this long time, he was observed by Fr. John Mary Cioni, his confessor, with a face radiant and full of heavenly light. After the Mass was over the same Father John Mary said to the venerable Father in a playful manner, "*This morning there fell a good shower of rain, did there not?*" This was a phrase, very familiar to the venerable Servant of God, to express an abundance of divine unction or other heavenly favors in prayer. The face of the venerable Father Paul was covered with blushes and with tears in his eyes, and with his voice, broken by sobs, he said, "Oh! What have I seen this morning! My children, the Passionists, in England! My children in England!" His confessor was anxious to hear something more from him upon the subject, but he could obtain no answer but this, "My children in England!" We may presume that some farther particulars were communicated to him on that occasion to console him and strengthen his hope

for the conversion of this realm, so dear to his heart; however this was, it is quite sure that he went on to the end incessantly praying for the welfare of this country and never could lose sight of it; as he used to say of himself, “It would be impossible for me to abstain from praying for England, because, as soon as I kneel down to pray, England comes before my eyes.” May we not indulge the thought that at these times not only was England before him but also those of his children who were to be the first to land on these coasts, and those who should embrace his Institute in this kingdom, their sufferings, their labors and all which concerned them? I think we may. At least I am confident that Almighty God now permits him to know their state, and what is more interesting for them, that he prays for them now in heaven with more fervor and efficacy than he did or could do while he lived on earth.

It appears that Almighty God granted to His beloved and faithful servant another grace not less precious, which is, that all his spiritual children have inherited from him a love for England, and an ardent desire to see this country reconciled to the Catholic Church, and to spend their own lives, if they are permitted, on this great achievement. For I am convinced that there is not a Passionist who does not feel interested in it and who does not endeavor to inspire others with the like feeling, exciting them to pray for England’s conversion. We might look upon this as a kind of appendage to the religious vocation to our Congregation. May God grant us to see some good fruits arising from this happy tendency. It seems that many years ago these feelings had already met with a sympathetic chord in England itself. Long before there appeared any probability of the thing being accomplished, some zealous souls in England had expressed their desire of having Passionists among them. I remember being told that the Chevalier Drak, who, from the Jewish profession had entered the Catholic Church, once called at Saints John and Paul when he was at Rome more than fifteen years ago and said that the first time that he had heard the name of Passionists was in England, and that an impression existed among many people that the Passionists were to contribute to the conversion of England. Before that period I have heard of another more distinguished person having been interested about bringing the Passionists to England. This was Dr. Milner, late vicar apostolic of the Midland District, a man so well known to the world for his zeal and his literary exertions in the cause of religion. He was at Rome for some affairs of his district, about thirty years ago, and made an application to the Very Rev. Father Thomas Albesano, then General Superior of the Passionists, to give him some of his

religious for England. The good General was not able to comply with his request, having no subjects fit for this mission. Dr. Milner, however, though he could no longer entertain the hope of seeing Passionists in England during his lifetime, seems to have been confident that they would come at no very distant period; and by the way in which he spoke on the subject, one might suppose that he had even received some supernatural intimation of the event. There is a nun still living in the Central District to whom he said, "I am old and shall not live so long as to see Passionists in England, but you are young and before you die you will have this consolation." It was a subject of great astonishment to Father Dominic, the first of the Congregation who ever did land in England, on his being called to give a retreat in the convent to which this nun belongs, to be thus accosted by her, "Father, how long have I been expecting you!" "How so?" said he. "Did you know anything of me?" "No," she replied, "I did not know you; but when I was young, Dr. Milner told me that before my death I should see Passionists in England."

Whatever view be taken of these previous circumstances, the settlement of the Passionists in England has been happily brought about. The first movement towards this event took place in the year 1830. Father Dominic, the present provincial of the Order in England, was lector or teacher of theology in the Retreat of Saints John and Paul at Rome, and in this year first made acquaintance with Englishmen, although for many years previously he had been inspired with the like ardent love for England as had filled the breast of our venerable Founder, and with a constant desire of devoting himself to labor for its good. He always firmly believed Almighty God would one day gratify this desire, though he could not see in what manner this would be accomplished. He declared those feeling to his new friends, among whom were the Hon. and Rev. George Spencer, who had but lately been received into the Church, and Mr. Ambrose Lisle Phillipps of Grace Dieu Manor. They had much conversation together on the subject of bringing the Passionists to England, and afterwards kept up a correspondence with this view for several years, although for the time nothing could be concluded.

In the year 1839 Monsignor Acton (afterwards Cardinal) presented by the hands of Father Dominic a memorial to a General Chapter of the Congregation, asking for an establishment of Passionists in England. The General Chapter acquiesced and the long-desired event appeared now on the eve of its accomplishment; but new unforeseen difficulties interposed, and the plan was frustrated. In the following year, however, a foundation was offered in Belgium, in the

Diocese of Tournay, by way of a step towards England, and was accepted, four religious being appointed for it. Father Dominic was not included in the number. He said pleasantly, "I am not chosen by men, but if God has chosen me it is enough; I shall go." So it happened that one of those who had been named, and the one who was to be the superior of the new establishment, began to feel discouraged with the thought of having to learn a new language in his old age, and of other difficulties. When he, therefore, begged to decline the undertaking, Father Dominic was in fact nominated in his place and came to Belgium with his companions. It was a few months after this that Dr. Wiseman was consecrated bishop and appointed coadjutor to the Right Rev. Dr. Walsh, Vicar Apostolic of the Central District. As soon as Father Dominic arrived in England from Rome, he invited Father Dominic to visit him in order to make arrangements for a foundation in England. This first visit led to no conclusion; but in the course of a year, he returned with a companion, and by the favor of these two prelates was at length put happily into possession of the house of Aston Hall, near Stone in Staffordshire, where he opened a novitiate. For a considerable time, as may be supposed, he had to contend with great difficulties from his ignorance of the English language, but gradually these were overcome and about four years ago he began to go out in every direction giving missions and retreats, which he and some of his brethren have continued since without interruption. In 1846 a second establishment of Passionists was formed in Gloucestershire, under the patronage of William Leigh, Esq., a recent convert, who is engaged in building for them a church and house. For this advantage also they are indebted solely to Dr. Wiseman, who recommended them to Mr. Leigh, and whom, therefore, they must regard as the chief instrument for their introduction and establishment in England. I need not say that all the religious of this Congregation will entertain, as they are bound to do, an eternal gratitude to this eminent prelate, whose learning, zeal, and charity have gained him the veneration of the whole Catholic Church. May he receive an abundant reward from Almighty God.

The house and chapel of Aston Hall are not, in their present state, fit for a community such as we would wish to see assembled at the mother house of the Congregation in England, especially as the novitiate is established here. But by the help of God and the charity of many pious English Catholics, a new church has been begun, and is well advanced towards its completion; and it is intended also to build a new convenient house adjoining to it. As Almighty God has thus far

assisted the Congregation in this difficult undertaking of building a church and house, it is hoped He will further bless them by sending them many good and zealous young men to join them in working for His honor and glory for the conversion of England.

Having now given this brief narrative of the establishment of the Passionists in this country, we will go on to give some account of the end and spirit of the Institute itself, and of the manner of life pursued in it. We shall not enter on the circumstances under which it was approved – at first by Pope Benedict XIII orally, afterwards by a Brief of Benedict XIV, and finally by a Bull of Clement XIV, and another by Pius VI. These will be found given at large in the life itself of the venerable Founder. We shall content ourselves here with some details on the nature of the Institute.

This Order, or Congregation, is neither purely contemplative nor purely active. The manner of life pursued in it is of a mixed character, embracing both contemplation and action. It appears that the leading idea of the venerable Founder was to unite in it the mortified life of the Carthusians or the Trappists with the active life of the Jesuits or the Lazarists. The end of the Congregation is stated in the Rule to be twofold: first, the sanctification of its own members and, secondly, the sanctification of others; and the provisions of the Rule are calculated throughout for these two purposes. With a view to the first of these objects, the houses of the Congregation are to be situated as far as possible in solitude; and for this reason are called *Ritiri*, or places of retreat from the noise and business of the world. They are to be decent and clean, but poor in the strict sense of the word. The religious cannot possess any property, either in private or in common, except that in common they may possess their houses with a kitchen-garden and a few acres of meadowland attached to them, not with the intention of farming, as we say in England, but to keep a few heads of cattle, to provide vegetables for the use of the community, and to enable them to take exercise without going out of the premises, which they never do without a particular permission from the superior. How then, it may be asked, do they support themselves? The Rule allows them to beg, when necessary; and in Italy the religious do go to beg, so that they are reckoned among the mendicants; but in England, they have, as yet, never been obliged to have recourse to this means for their subsistence, having lived *by free will offerings*, on what has been given voluntarily by pious persons from time to time. They are allowed, indeed, to keep some money for the expenses of the church or chapel, which, however, is served quite

gratuitously; no seat-rents being ever demanded, nor any fees for baptisms, marriages, burials, or the like. If anything is given on such occasions, it is done spontaneously. It is their custom to make a collection at the offertory of the Mass on Sundays; but what is got by this means, is scrupulously set aside, to be spent not for the wants of the religious, but towards the expenses of the school or to provide something necessary or ornamental for the church. If some person, possessed of property, desires to become a Passionist, and would wish to dispose of it altogether, or in part, in favor of the house which he enters, he may, indeed, if he pleases, present to it some definite sum of money, but would not be allowed to settle upon it anything in the form of an income or revenue, since the Congregation is forbidden to have any revenues. The novice, therefore, is advised when he makes his will at the time of his profession to leave all he has to dispose of to his parents, or other relations, or to whomsoever he pleases. He may reserve to himself the right of returning to it, in case of his quitting the Congregation, so that his legatees enjoy the use or fruit of it during his lifetime, if he continues to the end in his vocation, and at his death they inherit the principal as well. It is to be observed that the disposition which he makes of his property at the time of his profession is a final one. He cannot afterwards make any alteration in it. If the relatives or friends of any of the religious desire to give anything in the shape of alms to the Congregation, or to any of its houses, they may do so, and it would be gratefully accepted. But any settled property, such as houses or land, or any permanent income, from whatever source, it cannot accept.

When the religious go out to give missions or retreats, they are expressly forbidden to ask or expect anything as retribution for their labors; but in this case also, if anything is offered as an alms, they may accept it with some limitations pointed out in the regulations of the Order. Passionists are, everywhere, poor; and it is to be hoped that they will always continue so. Woe to them if they happened to become rich! Their Rules threaten them in that case with a kind of malediction, which, however, we trust they will never incur. They have never been without food and clothing; and let them be content with this. Whatever they should possess more would be not to their advantage, but their loss. May God avert from them evermore the curse of riches!

Novices, having completed one year of probation, if they are found worthy, are admitted to their profession. They make the three common vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, to which they add a fourth, which is to promote to the utmost of their power, especially by such

means as the Rules point out, a tender devotion to the Passion of our Divine Savior. On this point we shall presently speak more at large. The Order admits of two classes of religious, that is, choir brothers and lay brothers. The former are to give themselves to study, that they may be fitted, when called, to labor with fruit in the vineyard of the Lord. The latter are charged with the economical business of the house. The conditions for the reception of subjects are that they should be at least fifteen years of age and under twenty-five; that they should have been baptized and confirmed in the Catholic Church; should have no stain upon their character or, as it is expressed, should be of good repute; and should be bound by no secular tie such as would be an obstacle to the profession of the religious life. If they are to be received as clerics, they must also have previously a tolerable knowledge of Latin. The General has power to dispense with the impediment of age, so that if there are reasons to make it desirable, one may enter above the age of twenty-five. It is also an impediment if the postulant has before received the habit of any other religious Order, although he may not have been professed in it. The General may dispense also in this case; but this is not done except under certain very peculiar circumstances.

The vows made in this Congregation are simple vows, from which it follows that, for a reasonable cause, the General of the Order, with the concurrence of his assistants, may dispense with them. The religious are not free to quit the Congregation after their profession without such a dispensation, though the superiors have power to dismiss anyone who should prove obstinately indocile or be guilty of any faults such as would cause scandal to his brethren or put a mark of infamy on the body itself unless he were dismissed. No religious, after his profession, can be dismissed on account of any bodily or physical infirmity, unless it be discovered that he was laboring under it before he was professed and wilfully concealed it. After a novice has made his profession, if he be a lay brother, he will be employed in domestic services; if he be a choir brother, he will go through the course of his regular studies under the direction of able masters in philosophy, theology, holy scripture, etc. When he has gone through his studies to the satisfaction of his superiors, he may be promoted to holy orders (*under the title of poverty*), but not before he has passed four years in the Congregation from the time of his profession, unless the Superior General should think fit to give him a dispensation. Should the student not give satisfaction, his ordination may be delayed *at the pleasure of the superior*. After receiving Holy Orders, he may either go on with his studies, or, if these be completed, he may be trained at once

for the apostolic functions of preaching, hearing confessions, etc.

We will now speak of the routine of the life of Passionists while in their *Ritiri*, or religious houses. When they are out on missions they are not under the same regulations, as we shall explain later. They sleep on straw mattresses, with straw pillows, but provided with as many blankets of common wool as the season requires. They do not put off their clothes at night, except in case of sickness, if ordered by the medical man. If they are in health, all rise about one hour after midnight to Matins, after five hours' repose. They remain an hour and a half in the choir, the time being occupied after they have finished Matins in meditation. After this they return to rest, and again rise at five o'clock in the summer, or at half-past five in the winter, for prime and tierce, after which there is an hour's meditation. This being finished, they go to study in their cells, or are employed in other ways suitable to their condition and according to the direction of the superior. At half-past ten the last Mass is said, from which they go to the choir for Sext and None, and then to dinner. After dinner they spend three quarters of an hour in recreation together, and then retire in silence till Vespers. After Vespers, which begin in summer at a quarter-past two, there is spiritual reading for some time in common, followed by another hour of meditation, which being concluded, each goes about his proper avocations till Compline, which in summer is at six o'clock. In winter Vespers are half an hour earlier and the meditation is made after Compline, which at that time of the year begins at a quarter-past five. At half past six they go to supper, after which they have recreation in common, as after dinner, for three quarters of an hour. The day concludes with night prayers in choir, from which they retire to rest. On Sundays, Thursdays, and feasts, whether of precept or devotion, instead of going to study after Vespers, they have a common walk or recreation till Compline. They keep the Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays of every week as fast days, besides fasting and abstaining from flesh meat through the whole of Advent and Lent. Those fasting days, however, which are ordered only by the Rule and not by the universal Church, are not very rigorous, and a person in health finds no difficulty in their observance. When they are away from home, traveling or preaching, etc., they are bound to none of the abstinences, fasts, or other austerities which the Rule prescribes, but follow the practice and diet of other good Catholics, so as not to cause inconvenience to those with whom they may chance to be. In the house, some farther austerities and mortifications or humiliations are prescribed, besides what have been here named; but these are the principal

features of their conventual life—the rest will soon be learnt in practice. From what has been said, we may gather that while at home they spend about five hours every day in the choir, singing the Divine Office, which they do according to the Roman Breviary and calendar, or in meditation. The lay brothers, who do not sing the Office, employ the time in reciting vocal prayers, visiting the Stations of the Passion, etc. Every priest in the Congregation says Mass daily. The rest receive communion at least two or three times a week. They all make a practice of going to confession every week, and frequently hold spiritual conferences in private with their directors. There is also a quarter of an hour every day assigned for spiritual reading in private for all priests and clerics. Each year the whole community makes a spiritual retreat, previous to the annual renewing of the vows, and two or three familiar sermons are preached in the choir every week by the superior or by some other priest appointed by him.

The above particulars, as will be easily seen, all regard the first end of the Rule, as before stated, that is, the personal sanctification of all the members of the Congregation.

We will now proceed to give a sketch of what they do for the sanctification of others. We will begin by noticing a few of the things practiced by other religious Orders which they do not do. They have no colleges for the education of seculars and have no young men or boys under their care, except those whom they receive as members of the Congregation. These, as has been said before, must be at least fifteen years old and have already learned Latin. The Passionists do not send out professors to teach in public schools or colleges. They do not preach lenten sermons³, nor, except very rarely, do they preach panegyrics or any other stylish sermons; but they do give simple instructions to the people on Sundays and holy days in their own churches or in others, if called to do it by the lawful pastors. Generally, they do not undertake the cure of souls by themselves, but endeavor to assist the parish priest of the place where any of their houses are established, by teaching Christian doctrine, hearing confessions, etc. Hitherto, in England, it has been necessary that they should take on the care of the congregations where they have houses; but where this is not done, their priests are always ready to instruct and hear the confessions of all persons who resort to their churches or chapels. They also receive priests or laymen in their houses for any length of time, not exceeding a fortnight, if they wish to retire and

³ These sermons were called *quaresimali* sermons in Italy.

go through a course of spiritual exercises under their direction, provided the persons be known to them or be recommended by some lawful authority.

The principal means, however, employed by the Passionists for the spiritual good of others, is giving missions and retreats, whether to public gatherings in towns or in country places, to religious communities, to colleges, to seminaries, to any number of the clergy assembled for the purpose, or, as is sometimes done, to a number of persons of some particular class of society sufficient to compose an audience, to whom they would address instructions suited to their state in life. This is their proper calling and principal occupation during the entire year; and for this reason it would be wished that they should not have the care and responsibility of any particular congregation, so that they might be free at all times to go wherever they are called; but in the present circumstances of this country, it may easily be understood that it would not be possible for them to decline this charge. To these missions or retreats they go either one or more at a time, according to the circumstances of the case. For a regular mission there ought to be at least two priests able to preach and hear confessions. We abstain from entering here on a full detail of how these missions are to be carried on. For in many things they must vary according to circumstances; and it has been found difficult hitherto to carry out in this country, to its full extent, the system observed by our missionaries in Italy. In general they accommodate themselves to the practice of other missionaries; giving instructions to the people on the manner of observing the laws of God and of the Church; how to prepare themselves for the reception of the sacraments, especially those of penance and the Eucharist; suiting the style of their instructions to the wants and character of their hearers in different localities. There is also a sermon on each day of the mission on one or other of the great topics of our religion, as on the last end of man, mortal and venial sin, death, judgment, etc., and every day they give a meditation and plain instruction on the Passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In some form or other this last subject must invariably be introduced, both in public missions and in private retreats. The treating on this subject belongs in a peculiar manner to the missionaries of this Congregation, who, as their very name of Passionist indicates, are obliged to promote, to the utmost of their power, a tender devotion towards the Passion of our Redeemer. In regular missions, besides the meditations on the Passion, there are given every morning to the people short and plain instructions on how to meditate on this great subject by themselves. In private

retreats, the first thing in the morning is the meditation on the Passion, after which, during the day, are given one or two instructions suitable to the class of persons who form the audience; and in the evening another meditation on some of the subjects which we named above when speaking of the evening sermons in a mission. The length of time occupied in one of these sermons or instructions is from three quarters of an hour to an hour. The time which is not taken up with preaching is employed in hearing confessions, or in spiritual conferences with such persons as desire them. We may observe that Passionists are enjoined by their Rule to avoid charging themselves with the particular direction of souls, excepting the members of their own Congregation. They are also warned against using any influence or giving advice to people about their wills and legacies; but they are more particularly and strictly forbidden, either directly or indirectly, to induce any person to make grants or legacies in favor of their Order; they are, on the contrary, as much as possible to dissuade them from doing it. Passionists, as we before said, must be always poor if they would hope to prosper and enjoy God's blessing; and consequently they should accustom themselves to abhor, as they would a heavy curse upon their Order, the thought of becoming rich, either individually or in common. They should put before themselves, as the only reward of their labors, that which they hope for in departing this life – a place in God's heavenly kingdom. The Passionists make no particular vow, like that of the Jesuits, to be ready to go on foreign missions among infidels or wherever His Holiness the Pope may send them; but their Rules enjoin them to be thus ready at the disposal of the Holy See or of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. Accordingly, they have missionaries, a bishop in Bulgaria, and other missionaries in Australia.

They are also commanded by the Rule to conform themselves with the greatest deference to the wishes of the bishops or ordinaries in whose dioceses or districts their houses are situated. These are to be served first, in preference to any other persons; though when not employed by the ordinary of the diocese in which they live, they are ready to obey the call of other bishops or ordinaries who may desire their services, as is often the case. In a word, they profess to serve everybody and to be served by none; and it is their duty to act up to their profession as closely as they can. With the help of God they will never refuse to labor in the Lord's vineyard, though the place to which they are called be the poorest and meanest of all, and the people whom they have to deal with be the most thankless and intractable, or though they have to expose their lives by

attending on those infected with pestilential diseases. In short, let them only be called by proper authority and they are to be ready for all things, remembering the example of the Good Shepherd, whose servants they are, who laid down His life for His sheep.

What has been said will give some idea of the nature and spirit of the order instituted by the venerable Father Paul of the Cross, whose Life now for the first time appears in English; and we have thought these details on the subject would form a suitable introduction, or, as they might perhaps more appropriately be styled, a suitable appendage to this work. The same holy man also founded an Order of nuns, whose manner of life is quite analogous to that of the Passionist religious men. As, however, an establishment of these nuns has not yet been formed in England, we refrain on the present occasion from saying any more about them, except to entreat those who may read these pages to pray for all the spiritual children of their venerable Father, that they may never lose the spirit and fervor of their first foundation.

Dominic of the Mother of God, Passionist

Aston Hall, Feast of St. Matthew, September 21, 1847

THE LIFE OF THE BLESSED PAUL OF THE CROSS

CHAPTER I

Of the Birth and Early Life of the Venerable Father Paul of the Cross

Father Paul of the Cross, of blessed memory, was born in Ovada, a small town in the Diocese of Acqui, subject to the dominion of the Republic of Genoa. His father was Luca Danei, a native of Castellazzo of Monferrato, in the Diocese of Alessandria della Paglia, a descendant of the noble family of Danei, once one of the most distinguished of that beautiful city. We might here give his exact genealogy from the archives of the same town, if we had not determined simply to write a faithful recital of the life and actions of Father Paul, who always wished to conceal the rank and importance of his family, desiring only the treasures and ornaments of Christian virtue. His mother was Anna Maria Massari, a lady of respectable parentage, born in Roveriolo, a place which also was subject to the Republic of Genoa. They resided for some time in Castellazzo, the native place of Luca, but to escape from the turmoil and the grievous inconveniences of war which were then heavily pressing on the Province of Monferrato, as well as on other parts of Lombardy, they sought a more peaceful life in Ovada where our Paul was born. His happy parents lived in the holy fear of God, closely united in holy love with each other, and never gave to anyone cause for displeasure or complaint. Luca was a man of the highest integrity and purity of conscience, greatly given to the reading of those books from which he could best learn how to lead a Christian life, for which end the lives of the saints are above all particularly useful. His mother was yet more remarkably distinguished for the exercise of all the virtues proper for her state; she was held in high esteem by all who knew her, and was ever respected as a most pious and exemplary woman. Their means in consequence of various reverses had become much reduced, therefore Luca, not from any eagerness for gain, but to support himself and his family, had engaged himself in a small way of business; while Anna Maria applied herself to the care of the house. The less they abounded in earthly wealth, the richer were they in the treasures of grace. Understanding that they owed both themselves and their offspring to the sovereign Creator of all, they devoted their utmost care to the Christian education of the children with which God

had abundantly blessed them, to the number of sixteen boys and girls. Paul was the first to come into the world, and he received from God the earliest and greatest blessings that descended upon his family. His pious parents made it their rule that their children, as soon as born, should be washed in the waters of Holy Baptism, that they might speedily be born again to grace and might acquire a right to their heavenly inheritance. The baptism of Paul, however, by some accident, was deferred for some days, for he first saw the light on the 3rd of January, 1694, and was not baptized until the 6th of the same month. The infant received in baptism the names of Paul Francis, perhaps by a special dispensation of Providence, this infant being destined, when grown to full stature before God and man, to preach Jesus Christ crucified, like the Apostle St. Paul, and to awaken in the hearts of men the remembrance of the life-giving Redeemer, to which function, like the seraphic patriarch St. Francis, he was likewise marvelously chosen.

His good mother must clearly have perceived that the child which she had brought to light was endowed by our Lord with most special blessings, for during all the months of her pregnancy, she not only felt no load, nor annoyance, nor pain, but she experienced a wonderful lightness in her interior and a certain sweetness and fragrance on her palate, by which she was filled with consolation. At the birth of the infant, the whole room appeared vividly illumined by a marvelous flood of light, and bright refulgence, in comparison with which the lamps which were burning in it (for it was night) seemed to have no more light or brilliance – as though our Lord by this miraculous sign would indicate the brilliant rays which the child would so abundantly shed forth by the example of his sublime virtue. The tender infant, as if he possessed discernment even in his earliest days, took no milk except regularly every four hours, thus seeming to foresee the great abstinence he was to practice in the course of his life. Everyone can imagine how earnestly his mother desired to plant in this soul, which of itself gave such promising hopes, the seeds of all virtues as soon as it was capable of receiving them, and how carefully she watched over the precious treasure confided to her by her Heavenly Father. As this wise parent well knew how easy it is to be infected by the world, more especially in youth, she was accustomed to keep her children at a distance from mingling with others, and particularly from conversation with women, remarking that they too, although they ought to be mirrors of modesty, sometimes say things that ought not to be said. Hence she kept her children at home, under her own eyes, as so many young olive trees that were to be cultivated for the glory and service of God. She always,

however, sent them, when they had arrived at the proper age, to be instructed in catechism, that they might learn with other children in the House of the Lord to know Him well, so as to love Him and serve Him as they ought to do. Still, she believed this to be only a part of the duty of a good mother of a family. In addition, she herself repeated at home the truths of the faith and taught them the law of the Lord. In imitation of the mother of the wise man, who endeavored from the beginning to form her son by her instructions to virtue and holiness, the mother of Paul sought earnestly to imprint the holy fear of God in the souls of her children while yet tender. Her husband cordially approved of her tender solicitude and was delighted to see his offspring thus nourished with the milk of celestial wisdom. He added on his part this special advice to his sons, that they should never gamble and should refrain from bearing arms. As on the one hand he knew how much injury is caused by gambling and the use of arms, and on the other how easily such bad habits are acquired, he would not allow them on any account to touch cards nor to carry arms even for the chase.

In this school of virtue and of the holy fear of God, the child Paul speedily displayed the docility and candor of soul with which he had been enriched by God. His good parents, who watched over the education of their family, but especially his mother, must have worked with all possible affection and earnestness for their son, that with his growth in age he might grow also in grace and virtue according to his capacity. This pious woman lost no opportunity of rendering him better and better by her care. She used holy expedients of all sorts to draw his tender soul to virtue, taking advantage of the most insignificant occurrences to give him useful admonitions under a pleasing form and to stimulate him to virtue with discretion and address.

Thus, when she desired to put his hair in order, if ever the annoyance or the pain made him cry, as children will do, she would recount to him the lives of the ancient holy anchorets; and as she kept her heart in close union with God, she told these things with so much grace and devotion, that the little Paul was quickly tranquillized and ceased to weep because of the consolations which these little recitals gave him, which perhaps was an omen of the great love which he afterwards had for a retired and solitary life. Because this good mother was acceptable to God, and her virtues were of that pure gold which can bear the severest tests, our Lord, in order to refine and perfect these virtues and to enrich them with new merit, gave her great occasions of suffering by which she was enabled to prove herself a truly valiant woman and a

faithful imitator of our Redeemer Jesus Christ.

Besides the inconveniences these excellent people endured from being away from their own native place with diminished income, Anna Maria, with the burden of a very numerous family, was almost always ill. Still was she ever united with the most holy will of God; she kept herself humble, devout, and retired. What ought most to be esteemed, amidst so many trials, is that never was there heard from her mouth a word of complaint or impatience. When she found herself most strongly tempted to anger, she would conquer herself and repress all its violence, only saying to her children, "May God make you all saints." With the example of so virtuous a partner, by the reading of good books, and the exercise of holy prayer, her husband Luca also endured with great resignation and patience the inconveniences of his difficult circumstances and his other trials, accepting them all from the loving hand of God. By suffering like a Christian, in silence and peace, there increased within him at the same time an affection for the cross and a love towards our most sweet Redeemer; so that this truly virtuous man conceived so ardent a desire to die for our Lord, that he would willingly have offered his life in the midst of torments for the confession of his faith. How sincere were these desires, and how great was his love of God, from which alone they could spring, was clearly proved by the noble acts of fraternal charity with which he crowned his life and met a precious death. After Paul had left home and was employing himself in assisting the sick in the Hospital of St. Gallicano, as we shall relate in its proper place, his father Luca, we know not by whose fault, met one day with a sudden fall which terminated fatally. No sooner had he fallen than his first thought and greatest care seemed to be the defense of him who was the occasion of his death. There happened to be near him one of his sons, by name Joseph. He charged him, before all things, freely to forgive the person who had unintentionally caused his fall and to beware of entertaining any bitterness or aversion towards him. With these pious and holy sentiments he prepared himself for death. His poor wife, who in losing her husband lost so virtuous a companion and so edifying a model, and at the same time the principal support of her numerous family of all their kindred, must doubtless have felt an indescribable grief; but conquering by virtue all the feelings and the weakness of nature, she continued immovable on her knees at the foot of the bed, recommending to God the soul of her dying husband, and remained thus until he expired. She survived her pious consort many years, and always persevered in her exemplary course of life, until the time arrived for her to go, as we

hope, to receive the reward of her truly Christian life. In her last moments, as the priest who attended her was repeating to her the most holy name of Jesus, to which she had always a singular devotion, she omitted not to bow her head, dying as she was. Having done so twice, at the third effort she placidly expired. As soon as Paul heard of his mother's death, he wrote a letter which may serve as an attestation of her holiness, no less conclusive than it was sincere.

“May the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ be ever in our hearts.

“Most dearly beloved in Jesus Christ,

“I have received your letter, from which I learn the happy and holy death of our good mother. Nature has paid its tribute by making us feel some little touch of sorrow, though this has been sweetened by our seeing in the blow the Divine Will, which can choose nothing but the best. In all our three retreats Mass has been sung and the entire Office for the dead recited, and we three still continue to offer Mass for the soul of so good a mother, though we have a lively confidence that she has no further need of these suffrages, since it appears to us impossible to doubt that our good God has already received her into the bosom of His infinite mercies in the paradise of the blessed. Thus we should all rejoice, that, after so many trials suffered by her with so much constancy, patience, and resignation, she is now enjoying for all eternity the fruit of her many virtues through the infinite merits of the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ, and that we ourselves are so happy as to have her for our advocate in the celestial kingdom. By her holy example and fervent admonitions, she ever endeavored, while she was in this valley of tears, to set us forward and to stimulate us all to run in the path of perfection and sanctity. It remains for us never to forget her holy instructions and example, and to imitate her constant devotion, patience, and resignation, so that we may one day sing with her the mercies of God in that great kingdom of glory.”

With the pious education which we have described, Paul grew up and from his earliest years he gave the best indications of his future character, showing thus early an inclination for devotion and retirement. Averse to childish sports, he spent his time with particular pleasure in making little altars with his brother John Baptist, who continued as his faithful companion until his death. They used to kneel before a devout image of the Infant Jesus, formed in wax, which they had procured for the purpose. Such acts are generally signs of a pious disposition and of a vocation to the ecclesiastical state. Amidst these practices of dawning piety, Paul and his brother

John Baptist never ceased to venerate, to the best of their power, the Queen of Heaven, the loving protectress of us all. And this mother of grace and affectionate patroness failed not to show how acceptable to her were their acts of innocent homage, and how lovingly she watched over the two little brothers, her clients.

One day, from that want of caution common among boys, they fell into the river Tanaro and were in great danger of being drowned. Suddenly there appeared a most beautiful and lovely lady, who, benignly extended them her hand and delivered them from the water and from death, thus giving them a marvelous proof of the care which she then and ever afterwards took of them.

CHAPTER II

How He Devoted Himself to a Life of Exalted Perfection

As the young Paul increased in age, moved by divine grace as though he was determined to place a fence around his innocence in order to guard it safely and water it abundantly at the fountain of divine benedictions, he commenced leading a most austere life, entirely dedicated to prayer and union with God. He seldom slept in a bed, so that his sister, who observed the manner of life of her virtuous brother, solemnly deposed on her oath that she generally found his bed in the morning in the same state as it had been made up and left the day before. She proceeded to question him to know where he slept, but the good youth, who desired no other witness of his mortifications than his God, refused to answer and modestly bowing his head preserved his secret. His sister suspected the truth and afterwards clearly discovered that Paul passed the night in the granary, with her other brother John Baptist, for she often saw them go up to this place in the evening, and likewise observed that there upon some planks were placed a few bricks with a crucifix. Hence, she had reason to conclude that the two boys slept upon these bare boards, and that the bricks served them for pillows. Nor was the good sister deceived in her conjectures, for besides her depositions on the subject, we are assured in the Processes that Paul slept but little and on bare boards with stones and bricks under his head, often meditating on the bitter pains of Jesus who in his extremist agony had no other bed than the hard wood of the cross. After a short rest, accompanied with so much discomfort, they resolved when it was bitterly cold to commune

alone with God. And as they knew that prayer is a sacrifice so much the more acceptable in proportion as it is attended with mortification and penance, these fervent youths made use of the discipline, and with what severity they chastised themselves is known to God alone, to Whom they offered their bodies as living holocausts in order to find grace and acceptance in His sight. There is no doubt that their good mother was aware of it, and with tears of tenderness and compassion told their sister that she had heard them practicing this mortification. Their father Luca Danei, also found them one day disciplining themselves with strips of leather made into a scourge. Seeing how severely they were striking themselves, he could not resist exclaiming, “How now, are you going to kill yourselves?” So great was the violence of the stripes. But particularly the blows which Paul inflicted on himself were so many and so hard, that John Baptist, although scarcely less fervent, was several times constrained to take the discipline from his brother’s hand in order to save him from fainting. Thus did these chosen souls dispose themselves to be more and more perfectly united with God, the sweetnesses of whose Spirit they already began to taste in great abundance. Inflamed daily with new desires of the Sovereign food, they used to spend many hours in prayer.

In order to find time for this, more free and undisturbed, our Paul used to rise two or three hours before daylight, and retiring in secret into a little room would pour forth his heart before God. He thirsted so eagerly after this fountain of life, that all the time which remained over and above what was employed in studies suited to his age, he gave to holy prayer in hidden parts of his father’s house. But as he well knew that the Church is the throne of the divine mercies which God has set up among men, and the chosen spot for holy prayer, he there passed as many hours as possible assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, reciting the Divine Office with the priests in the choir, or silently meditating. All his chaste delight he found in remaining in the house of the Lord, as we learn from the deposition of an excellent religious who was an educated person, his contemporary and eyewitness of his conduct. He declared that if any wished to find him, it was in the church he must look for him. During the time which he thus spent in the house of God, so great was his exterior recollection and devotion that it might serve for edification to all who beheld him. Amongst others he was observed by the Countess Canefri, who happened to be at Castellazzo, passing there some of the summer months with her noble family. This pious lady frequented the Church of San Martino in that place, and there almost always noticed a youth

close to a pillar, kneeling upon the ground, immoveable in prayer. Being anxious to know who this young man was, she enquired from the sacristan and was informed that he was one of the sons of Luca Danei, that is, our Paul. The good Countess was greatly edified, and that same morning upon her return home, desiring that others should share the spiritual consolation which this sight had afforded her, she related the circumstance during dinner to the Count, her husband, and being a person of great discernment, she declared her conviction that this youth must be forming resolutions of no ordinary virtue.

Hence it is evident that the devotion with which Paul prayed in church was something very singular, not like that of others. Seeing it enabled this pious Countess to perceive the holy designs which he was forming. The lively faith with which he contemplated the house of God, the tender love and piety he cherished towards his Heavenly Father, and the zeal with which he was inflamed for the Divine glory would not suffer him to witness in others profanations of God's house and offenses to the Divine Majesty without being deeply wounded at heart. If he happened to see any persons talking in church, he would reverently go and kneel before them and with all humility beg them to observe more respect in the house of the Eternal God. By these, his lengthened communings with our Lord, who is Himself a holy fire of love which burns away every imperfection and transforms into itself whoever approaches it, as it is written, "The Lord our God is a consuming fire," the devout reader may well conceive that the soul of the young Paul was daily more and more purified from all failings, and that there were kindled in him new desires and inflamed longings to please God even more and more. It was easy to perceive the great profit which he drew from remaining so much with his God; for his words, his looks, and his whole bearing breathed that modesty which makes the exterior of a man a means of instruction and edification. Thus, daily burning with fresh love towards God, he cherished a most ardent desire to convert souls to Him and to inspire them with fervor in His holy service. He therefore chose some young companions with whom he would converse on holy things when walking out together; this he did with great ardor and singular profit, so that these good youths led a most virtuous and edifying life.

The virtue of one of them was put to a dangerous proof by a licentious woman, who, as is related by the servant of God, met the young man alone in an unfrequented road and basely tempted him to evil. The good youth, in his horror and disgust at her infamous proposal,

promptly cut off a great piece of a bramble bush with which he began severely to whip the unhappy creature and punished her as she deserved for her boldness and impudence. Of so much advantage to the young is frequent and pious discourse with a devout companion! In order that they might relish the loveliness of God, and thus be confirmed more and more in the paths of Christian virtue, our Paul, with wonderful skill and sweetness, taught them the method of conversing with God in prayer, and an easy, safe, and direct way to arrive in a short time at great holiness. Seeing that some were called by our Lord to a more perfect state by his persuasions, he induced them to abandon the world and to become religious. Six of his companions took the habit of the Servites of Mary, some others joined the Augustinian Friars, and four became Capuchins. The young Paul, however, gave his most frequent instructions in his father's house to his brothers and sisters. He taught them often to reflect on the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, towards which he entertained even from that time a most tender devotion. He used sometimes to take them to his room, and there read some devout book to inspire them with love for the Divine Mysteries, which are the fountains of all grace. His words must have been most efficacious, because it was evident that he himself was penetrated with compassion for our most amiable Redeemer, the impression of whose suffering he so deeply bore in his heart.

On Fridays, when a special remembrance is made of the death of our Lord, Paul, when at table, instead of eating would do nothing but weep. If he asked for a piece of bread, he begged it as an alms for the love of God from his sister, though he himself was master of what little property they then possessed, as being heir to one of his uncles, deceased, as we shall mention shortly. Of the bread thus begged he took but very little. His drink on this day was gall mixed with vinegar. In order to conceal this from the domestics, he imitated the simplicity of the ancient anchorites, and drank from a little gourd made into a bottle, which he kept with great jealousy hidden from everyone. The family did not perceive this extraordinary mortification, but his sister clearly made out what kind of drink this was by seeing him one day returning home with a bladder full of ox's gall. She asked him what he intended to do with it, but she could get no answer from her humble brother, so she had good reason to believe that this gall tempered with vinegar was his Friday's beverage. Of this we are also assured by another testimony, which says, that "in memory of the life-giving and most holy passion, he drank every Friday a draught of gall mixed with vinegar." He had besides this another little earthen bottle in which he kept gall for the same

purpose. As long as he lived at home, this never fell into the hands of his relations because he took great care to conceal it; but after his departure, his sister one day, while busy in some work about the house, knocked it with a broom and broke it in pieces. It was hardly broken, when (a fact truly miraculous) an unusual fragrance spread through the room and was perceived by her and by others of the family. The devout sister gathering up the pieces, closely examined them, and observed that they were still stained with the gall which her fervent brother was in the habit of keeping in them. Edified by this new proof of the mortification of Paul, she desired that her aunt, a choir nun in the Monastery of St. Augustin in Castellazzo, of the name of Sister Rosa Maria, should share her consolation and astonishment. She therefore carried to her a fragment of the broken vessel that she might also enjoy this wonderful sweet odor. Thus did Almighty God make known how acceptable to him was this self-denial and mortification practiced by the young Paul in memory of the Passion of his Son. By these holy exercises Paul reached such a height of perfection that he was already considered and venerated as a saint, and at the sight of him people used to exclaim, "Here is the saint!" If the servant of God came in the way of a circle of young persons assembled together, and he often did so on purpose to ask them of what they were talking, at the first sight of him, or as soon as they heard his voice, they were so inspired with respect and awe that they would tremble for fear. Paul turned to advantage the influence which Almighty God gave him over the souls of others. He zealously labored and finally succeeded in putting an end to the wicked abuse of young men going about singing during the night, and through his persuasions this bad custom was abandoned. From that time nobody dared to go about singing and playing at night, which they used previously to do with so much danger and scandal, as must be the consequence of bad customs of this kind. It must indeed have been evident to all at Castellazzo, but especially to the young, how much it was to their advantage to obey this servant of God, by the fatal end of one ill-conditioned youth who would not yield to his loving persuasions. His name was Damiano Tarpone. While engaged in bringing about a reconciliation between him and another youth, Paul had strongly cautioned him against going up and down at night, telling him that if he did he would be killed, A few months afterwards, Damiano, despising or not heeding the words of Paul, went to the town of Frascano to see a certain young woman with whom he was madly in love. One night while he was rambling about, as is the custom with young men of bad habits, he was slain, as Paul had predicted, and found

dead in a meadow near the Bormida. To another youth who lived but little in the fear of God, he foretold with equal clearness that he would die when he least expected it. The father of the young man, who suffered greatly from the ingratitude and ill conduct of his son, requested Paul to give him a good admonition and remind him of the respect he owed his parents. The servant of God sent for the youth, charitably reprov'd him for his faults, and endeavored to persuade him to ask pardon of his father, in order to compensate in some measure by this act of humiliation for the injuries he had done him. "Ask pardon of my father!" said the wayward young man. "No, indeed!" Paul replied, "You will not ask your father's pardon, do you say? In a short time you will die." The prediction was soon followed by the punishment, for in a few days the young man died, though he had not only youth in his favor but had been also in perfect health.

To give His faithful servant still more influence for the benefit of souls, Almighty God, even at the time we speak of, communicated to him the gift of discerning spirits and enlightened him clearly to know the consciences of others. Sometimes when with sinners, He caused him to smell a horrible and unnatural stench and to indicate the foul and hideous crimes with which they were infected. Enlightened by this lively sense of the needs of different consciences, and burning with desire for his neighbor's salvation, he used to disclose in private, first to one, then to another, his secret faults, saying with certainty, "Brother, you have committed such a sin; go to confession." He would then instruct such a person in order to facilitate his worthy approach to the sacraments, and would finally send him to some enlightened director that the minister of God might with charity and skill heal the wounds of the poor soul. Such was the great good which, even at that time, Paul used to do, and such was the tenor of life he observed while still a secular – a conduct, as everyone must see, calculated to draw his soul to an intimate union with God and to pave the way to sublime perfection.

When he was grown old, one day, in a sad and melancholy tone, said to his confessor, "Ah! It appears to me I have mistaken the road; if I had remained a secular perhaps I should have been saved." Continuing the conversation he added, "I used to spend at least seven hours of the day and night in prayer and other devout exercises. The mornings of feasts I used to rise very early and attended a confraternity of which I was a member. When this was over, I went to the principal church, where, according to the usual custom, the Most Holy Sacrament was exposed, and I there remained at least five hours on my knees. I then went to take a little refreshment, after

which I came to Vespers. After Vespers I walked out in company with some devout youths, with whom I kept up pious conversations. After passing another hour in mental prayer I returned home.” So true it is that the servants of God, in the very moment when they are seeking to humble themselves and to condemn their own doings, through a particular dispensation of Providence, disclose things which could not be known in any other way.

His fervor, however, was not altogether satisfied, and he chose to employ himself in other good works, far more arduous and more repugnant to human nature. In imitation of Tobias, he would be the first to take up the most stinking dead bodies, which no one else would touch, and, placing them upon his shoulders, carry them to the cemetery, inviting others to follow his example. The tomb being then opened, he would sometimes, in company with a good companion, contemplate the moldering and putrid corpses enclosed within it, and, as though a great book of truth was set open before them, meditate so profitably on the vanity of earthly things that the young companion would generously abandon all earthly things and devote himself to a life of great fervor and penance. Paul, being subsequently elected prior of the Confraternity of St. Anthony, which met near his house, used to go to their meeting early on festival days. Dressed in the sack of the Confraternity, he used to address the brothers from the prior’s chair in a spiritual exhortation, teaching them the obligations of good Christians. So great was the grace with which he performed this holy exercise that persons used reciprocally to invite each other to go and hear him. In the afternoon he taught the boys catechism in the same church. These were the first fruits which he offered to God of his burning zeal for the salvation of souls, and this was the beginning of that life which he was subsequently to devote to the holy missions to which God called him.

CHAPTER III

How He Depended Entirely upon the Guidance of the Director of His Conscience

In undertaking the devout practices which we have related, Paul did not allow himself to be carried away by a youthful fervor or a capricious zeal, nor did he regulate his conduct by his own judgment, but, as he ever entertained a high opinion of the virtue and merit of obedience, he

placed himself entirely under the guidance of his parish priest. To purify his soul still farther, to receive more copious fruits from the sacrament of penance, when he had reached the age of nineteen years and a half, he chose to make a general confession. He had, as we have already shown, lived so far in great innocence and purity, and had always given edification without a shadow of bad example. Nevertheless, upon hearing one day an ordinary discourse by his pastor, he felt himself so moved to compunction, that he resolved to devote himself entirely to a life of perfection. He threw himself at the feet of the priest and made a confession of his whole life. So vehement was the grief and contrition which our Lord bestowed on him, that he was very near breaking his chest with a stone which he had brought with him on purpose, and with which he struck himself without mercy in detestation of his little faults, as if they had been the most enormous crimes. By the same worthy priest he allowed himself to be entirely guided, and he obeyed him with entire submission. This confessor was naturally austere and of a melancholy, discontented, and disagreeable temper. Hence, partly to excite Paul to virtue and partly from following the impulse of his own natural disposition, he used to give many mortifications to his young penitent, who took everything in good part. He used to make him go to the public confessional, and then would hear the confessions of all the rest of the people, who attended often in great numbers, not turning to him till after all the others. Then, as he was hearing him, he would say in a very rough tone, "Speak out, now." The humble penitent obeyed and confessed his sins in a few words; for, by the mercy of God, he had a tranquil conscience. When he approached the sacred table to receive Holy Communion, there, too, he had to look for some great mortification, for, sometimes when the concourse of people was very great, the priest, as he carried round the Holy Communion, to mortify him right well, would pass him over as if he had been a notoriously unworthy sinner. The poor youth felt this mortification to the quick, fearing the surprise it might create in the people, but taking all in peace and silence. Notwithstanding his great desire to communicate, Paul humbly submitted to this harsh treatment and never sought to receive by any other means.

Another time, when the servant of God had retired to the choir of the church, where, tasting the sweetness of God in prayer and shedding copious tears, he was keeping his face covered with his mantle to conceal the grace of devotion which he was receiving, his director, who knew how to avail himself of every occasion to mortify his penitent, seeing him thus recollected, violently

and angrily pulled his cloak off him and said with a severe countenance, “Is that the way you behave in church!” as if he had been guilty of some weighty fault, when uniting himself more fervently than usual with God.

When he accused himself of some such failing, as may be compared to dust, with which the most pure souls are soiled, the confessor did not lose the opportunity of mortifying him yet more sharply.

Having once observed the modesty and devotion of a certain person in church who, Paul had been told, was a soul of great virtue, it seemed to him afterwards that he had indulged his curiosity, though, after all, it was through a motive of devotion; he therefore mentioned it in confession to the same priest who scolded and reprovved him as harshly as if he had been guilty of some great crime. The trial, however, which put the obedience and submission of Paul to the severest test, was upon the following occasion, when his confessor, otherwise a grave and sensible man, seemed to out step the rules of wisdom and discretion. During the Carnival, when there was a little entertainment given in the priest’s house, the servant of God happened to pass by the street on his way to church. As soon as the curate knew that Signor Danei was going past, he immediately called him, obliged him to come up stairs, and in an authoritative manner commanded him to dance. This he did, either to try the obedience of the youth or to mortify him by exposing his devotion to ridicule. One can easily imagine what were the young man’s feelings at so unexpected and indiscreet a command; for, having his heart full of God, he must have experienced the very greatest repugnance to mixing in such vanities. Nevertheless, so highly did he esteem holy obedience, that he was preparing to comply in all simplicity, it being a case where his pure soul did not clearly discover sin. Our Lord, however, who ever protects those who seek Him with a pure intention and serve him with their whole heart, ordained that the musicians had hardly begun to play when all the strings of their instruments were broken. This unlooked-for extraordinary accident rendered the curate more prudent. He allowed the young man to take his leave and dismissed him in peace.

Although Paul was treated with so much harshness, and we may almost say with so much indiscretion by his director, he never left him. It is true the enemy of all good suggested to him to go to another, but he constantly replied, “No, this is the confessor for me, as he makes me bow down my head.”

The parish priest, after having assisted him for some time, himself judged it better to put him into other hands, that he might be more helped forward in the interior paths of sublime perfection to which he was called by God. Paul then placed himself under the guidance of a new confessor, who knowing his purity of conscience and close union with God, made him communicate every day. Paul humbly obeyed, but approached the holy table first in one church and then in another, desiring to hide himself from the eyes of men, that he might be dearer in the eyes of God. It is not precisely known who this confessor was, but from what can be gathered from the Processes, we may conclude that he was Fr. Girolamo da Tortona, a Capuchin. Father John Baptist of Alexandria, ex-provincial of the Capuchins, deposes that after Father Girolamo had heard Paul's confession and directed him for some time, seeing that he was a man of the highest degree of contemplation and perfection, recommended him to another Capuchin, Father Columbano, a Genoese, a man full of the Spirit of God and endowed with a rare talent for the direction of souls. Paul professed himself under deep obligations for the aid which this most worthy religious afforded him, instructing and animating him to work courageously in the way of the Lord. Afterwards, perhaps because he could no longer enjoy the assistance of the above-mentioned Father Columbano, he placed himself under the direction of the canon penitentiary of Alexandria. What kind of man this ecclesiastic was may be best learnt from the words of Father Paul himself, who thus writes in one of his letters, "I have to inform you that two other ecclesiastics have joined us; and my former confessor, who is the grand penitentiary of our Cathedral of Alexandria, who used to direct my poor soul when I was a secular, sends me from Lombardy four other subjects examined by himself. I can safely trust this learned servant of the most High."

No small discomfort and mortification, however, did this direction cost our pious youth. He had in the first place to walk nearly four miles to see his director. When arrived at Alexandria, the penitentiary would make him wait entire mornings, nor had he a chance of an audience until all the female penitents had been heard. Paul used freely to open his heart to him and disclose all the lights and graces which our Lord conferred upon him in prayer. But the canon, either from caution or in order to try him, chose not to value such gifts. He would even answer him with reprehension and reproofs; and having planned in his own mind a method of direction for him, according to the way by which perhaps he himself walked, he appeared as if determined to lead

Paul by a path quite different from that to which he was called by God, as he ordered him to choose for the subject of his meditations sin, death, judgment, hell, and heaven. The servant of God, with perfect obedience, would set himself to make his meditation according to his director's injunction upon sin, saying to himself, for example, "Consider, O my soul, that sin offends God," etc. Our Lord, who takes such delight in docile and truly mortified souls, would, in reward for his obedience, illumine his heart with a vivid ray of interior light, so that he could not continue forming reflections upon sin, but his soul, taking flight, was raised to sublime contemplations of heavenly things. The same happened whenever he attempted, from holy obedience, to meditate upon the four last things. When he came to the reflection on Paradise, he was more than ever wrapped up in God, and, among other things, he heard our Lord saying to him with a very clear internal voice, "My son, in Paradise one of the blessed will not be united with me as one friend is to another, but as iron penetrated by the fire." And here he heard "secret words which it is not granted to man to utter."

As he enjoyed such familiar converse and so intimate a union with God, it is not wonderful that the general esteem in which he was held was always increasing, particularly among the young, in whose eyes the presence of the servant of God came to be so venerated. If they only saw him approaching from a distance, while they were conversing on anything not good, they would be quite confused and say one to another, "Let us be off; here comes the saint." Thus does he who is united with God diffuse around him the sweet odor of holiness, which is communicated to him by God Himself, as our Lord once interiorly said to Paul, "Son, do this to please Me, for the fruit of good example will follow in consequence." Paul, however, though in such constant exercise of virtue, did not think himself secure in the midst of dangers, but avoided, as much as was in his power, all occasions of sin. He especially kept aloof from the company of women and showed a great aversion to conversation with them. He never spoke with anyone alone, never even looked at them. He fled from them as from fire, and charity alone could bring him to talk with them. It was this charity of his which induced him, while still a young secular, to take home with him one day two poor French women who were heretics. From the desire he had of their conversion, he did all he could to serve them, and our Lord in part satisfied the desire of this servant, for one of them embraced the true faith and was subsequently placed by his means in the asylum of Santa Maria of Alexandria. Except on similar occasions,

when charity induced him to converse with women for their good, he avoided them as much as possible in order to preserve that serenity of mind and unsullied purity of heart with which he pressed forward in the holy service and love of God.

CHAPTER IV

How He Renounced an Honorable Marriage, and Gave up the Inheritance Left Him by His Uncle the Priest, with Other Property Which Was Offered Him

While Paul was thus endeavoring daily to detach himself more and more from things of earth, in order to unite himself still closer with God, his uncle, who was a priest, desiring to see him happily settled in the married state, had, without giving him the least intimation, negotiated an honorable connection for him with a young lady endowed with every good quality. Nothing more was necessary than that Paul should see her who had been thus destined by others to become his wife, and that he should give his consent to the arrangement. When, however, the affair was mentioned to him, he could not be persuaded in any way to entertain his uncle's proposal; for the servant of God had very different designs in view and was determined at all costs to preserve his purity unsullied. His uncle, taking, perhaps, too great advantage of the influence which he possessed over the mind of his nephew, pressingly insisted that he should agree to his wishes; and others of his family, who hoped by an advantageous marriage to raise the fallen fortunes of their house, joined in most earnestly persuading him to comply. Pressed on all sides and hardly knowing how to escape, Paul had no other refuge than recourse to the Almighty, who knows how to unloose the most complicated bonds. Meanwhile, however, he could not avoid going to the young lady's abode with his uncle, who had determined that there the contract of marriage should be finally settled by his nephew.

But this was just the conjuncture to see repeated the example of Saint Francis de Sales, when placed in a like perplexing and difficult position. The modest youth did not so much as raise his eyes while in the presence of his chosen bride. His uncle still persisted in his efforts. The servant of God, upon his return home, had recourse by fervent prayer to the Divine Goodness to free him from this most trying difficulty. Our Lord most speedily granted his request, but in a manner he

little expected. Not long afterwards his uncle fell sick and died, and thus was Paul freed from his importunities. It is true that in order to facilitate the execution of this marriage contract, this priest had left him the heir of all his property; but Paul, who, in comparison with the treasures of chastity and virginity, esteemed as dirt all the goods of the earth, generously renounced before the vicar of the place the proposed legacy, only reserving for himself a breviary to recite the Divine Office. After which, turning to the crucifix with deep interior fervor of heart and tears of love, he exclaimed, “My crucified Lord, I protest that of all this inheritance I desire but this breviary, because You alone are sufficient for me, my God and my all!”⁶ The executors of the will wished to give him a new suit of clothes, in order to fulfil the intention of the testator who had so directed. They were already taking steps to provide some becoming cloth, but Paul refused to accept them, contenting himself with being clothed for charity with a dress of coarse cloth, which just sufficed for his decent covering. In proportion, however, as he for love of holy poverty refused what was offered for his own person, so much the more did he from charity and compassion desire all to be given to the poor, because in them he recognized by a lively faith the person of Jesus Christ Himself. Hence he was often seen offering them alms on his knees with great humility.

While Paul was thus advancing in virtue by the means of so many pious exercises, all of which drew him towards God and more intimately united him with the Divine Majesty, it happened that the Serene Republic of Venice was raising a large army to send against the Turks. In the fervor of his devotion, desiring to wage war against the enemies of our holy faith, Paul enrolled himself as a volunteer. But Divine Providence had destined His servant to fight in another sort of warfare against vices and crimes. And so, one day, as Paul, now a soldier, was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, exposed for the forty hours’ adoration, our Lord made him understand by a clear inspiration that He called him elsewhere. He therefore left the army, and on his way home, when passing through Piedmont at a place called Novello, he was entertained by a gentleman and his wife, who conceived such an affection and esteem for him in consequence of his many good qualities and rare virtues, that, having no children themselves, they were minded to make him heir of all they possessed.

Paul, however, esteemed not earthly riches, and willingly renounced all to live more entirely for Jesus Christ. He, therefore, returned home and continued the same austere manner of life we

have already described. In his severe mortifications he found great support from frequenting the Holy Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, each communion serving him as a preparation for the next. His innocent soul experienced so lively a desire to be united to our Savior sacramentally, that, afterwards he used to say to his confessor, “In those early years, our Lord caused me to hunger for two things, for Holy Communion and for suffering.”

Although we have hitherto beheld Paul always occupied in works of piety and other exercises disconnected with literature and study, we must not think that he passed his life without attending to the cultivation of his mind. God had endowed him with a good mind, much penetration, and a capacity for acquiring all kinds of knowledge. When he was still quite young, he was placed by his father under a master in Cremolino, a town not very far from his own home. He made as much progress as could be expected at such an age and in such a school. Free from the tumult of passion, with a serene mind and a tranquil heart, he continued always to read and reflect seriously, and thus acquired that happy method of expressing himself with propriety and persuasively, and with that unaffected, pious eloquence which ever afterwards characterized his discourses.

CHAPTER V

How Our Lord Inspired Him with the Design of Founding the Congregation of the Most Holy Passion of Jesus Christ

Almighty God, who delights to employ such instruments for His glory as appear in the eyes of men the most unsuitable, had, in His special mercy, chosen our Paul to found a poor Congregation, which, by word and example should labor to awaken in the faithful the remembrance of the suffering Jesus, and imprint deep in their hearts a great devotion to His most bitter passion and most painful death.

The young Paul was leading a life thus detached from the world, recollected and devout, when Almighty God began to make known to him the general outline of the work for which He principally intended him, and the manner of life which he was to lead until his death.

The most holy will of God was in part declared to him by the means of an excellent nun of

Alexandria, who sometimes said to him, “God has given me to understand that He expects great things from you.” At other times, while in prayer, our Lord used to show him a black tunic, but He did not then explain the mystery of it. After these first lights, which formed, as it were, the rough draft of the future holy work, it pleased God, at length, to reveal to His servant the whole plan, in a wonderful manner which will be best related in his own words, which were, by way of an introduction to the original Rules, written in his own hand. In this place he had, in obedience to an injunction of his director, to give some account of his undertaking and of his most holy purposes. Thus we come to the knowledge of what it had pleased the Divine Wisdom to bring about. Blessed be the Name of Jesus!

“I, Paul Francis, a most miserable wretch and great sinner, the least of the servants of the poor of Jesus, about two years after my most loving God had converted me to a life of penance, was passing along the coast of Genoa, towards the west, when I saw a little church upon a hill above Sestri, called la Madonna del Gazzo. Seeing it, my heart was moved with a desire for that solitude, but as I was then engaged in the charitable office of assisting my parents, I could never effect what I wished, but I always cherished this desire in my heart. However after some time (though I do not clearly remember the month nor the day) these constant inspirations to retire into solitude became more and more pressing, and my good God accompanied them with much sweetness of heart. It was about this time that I was moved to wear a black tunic of a stuff called *arbagio*, which is made of the coarsest wool to be found in those parts, to go barefoot, to live in the greatest poverty and, ultimately, by the grace of God to lead a life of penance. The desire I then conceived never left me. I felt myself more and more powerfully impelled, not so much to retire alone into that little church in particular, but simply to go into solitude, whether it was in that place or in any other, and this in order to follow the loving invitations of my God, who in His infinite mercy called me to leave the world. But as I could not then execute this holy inspiration on account of my services being needed at home by my father, mother, and brothers, I kept the above-mentioned vocation always concealed in my heart, except that I consulted over it with my Reverend Father Confessor. I did not know what God desired of me, and so I thought of nothing more than getting clear of my family affairs, that I might then retire into solitude. Almighty God, however, who in his infinite mercy expected something more of this poor worm that I am, never permitted me at that time to free myself. When I was on the very point of

breaking loose from all ties, new difficulties would arise, but my desires were always growing stronger. It was then that another inspiration came into my mind, and this was to assemble some companions that we might unite together in endeavoring to promote in the souls of others the holy fear of God, this being what I wished for the most; but this idea of gathering companions I did not attend to much, though it remained in my mind. Finally, in order not to be too diffuse, I will simply state how long these desires and inspirations lasted before they were followed by the light I am about to mention. I could not tell this with certainty, for I made no note of it. To speak about the mark, more or less, I would say about two years and a half. Then at the end of the following summer, I cannot recall the month or the day, because I have not written it down, but I know it was when the harvest was being gathered in, I had been to communion some week day in the Church of the Capuchins in Castellazzo, and I remember having been very recollected. Then I left the church to return home, and as I went I continued recollected as if in prayer. I was in a street about to take a turn close to home, when I was absorbed in God, in a state of most exalted recollection, with a forgetfulness of all around me and an exceeding great interior sweetness. At this moment I saw myself in spirit, clothed in black with a dress down to the feet, having a white cross on the breast, and under the cross was written the most holy name of Jesus in white letters! Then I heard said to me these very words, “This is a sign how pure and spotless that heart ought to be, which is to bear stamped upon it the most holy name of Jesus.” Seeing and hearing this, I began to weep and then the vision ceased. A little time after I saw in spirit the holy tunic offered to me, with the most holy name of Jesus and the cross all white, but the tunic black, I embraced it with jubilation of heart. Let the reader remark, that in seeing myself given this black tunic, I did not behold a corporal form, or anything like the figure of a man. No! What I saw was in God; that is to say that the soul knows that it is God because He makes it understand this by internal motions in the heart and by an infused intelligence in the mind, and this in a way so deep that it is most difficult to explain because that which the soul understands is so great that it cannot be expressed in word or writing.

“To be, however, better comprehended, I will relate a certain spiritual vision with which God in His infinite goodness has many times favored me, when He was preparing to send me some extraordinary trial. While in prayer, I used to see a scourge in the hands of God, and this scourge had lashes like a discipline, on which was written *Amor*. At the same instant God would raise my

soul to the most exalted state of contemplation and enlighten it to know that He intended to scourge it, but with love. My soul would run in haste to embrace the scourge, kissing it in spirit. When God in His infinite goodness has made me see this, in a short time some very remarkable tribulations have come upon me, and I knew for certain that they were to come because God used to give me, in my soul, an infused knowledge of them. I have written thus much in order to explain my meaning, and to declare (by the power of understanding which God gives me) that I hold as more certain what I see in spirit by the most exalted light of holy faith, than if I beheld it with my corporeal eyes. For these might impose upon me by some false apparition, but in the other case there is no danger, according to the knowledge which God gives me, seeing that I resign myself to the advice of my superiors, subjecting myself to whatever, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, they shall tell me. When, therefore, I say that I have seen anything in the hands of God, I have not literally seen it, but my soul has a most exalted knowledge that it exists in Him who is infinite, and thus it happened to me in regard to the holy tunic. And further, let it be known that after my God has withdrawn me from the exercises of meditation, that is, from forming reflections in my mind upon the mysteries and passing from one point to another, I no longer see forms in my imagination.

“To proceed, then, with my account of the wonders which God did for me after these visions of the tunic with the most holy badge, he gave me a still greater desire and impulse to form an association of companions, and with the permission of holy Church, to found a Congregation entitled, The Poor of Jesus. After this God gave me an infused knowledge in my soul of the form of the holy Rule to be observed by the Poor of Jesus, and by me, his least and most unworthy servant, which by virtue of holy obedience I now will go on to write, with the grace of the holy Spirit.

“Let it be known, that the intention which God gives me in regard to this Congregation does not consist in anything but this, that is, in the first place, that we should perfectly observe the law of our good God, adding to this the perfect observance of holy, evangelical counsels, and particularly the total detachment from all created things and a strict practice of holy poverty, which is so necessary for the observance of the other counsels, and that we should maintain our fervor in holy prayer, be zealous for the honor of God, promote in the souls of others the holy fear of God, seeking to destroy sin, and, in fine, that we should labor indefatigably in holy works

of charity, so that our dear Lord may be loved, feared, served, and praised by all for ever and ever. Amen. *Blessed be the Name of Jesus.*

Here follow the Rules written by his own hand, in which were found the most exalted sentiments of deep respect and reverence towards the Mother of God, of great love for perfection, and of a most special devotion to the most blessed passion of Jesus Christ. The following are extracts from them:

“Ah! dearest brothers, recalling Friday to our mind is enough to cause the death of one who truly loves, because it is as much as to say this is the day on which my incarnate God suffered so much for me and then left His most holy life, dying upon the hard tree of the cross. And know, dearly beloved, that the principal intention of our being clothed in black, according to the particular inspiration which God has given me, is to wear mourning in memory of the Passion and death of Jesus in order that we may never forget to keep up within us a continual sorrowful recollection of them. Therefore, one of the Poor of Jesus should endeavor to lead all whom he can persuade to the pious contemplation of the torments of our most sweet Jesus.

“I, Paul Francis, a miserable wretch and great sinner, and most unworthy servant of the Poor of Jesus, have written this holy Rule, retired alone in the parish Church of San Carlo at Castellazzo, that retreat having been assigned me by his Lordship the Right Reverend Monsignor Gattinara, Bishop of Alexandria, during the first days after my receiving the habit. I began to write this holy Rule on the 2nd of December in the year 1720, and I finished it on the 7th of the same month. Before I wrote I said Matins, then applied myself to mental prayer, and then went full of courage and began to write. The enemy of souls did not fail to assault me by feelings of repugnance for this work, and also suggesting difficulties. But, as it was a good while since God had inspired me with the thought, and I was acting under obedience, I set myself to work, by the grace of God, without regard to anything. And be it known that, when I was writing, I went on as quickly as if somebody in a professor’s chair were there to dictate to me. I felt the words coming from my heart. Now I say this that all may know that I was herein particularly inspired by God, because, as far as regards myself, I am nothing but iniquity and ignorance. In all, however, I submit to the judgment of my superiors. May the most Blessed Sacrament be praised and honored upon all the altars in the world.

“Paul Francis, the most unworthy servant of the Poor of Jesus.”

CHAPTER VI

How He Opened His Mind in Full Confidence to Monsignor Francesco Maria Gattinara, His Bishop, Who Approves His Spirit and Finally Clothes Him with the Habit of Austere Penance in Memory of the Most Holy Passion of Jesus Christ

Father Paul, in the direction of souls, as appears most clearly from his letters, always acted with great wisdom and sought that those whom he conducted should serve God in sincerity and truth, with due dependance on their spiritual superiors. He himself walked faithfully in the same path, never following his own opinion, but subjecting himself in all things to the judgment of men full of wisdom and discernment, that he might make sure of following the will of God. Whenever, therefore, he was about forming any extraordinary resolution, he used to multiply his prayers for the divine light, and he sought the counsel of persons noted for their union with God, their knowledge and experience. This plan he followed with more exactness when he had to make up his mind to embrace the state to which he thought himself called by God. He threw himself at the feet of Bishop Gattinara, a man most abundantly gifted with all the talents necessary for guiding souls and discerning the true movements of the Holy Spirit, and begged to be informed by him what was the most holy will of God.

We will here give the reader a short account of this illustrious prelate, to the end that he may better know how to appreciate the counsel and direction of the man, at whose command Paul undertook the work of God, and by whose advice he regulated his conduct as long as he was permitted to enjoy his instructions and holy conversation. Monsignor Francesco Maria Arboreo di Gattinara was born in Pavia, and having entered the illustrious Congregation of the Regular Clerks of St. Paul, commonly called Barnabites, he there completed his studies and became an excellent preacher. He was endowed with the talents requisite to make a true orator; his words were animated with a burning desire to draw souls to God. He spoke to the hearts of his listeners and touched them all the more effectually as he himself in preaching was wholly penetrated and moved with the truths which he announced and was often seen bathed in tears. The tears of Francesco Gattinara became quite proverbial, and the fruits of his sermons were visible upon the

most hardened sinners. In the management of affairs, to his singular prudence, he united such amiability and persuasiveness of manner as endeared him to all and ensured him success in all he undertook. Clement XI made him Bishop of Alexandria. In the government of his Church he was ever a watchful pastor, untiring in the exercise of his sacred ministry and in all the duties of a good bishop. He never spared himself when the honor of God was concerned. He was especially remarkable for the lively zeal with which he labored in the regulation of his diocese, but particularly of his clergy, who formed at once the most conspicuous and the most holy portion of it. Tenderly solicitous for all the wants of his flock, his charity seemed to know no bounds; he did all that he was able and he desired to do far more. His great art lay entirely in this, to gain the hearts of all, to do good to all, and by kindnesses to win the affections, even of the wicked. Benedict XIII, of blessed memory, aware of his uncommon merit, transferred him to the archbishopric of Turin, where he was received with demonstrations of extraordinary joy. His charity increased with his extended sphere of action. He seemed to think that all his property belonged of right to the poor; he spent all on them. Once, when the death of a certain person relieved him from the payment of a pension, he said that the gain was not to himself but to the poor. In fact, no one ever asked him for an alms in vain, and no one was ever in distress but the good archbishop, if he came to know of it, without being requested, would immediately relieve him liberally. He looked upon all pious institutions with an eye of special benevolence, and many of these experienced the abundant fruit of his great generosity. By his giving so freely, it sometimes happened that in a few months he had spent in alms a great part of his entire annual revenue. And in the year that he died, it was computed that from the month of January to the end of September he had distributed five thousand crowns of gold. Many persons used to wonder how he could afford such liberality; but he is always sufficiently rich who willingly relieves the distressed and has a lively confidence in God, who has declared Himself the loving Father of the poor. Ultimately, Bishop Gattinara was a true shepherd, who would have given not only his riches but his life for his flock. In fact, when his flock was in the greatest affliction, through the miseries of war, after conducting a solemn penitential on the 22nd of September, 1743, this tender pastor preached a discourse which breathed all the spirit of his devotion and manifested all the tenderness of his heart. Those who heard it were deeply moved, particularly at the conclusion, when, weeping as he was wont to do, he turned himself to God, and with great

feeling said that he offered himself for the safety of his people, imploring that if the Divine Justice was not yet appeased, it might discharge its blows upon the shepherd and spare the sheep. There was not one who listened to these words but felt himself irresistibly moved to love and gratitude, as each one most clearly understood that he was an object of his devoted love.

It would seem that our Lord graciously accepted this cordial and most generous offering. The effort which he made in speaking aggravated a complaint under which he was suffering before, that is, a rupture. He was obliged to take to his bed, and, in a few days, was too ill to leave it again. Inflammation having fixed on the part, he was brought to extremities and received the last sacraments with the greatest devotion. Comforted by his God under the most acute pains, he maintained an invincible patience and an unalterable serenity of mind, and repeated with great calmness, "Let us suffer willingly for the love of God." Those present, seeing him suffer so much and so cheerfully, were edified and touched and could not restrain their tears. At length, full of firm hope of possessing that God which he so eagerly desired, after a short agony, he gently breathed his blessed soul into the hands of his Creator on the 14th of October, 1743, at the age of eighty-five years, nine months, and one day.

Such was the chosen director of Paul, into whose hands he resigned himself the more willingly, as, at the same time, he was his bishop, so, while following his counsels and instructions, he was persuaded that he was following the very voice of God. In order to make a good beginning, and to give this holy prelate a clear knowledge of his interior, Paul began by accusing himself of his sins and making a general confession. He gave a faithful account of his past life and confided to him the lights with which he had been favored by God. The most prudent prelate listened attentively to the recital, and then ordered his penitent to relate to him from time to time all the communications which he received from our Lord. The devout youth obeyed and, having written several sheets of paper full, brought these to the prelate, who, reading them, and knowing that there were true lights imparted by God, who is truly the Father of lights, shed over them tears of tenderness and devotion. Nevertheless, acting as a man of caution and prudence, he chose to seek further assurance that the spirit and conduct of the devout youth were sound, and made him take counsel of the most pious and learned men who could be found in those parts. At last, no longer able to entertain a doubt of his divine vocation, he resolved to invest Paul with the black habit in memory of the Passion of our Lord, according to the idea

which the Almighty had Himself put before him.

The fervent young man, secure of being soon gratified in his holy desire, looked forward, as may be easily conceived, with inexpressible eagerness to the event he had so long sighed for, when he might, by the very form of his outward dress, declare that he renounced all things to live entirely for God. But, as great undertakings have generally to encounter great difficulties, it was not long before the spirit of Paul had a fierce battle to fight, which will be best described in his own words from a letter which he wrote to a devout youth, his penitent, in order to encourage him to follow his vocation to religion:

“Happy you, my dearly beloved, if you are faithful to fight and conquer, and if you do not care for the compassion of parents, but look steadfastly upon the Crucified, who invites you to follow him in so marked a way. He will be to you father, mother, and all. Oh! if you could but know the conflicts which I endured before embracing this sort of life which I follow, the great horror which the devil raised in me, my feelings of compassion for my relations! All their hopes, according to the world, were placed on me. Then came interior desolation, melancholy and fears. It appeared to me that I should not persevere. The devil tried to persuade me that I had been deceived, that I could serve God in some other manner, that this life would never suit me, and plenty of other fine things which I omit. The worst was, that all fervor of devotion had left me; I found myself dry and tempted in every sort of way; I began to detest the sound of bells; everyone appeared happy except me. I could never relate these great struggles I endured, and these assailed me more vehemently as the time of my clothing drew near to when I was to quit my poor home. This is merely the simple truth, but there is plenty besides which I cannot explain, and which I omit for brevity. Therefore, dear brother, take courage. ‘To him that overcomes, He will give the hidden manna and a new name.’”

This was permitted by our Lord who is wont to play lovingly yet teasingly with his servants, in order to try Paul’s fidelity, to strengthen his virtue, and to prepare him by these conflicts for more glorious victories. To these interior struggles was added an exterior suffering, and this was more definite, acute, and sensible. Scarcely had the bishop permitted him to put on the sacred habit, than he began to feel the greatest inconvenience from the cold. The very day that he returned from Castellazzo to Alexandria to put on the new habit, he experienced on the way before his clothing so great a cold, that he greatly feared he should not be able to endure it,

although he had previously been so hot, that he could hardly bear his shoes on. But he who follows faithfully God's voice conquers all; for God, when He calls us to a hard and austere life, does not fail to give the necessary strength to bear all the pains which it brings with it. Thus it was with Paul, for notwithstanding all the repugnance he was beginning to feel in following the will of God, he bought some coarse common cloth called *arbazio*, seeking it of that quality because he had seen that it was what was worn by the poor in Genoa. He caused it to be dyed black to make it like the tunic he had seen in the vision; and then he went on, preparing himself by great acts of virtue, for the clothing so long desired. He would have wished to be clothed on the day of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, his dearest mother and lady, that he might imitate on that same day the generous example which she left us of an entire consecration to God. But in that year, which was 1720, the Feast of the Presentation fell upon a Thursday. The following day was Friday, the day consecrated to the Passion and death of Jesus Christ. Paul thought it best to defer his clothing to Friday, which was the 22nd of the month. Having made all his preparations, he visited the churches of Castellazzo on the 21st; he had his hair cut off as though in attestation of his entire renunciation of the things of the world; he took leave of his friends; and he disposed himself with new fervor of spirit for the sacrifice he was about to make. The day following he set out for Alexandria, where he found the bishop was out of the town and not expected to return that day; but the servant of God asserted positively that he would return, as in fact he did. His lordship the bishop returned on that same day, the 22nd of November, 1720, and so this most prudent prelate clothed our Paul in the new habit of the Passion on a Friday, the day on which the Redeemer of our souls gave up his life for our love in a sea of agonies and torments upon the cross.

CHAPTER VII

How He Wrote the Rules in a Wonderful Manner

The graces and spiritual consolations which Paul received, after he had been invested with the sacred habit, are known to God alone, who was the loving and liberal dispenser of them. We may, however, say that, from the moment of his putting on the dress of the Passion, as if he had

been filled with a new spirit, he took up the resolution to imitate in all things the virtues of Jesus Christ, and to make in himself, as far as he could, a copy of His most holy life so that he might, more by his works than by his habit of penance and sorrow, give a living image of Jesus crucified and might thus remind all others to follow his example and weep over his death. Understanding, then, that it was according to the will of God that he should retire into some place apart, he obtained the permission and blessing of the bishop to remain in a little room which was underneath a staircase near the sacristy of the parish Church of San Carlo, to stay there while he wrote the Rule of the Congregation, of which God had inspired in him the form⁴ and at the same time to enjoy in perfect peace the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, which was reserved within the church. This room, which he asked for, was an abode where he might suffer much, for it was damp, confined, rude, and disgusting, without any convenience except a little stove. And here it was that the fervent Paul withdrew, or, as I might say, shut himself up. His entire clothing consisted of a tunic, very rough, with common drawers of the cheapest linen cloth, so coarse that its roughness seriously hurt one of his legs. His head was always uncovered and his feet bare; for his bed he had nothing but a little straw thrown upon the bare ground; all his food consisted of a little bread, which he received in charity; and his drink was pure water. Who, then, can tell how much this pious youth must have suffered in so cold a climate, at a time when a severe winter had just set in? But in the midst of all these sufferings, all his refreshment and comfort was in the holy love of God. Desiring also to offer up to Him in the time of his greatest silence and quiet a sacrifice of praise, he used to rise in the night to recite the Divine Office, after which he commenced his mental prayer, and between Matins and meditation he employed about three hours, notwithstanding the violence of the cold, which must have been excessive. After having thus prepared himself by long prayers, he used to write every day a chapter of his Rules. So manifestly visible was the assistance of Heaven to this prayer of his, that although he had never read the Rules of any religious Order, he wrote with as much freedom, rapidity, and readiness, as if he had heard a voice dictating to him how to compose the Rules of the new Institute with exact discernment and perfect wisdom. In order that he might not be anyway interrupted in that holy retreat, in which his great occupation was to remain in constant

⁴ The spirit of the Rule.

recollection and union with God, the true Father of lights and Fountain of all wisdom, he held no conversation at that time with any person whatsoever, but lived in perfect solitude. Great were the graces and extraordinary the communications with which God was pleased to favor him in that place, of all which, in order that he might walk secure from all illusion, he rendered a faithful account to his bishop and director in an exact diary. In this, his own account, we plainly perceive that if his sufferings were great and deeply felt, through the hunger which tormented him, the cold which pierced him as though with sharp needles on all sides; if the temptations and assaults of the devils, who sought by them to increase his feelings of pain and to force him from the exercise of holy prayer, were so violent and grievous that his weak body felt the effects of them, and his chest was painfully affected; if some days our Lord left him in darkness, in dryness, under interior desolations, to make him acknowledge himself daily more and more unworthy of the divine favors, and look on himself as a most filthy sewer; yet he well understood that the soul which perseveres firm and immovable in prayer, amidst weariness, heaviness, and the most troublesome temptations, is like a rock, hard and firm, against which the fury of the waves and tempests may be let loose and will spend itself without moving it in the least. And on some other days he received communications and most profound conceptions of highly privileged supernatural prayer, through which he was enabled afterwards to speak on the subject with confidence, "*taught by experiencing divine things*"; and through which at one time he felt his breast melted with love as with a fire; at another he was inflamed with the most eager desire to drink with Jesus the chalice of the Passion; at another animated with a burning zeal for the conversion of infidels, but more especially of England, and for the reformation of the multitudes of wretched sinners. So abundant were these desires, that he wrote to the above-named bishop, that while enjoying the sweetness of this infused joyous contemplation which our Lord imparted to him, he used to long to be flayed alive for one only soul. The fervor of his love increased greatly as he daily received Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, who is the Furnace of love and the Source of light. From him he asked with great affection the necessary light, and his own spirit with which to be guided in writing his Rules. To obtain this more easily, he addressed himself with great confidence to the Blessed Virgin and to the angels and saints in Heaven, particularly to the founders of religious Orders. When he had thus passed forty days, with his Rules now written out in full, and his soul penetrated through and through with celestial unction, Paul went

forth from his solitude, threw himself at the feet of the bishop, and presented him the Rules written in the manner we have related, by the inspiration of God. That prelate, full of learning and wisdom as he was, yet not depending, as is usual with persons of superior discernment, on his own judgment in a matter of such importance, in order better to ascertain the will of God, desired Paul to go to Genoa, and there to consult a great servant of God, who, by the great lights with which he was enriched, was well qualified to form a judgment whether the youth, who was presented to him, was guided by the Spirit of the Lord. It was then the depth of winter, and the mountain which divides Lombardy from the Genoese territory, which he had to cross, was so impassible and frightful on account of the snow which falls there in great quantities and lies a long time, as of the impetuous winds which rage upon its heights, that the boldest and most experienced muleteers will hardly risk the attempt. Travellers who are too venturesome often lose their lives upon it. Nevertheless, Paul, made valiant by obedience, set off on the journey, walked over the ice and snow with his feet bare, his head uncovered, and with a single tunic, better calculated to cover his nakedness than to protect him against the cold.

In order, moreover, to fulfill with the greatest promptitude the command of that holy bishop, he was not content to walk by day. Pressed on by his fervor, he walked also by night amidst the cliffs and precipices of that terrible mountain, where to the excessive cold was joined the fear of the wolves, which he saw ravenous with hunger scouring the steeps – he with no other company or support than the image of Jesus crucified, which to his great consolation he bore upon his breast. When morning came and the sun rose, although it is true that his sufferings and the horror of his situation became less in some respects, yet his fears increased as he beheld great blocks of ice detach themselves from the summit of the mountain and precipitate themselves from time to time on the road, which he had to pass. At length, stiff with cold, oppressed with fatigue, and tormented with hunger, he reached the top of the mountain upon the night of our Lord's Epiphany, a memorable feast for him. Not having even a morsel of bread, nor money to buy it with, he asked alms on his knees, as was his practice in those first days, of some policemen whom he happened to meet. These poor policemen (*Sbirri*) gave him a little refreshment, and the servant of God received this kindness with so much gratitude and affection, that not only did he preserve the memory of it as long as he lived, but ever afterwards showed a special affection and charity towards this class of men. Particularly in his missions, he devoted himself with the

greatest earnestness to assist the souls of those, by whom, as he used to say, he had been relieved in his most pressing need.

As Paul went on his way, some who saw him in so penitential a dress, and not having understanding to know and admire the fervor of the innocent youth, exclaimed one to another, “Oh! He at least must have been a rare sinner! See what a penance his confessor has given him.” Amidst incessant contradictions and annoyances he arrived at Genoa. He met with two religious there, who, not having light to discern his virtue, in order to mock and insult him, misapplied the words of Scripture and said, “Why have the Gentiles raged, and the people devised vain things?” as though they would make him out a fanatic, or perhaps even a madman. On hearing such words, the servant of God only humbled and abased himself the more, and his soul gained so much good from these that he used afterwards to say, “These scoffs and derisions, however, did my soul much good.”

The precise advice given him by the holy man whom he went to consult we know not, but there is reason to believe that he fully approved the tenor of life which he had undertaken, that he recognized his lights as true and his designs as holy, and that he gave assurance of this to that most prudent bishop. For Paul, being returned home and continuing still under the direction of his prelate, went on with increased fervor in his practices of penance and sought to bring to perfection the work he had begun with more and more satisfaction in proportion as he was better assured that it was acceptable to God.

CHAPTER VIII

To Enjoy More Entire Solitude Paul Retires to a Church in the Country Dedicated to St. Stephen and about His Labors for the Good of His Neighbor

It is no wonder that, as the soul of Paul had now tasted the peace and sweetness of solitude, he should seek to separate himself as much as possible from communication with the world. After returning to Genoa, he retired, by the permission of his bishop, into a little hermitage attached to a country church dedicated to St. Stephen, where his brother John Baptist also chose to keep him company. In this solitude their life was in the highest degree poor, penitential, and in

all respects well calculated to make of them great servants of God, who might be set forth as examples of virtue and perfection. Their dwelling was very small, consisting simply of one little room. Very scarce and very poor was their furniture, there being in the room nothing but a straw bed covered with a tattered rug, a crucifix and a discipline hanging on the wall inside. On the outside of the same wall there was a little box to receive the alms which charitable and pious people offered spontaneously, which generally consisted of nothing but a few bits of bread, which they used very sparingly, giving the best part to other poor persons and keeping for themselves only some remnants. It happened sometimes that it would be a late hour before they had taken food of any kind. When this came to the knowledge of their good father, who no doubt must have been highly astonished and at the same time consoled at their virtue, he ordered that a basin of soup and some other provisions should be taken to them from home to refresh them. The good penitents thanked him, and although they preferred to continue to live as they had commenced, they were obliged by the commands which their loving father wisely laid upon them, and thus on that one day young Paul and his good brother relaxed, somewhat, the penitential rigor with which they afflicted themselves.

Amidst all this mortification, our Lord, who graciously bestows His highest favors upon souls that suffer most for His sake, did not fail to enrich the two penitents with His choicest gifts. Such were the consolations of spirit and peace of heart which our Paul experienced in this place of retirement, notwithstanding the assaults of the common enemy, that when he wrote to his bishop, he humbly thanked him for having procured him a paradise in holy solitude. While Paul thus passed his time, wearing the holy habit in his own country, he felt a constantly increasing desire to bury himself in a still more profound retirement. Accordingly by the counsel and approbation of his bishop, he made a journey to France to explore certain mountains, in the hope of finding a suitable place where he might live hidden from the eyes of men, and at the same time might practice his exercises of piety and devotion. He had been told that there was there a little chapel dedicated to the great Mother of God; but when he reached it, he found it uninhabitable on account of the quantity of snow which fell and constantly lay there. He therefore returned to his own country, waiting to know in better time where it was that the holy will of God would call him to accomplish the designs which He had for him.

But he was destined to something more than forming his own soul to virtue in solitude; he

was to become a great apostolic laborer, who in his missionary career was to be the means of leading many souls to heaven. Hence, our Lord, disposing all things at the same time with sweetness and with force, caused that, at the sight of the enormous sins by which the souls of men are lost and God offended, he should be pierced to the heart with the most lively grief and should be moved by an ardent desire to remedy the evil as much as lay in his power. For this purpose he consulted and conferred with his bishop, and that enlightened prelate, who well knew the great treasures of celestial wisdom which Almighty God had hidden in the heart of Paul, ordered him to undertake the catechetical instruction of the children in Christian Doctrine, thus affording him some means of displaying the zeal with which he was so ardently inflamed. The fervent youth would have immediately obeyed the command, if the curate of the place (perhaps with a little too much regard for the custom of the age) had not told him that, as it was the time of the carnival, it would be better to defer for a season the commencement of a work, otherwise so pious and profitable. The young Paul thought it right to comply with the wishes of his superior and consented to the delay of a few days. But shortly afterwards in prayer, he felt himself interiorly reprehended by our Lord with some severity, understanding, therefore, that it was always a suitable time to do the good that God desires. Without further demur, he quickly took a blessed crucifix and, conquering his natural repugnance, went out for the first time into the streets and public places, inviting all with a loud voice, "To the Christian Doctrine in the Church of San Carlo." While he thus employed the zeal and talents which God had bestowed upon him, his little instructions produced fruit beyond expectations. When the bishop was informed how they were blessed, he greatly rejoiced in our Lord, and in the consolation of his heart shed abundant tears. Reflecting on the profit that might be reaped among the people if Paul could extend the sphere of his labors, this excellent prelate ordered him to preach from the pulpit and to propose more particularly to the meditation of the faithful the most holy passion of our Savior. It may excite surprise that so wise a bishop should depart from the regulations of the Church in thus employing a young man who had not yet received even the tonsure, but only wore the habit of a penitent. But this pious and learned man thought he could reasonably use a dispensation in favor of one upon whom our Lord had conferred such rare gifts.

The blessings that attended the labors of Paul proved it a sign of great prudence and wisdom to lay aside ordinary rules when it is evident to an experienced eye that a great object can be

attained. Paul therefore left to others the instructions upon Christian Doctrine, but he did not entirely lose sight of a work which had produced so much good. One day, approaching the youth who was catechizing the young girls, he gave him some very beautiful and opportune advice by repeating the words, "Turn away your eyes, lest they behold vanity." And now he directed all his attention to announcing the truths of our holy faith from the pulpit. And because his words proceeded from a heart united with God and were animated with a fervent zeal, and supported by the example of a holy and irreproachable life, they brought forth abundant fruit. At his voice, balls, feasts, masquerades, and other dangerous amusements ceased without anyone showing displeasure or lamenting the change. The occasions of sin, being thus removed, in order that all might be excited to true penitence, he desired in the last days of the carnival to conduct a solemn Triduum. He observed the following method in conducting it. Towards evening, he went round the streets of the town, preceded by a large crucifix and accompanied by several persons and a good number of children singing devout hymns. The people flocked in crowds to the church, which was soon quite full. Paul then commenced a fervent discourse, inveighing with great force against sin, and particularly against the scandalous conduct of certain females who disregarded modesty and decency in dress. All listened with deep attentions and seemed penetrated by his words. But the devil, jealous of what promised so much good, endeavored during those days of prayer to distract the audience and dissipate their feelings of compunction by means of a possessed woman, whom he excited to make a great noise in the church. The servant of God saw this work of the malignant enemy and was interiorly inspired to order him to cease his disturbance. Knowing that his impulse proceeded truly from God, he commanded silence and the evil one obeyed. By the power and earnestness with which he had announced the sacred word, and by the silence he had imposed on the devil, the people were completely overcome and were heard, as with one voice, to cry out to God for pardon and mercy. The fruit of his preaching was still more apparent in the amendment of sins and disorders, particularly amongst the women, who at his suggestion no longer entered the church with their heads uncovered. He continued during the ensuing Lent to deliver pious discourses and fervent exhortations, and with particular care he instructed his hearers how to meditate upon the sacred passion of Jesus Christ, always leaving them touched and enlightened by his holy words. His zeal was not confined to his own immediate neighborhood, for he preached a mission in a place called Retorto, and in two other

towns where his memory is still preserved, and where the happy result of his labors was seen in renewed fervor and compunction amongst the inhabitants. On one of these occasions, a distinguished lady, the Signora Marchesa del Pozzo, in a penitential procession which took place, insisted, through humility, upon walking barefoot – to the great edification of all. This pious lady had afterwards the consolation of possessing and retaining in her house a heavy cross which Paul used to carry on his shoulders at these solemnities. This relic is still preserved with singular devotion by her descendants.

Having once tasted the sweetness of gaining souls to God, Paul knew not how to restrain his zeal, but continually occupied himself in visiting and consoling the sick, in rooting out all bitterness and discord, and in reconciling such as were at variance with one another. Nor was he daunted by the fatigue and annoyance these acts of charity might cost him, because he knew they were pleasing to the most loving heart of his Jesus. It came to his knowledge that, in a place about three miles off, there were some persons who lived in mutual enmity, and although the winter was most rigid and the road covered with snow, all barefoot as he was, he walked full of fervor till he reached the spot. He had no sooner arrived, than he brought peace to the disputants and reconciled them with themselves and with God. The pain and trouble which his labors cost him seemed light in comparison with the peace he restored and the charity he rekindled in so many hearts. Amongst other things, there was one occurrence that made a great impression at the time, and which we cannot refrain from relating here. A bitter quarrel had existed for a long period between two of the principal persons in Castellazzo, one of whom was the doctor Maranzana, and the other a person bearing the same name, probably one of his relations. Their reconciliation had been vainly attempted by parish priests, by preachers, and by holy religious men. It seemed that the victory had been reserved for Paul. The two enemies went one evening, either out of curiosity or from some kind of devotion, to hear the servant of God preach at St. Stefano. One of them was observed by a certain Canon Sardi, a friend of Paul's, who immediately went to inform him of the fact. Paul, therefore, adopted as the subject of his discourse and meditation the prayer uttered by Jesus Christ upon the cross for his executioners. Animated by the Spirit of God, he spoke with so much force and efficacy, that those long hardened hearts were touched and conquered. They both inwardly resolved to lay aside their animosity. No sooner was the function over, than they stood before Paul in his little room near to

the church. This was all that was required to complete their conversion. Paul's brother was there and Signor Sardi. Now, more than ever, stimulated to be united in holy charity and peace, they affectionately embraced each other as a sign that they had cast away all hatred, that they sincerely forgave each other, and that they were perfectly reconciled. Wisely, however, did our Paul remind them that all was not finished, but that they had to seek to repair the scandal which had been given. To this end, therefore, he advised them on the following day, after a good confession, to receive Holy Communion together in the parish church. A great concourse of people would be drawn thither by the forty hours' adoration, and it would be a public evidence that those, who had once so implacably hated, were now, on the contrary, filled with fraternal charity since they approached side by side to the sacred banquet of celestial love. And thus it is the happy lot of one who is rich in virtue to go about sowing peace in the hearts of families, because he himself partakes so abundantly of the Spirit of God, which is a spirit of love and peace. So common was the opinion held of Paul's influence in settling all kinds of disputes that even drunkards, the very men of all others least likely to listen to reason, submitted without resistance to his words.

There was one day a fierce quarrel between some of these men in Castellazzo, and they were on the point of coming to blows, with what peril to themselves may be easily imagined. Paul ran to the spot with a crucifix in his hand and, kneeling down in the midst of them, urged them to be reconciled for the love of Jesus. The dispute was over in an instant and the combatants dispersed, some on one side, some on another.

But Paul's chief solace in all his labors and sufferings, and the sweet but strong support which carried him through his life of penance and austerity, was the long and continual prayer with which he nourished his soul. Many hours did he pass in his hermitage, conversing interiorly with God, many more did he spend in the church, assisting at the sacred functions, hearing Masses, or kneeling before the altar where his Jesus lay hidden beneath the sacramental species. So untiringly did he persevere in prayer, that a worthy ecclesiastic, who knew him, deposed in the Processes that Paul was generally the first to enter and the last to leave the church. No wonder, then, that while thus perfectly united to God, from whom comes all help, strength, life and every good, he was enabled to prosecute the undertakings which he had begun. The consolations he received in the midst of his exercises of charity and penance were not always

interior ones, for several times our Lord testified with open prodigies the satisfaction he took in his servant. There lived in Castellazzo a pious man named Andrew Vegetto, who had several times, when Paul lived at the hermitage of St. Stefano, given him the charitable assistance of some wood for his fire. By an accident this poor man hurt his leg and a wound formed which became an ulcer. Paul went one day to see him, and out of his great charity, he insisted upon dressing the wound. A considerable discharge came from it, but the servant of God, overcoming the repugnance of nature, was only the more animated by the mortification, just as a fire burns with greater vigor when agitated by the wind. Recognizing, by the light of faith, the person of Jesus Christ in this sick man, he desired to perform towards him an act of heroic self-devotion. He told him to turn away his face, and then, believing that he was not seen, he began to apply his tongue to that disgusting wound. The sufferer perceived what he was doing and vainly entreated him to desist. The next morning, when the surgeon came, the ulcer was found dry and healed, and in another day or two Andrew was able to rise from his bed and walk about without pain. Finding himself cured in this wonderful manner, he began to publish everywhere the charity and holiness of the servant of God. Not content with making the miracle known in his own country, he went on purpose to Retorto, that he might relate the grace he had received, to Paul's great friend, the Marchesa del Pozzo. Almighty God was pleased thus marvelously to testify how grateful in his sight was the charity of our devout youth. In a similar manner did he make known his approval of his austere penance. It happened on one winter's day, that Paul, walking as usual with his bare feet, got them very wet and muddy in fording the little river Bormida. He was met by a pious woman named Tecla Gambarotti, who, seeing the state he was in, presented him with a towel to cleanse and dry his feet. Paul did not like to refuse the solace which she so kindly offered, especially as her prayers and entreaties would scarcely admit of a denial; he, therefore, took the cloth, and after using it, gratefully returned it all soiled as it was to the devout woman. She had to pass the Bormida herself as she went home, and she determined therefore to wash her towel in the water as she went by. But on looking at it again, her surprise was extreme to find it perfectly clean and unsullied, with only one little spot of mud in the corner, as though to show the change that had taken place. A truly wonderful prodigy operated by that God who displays his infinite power in small things as well as in great. We need not, therefore, marvel that the town of Castellazzo, which received such edification from the life of Paul, became daily more

and more confirmed in a high opinion of his sanctity. Every hour a great multitude of persons of all ranks came to seek his advice and to listen to his pious instructions, as we are assured by the testimony of creditable eyewitnesses. His exemplary life, his truly admirable patience, the ardor of his charity and the fervor of his zeal, caused him to be esteemed and venerated by all as nothing less than a saint.

CHAPTER IX

Now He Went to Rome to Throw Himself at the Feet of the Sovereign Pontiff, and How He Was Denied an Audience

Almighty God, who was forming in Paul a model of virtue, which might afterwards, like an excellent statue chiseled by some famous artist, serve as a copy for others, now spoke amorously to his heart and called upon him to leave his country, his parents, and his friends, in order the more perfectly to fulfil his heavenly designs. Paul manifested all his inspirations to the holy bishop, his director, and that wise prelate consented that he should undertake a journey to Rome, that he might kneel at the feet of the Vicar of Christ, and then, giving up himself and all he possessed, learn from his lips the holy will of God in his behalf. Bishop Gattinara could not oppose this project, although he cherished Paul with the love of a father for his son and entertained such an esteem for his virtue that in an attestation he gave him, after mentioning that he had clothed him with the habit of the Passion, and recommending him to the charity of all who might see this credential, he called him a youth “shining with wonderful virtues.” Now these words give us a very distinct idea of the resplendent, luminous, and edifying character of Paul’s sanctity, and from the lips of so prudent a prelate cannot be suspected of exaggeration; still, with all his love and esteem for Paul, the bishop thought not of opposing the designs of God, who called His servant out of his own country to lay the foundation of the new Congregation.

Full of fervor, and with a bold and trustful spirit, Paul began his journey. It is not difficult to imagine what a loving heart like his must have suffered in this separation from all his friends, from his good brothers and sisters whom he cherished with so true and sincere a charity, and

from his parents, whose Christian life and tender care of their family rendered them worthy of all the gratitude, reverence, and piety he felt towards them. He offered up the sacrifice of all to his Lord, and then, with no other company save his confidence in God, he set out for Genoa, where a devout Cavalier kindly received him and charitably provided the expenses of his journey. While he was waiting to embark, his brother John Baptist, a youth of great piety and earnestness, came to seek him with the idea of accompanying him to Rome. But Paul, ignorant as yet of the will of God in this matter, persuaded his good brother to return home, although the young man, perhaps more fully enlightened, exclaimed, "You may go, but you will find no peace without me!"

John Baptist went home by Monterrato and Paul embarked immediately afterwards for Civita Vecchia. On the 8th of September, 1721, the Feast of our Lady's Nativity, the vessel reached Monte Argentario, but here the wind so entirely ceased that it was impossible to proceed. The sailors went upon shore to gather some wild figs which grew there, and Paul remained contemplating the mountain and admiring the little grottoes and caves in the rock, which during the middle of the day are exposed to the sea, and which, perhaps, were once the habitations of those religious, who, as St. Gregory tells us (Dialog. lib. 3, C. 17.), used to live there doing penance. He felt a strong desire to retire into such a solitude in order to lead a life of penance and prayer. But the wind arose and the vessel moved onwards, while Paul was filled with a fervor of spirit which animated him to go to the other end of the world, if necessary, for his dear Jesus. They reached at length the port of Civita Vecchia, where, on account of some fear of contagion, the sailors and all the passengers had to perform quarantine. Paul had no provisions for this delay, so the magistrates of the town, taking compassion on him, allowed him two *bajocchi* a day (about six farthings) to buy some bread. Scanty as was this charitable aid, Paul was most grateful for it and never forgot as long as he lived the kindness which prompted it. Although he was then young and vigorous, and at an age which requires more food than any other, so accustomed was he to mortification, that he was contented with a little and suffered want with the greatest consolation of heart. In order to lose not a moment of the time, which he looked upon as a precious treasure, he employed himself during those days of quarantine in transcribing clearly the Rules he had already written in the Church of San Carlo, and the hours that still remained, he devoted to catechizing and instructing the people in the Lazzaretto.

When the quarantine was over, he hastened to set out on the road to Rome. He stopped for

the night in an obscure country inn in order to be as poor as he could, and he took no refreshment but the little he received from a poor man who accompanied him. On the following morning he reached Rome, and before entering the holy city, penetrated with a lively faith and humble devotion, he reverently kissed the ground which had been blessed with the footsteps and blood of the apostles and martyrs. He then went quickly to the Basilica of St. Peter, but, upon kneeling down to pray, he found himself in great aridity and desolation of spirit, and deprived of all the sweet communications he was accustomed to experience – a prophetic indication, perhaps, that the time was not yet come for the fulfillment of his desires. He lodged that night with the other pilgrims in the Hospital of the Trinita where Christian charity is exercised in such perfection and reigns with so visible a spirit. Going with the rest to the washing of the feet, it happened that the person who was to perform that charitable office was a great cardinal, Monsignor Tolomei, of happy memory, who constantly undertook this lowly employment to the great edification of all who saw him. We can easily imagine the confusion of poor Paul, who, in his humility deemed himself worthy of nothing but contempt, especially when the holy prince, having washed his feet, offered him an alms. He, believing himself sufficiently rich with his trust in God, meekly refused the gift and besought his eminence to bestow it on another, that thus it might benefit the poor.

Early the next morning, Paul was at the pontifical palace, longing to throw himself at the feet of the Pope, who was then Innocent XIII, of blessed memory. But when he requested an audience, he was rudely rejected by one of the officials who said to him, “Do you know how many loiterers come here every day? Be off with you.” The humble servant of God, satisfied that he was treated according to his deserts, and clearly understanding from this that the period had not yet arrived for his great work, submitted to the will of God and began directly to think of returning to Monte Argentario. As he walked away from the palace feeling the want of some refreshment for his weak body, he retired into a court where there was a little fountain, intending to eat there the small pieces of bread which had been given to him that morning at the Trinita. But God, who desired to try the charity of His servant, so disposed that a poor man should approach just then to ask an alms. Paul’s youth, as well as his long fasting, had given him so great an appetite that he could have eaten five loaves instead of one. Nevertheless, doing violence to nature, he parted with half his bread for the love of God, whom he never failed to

recognize in the person of the poor. Little, indeed, was the relief he bestowed, but the affection with which he gave it, at the time he needed it most, was certainly not small, but great and generous.

CHAPTER X

How He Went for the First Time to Monte Argentario and Afterwards Obtained from the Bishop of Soana Permission to Inhabit the Hermitage of the Annunziata upon That Mountain

Divine Providence had still in store for His servant diverse accidents and trials wherewith to prove and fortify his virtue. Paul, leaving Rome, embarked in a vessel, where he found a priest, who, strangely enough, whenever he saw the devout youth recollected in prayer, seemed moved by an almost insane fury against him and loaded him with injuries and reproaches. At Fiumicino, where the boat stopped, Paul engaged a place in another ship going towards Santa Severa. But this voyage was rendered no less disagreeable than the last, by the behavior of a lay brother, who insulted and ill treated him without any visible motive. Paul, who in his prayers had conceived an earnest wish to suffer something with his Redeemer, and from Jesus had learned how to be silent under scoffs and revilings, never opened his mouth in reply, either to the priest or the lay brother. Believing himself a miserable sinner, he said in his heart that there was doubtless every reason for treating him thus. From Santa Severa he went by land to Civita Vecchia, and there, finding no one who would take him in, he spent the night in the portico of the Sanita.

He journeyed onwards through Corneto, where he was charitably entertained by the Augustinian religious, and he was sheltered for the night at Mont'Alto, through the kindness of a good priest. The next day he took the road to Monte Argentario, hoping to reach the mountainside before dark. But he was overtaken by night in the open country, and he was obliged to seek his rest in a wretched hut which had been abandoned by shepherds. The place swarmed with nasty insects, which to our poor youth, who had nothing but his rough tunic, were a great torment, until he returned to Lombardy. In the morning he walked on quickly towards Portercole, anxious to complete this tedious journey; for besides his exhaustion from fatigue, he

felt lonely in those dreary wastes, where there was no human being but himself, and his spirit was under the influence of that interior desolation with which the Almighty so often tries the constancy of His servants. At Portercole he was most kindly received by the archpriest D. Antonio Serra, who informed him that upon the mountain there still existed a hermitage, which had been a convent of Augustinians under the title of the most holy Annunciation. Desiring to find out if it could be adapted to his pious designs, Paul ascended the mountain, taking with him nothing but a small morsel of bread given him that day in alms by a charitable cleric. He saw with delight that the whole place breathed an air of holy retirement and invited to recollection, penitence, and prayer. He accordingly remained in this retreat for several days, nourishing himself with the bread he had brought and a few grapes which grew there. He found the spot well suited for retirement and for the tranquil enjoyment of sweet converse with God. He therefore desired to see the Bishop of Soana, to whose spiritual jurisdiction the church and hermitage of the Annunciata belonged. Not feeling in his heart all the peace which is enjoyed in the perfect fulfillment of the designs of God, he began to remember the strong desire his brother John Baptist had expressed to be with him, and the words he had spoken, and he then thought of going to fetch him that they might inhabit this hermitage together.

He descended the mountain by Orbetello, in order to take the road to Pitigliano, the ordinary residence of the Bishop of Soana. Not having any acquaintance in Orbetello, there was no one to receive him; wherefore, standing among the poor in the piazza, he waited with them till Providence should send him some charitable host. He did not stop there long, for a good Father of the Minims who passed by was touched by compassion at the sight of this youth in his abject garb of penance. He obtained the superior's leave to invite him to his monastery, and here Paul was lovingly received by the religious and the priest friend, who became for some little time his confessor.

He left Orbetello by Marsigliana, but his journey was weary and difficult, in consequence of the many twinings and windings of the road, which was perfectly unknown to him, and lonely and desolate on account of the solitary fields and dark groves which abound in those parts. He arrived the first day at Manciano, in Tuscany, and meeting the curate of the place, he humbly begged a lodging for the love of God. The priest, seeing before him a person so ill-dressed and neglected, without much thought abruptly refused him, saying, "So many beggars arrive here,

and one is enough to do mischief.” The lowly servant of God at these words only meekly answered, “I am indeed capable of doing any evil, but I trust God’s grace will preserve me from it.” True humility is the great secret for winning all hearts and obtaining whatever we want. Touched by a reply so wise, and at the same time so gentle, the curate received Paul into his house and treated him with all kindness.

The youth pursued his journey on the following day to Pitigliano, where he found to his great disappointment that the bishop was absent at Pienza. After fresh difficulties he succeeded in reaching that town, where the good prelate, who was Monsignor Fulvio Salvi, benignly welcomed him, granted all his desires, and dismissed him with his benediction.

CHAPTER XI

How He Returned to Lombardy for His Brother John Baptist

Paul, consoled with the bishop’s goodness, determined to go from Pienza to Leghorn in order to embark for his own country. He reached Pisa in a short time and took the canal from there to Leghorn. Again was his vessel a school of patience, for two ecclesiastics who were on board treated him not only injuriously, but even inhumanly. It is scarcely to be wondered that he met with such frequent harshness since his strange dress of penitence and austerity was revolting to the feelings of those who possessed not the spirit of God, although his sufferings were enough to move the pity and compassion of the hardest hearts. In fact, while in Leghorn he begged of a Jewish merchant, who was unable to resist the sight of such poverty. With the small pittance he received from this man, he procured some refreshment for that day and the following morning. After obtaining his passage from a charitable captain, he embarked for Genoa. Again his voyage was one of the greatest suffering, for the vessel was loaded with undried bull’s hides. Since Paul, as the poorest, occupied the worst place in the boat, he suffered the most from the intolerable odor emitted by the skins. At night he rested his wearied limbs upon a hard plank; added to this was the inconvenience which he suffered from those insects which must have been abhorrent to his sensitivity; but he endured all with unfailing patience. His repose was tortured and his nourishment scanty, being no other than what was given him in charity by the sailors, and even

for this he had little appetite on account of the fetid smell, which produced a nausea for all food. When the boat arrived in Genoa, all were obliged to perform quarantine. As if to render his sufferings more acute, with the sight of the palaces of that superb city, came the thought of all the comforts and delights enjoyed therein which contrasted so miserably with his own poor and painful position. He was sensibly alive to the privations he endured; but turning them into an occasion of merit, he offered them up in conformity with the holy will of God, for whose love he would joyfully have borne greater evils.

As soon as the quarantine was over, he set off for Alexandria in order to have the consolation of being once more at the feet of his beloved bishop. Who can describe the tenderness and compassion of that most loving father, when he listened to the history of the painful trials of his son Paul? The wise prelate did not, however, doubt of the ultimate success of the work of God. At the request of Paul, and at the urgent desire of John Baptist, he clothed the latter with the habit of the Passion on the 20th of November, 1721, the octave day of the Presentation of our Blessed Lady, in order that together they might follow the voice of God.

CHAPTER XII

How He Quit His Own Country and Left Pious Advice to His Family

The two holy brothers, Paul and John Baptist, cherished the same earnest desires to serve God and the same ardent longings to promote his greater glory, united to a tender devotion to the most sacred passion of Jesus Christ. Being now both clothed with the habit of penitence, they remained some months in the hermitage of San Stefano, where they gave general edification by the austere mortification of their lives, by their utter withdrawal from all outward relationships with others, and by their great dedication in prayer, in which holy exercise they passed many hours in the church. At length, on the first Sunday in Lent, when the Gospel speaks of our Lord being conducted by the Holy Spirit into the desert, they left their country for Monte Argentario, that there, in still more profound solitude, they might freely devote themselves to the contemplation of the Divine perfections. The feelings of flesh and blood, which might awaken their tender regrets at bidding farewell to their country and home, had no power over them, but

with fervent hearts, while seeking to increase within themselves the divine love, they both labored (but Paul more especially) that those who remained in their family should, according to their state, love and serve their Lord. The letter which Paul wrote upon his departure is full of these sentiments and is a clear indication of the rectitude of his intentions and of the ardor of his zeal. It is well worthy of being copied here in his own words for the edification of the devout reader.

“The holy peace of Jesus Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, be with us and guard our hearts.

“Beloved brethren and sisters in Jesus Christ.

“I, Paul Francis, your brother, a miserable sinner and most unworthy servant of the poor of Christ, being obliged by the Divine command to leave these parts in order to follow the holy inspirations of Heaven, and by retiring into solitude to excite not only all reasonable beings but even irrational creatures to weep with me over my great sins and to praise the good God whom I have so much offended. Before entering into my holy retreat, I cannot leave you without bequeathing to you, my brothers and sisters, some spiritual advice that you may ever walk with increased fervor in the holy love of our most tender Savior.

“In the first place, observe with the greatest exactness the holy law of the Lord, and preserve a filial fear for that great God who has created and redeemed you. Know, dearly beloved, that in proportion as a son loves his father, so does he always fear to distress him, to displease him, in short, to offend him in the least degree. In like manner, then, cherish this holy fear of offending God, that it may serve you as a preservative against falling into sin. Love this best of fathers with an ardent affection and look up to him with a tender but reverential confidence. May your every action, as well as all your words, your sighs and tears, your labors and troubles, be dedicated to his holy love. In order to retain this divine friendship frequent the sacraments, that is to say, go often to confession and communion. When you approach the Sacred Table, have no other end in view than ever more and more to consume your soul in the flames of this holy love.

“My dearly beloved, I say nothing of the requisite preparation, because I believe you will do all that you can. Remember that it is the holiest action you can possibly perform. Ah! Think that our dearest Jesus could have made us no greater gift than His own Body for our food; let us then love One who has so loved us. Be full of devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament; go frequently

to adore it in the church, and visit reverently the altar of our dear Lady. Teach these acts to the other children and perform them especially before you go to school. Let no day pass without making half or a quarter of an hour's meditation on the dolorous passion of our Blessed Redeemer. Do more whenever it is possible, but at least never omit this. Preserve a continual remembrance of the sufferings of our crucified Lord, and remember that the saints of God, who now reign triumphant in eternal bliss, attained their perfection principally by this means. Employ yourself, therefore, in this heavenly exercise whenever you can and more particularly on days of Holy Communion. Entertain a tender devotion for the sorrows of our Blessed Lady, as well as for her holy and Immaculate Conception, for your guardian angel, your saintly advocates, and the twelve apostles. Familiarize yourselves with ejaculatory prayers, and see that they spring from the depths of your heart. I write a few here for your spiritual profit:

“Ah! Dear Lord, would that I had never offended You! Ah! Hope of my heart, I would rather die a thousand deaths than sin any more against You!

“Ah! My Jesus, when shall I truly love You! Oh! My Sovereign Good, wound my heart with Your holy love! He who loves You not, my God, does not know You. Would that all could love You, my dearest Love! When shall my soul be inflamed with the fire of Your charity?

“Acts of resignation. May Your holy will be done. Welcome, toil and labor! Dear sorrows, I embrace you! I press you to my heart! You are the joys sent me by my Lord! How beautiful it is to suffer! I kiss the beloved hand of my God! Blessed be the blows that hurt me so grievously! It is good for me, dear Father, that You should humble me!

“Endeavor thus to make continual acts of love and sorrow; you can pray when you are walking, and while you are at your work, even when in the company of others. For if men surround your body, they need not approach your heart so may your soul gain much good in the midst of the most engrossing occupations.”

He goes on to exhort them most earnestly to practice perfect submission towards their parents, and he calls this virtue a heavenly gem, and one of which our Lord Himself gave the brightest example when He laid down His life for obedience upon the hard wood of the cross. He admonishes them that they can scarcely attain perfection in this virtue, unless they submit even their external affairs to the will and direction of their father and mother. And with the design of removing them from the perils of the world, he advises them to read every day some pious books

and to fly from evil company as from the devil. He then counsels them to be strictly just in their dealings, to pay their debts whenever they have contracted any, and if they should find themselves unable, meekly to beg their creditors to have compassion on them. "Humble yourselves," said this lowly-minded man, "before all for the love of God." And placing a just value upon the merit of holy charity, he continues, "If I beg of you to bear ever in mind that great precept which Jesus gave to His apostles at the last supper before His death, 'My dear disciples, I give you a new commandment, that you should love one another, as I have loved you.' Oh! what sweet words! And how dear an example! Love one another, my dearest brothers and sisters, and remember that you can never please Almighty God if you do not love each other. Let there be no dissension amongst you. If by accident some bitter word be spoken, soften it quickly, and let not anger take possession of your hearts. Again I return to the maxim of St. John, 'Love one another,' for in this is known the surpassing charity of our Lord. Be gentle and compassionate towards the poor of Christ.

"His epistle concludes with these touching and devout expressions, "I leave you, then, within the sacred Wounds of Jesus and under the protection of our Lady of Sorrows. Pray that she may bathe your heart in her most sorrowful tears, in order that you may preserve the constant memory of the cruel Passion and bitter sufferings of your Savior, and that you may persevere to the end in the holy love of God with patience and fortitude. Take her, therefore, as your protectress, and forget not the frequent meditation of the death and passion of Christ. May God in his mercy grant you his holy benediction, which I pray you in return to obtain likewise for me. *Thanks be to God and Mary ever a virgin.*

"Your most unworthy brother,

"Paul Francis Danei, the lowest among the servants of the poor of Christ."

CHAPTER XIII

How He Returned to Monte Argentario. The Fervor and Penitence of the Two Brothers in the Heritage of the Annunziata

Paul and John Baptist, now more united together, were of mutual assistance in increasing

each other's zeal, like two lighted coals, which, when brought into contact, communicate their fire and heat. In this happy union they departed from their home, embarked at Genoa and arrived at Civita Vecchia, where, after performing quarantine, they set out on foot for Monte Argentario. One day's journey brought them on Wednesday in Holy Week to the borders of Lake Burano, where they found themselves in want of shelter and unprovided with any kind of nourishment. Defending themselves as well as they could from the cold air of night, they laid down with their scanty clothing upon the bare ground under a tree, which was so poor a shelter that they arose in the morning soiled and wet and with their hair covered with frost. The pious youths, remembering that it was Maundy Thursday, a day consecrated by so many mysteries, were inflamed with an ardent desire to make the Paschal feast with their Redeemer and to communicate in some church. Accordingly, heedless of their fatigue and suffering, they hastened to continue their journey, and ran rather than walked until they reached Portercole, which was about twelve miles distant from the lake. They arrived there exhausted with hunger. While their bodies were weak and sinking, their souls were strong and fervent. It is not easy to express the consolation which Paul in particular enjoyed when he found himself enabled to be united with his Lord in sacramental communion. Neither can we attempt to describe the devout affections of his heart during that and the following days. It was his usual custom at that period of his life to remain in church during the whole time of the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the repository, and to persevere in prayer without stopping either for repose or food. We may well believe, therefore, that he did not omit this now when he was preparing with his brother to retire into the most complete solitude and to perfect the new enterprise he had just begun.

When Holy Week was over, by the advice of the chief priest of Portercole, who had charitably received the two brothers into his house, they resolved before ascending Monte Argentario to go together to the Bishop of Soana and to obtain, with his blessing upon their undertaking, fresh grace from Almighty God. They went on to Orbetello, and upon leaving the church there, they met General Marchese Speco, accompanied by several gentlemen of his staff, who had just been assisting at Benediction. This nobleman enquired who they were and where they were going. "We are," they replied, "two poor brothers, who have been inspired by Almighty God to do penance on Monte Argentario." These simple words were uttered with so much humility, modesty, and devotion that the General and his company were both moved and

edified. Taking leave of his excellency, they pursued their journey to Pitigliano, where they received the bishop's blessing, and then hastened onwards to their retirement on that rock which Paul used to call, with reason, the Mount of Sanctity.

The provision which the two brothers carried with them to the hermitage of the Annunziata may be learned from the words of Fr. Paul himself. A few years before his death, he visited for the last time that retreat, and upon hearing the young novices sing the praises of God, he was unable to restrain his tears. His confessor asked him in the words of St. Francis de Sales, "Has it been raining?" alluding to the abundant sweetness showered from heaven upon his soul. But Fr. Paul replied with a deep sentiment of humility and thankfulness, "Ah, how can I help weeping when I remember that I came to this solitude with no other provision but a morsel of cake and a little gingerbread given me in alms at Pitigliano, and now I behold two monasteries full of fervent religious, praising God day and night."

In order to try the constancy of his servants, their loving God permitted them to remain for some time in this desert without any human assistance and with no other food but herbs and roots. At last, however, he who holds in his hands the hearts of men, moved a devout lady of Orbetello to bestow some relief upon them. Following the divine impulse, she sent them a quantity of small beans, with which the grateful penitents satisfied their hunger, eating them, generally, raw as they were, beside the fountain which sprang up beneath the hermitage. They afterwards received succor from various other persons, but their mode of life always continued rigorously austere. They drank no wine except on Thursdays and festivals, when it was sometimes furnished them by charitable benefactors. Their bed was either the bare ground, on which Fr. Paul reposed, or a hard plank on which John Baptist slept. Their rest was very short, for they both rose in the middle of the night to recite Matins and afterwards employed three hours in uninterrupted contemplation. Paul returned again to prayer in the early morning, as soon as the birds began to sing, as if these innocent creatures invited him to love and praise their Creator. All day long they kept themselves in the presence of God, occupied in meditation and study. They took their daily walk barefoot into the wood to make up their bundle of sticks. Their silence was continual; they spoke not to each other in order that they might entertain themselves with God and hear His voice in their hearts. The mountain on which they lived, and all the creatures upon it, were, as a book, always open, or as a school, in which they might learn to love

their divine Creator. Even the neighboring garrison helped to stimulate their fervor. Paul, when he heard the sound of the drum, used to say to himself, "See how much is done by the soldiers of earth to defend their material walls; and what then ought you, a soldier of heaven to do, to protect the spiritual kingdom of your soul?"

And as with tepid persons all labor seems irksome, so with these fervent servants of God everything they did appeared light and easy. Hence, they sought to increase their pious practices by special novenas. And the day after the Epiphany, Paul retired by himself into a still more lonely part of the mountain, thereby to imitate the seclusion of our Savior in the desert. To say all in a few words, the life of these two hermits on Monte Argentario was one of solitude and silence, penitence and prayer. Hidden from the eyes of the world, they preserved their innocent souls unperilled by its snares; they daily offered up a sacrifice of grateful praise to God; they obtained rich treasures of grace for their neighbor; and they formed in themselves examples of lofty virtue, which were, one day, to serve as models for many others. Nor did Paul forget that he had been called by God to work for the salvation of souls. He therefore employed himself frequently in teaching and explaining Christian Doctrine. On festival days, he went to Portercole for this purpose, where, with marvelous zeal and devotion he preached the knowledge and love of God and the observance of His holy law.

CHAPTER XIV

How They Were Called to Gaeta by Bishop Pignattelli, the Bishop of That City, after Having Made Another Journey into Their Own Country through a Motive of Charity

The spirit of charity is the rule which governs all the actions of the servants of God and makes them ever willing to give up their most innocent and virtuous inclinations, when a reasonable motive seems to demand the sacrifice. How willingly our two penitents would have remained in their retirement may be imagined by those who have tasted in solitude the sweetness of the Lord. But when they heard that one of their relations was in danger of losing his soul and might possibly be saved by their means, they immediately left their desert, and exposing themselves anew to all the hardships of a long voyage, they at length reached their own country,

where they had scarcely arrived before John Baptist fell sick. Upon this occasion, Cardinal Cienfuegos, who had always been very kindly disposed towards the two brothers, wrote to Paul in these words, “Your letter would have been most welcome and acceptable to me if it had not brought the news of John Baptist’s illness. Still, I know full well that the visitation of the Lord never gives you anything but contentment.”

When they had completed their work of charity and settled every other affair which demanded their presence, they set off on their way back to Monte Argentario, in the hope of again enjoying the blessings of that beautiful and holy solitude. Passing through Genoa, Paul uttered a prediction to the mother of the archbishop of that city, then Monsignor Saporiti. This pious lady saw the servant of God in church, and struck with his recollected deportment, she conceived a great desire to speak with him. She communicated her wish to the prelate, her son, who perhaps deeming that it proceeded from feminine curiosity, endeavored to dissuade her from gratifying it. But the good mother was bent upon satisfying her devotion; she sent for Paul to speak with him, and the conference they had together proved very beneficial to her soul.

The servant of God clearly announced to her that she must prepare for her death, which would take place on the ensuing Feast of St. Joseph. Shortly afterwards, she fell seriously ill, and she died precisely on the day which had been foretold her. The archbishop knew of the prophecy and was fully convinced of its truth; he himself attested it to a priest, who deposed it upon oath in the Processes. The time alone is uncertain; it might possibly have happened during another of Paul’s journeys, but this does not diminish the certainty of the occurrence.

The brothers were allowed but a short time to rest at Monte Argentario, for being invited by Monsignor Pignattelli, Bishop of Gaeta and a worthy prelate of holy Church, to visit his city. Out of respect to so holy a name, they lost no time in complying with his request. They left their desert a second time, carrying with them the blessing of Bishop Fulvio, and an attestation in which he briefly bore witness to the mortified and edifying tenor of their lives. At Gaeta their exemplary conduct gained them the affection and admiration of all. The bishop was well pleased to have them in his diocese, and he willingly granted the permission, which out of their unabated love of holy solitude they demanded, to retire to a hermitage called Our Lady of the Chain, situated upon a hill near the rock Serapi, about a mile and a half distant from the town. Paul and John were thus enabled to resume their exercises of penance and prayer in this devout seclusion,

the spot in which, according to tradition, St. Nilus had once founded a monastery. One, who had the consolation of being near them and of knowing them more intimately than others, was astonished and confounded at their mode of life, so detached from earth and so hard for flesh to bear. He deposed with great exactness in the Processes that, besides wearing a rough habit which pricked and tortured their skin, they passed their nights upon the bare earth. "Many times," he said, "have I seen them sleeping upon the ground." They rigorously observed a daily fast, taking no other dinner but a little bread and water or a broth composed of herbs and vegetables, with nothing but mortification to season it. When there was oil in it, salt was wanting, and when it had salt they used no oil. Often, to render it still more unpalatable, they sprinkled their potatoes with ashes. In the evening they ate about three ounces of bread each, and even this slender pittance was sometimes diminished if it was not supplied them by the hermit. The above-mentioned witness adds that their time was entirely employed in contemplation or in reading some spiritual book in a tribune above the porch of the church. He concludes, "So that I may well say that their life was one continual prayer." Their rigorous abstinence, together with their harsh treatment of themselves, rendered their bodies so thin and emaciated that they seemed nothing but skin and bone. But while the flesh was denied every consolation, Almighty God abundantly nourished and invigorated the spirit in holy prayer and interior recollection. Paul, in particular, desiring to plunge into the very depths of the ocean of the infinite goodness of God, found a grotto for himself among the rocks by the seashore. Having placed in it an image of our Blessed Lady, he there passed alone a great portion of the day, reading and meditating on the Scriptures and tasting all the sweetness of the Holy Spirit, who speaks therein with such infinite love. The devil tried to molest him, but he received the infernal suggestions with contempt and was not to be diverted from his interior recollection. Sometimes, of course, it was a duty for these servants of God to converse together or to receive the persons who came to visit them. Upon these occasions they always kept before their eyes the Divine Presence and their own spiritual advantage. Hence, as the same witness declares, their conversation was always upon spiritual things. Paul and John Baptist both entertained a singular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. Whenever the desire of the bishop, or any pious motive, called them to the city, they quickly sought the cathedral church, and kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, remained absorbed in prayer until they were summoned away.

Sometimes they had to dine in the episcopal palace, but they soon left the table to return to the church. If they found the doors closed, they retired to some unfrequented spot to adore in spirit that sacrament which was their love, their consolation, and their true and divine food. The ardent devotion which they professed towards this Furnace of love could not remain unknown, and was, in fact, soon talked about in the town. These fervent youths had deeply impressed upon their hearts that whoever walks out of the road of holy obedience, however holy he may imagine himself, treads a dangerous path. They therefore placed themselves under the direction of a good priest, who, knowing their virtue, exercised them in diverse ways.

He sometimes obliged them to carry heavy loads of wood upon their shoulders, while they, submitting to him in all things, obeyed even his slightest sign. Their conduct, also, depended upon the bishop, to whom they professed entire and loyal subjection. This wise prelate soon perceived the marvelous gifts they had received from God; and, guided by the same spirit of discernment which had regulated the Bishop of Alexandria in his direction of Paul, he ordered them to teach catechism and Christian Doctrine in the cathedral church, to visit the rich⁵, and to console and prepare the dying for their last hour. He went still further when he desired Paul to give the ordination exercises. At this unusual determination, there were not wanting critics full of the spirit of contradiction, who censured the good prelate for committing this ecclesiastical function to one who was a simple lay hermit. But the wisest, best, and the largest portion of the clergy were pleased with the bishop's choice because they knew that Paul was full of the spirit of God, and that his words, breathing no common zeal and fervor, penetrated all hearts and reaped wonderful fruits of conversion. The humble servant of God obeyed his superior's commands and preached the exercises. The profit and advantage to the newly ordained were so great, that the opinion of the prelate was fully justified and the approval of all good men was gained.

CHAPTER XV

How They Went to Naples to Venerate the Relics of St. Januarius, and Were Afterwards Summoned to Troja by Bishop Emilio Cavalieri, the Bishop of That City

⁵ This might be a typographical error; perhaps it should be "sick".

The Feast of St. Januarius, being near at hand, the brother penitents determined to go to Naples, both to honor the relics of that great martyr, the wonderful protector of the city, and to be present at the miracle, which is one of the clearest signs of God's Providence over a faithful people. And since the servants of God are ever distinguished from the children of the world by the manner in which they make the most indifferent things tend to their sanctification, so the very voyage of Paul and John was rendered a holy one by the devout and fervent discourses which they delivered in the vessel, and which greater edified the mariners and excited their admiration for the two brothers. Among the passengers was a worthy ecclesiastic of Gaeta, who himself declared that either through the consolation of being with Paul or by some special grace from God, he was entirely free during this voyage from the illness which on all former occasions had so greatly inconvenienced him. This, he said, had been predicted to him by the holy man when they started. When they arrived at Naples, they lodged in this priest's house, and on the Feast of St. Januarius, they went with him to behold the miraculous liquefaction of the holy martyr's blood. Their piety and reverence gave a lesson to everyone on how it behooved them to venerate the relics and employ the festivals of the saints.

When they had satisfied their devotion and kissed the blessed relics, they thought of returning homewards. During the eight or ten days that they had sojourned in Naples, they had given singular edification by their modest bearing, their penitential dress, and the good advice and holy counsels with which they furnished all who had occasion to speak with them. Those who knew the brothers conceived so high an opinion of their sanctity that the night of their departure, while they were waiting for a favorable wind in the house of the captain of the ship, a crowd of persons from the neighborhood assembled to see them and to have the consolation of kissing their hands and their habits before they went. Paul and John did not lose so good an opportunity for inviting all present to dedicate themselves, heart and soul, to the holy love of God. They had an appropriate word for everyone, and they especially exhorted the women to become mirrors of Christian modesty.

On their return to Gaeta, after a voyage like the first, employed in devout and holy practices, they received an earnest entreaty from Bishop Emilio Cavalieri of Troja to visit that city. The bishop was a man of profound learning, of a singular perfection, and of an extremely penitent

life, as we learn from our Paul himself, who was admitted into his confidence. To form an idea of his doctrine, it is sufficient to know that Clement XI, a most enlightened judge in such matters, would remark whenever anything important was asked in Bishop Cavalieri's name, "We must do as he requests, for it is impossible that he should ask anything incompatible with ancient precedents or the example of the fathers." His great virtue had gained him such esteem that the same Sovereign Pontiff often expressed himself most edified with the holiness of life and purity of conscience of the Bishop of Troja. Moreover, Clement XII, speaking of this bishopric, did not hesitate to give the title of saint to him who had governed it, saying, "We know how a saint like Bishop Cavalieri must have suffered in that diocese." Benedict XIII, during the good bishop's lifetime, had spoken of him in the same terms upon an occasion which we cannot refrain from mentioning here.

During the Holy Year of 1725, a young man from Foggia went to confession in the Basilica of St. Peter. Now it happened, that without knowing him, he knelt at the feet of the Pope himself, who, out of his ardent zeal for the conversions of souls, was wont to hear the confessions of the pilgrims. The youth accused himself of having spoken against the character of his prelate, the Bishop of Troja, upon which His Holiness severely reproved him, saying, among other things, "How is it that you have dared to open your mouth against so holy a man?" He imposed upon him as a penance, that immediately upon his return to his own country, he should go and kiss the bishop's feet, retract his uncharitable words, and publish throughout Foggia that the Pope had given him this penance.

The reason why this holy prelate desired to have the brother penitents near him may be learned from the *Life of Cavalieri*, published in Naples in 1741 by the archdeacon of Troja, John Rossi. He speaks thus, "The bishop having heard of the piety of two brothers who lived in a hermitage and devoted themselves to a continual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, forthwith sought to have them within his diocese in order that their example might excite his people to a greater veneration of their Blessed Lord, and, at length, to his extreme joy, he obtained his desire. "The request of so great a prelate, and one of whom fame spoke so highly, could scarcely be denied by Paul and his brother, although they foresaw that the journey to Troja must be attended by much suffering and inconvenience. They left Gaeta in the month of August, while the heat was so excessive that the burning rays of the sun fell with torturing power upon their

uncovered heads. John became so ill that he nearly lost his life, and Paul was attacked with a malignant fever. They traveled without either money or provisions, begging for relief at the inns upon the road. They met, however, with little compassion and scanty charity, for the alms they received amounted to no more than a single coin of little value, with which they procured some refreshment but were unable to afford a lodging. Still they went meekly on their way, their patience failing not and their devotion never cooling. When they reached Mount Gargano, they spent the night praying before the miraculous cave, rendered special by the apparition of St. Michael. It was during their prayer that John Baptist heard these words addressed to him in a clear voice, "I will visit you with a rod of iron, and I will give you the Holy Spirit." Thus did Almighty God, while he was preparing many trials for his servants, promise to communicate to them at the same time the abundance of the Spirit. Weary and exhausted, they at length arrived at Troja, where the welcome given them by the good bishop was in proportion to the desire he had testified to see them. He received them with affectionate joy and lodged them near himself in his own palace.

The zealous pastor was not deceived in the hopes he had built upon the two brothers; for the example they gave of reverence and tender love towards the Blessed Sacrament caused many fervent souls to devote much of their time to visiting and contemplating Jesus in the mystery of his love. The holy prelate, as the above-mentioned life informs us, joined his prayers to theirs, and although burdened with age and infirmities, gave up all the time he could spare to partake in their devout exercises. Desiring that his flock should profit by the voice as well as by the example of Paul, and that the wicked might be redeemed, while the good were encouraged, he begged him to conduct the practices of devotion in public and to preach in the open streets and squares of the city. The humble servant of God attended with prompt obedience to the wishes of a superior whom he so highly venerated. He began his mission by going about in the night, accompanied by the brothers of a pious confraternity, awakening with the thunder of God's word those who were slumbering in sin. He even went so far as to preach in the vicinity of places of public scandal, at the request of a zealous priest who trusted that the words of Paul would effect the conversion for which he had so often labored in vain.

The bishop, being well aware that the brothers were full of the Spirit of God and were deeply versed in the science of the saints, held frequent spiritual conferences with them. To Paul in

particular, he opened his whole heart with great humility, and he sought his direction in that road of penance and holy love which he already trod with giant steps. On the other hand, Paul, who loved the prelate as a father and venerated him as a saint, submitted his conduct entirely to his discerning guidance, and revealed to him the light he had received from God, touching the foundation of his new Congregation. After hearing him, the bishop could entertain no doubt that Paul had been guided by the true wisdom of God, and that his graces came from that Blessed Lord, who is the source and Father of light. Nevertheless, in order to pronounce with the greatest decision in an affair of such importance, he consulted the Almighty in fervent prayer. As soon as he clearly understood the designs of God's infinite wisdom upon his servant, he eagerly encouraged and animated Paul to carry out his holy enterprise, saying, with deep feeling, "This is God's own work; great things will come of it. It will make progress through hidden and mysterious ways." The holy prelate's words, full of heavenly discernment, relieved Paul from all the doubts and perplexities which had seemed to hinder his undertaking. The bishop even declared that the first house of the new Institute should be established in his diocese, and he immediately began to seek for an appropriate site, which, however, could not then be found. He would have wished, if his state of health had permitted it, to go himself to the Roman council, and to lay before the illustrious Benedict XIII the whole idea of the Congregation of the Passion, in order to obtain the pontifical approbation. And as he had long desired to end his days in peace, unburdened by the weight of the episcopate, which has caused the holiest souls to tremble, he intended to devote his latter years to God in a house of the Institute. He was not, indeed, enabled to effect all that he proposed; nevertheless, he contributed greatly to the establishment of the Congregation by his wise counsels and fervent prayers, and also by his inducing Paul and his brother to prepare themselves for the reception of holy orders. He declared to them that such was the will of God, made manifest to a holy soul under his spiritual direction, whom he had often consulted about the Congregation. However, he assured them that they would soon have as many companions as they desired. Thus did our Lord dispose all things for Paul's encouragement, so that he could no longer fear to present himself once more in Rome with his holy bearing and abject dress. The servant of God, however, deemed it prudent to communicate to his eminence, Cardinal Cienfuegos, the sentiments of the Bishop of Troja, and to ask him still further advice upon the matter. The cardinal replied in these words, "I received your welcome letter with great

joy, and I have to tell you that I can do no less than praise exceedingly the conduct of that excellent pastor, the Bishop of Troja. I entirely concur in his wise opinion, that our Lord in his mercy not only inspires his servants to perform what he desires but likewise frequently indicates to them by outward signs His omnipotent will in their behalf. I will offer up what prayers I can for you, and I beg of you not to forget me before God, whom I now entreat to bless you with the unspeakable fullness of His divine grace. Rome, August 1st, 1724.

“Yours, in all affection,

“A. Cardinal Cienfuegos”

Paul could now no longer remain inactive without opposing the will of God, but it may be easily imagined that he felt no little sorrow at the idea of leaving Troja and parting from the holy bishop, whose life was an example of all virtues and in whom he had found such treasures of enlightened doctrine and celestial wisdom. On the other hand, the good prelate himself suffered no less at the departure of the two brothers, whom he so tenderly loved, and especially at the loss of Paul, to whom he had confided all the secrets of his heart. When they took their leave, he gave them a proof of his solicitude for their success, and his great desire for the foundation of the Congregation, for, to use the words of his biographer, when these holy souls had determined to go to Rome to obtain the approbation of the Holy See, the bishop presented them with letters of recommendation to many cardinals and to other distinguished personages of the papal court. Through the help of these, after a diligent examination of the spirit of the brothers and of the Rules of the Institute, the apostolic approval and confirmation was conceded to them, but this happy result came long after the holy bishop had passed (as we may piously believe) to the reward of his labors and his toils.

CHAPTER XVI

How They Arrived in Rome During the Holy Year. They Went to Gaeta, and Then Back to Rome, Where They Were Ordained Priests, and Employed Themselves in Attending the Sick in the Hospital of St. Gallicano

It was the jubilee year when Paul and John Baptist left Troja for Rome; and we may well

believe that, had there been no other motives for visiting the holy city, their lively devotion and tender piety would have induced them to go there at such a time to venerate, like the saints of old, the sanctuaries of the faith, and to acquire the priceless treasures of the indulgences of the church. The two brothers were praying one day in the Basilica of St. Peter, when they were observed by Monsignor Crescenzi, then a canon of St. Peter's, and afterwards a cardinal of the church. Upon seeing these modest youths in their strange garb of penitence, he was moved with a pious curiosity to know more about them. He himself gives the account of their interview in a letter he wrote many years afterwards to Paul:

“I cannot help reminding you, that we first became known to each other in St. Peter's, during the Holy Year, 1725, at which time I was a canon of that basilica. When I saw two brothers in so austere a dress and nearly barefooted, praying before the Confession of the St. Peter⁶, I had so great a desire to know their state of life and vocation, that I asked them many questions in the church.”

Not long afterwards, he introduced them to Cardinal Corradini, and then to Benedict XIII, of happy memory, who ordained them priests. And thus, no little good was caused by visiting the holy places of Rome in that penitential dress. The very first conversation which this enlightened prelate held with Paul and John Baptist inspired him with that esteem and love which he ever afterwards showed towards them and their Congregation.

Through the influence of Bishop Crescenzi, they were introduced to his eminence, Cardinal Corradini, a man of undeviating rectitude, and, at the same time, of so tender a charity that he was known by the name of the father of the poor. He recognized in our holy penitents a true spirit of piety and an earnest desire of serving God, and he most probably spoke in their favor to the Sovereign Pontiff himself.

One day, when His Holiness had occasion to visit the Church of Santa Maria in Navicella, Paul and John threw themselves at his feet to ask his permission to form a Congregation according to the Rules Paul had already prepared. The Pope, without any hesitation, *by an oral declaration* granted their request and confirmed by his pontifical authority the foundation of their poor and lowly Institute. After obtaining this precious favor and satisfying their feelings of

⁶ A shrine in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome.

devotion, they returned to Gaeta to the hermitage of our Lady of the Chain, where Bishop Cavalieri addressed them a letter in the following terms, “Oh, how consoling it is to think that, with the blessing of God, you are now to be joined by companions who will walk in your footsteps. I do not envy, but *with the envy of God I envy* the Bishop of Gaeta, who has you in his diocese; nevertheless, I hope against hope; I trust and confide.”

Paul and his brother did not possess in their hermitage all the peace and retirement which they desired, for they were disturbed by the crowds of people whom the fame of their sanctity attracted. Hence, to enjoy more fully the sweet fruits of solitude, they withdrew for some time into a sanctuary of our Blessed Lady, about five or six miles from the town of Gaeta. It was here that the heart of Paul became more and more inflamed with heavenly desires, as we learn from a letter which he wrote to his confessor, in which he speaks thus, “May the most holy cross of Jesus be ever planted in our hearts, in order that our souls may be engrafted upon this tree of life, and may produce worthy fruits of penance through the merits of the death of the Author of life. Oh! when shall we imitate perfectly this Divine Redeemer who emptied Himself? When shall we be so humble that our glory will consist in being the rejected of men and the outcasts of the people? When shall we be so simple and lowly that we shall think it our happiness to occupy the last place and our misfortune to be honored and esteemed? Ah! When? When? In charity pray that God may give us this grace.”

So great was his longing to unite himself closely with God and to transform himself into his sweet Redeemer, that he complained of being still interrupted in his prayer and distracted in his intimate communications with his only Good.

But it was some time, after so long a preparation of penance, that Paul should proceed with his brother to the spot where they could be admitted to the priesthood. In the month, therefore, of September, in the year 1726, they went to Rome, where they speedily devoted themselves to the practice of acts of charity worthy of their piety. Paul gives some account of their manner of life, in a letter written to the above-mentioned confessor, “We have arrived at Rome, by the grace of God, in good health, and we live at the Hospital of San Gallicano, where we daily increase in desire to consummate our sacrifice of love. The opportunity, however, has not yet been presented to us; but within eight or ten days the Pope will come to consecrate the church, and then we shall be enabled with holy joy to consecrate ourselves also entirely to our beloved Jesus in the persons

of His poor. Here we have much labor, many mortifications, and frequent occasions of self-abasement.”

The building of which the venerable servant of God speaks about being completed, when the church was opened, it fell to John Baptist to carry the cross during the sacred function. Cardinal Corradini, who was the patron of the charity, desired the brothers to take care that no spiritual aid should be wanting to the poor sick. Paul devoted himself to teaching the catechism and to giving instructions. Among other holy practices, he introduced there the custom of a general communion at certain times of the year. He was vigilant in preventing those abuses which are so apt to creep in and ruin the most holy works. But for this he gained little favor with those who ought to have been the first to second his zeal; and although perhaps they acted for the best, the only recompense he met with was mortification and ill-treatment. All was borne in peace and silence by our Paul, who had already rejoiced in the opportunity of self-abasement.

In the meanwhile, Cardinal Corradini, who was well acquainted with the irreproachable conduct of the two brothers and was highly satisfied with their active charity, showed them a daily increasing love and esteem. Apprehending the repugnance which their humility might feel at receiving holy orders, he commanded their ordination under holy obedience. He took upon himself the care of procuring the necessary credentials, and obtaining from the Pope, as a special favor, that they should be ordained for the service of the hospitals. The fervent youths complied. Thus, with the merit of obedience, they received the tonsure on February the 6th, 1727, from the hands of the then vicegent, Bishop Baccari. They were promoted to minor orders on the 23rd and 24th of the same month in the domestic chapel of the prelate.

On Holy Saturday, April 12th in the same year, after having performed the spiritual exercises in the house of St. Andrea di Monte Cavallo, then the novitiate of the Jesuit Fathers, they were ordained subdeacons in the Lateran Basilica. On May the 1st, with the apostolic permission for receiving orders *outside the regular times*, they were admitted to the diaconate. Finally, on Saturday in Ember week, the 7th of June, they were ordained priests in the Vatican Basilica by Pope Benedict XIII of holy memory. His Holiness, while imposing his hands upon Paul, pressed them on his head with peculiar earnestness, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit,” etc. When the ceremony was concluded, he joined his hands together in fervent prayer, giving thanks and repeating, “*Thanks be to God.*” After the function, although he had not spoken to any of the

newly ordained, with special affability he inquired of the penitent brothers whether they had received minor orders in their own country or in Rome, to which Paul meekly replied, “In Rome.”

After having been endowed in the sacrament of Holy Orders with a more abundant infusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it can be readily conceived that, if Paul’s soul was before inflamed with divine love, it became now, as it were, consumed with the ardor of his charity. The sentiments of faith, devotion, and tenderness, and the copious tears with which he said his first Mass on the Feast of the Holy Trinity were the fruits of this charity; hence it was, that for many years he never celebrated without weeping. He returned with fresh zeal to the service of the hospitals; and as he felt that the rank of the priesthood and the good of his neighbor required (as he wrote to a friend) great things of him, he applied himself with particular diligence to study. He sought the aid and guidance of enlightened men in order that he might diffuse abroad the food of holy doctrine, as well as the edification of good example, and be in the house of the Lord like the lamp of the sanctuary, which not only burns but illuminates. Almighty God was pleased to bless his holy purpose and virtuous application, so that he was enabled to attain all the knowledge necessary for preaching missions with spirit and benefit. Both he and his brother, who was remarkable for his knowledge of scripture, spoke with such force, precision, and propriety that it might well be said of them, “*They were imparting the word of truth without deviation*” (II Tim. 2:15).

CHAPTER XVII

How They Went Home to Lombardy on Account of Their Father’s Death and Afterwards Returned to the Hospital of St. Gallicano

Wise and holy men have never believed that any exercises of devotion or austerity could dispense them from the duties of their state, or from the obligation of love and reverence which they owe to those who gave them birth. While Paul and John were piously spending their days in the Hospital of St. Gallicano, news reached them of their father’s death. They lost no time in writing their widowed mother a letter full of consoling and encouraging sentiments:

“Live Jesus.

“Most dear Mother,

“The news of our father’s death has caused us, as you cannot doubt, great affliction, the more so as we have not yet received any distinct accounts of it. We bow before the holy will of God and pray that He may console you. Be comforted, dear mother, and let them not grieve at home, for we feel assured that our father is in paradise. I will say no more at present, for we shall set out as soon as possible and come to assist you in your need. We shall procure the necessary leave today, and shall only wait to arrange our affairs, so that we hope to commence the journey in the beginning of September. Pray for us. Tomorrow, and often afterwards, we shall say Mass for our departed father.

“Your most affectionate servants and sons,

“Paul Francis and John Baptist

“Rome, August 16, 1727”

In order, therefore, to give what comfort they could to their good mother, and to help their family with pious advice and direction, they went home to Castellazzo, where Paul wrote to a friend:

“The death of our father, whom I firmly trust God has taken to Himself, has recalled us into Lombardy for works of charity in our own household. After two months voyage, I was taken ill when I arrived, with tertian fever⁷ which has prevented my saying Mass for eighteen days.”

Having put in order the affairs of their family, the two brothers returned to Rome, leaving their mother consoled and revived by the holy thoughts with which they had inspired her, and their brothers and sisters excited to walk with fresh courage in the path of perfection. Paul always continued to communicate with them by letters and to give them advice worthy of his fervent spirit. He taught them to be faithful in prayer and to live in retirement and holy humility, saying that there was no better rule than to keep in solitude, to attend to themselves, and to open their hearts to all the sweet feelings of God’s holy love. “I know,” he said, “some poor people of this world who do great things for God and never give up prayer, although they are in poverty,

⁷ Malaria.

affliction and wretchedness. Happy they! because they know the truth and reject the lies of which this world is full.” “Thus spoke our Paul, burning, as he was, with an ardent desire to see all his kindred saints. Some years afterwards, when he lost his excellent mother, knowing the need in which his family stood of holy direction, he gave them many instructions, beside an attestation in writing of the virtues of their departed parent, in order to serve for example to those she had left behind. He wrote with touching affection to the oldest of those who were at home.

“My dearest brother Joseph,

I recommend to you a constant care and vigilance over our dear sisters. Let them remember that they are obliged, beyond all others, to give good example, and to become holy according to the instructions which I have given to them, both by word of mouth and in writing. Let them keep themselves retired, let them work and pray and frequent the holy sacraments. Above all, let them not suffer anyone to visit them, not even ecclesiastical persons, for, although these are supposed to be devout and holy, yet we must be prudent with everyone. Oh, what experience I have had of this during all the years of my missions! How often do I recommend it in my sermons! We must attend to ourselves with a filial confidence in Jesus Christ, in the Blessed Virgin, the angels and saints; but we must avoid the company of men. I do most firmly trust that our good sisters will be real saints and examples to those around them. Believe me, dearly beloved, you are the happiest people in the world, poor in this life, it is true, but rich in faith, rich for all eternity. Do you know why God keeps you in all this trouble and poverty? Because he wishes, by these means, to insure your everlasting happiness. Short and momentary will be your sufferings; eternal your rejoicings. Tell me what you would wish to have done if you were about to breathe you last. Would you desire to have had riches, which are so often accompanied by grievous sin, and be thrown into hell? Or would you have the poor life you actually lead and be transported into heaven? Be of good courage, then, look up to God, and believe for certain that He will never abandon you, that He will Himself assist you and provide you with all that is necessary. This is the true way to love our kindred, in Him who is the author of all union, by helping them in the paths of sanctity.”

CHAPTER XVIII

How They Left the Hospital of St. Gallicano and Retired to Monte Argentario, Where They Were Inspired by God to Form Their New Congregation

The true servants of God, when changing their place of abode, do not alter the resolution of their hearts. They carry with them everywhere the same fervor of spirit and the same desire of fulfilling the holy will of God. Hence, that which is the effect of caprice in those who are guided by their own inclinations is prudence and wisdom in such as follow the inspirations of Heaven.

After the return of Paul and his brother to Rome, they did not remain long in the Hospital of St. Gallicano, but speedily left it for reasons which will presently be explained. The principal motive for their conduct is manifested by Paul himself with admirable simplicity in a letter which he wrote to a worthy priest of Gaeta: "I have not yet been able to give you any account of our departure from our hospital for Monte Argentario, but I will now do so in order to show you how the grace of God has drawn us to that place, though at the time we knew it not. Many things happened to detain us in Lombardy, among which was my sickness, which lasted the entire winter. Then we were both ill almost all summer, and it became evident that the air did not agree with us. Upon our return to Rome, we found that the rules for the hospital were being drawn up, and one of the principal duties required of the attendants was bleeding the sick, which, although it was so great a work of charity, we had not the courage to undertake, and, in fact, we never desired to do it. We employed ourselves in all the other offices of the house, principally in the spiritual care of the sick, but not in this particular work. His eminence, the patron, seeing our faint heartedness in this respect, most kindly obtained a Brief from His Holiness, permitting us to return to our solitude." So far the servant of God. Another reason for their departure was the weakness of their health, which sank beneath their charitable labors, as they themselves acknowledged to Pope Clement XII when they asked him to change the title of their ordination from the service of the hospitals to the duties of the missions. But, far beyond all other motives, was the internal impulse in the heart of Paul, which he well knew came from our Lord, and which lovingly invited him to continue the holy work of his Congregation. Hence, he himself said to a good priest: "When our Lord desires to be glorified in his servants, He stimulates them continually with his grace until they follow the divine inspiration. I went and hid myself in the

Hospital of St. Gallicano, and even there our Lord visited me with repeated impulses until he drew me forth.”

It was impossible for our Paul to doubt that he was really called by God, for he had received a letter from that most enlightened man, Bishop Cavalieri, telling him that his stay in Rome was not in his opinion according to the designs of Providence in his behalf. “For,” said that wise bishop, “the idea of retiring into the hospital seems to me to be attended with every possible difficulty. I conceive that this employment is directly contrary to your vocation and to what our Lord has clearly shown He desires from you. We must hope against hope. Our salvation is nearer than we believe, for when Abraham sacrificed his son, he did not expect to be the father of the faithful. Have we not a still more sublime example? Our Savior promoted the glory of his Father in the opprobrium of his cross, and the Father glorified his Son in his very sufferings. *“I have glorified it and will glorify it again”* (Jn. 12:28). Out of his opprobrium did the Son look for the glory of His Father. *“I made known to them your name”* (Jn. 17:26). Courage, recoil not at difficulties. I hardly know what I have written.”

Unable to resist any longer the manifestations of God’s will, Paul and his brother retired to Monte Argentario, where, finding their old hermitage of the Annunziata occupied, they obtained the bishop’s permission to inhabit another cell, which was next to the Church of St. Antonio. Here they prayed day and night in perfect peace and a firm trust that our Lord would send them companions. Nor were they mistaken, for they were soon joined by three persons, two of whom were lay people and one a priest. What manner of life they led in this holy solitude, we learn from the words of one of their number, whose simplicity and clearness attest the truth of his recital, the veracity of which he indeed deposed upon oath. “After I was invested with the habit, I remained in the hermitage of St. Antonio, where there were five of us, Father Paul, Father John Baptist, Father Anthony, and his cousin’s brother, John Mary, and myself. The tenor of our life I will presently describe.

“The hermitage consisted of a little church and two rooms, one above the other. In the upper chamber we all slept upon straw, raised above the ground on boards. Each of these rude beds was separated by cloth curtains, so that we could not see one another. In the middle of the night, we all rose and went to church, where Father Paul and the two priests recited Matins, while I and my lay companion said the beads and other prayers. When Matins was over, we devoted an hour to

meditation, after which, four times a week, we took the discipline; then those who desired repose returned to bed, and the remainder occupied themselves in study or some profitable exercise. Before dawn we returned to the church for prime and tierce, and for another hour of mental prayer. The Fathers then celebrated Mass, and after the thanksgiving they remained some time in the lower room reading and writing. Father Paul and John Baptist then took their writings and went out separately into the wood; Father Anthony occasionally did the same, and we two lay brothers stayed at home, employed in different things, such as cultivating the little garden, collecting the wood, or cooking herbs and vegetables in a shed which fronted the hermitage and served us for a kitchen. An hour before noon, they all returned to the hermitage and proceeded to the church to recite Sext and None, after which we took our repast. Our food consisted of diverse pieces of bread we had received in alms, a little wine mixed with a great deal of water, a soup of herbs and vegetables, and a small portion of salt fish which had been given us in charity. After dinner we spent a short time in recreation, either in the lower room which served us for refectory, or in the shed which was our kitchen, and we again separated after reciting Vespers. In the evening we returned to the church for Compline, an hour mental prayer, and the rosary of our Blessed Lady. In the winter season we remained for some time in study and then had tea, for every day was observed as a fast, unless it were a feast of the Church.”

The writer concludes by saying that the life led by Father Paul made him appear in the eyes of his companions a most austere penitent, an angel in the flesh. This witness, who at that time wore the holy habit, was not able, on account of his health, to endure so severe a life. Thus, Father Paul, guided by a spirit of prudence, advised him to return home saying, “Son, you must acknowledge that your strength cannot sustain our austerities; therefore, it will be better for you to leave us. When you are stronger, we shall see you with pleasure, but you can never belong to us. Preserve in your heart the holy fear of God, and keep yourself in his grace, ever remembering what I say to you now that you will have a heavy cross to bear; carry it with patience and paradise will be yours.” The novice adds of himself, “I went home to Orbetello and all that Father Paul said to me has come true, and still continues to be verified.”

The same heavenly light by which the servant of God was enabled to foretell things to come gave him the knowledge of many past and hidden events. The priest Anthony, who was one of his earliest companions, walking out one morning, as he himself deposed upon oath in the

Processes, was tempted to eat some figs without permission and unknown to anyone. He carefully washed his mouth lest his fault should be discovered and he deemed himself quite secure since his brother, being employed in prayer, could not have observed him. But the servants of God are endowed with a superior light, which penetrates what ordinary eyes cannot discover. The moment Father Paul saw Anthony he said with a severe countenance, "What, have you eaten figs without leave?" The culprit was inclined to deny the fact, but feeling an interior reproach he confessed his fault. Father Paul replied, "In a few days you will have a fever as a punishment for your disobedience." Anthony made answer that he heard that "figs eaten in the morning were good for the health." "You will soon find that out," added Father Paul. In fact, he was shortly afterwards seized with a fever, the attacks of which were proportioned in number to the figs he had eaten.

With no less certainty upon another occasion did Paul disclose to the same priest the hidden thoughts of his heart. For, as they were one day walking together the servant of God asked him some questions to which he, without thinking, gave a prevaricating reply. Father Paul, turning to him, gravely said, "Take care that you do not utter a falsehood. I know very well that you are now thinking of such a thing, of such a person, and of such a place," and he clearly described what was passing in Anthony's mind. It is not to be wondered, therefore, that this priest, when questioned by the presiding bishop during the Processes upon the judgment he had formed of Father Paul, should reply, "I have always held him in the highest esteem, and your Lordship will allow that I had good grounds for my opinion since he disclosed to me my most secret thoughts." It is easy to imagine the exalted idea that must have been conceived of the servant of God by those who inhabited or visited Monte Argentario and became acquainted with his marvelous life. Several times it happened that persons walking in the woods near the hermitage heard a strange noise, and when they ran to discover the cause, to their great surprise, they beheld Father Paul disciplining himself with an iron chain or tormenting his body with other painful instruments

Thus did the little Congregation of the Passion begin and thus did Paul labor and suffer in order that it might increase with the blessing of God. As he loved to unite a vigorous life with a joyous spirit, he took great care that in their poor solitude they should keep the feast of the Church with all fitting devotion. While, therefore, they celebrated the functions of Holy Week with a fervent spirit of faith and love and deep feelings of compassion, they also solemnized as

well as they could the festivals of Easter, Christmas, and the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin. It was beautiful to see how all that was wanting in pomp and grandeur was supplied by piety and fervor. Like the ancient anchorites, upon those blessed solemnities Paul permitted his attenuated body some little relaxation. He set aside the usual austerity of his meals and partook of milk diet⁸ and eggs. The house in which he had assembled his companions was inconveniently small, but his spirit rejoiced because it was far from the tumult of the world, and he felt assured that our Lord, in His own good time, would find him a more suitable habitation. He opened his heart in a letter to a worthy priest in these terms, “This place is certainly well adapted for attaining exalted holiness on account of its perfect solitude. Our hermitage contains no more than two rooms, but if there were a hundred, there would be space enough left for recollection and silence. God might doubtless give us more rooms if he so willed, but we do not wish for them, and through his grace we live detached from all things, at least in desire. May the most holy will of God be ever accomplished in us.” And in another letter he says, “God is praised here day and night. As for me, *I am a man of unclean lips*” (Is. 6:5). Thus wrote one who was a master as well as model to others in the fervent practices of piety.

CHAPTER XIX

How the First Missions of Father Paul Were Favored with the Special Blessing of God

Prudent men have ever desired that those who are called to labor for the salvation of others should first, by a long trial of their own virtue, have acquired the strength necessary for enduring the hardships and overcoming the difficulties which they must meet with in seeking to draw souls out of the snares of hell. Moreover, that by fervent prayers and loving communications with Almighty God, they should obtain that abundance of spirit which may enable them to transfuse into others the overflowing sentiments of their own hearts. He who with such a preparation goes forth to announce the word of God will assuredly reap a plentiful harvest. His words will be so many sparks of fire if they proceed from a heart inflamed with love; his

⁸ Dairy products.

reproaches will be piercing darts if they are directed by a strong and ardent zeal; his threats will be thunderbolts to strike sinners if his virtue is a bright burning light before men.

Our Lord was pleased to manifest, by the success of Father Paul's missions and of all the other enterprises which he undertook for the good of his neighbor, the force and efficacy of his servant's zeal and the sanctity of his life. Knowing well what God desired of him, he went to Orbetello and Poretercole to give instructions in Christian Doctrine while John Baptist catechized the people of the Port of St. Stephano. Bishop Christoforo Palmieri of Soana, seeing the exemplary life of the two brothers, conferred upon them, after a brief examination, the faculty of hearing confessions in order that they might be of still greater service to the sinners whose cause they had so much at heart.

The will of God, in this respect, was no sooner declared to Paul by Bishop Palmieri, than he determined upon going down to Portercole every Saturday evening. He walked always barefooted along the steep and rugged path of the mountain. His feet were so pricked and wounded by thorns and stones that the road not infrequently streamed with his blood. In the summer he had to endure still greater suffering from the rays of the sun which fell upon his uncovered head with almost intolerable heat.

This was the more painful to him as he was by nature so delicate and feeble; but the weakness of his body was overcome by his ardent love of God and his insatiable thirst for the salvation of souls. When he reached Portercole, he generally asked for the keys of the collegiate chapel, and passed the night before the Blessed Sacrament praying for the abundant blessings of Heaven for those whom he had come to serve. Nor were his supplications unavailing, for their fruit was seen in the crowds of penitents who surrounded him not only upon the days he was accustomed to hear confessions but whenever he came into the town. Beholding his extreme poverty (we use the words of one who was an eyewitness and a distinguished soldier), his perfect detachment from the things of this world, his lowly bearing, and his subjection to inferiors, they recognized in him a true servant of God who sought to reclaim sinners, heedless of difficulties or repulses. They received with eager hearts the good seed he scattered amongst them and brought forth such fruits of virtue that when the Spanish troops entered Portercole, the city was the admiration of all the officers who said they had never beheld so pious a town.

It would seem that God wished to reward, even with temporal blessings, the docility with

which his servant had been listened to. One day when the air was loaded with a heavy tempest which threatened to destroy the vintage, Father Paul, at the insistence of the terrified inhabitants, made the sign of the cross in the air with a crucifix, and the hail which fell left the grapes untouched while it withered and killed the leaves around them.

Besides the food of the word of God, which the two brothers unceasingly dispensed to all in the neighborhood of Portercole, they went out during the spring and autumn seasons to preach missions wherever they were asked by the bishops and ordinaries. It is not difficult to conceive what must have been the effect of their preaching when the sight of them alone was a sermon. These two missionaries, coming forth out of their solitude with their rough garb of sackcloth, their uncovered head and bare feet, recalled the memory of the great precursor of the desert or of the apostles of Christ, who announced, like them, in perils and in poverty the gospel of peace. Their labors commenced in the Diocese of Soana; they went next into that of Acquapendente; they preached in Tuscany and in part of the Maremme of the Patrimony of St. Peter; and they extended the missions to Giglio Capraja and the Island of Elba. Their toils were unceasing and, as was deposed by one who witnessed them, their sufferings were inexpressible. Wherever they preached, crowds of persons followed, beseeching them to hear their confessions and reconcile them with God.

Their severest labors were upon the coast of Tuscany, which teemed with bandits and public robbers. At that time the laudable custom of giving up convicted malefactors to their respective states had not yet been introduced. Father Paul, seeing the miserable state of those unhappy men and the need in which they stood of help, devoted his days and nights to effect their conversion and treated them with marvelous charity and gentleness. Nor was Father John Baptist backward in following the example of his fervent brother. He suffered greatly from the incessant toil which he imposed upon himself, and in his later years he acknowledged how much those missions had cost him, "I ruined my constitution," he said, "when we preached in Tuscany; I stood much in need of nourishment at that time, but I was engaged the whole morning hearing confessions and so could take nothing before dinner." From this confession of John Baptist we may judge of what was endured by Father Paul, who had to bear the heavier portion of the labor. His stomach became so weak that he never entirely recovered, and his death was finally caused by his inability to swallow any food, except a little sugar and water.

Their journeys were not the least toilsome part of their missionary duties for they always walked barefoot with uncovered heads and nothing but a simple tunic to defend them from the inclemency of the weather. When they arrived at their destination, drenched with rain or frozen with cold, they sought no other refreshment but retiring to the nearest church to pray before the Blessed Sacrament, which to them was like a burning furnace of love. They then resumed their apostolic labors with renewed earnestness, entirely forgetting how much they needed both food and rest. The missions concluded, they were soon upon the road again, walking vigorously, although their frail bodies were almost worn out. Their exhaustion was at times so complete that Father Paul once, sitting down by the roadside, fell fast asleep in the midst of some briars without feeling the pricks of the thorns. Nothing could daunt the courage of our Paul; he went from one mission to another, just as the voice of his Lord called him. Nor would he give up his work when attacked by evident illness, as was proved by his conduct when sent for to preach at Farnese. He was then under medical treatment, and no one could look at his attenuated frame without compassion; so much so, that a man whom he met a few miles from the town, and whom he sent before to say that the missionaries were coming, exclaimed, when he had delivered the message, "As for these missionaries, to look at them you would say that one at least was a dying man."

But Father Paul had no sooner mounted the platform than, conquering the weakness of his body by the strength of his zeal, he preached with so much force, vivacity, and fervor that the people were almost stupefied with surprise and admiration. No wonder that the mysteries of our faith, announced in such burning words and exemplified in such marvelous lives, should have struck the hardest hearts and converted the most obdurate sinners. As soon as the missions had terminated, the servant of God was in the habit of retiring joyfully into his beloved solitude, for he had deeply impressed upon his heart those words of his Divine Redeemer, "Come you apart, into a desert place and rest a little." This quotation was very often on his lips, and he instilled its spirit into all the missionaries of the Congregation. He took care that our retreats should be mostly situated in secluded spots, in order that when their labors were over, the missionaries might restore their diminished strength and acquire new fervor of spirit by being entirely removed from all outward distractions. He wished them to beware with the apostle, lest, while they preached to others, they should themselves become castaways.

While the fame of Father Paul's virtues became daily more extended, his missions, his voyages, and his labors increased in proportion. Besides the sufferings, which were almost inevitable to him from his scanty clothing and bare feet, he had much to endure from the accidents which befell him upon his journeys. He was once traveling with his brother towards Pitigliano, when they lost their way in the woods during a heavy shower of rain. It was in the depth of winter, and when night came on, wet as they were, they could find no better shelter than a tree under which they were obliged to remain. The rain was followed by intense cold; in the morning they found their hair was frozen upon their heads. Tortured with this exposure to the inclemency of the weather, they were awaiting the appearance of the sun to effect a slight thaw and enable them to continue their journey when they were recognized by a compassionate priest, accidentally passing by, to whom they were well known, and who treated them with all the kindness and attention their condition required.

We must not omit that our Lord was pleased more than once to work prodigies in favor of his faithful servants, especially in behalf of Father Paul. Upon one occasion he and his companions were preserved dry amidst a shower of rain which fell around them, as is distinctly attested by diverse witnesses worthy of faith, to whom we shall refer in the sequel. At other times, in order that Paul's abject dress might not have the appearance of extravagant singularity among those who could not comprehend his spirit, Divine Providence worked miracles in his behalf, such as one which took place while he was journeying to the holy house of Loreto. He had received a letter from Doctor Gherardini to one of his relations, Don Pietro Bianchi of Perugia. When he arrived in that city, Don Pietro, seeing his dress and appearance, began to suspect him to be an impostor; he therefore sent him to dine with his servant and was going to make him sleep in the same room with him. His sister, however, suggesting that this might appear disrespectful to their relation who had written to recommend our Paul, allotted a separate room for his use. Still doubtful of his guest, he locked the door upon him and carried away the key, so that no one could leave the apartment.

Paul made no complaint nor did he appear the least offended at the suspicions cast upon him. He only begged that the door might be opened early in the morning as he wished to pursue his journey. His host paid little attention to his words, and the next morning slept securely, knowing well that Father Paul could not leave the house without his concurrence. In the meantime the

sister went to see if the door had been opened. Finding it shut, she reproached her brother for keeping it still locked. He replied, "How do you know what might have happened to us?" However, giving her the key, he sent her to the room. She opened the door and then to her great surprise found that Paul was no longer there. He had doubtless been carried away by the hand of the Lord, who whenever he wills works such wonderful miracles in his faithful servants.

CHAPTER XX

The First Companions Abandon Blessed Paul, and in Their Stead God Sends Him Others. The Building of the First Retreat and Church Is Begun on Monte Argentario under the Title and Invocation of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The thoughtful reader has doubtless reflected with astonishment upon the marvelous acts of penance and self-abnegation which we have endeavored faintly, albeit faithfully, to record. We have been obliged to compress in a few words a perfect compendium of every kind of mortification, fasts and vigils, hair-shirts and disciplines, snatches of repose taken upon hard boards, and long journeys always performed walking and barefoot. All these form a noble edifice of which, we see indeed, the grandeur of the whole. But we know not the toil and labor bestowed upon the construction of each separate part. Some idea may perhaps be formed of the peculiar and magnanimous perseverance of Paul and his brother, when we relate how short a time they were accompanied in their arduous enterprise by those who had joined them at first with sincere desires of perfection. One after another they all abandoned Monte Argentario and left Paul and John Baptist alone in their retirement. Doubtless this was a heavy blow to our Paul, but hope was strong within him and his trustful spirit was not easily shaken.

"Our vessel," he said in a letter to one of his friends, "is upon the open sea, with neither sails nor oars; but it is guided by the great Captain who knows how to conduct it to a safe harbor. We are in the midst of storms and tempests, but his wisdom and his might shine all the brighter for the perils which encompass us. Blessed be God for giving us something to suffer for His love. The works with which he inspires us must struggle with difficulties, in order that they may exhibit the magnificence of his power. The more our labors cost us, the higher will they soar. "*The Lord brings one close to death, down to the underworld, then back again*" (I Sam. 2:6). Let

us all pray one for another, that we may conquer the enemies that stand in battle array against us, and that victory may be given us through Jesus Christ our Lord. May the most holy will of God be ever accomplished in us; for that is the great end of a devout life. May we despise ourselves and be closely united with this blessed will. Amen.”

God did not permit his servant to be deceived in his expectations, for He speedily sent him some new disciples, whose fervor of spirit and sanctity of life gave him much consolation and support. Among the most faithful and zealous of these was Father Fulgenzio of Jesus, a man of austere life, of wonderful patience in the sicknesses he had constantly to endure, of amiable sweetness of spirit, and of such winning manners that no one seemed able to resist his influence. The other companion, who deserves particular mention for his uncommon virtue, was a certain Brother Joseph of our Lady, a native of Augusta in Sicily, who, although a layman, was of much assistance in the missions, and by his fervent prayer contributed greatly to their success. After leading a life of exemplary holiness, he truly died that death of the just which is precious in the sight of the Lord. Hence, Paul wrote of him, “I have great confidence that his death has been precious ‘*in the sight of the Lord.*’ He burned with desire to fly up to heaven and to be united with God.”

Paul now began to think seriously of building a house for himself and his companions, as well as a spacious church, in order that their Rule might be strictly observed and the sacred functions decorously performed. He did not tremble at the expense which such an undertaking would necessarily entail, for deeply impressed upon his heart was that golden maxim that the foundations thereof ought to be laid in prayer. Most fully and fervently, therefore, did he recommend his design to God. One day when he was walking alone and turning over this thought in his mind, he came to the spot opposite the town of Orbetello, where the Retreat of the Presentation now stands. He knelt down according to his custom to adore in spirit the Blessed Sacrament preserved in the church of that city, and he then felt a special inspiration to recite the Litanies of our Blessed Lady. While he was praying, our Lord was pleased to visit him with a rapture in which He clearly revealed to him that upon that very ground would be built the first retreat of the Congregation. Being thus assured of the will of God, which he ever implicitly obeyed, he addressed a humble supplication to the town of Orbetello, that he might be enabled to follow out the Divine inspiration. The citizens received his proposition with much kindness and

unanimously consented to his project.

Circumstances, however, prevented him from carrying it into execution immediately, and it was not until two years afterwards that, when he was preaching a mission in Orbetello, the inhabitants were so moved by his zeal and by certain prodigies, which happened at the time, that they entered enthusiastically into his undertaking and took the work into their own hands. Desirous to see the building commenced, they collected a considerable sum for the purpose, so that at last the foundations of the house were laid upon the plan which Paul himself had traced out on the ground with his staff, which combined in a very striking manner both holy poverty and monastic decency. The venerable Founder was soon called away to preach the Lent at Piombino, but he left his brother to superintend the work. John Baptist eagerly watched the progress of the edifice, and finding that the supply of water, being at a great distance, occasioned much expense and delay, he had recourse in all simplicity to that God who causes the streams to flow and the torrents to gush forth. He went out one day, carrying the cross at the head of a little procession to a site near the place where the laborers were engaged. He prayed for a while and then ordered them to dig where he pointed; in a few minutes they found a stream of the purest and most clear water, which had never before been discovered. They employed it for the purposes of the building, and it still serves for the use of the religious who live there and for the refreshment of the travelers who pass that way. Thus was God's visible protection shed upon the rising edifice. The walls were already six feet above the ground when Paul returned from Piombino. But their progress was suddenly arrested by the Spanish army coming to lay siege to Monte Filippo. The tumult of war rendered it impossible to continue the work. Paul, submitting to the Divine dispensation, tranquilly waited for a seasonable time, and employed himself while the siege lasted in many deeds of heroic charity, which we are now about to recount.

CHAPTER XXI

How Paul Devoted Himself to Works of Charity During the Siege of Monte Filippo. How the Building of the Retreat Was Completed and the New Church Opened to His Great Consolation

Undisturbed by the tumult and agitation of the world, the true servants of God are ever at peace and always ready to promote the good of their neighbors upon any occasion that may be offered them. Hence, while the Spaniards, encamped at the foot of Monte Argentario, kept in a state of siege both Orbetello and the fortress of Monte Filippo (which were at that time in the power of Austria), Paul embraced the opportunity of practicing continual acts of charity. Sometimes he was obtaining pardon for deserters, who by the laws of military discipline were condemned to death; sometimes he was employing himself in other kind offices; but most frequently was he listening to confessions and receiving with open arms the penitents who crowded to kneel at his feet. He heard everyone who came to him, although his ignorance of the Spanish language cost him much additional time and trouble. His life was several times imperilled by his labors, particularly during the summer season when he used to go down to the camp in the open plain, exposed to the burning rays of the midday sun.

The life of the servant of God was at the same time in more evident danger, because the Spanish camp, being continually bombarded by the cannon of the fortress, the balls fell here and there, killing first one, then another. But the venerable Father, with that charity which burns the more brightly in proportion to the trouble and danger which it meets, hastened first to one point then to another as necessity required and courageously went on in the exercise of his ministry. He even went so far as to take his place under the fire of the artillery, where the balls fell the closest, to hear the confession of a poor soldier, who was wounded in that very part of the camp. After the towns had surrendered, the fame of his sanctity became very great, in both the Spanish and Austrian armies, as well as among the inhabitants of the surrounding country. Upon the restoration of peace, Paul's first thought was the continuation of the building of his retreat, but as he found that even the abundant alms of the good citizens of Orbetello were exhausted by the expense of transporting materials into so remote a place, he resolved upon making a journey with his brother to Naples, in order to implore from Don Carlos, the King of the Two Sicilies, not only assistance in his undertaking but likewise approval of his work. He was received with singular affability by that pious sovereign, who immediately ordered that a hundred pistoles should be given him, as a sort of a pledge of the munificence with which he afterwards assisted our poor Congregation. Paul returned from Naples to watch joyfully the daily progress of his building, and in order to hasten its completion, he himself and his companions used to help the

workmen with their own hands. They chose for themselves the most painful and laborious tasks they could find. After toiling all the day, they walked back at night along the rude mountain path to their old hermitage of St. Anthony. Their number now amounted to nine, so there could be but little comfort in those two close and narrow cells, which served for their dormitories. What with the heat, the close atmosphere, and the insects, their repose was rather fresh torment than a rest for their weary bodies. Paul, who was the father and leader of them all, animated his little band both by words and example, although he had still more acute sufferings to endure from the opposition the devil raised to impede the progress of the edifice, which was to contain so many holy men. How deeply he felt this cross and how resignedly he bore it may be gathered from an extract of a letter he wrote to a devout friend, in which he says, "O my God! how the powers of Hell conspire against me! How busy are evil tongues! I scarcely know which way to turn. Men persecute me with good will, for so I am willing to believe, and devils with malice. We must pray fervently for tempests are rising on all sides and contrary winds are blowing against us. If you only knew the troubled waters in which your poor Paul is struggling! God be praised for all. His scourge hangs over me in an inexplicable manner, and I fear it will become heavier every day. Pray that he may chastise me with mercy, and that he may preserve the soul that has cost Him so dear."

Paul's conduct was in accordance with the sentiments he expressed and was full of the most tender charity towards those who opposed, insulted, and derided him. That the number of these was however but few, he himself tells us. "Through the disposition of God's gracious Providence, the devout people of Orbetello are all longing to build us a retreat and a church in honor of the Presentation of our Blessed Lady, and the neighboring town of Portercole is also well disposed in our favor."

Still, his enemies, few as they were, did all they could to discredit and prejudice the servant of God and to throw contempt on his undertaking. The good Father sought to disarm their malice by every possible kindness. If he met them in the streets, he saluted them with affectionate cordiality; if they came to the retreat, he accosted them lovingly, made them eat and drink with him, and would not let them depart until he had given them some little pious present. Thus did this true disciple of Christ overcome evil with good, and thus, after suffering the storms which God had permitted should be raised against him, did he deserve to obtain peace and tranquillity

for his reward.

The long-wished-for day arrived at last, the first retreat of the Congregation of the Passion was completed, and upon the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 1737, the Church of the Presentation was solemnly consecrated by the Vicar General of Orbetello, who was empowered to perform the ceremony by Cardinal Altieri. A Brief was obtained from Pope Clement XII, dated August 31st, of the same year, and then Father Paul and his companions took possession of their house. The servant of God, writing to the same pious friend, speaks of the event in these terms, “After some trouble we procured a Brief from Rome. When the church and house had been blessed, our little Congregation made its solemn entry into the retreat on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. It was my office to head this procession with the cross. I was followed by eight companions, four priests and four brothers. The function concluded with a discourse suitable to the occasion. All serve God fervently here, except the unworthy writer of this epistle.”

In order to render the solemnity still more imposing, some of the Spanish soldiers brought their musical instruments and made the mountains re-echo the praises of him in whose honor this new temple had been erected. Father Paul was not, however, fully satisfied with his church, because he had not yet obtained for it the blessing of the Sacramental Presence. He thus opened his heart in a letter to one of his penitents, who afterwards entered the Congregation and died in the odor of sanctity, “Our retreat is built, our cells are finished, and nothing more remains to be done but to arrange and decorate everything in the church, so that we may place therein the most Holy Sacrament. Oh my God! how does each single hour appear to me a thousand while I am waiting to behold my Love enthroned within our tabernacles! How do I long to pass my time at the foot of his altar! Who will give me the wings of the dove, that I may fly to his Sacred Heart!”

Three years passed before his desires could be fulfilled, but at last this privilege was granted him by Cardinal Altieri. Full of joy and gratitude, the servant of God wrote to Count Garagni of Turin, a holy priest to whom he was much attached, in these terms, “I have just received the necessary permission for retaining the Blessed Sacrament in our church. This morning, after a solemn Mass, we placed it in our tabernacle, and then we sang the *Te Deum Laudamus* in thanksgiving for so precious a favor. My only trouble is that my poor heart cannot possess a single spark of the true love of God, or it would never would have resisted his calls, but would

have been overwhelmed and annihilated at the sight of all the graces and mercies which his infinite goodness has heaped upon such a monster of ingratitude.”

The Rescript which Father Paul mentions arrived at the very moment when such a permission would carry with it the greatest spiritual consolation, for it reached the retreat upon the Feast of Corpus Christi, while the entire church was employed in honoring with the tenderest sentiments of love and devotion the most August and adorable of mysteries. Doubtless it so happened by the particular disposition of God, as was observed by Cardinal Rezzonico (afterwards Pope Clement XIII), when he wrote to Paul in the following words, “I cannot but believe that Divine Providence specially ordained that the arrival of the vicar of Barletta should be postponed until Corpus Christi, in order that you might profit by Cardinal Altieri’s permission for the first time on that glorious feast. Greatly do I rejoice, therefore, because I trust that your pious adoration may have made some reparation for the irreverences which are too often committed in the world against the Blessed Sacrament of the altar.”

This holy cardinal had first become acquainted with our Paul through the means of Bishop Crescenzi, and he had conceived so high an esteem for him that he frequently invited the servant of God to make use of his palace while he was in Rome, telling him he would find there a poor lodging like his own cell at the retreat, and that he would have full liberty to follow out his holy exercises and preserve his loved retirement. And when he had once received him into his house, his love and attachment increased to such a degree that he became of great use to the Congregation and served it upon all occasions with loving alacrity and zeal. He once wrote to Father Paul, “It is very consoling to me to think that our Lord should have permitted me to help you in the smallest trifle, and that He should have inspired Bishop Crescenzi to give me anything to do for you.”

CHAPTER XXII

How Benedict XIV Approved by Rescript the Rule of the New Congregation Presented to Him by Father Paul

When the building of the retreat was finished, nothing seemed wanting to complete the

spiritual joy and consolation of Father Paul. He was at last fixed in a solitude of his own, in a spot which breathed, or rather invited, holiness. His venerated superior, Cardinal Altieri, notwithstanding the rumors which some evil-disposed persons spread of his disaffection toward the Congregation, testified towards it the most special marks of his favor. He made use of Father Paul and his companions to preach his missions, and he had painted, at his own expense, a magnificent picture of the Presentation of Our Blessed Lady for the decoration of the high altar of their church.

The holy Founder, meanwhile, cultivated with zealous care a true religious spirit among his disciples. Meditating day and night upon the law of the Lord, they flourished like trees planted near running waters, while Paul, looking round upon his little band, sighed for the time when God's blessing might enable fresh vineyards to be planted and more laborers set to work. It was just while he was waiting in faith and patience for the aid of Divine Providence that he heard of the accession of Benedict XIV, that great ornament of his age, to the chair of St. Peter. At this joyful news Father Paul felt so much interior consolation that it will be well to extract his own words from a letter he wrote on the occasion to the Abbe Garagni.

“I felt an extraordinary commotion in my heart, such as I have never before experienced, and which inspired me with a lively hope that this was the holy and zealous pastor destined to restore the failing piety of Christendom. I immediately burst forth into praises and blessings of the Most High for the signal mercy shown towards his sinning people.”

From this great Pontiff, Father Paul confidently hoped to obtain all the countenance and support necessary for establishing and propagating his little Congregation. In the meanwhile, he wrote to Cardinal Rezzonico, who was always ready for works of charity, begging him to mention the new Institute to the Holy Father. The good cardinal, having spoken to the Pope and ascertained his favorable sentiments upon the subject, answered Father Paul in these words:

“I presented myself yesterday before His Holiness and gave him (so to speak) a rough sketch of your holy Institute, explaining to him the sacred end for which it had been founded and the great good to be derived therefrom when the Constitutions should have received the approbation of the Holy See. He listened to me with the greatest attention, and then desired me to let you know that whenever any of your Order could bring the Constitutions to Rome for approval, he hoped to be able to grant all that you wish.”

Father Paul himself carried his Constitutions to the feet of His Holiness, and a particular Congregation, composed of Cardinals Corradini and Rezzonico, with the Abbe Garagni, was immediately deputed to examine them and pronounce an opinion. The investigation was conducted with all the application, discretion, and prudence demanded by so important an affair. With the exception of a few trifling mitigations, the examiners gave their unqualified approbation on the 30th of April, 1741, and with this decision they presented both Rules and Constitutions to the Pope. His Holiness, by an apostolic Rescript, dated May 15, joyfully added his own solemn approval of an Institute whose object being to awaken in the hearts of the faithful the memory of the Passion of Christ, was esteemed by him to contribute no less to the glory of our Divine Redeemer, than to the advantage of the souls he died to save. Consequently, so the Holy Father was heard to say, that this Congregation of the Passion had come into the world last, while it ought to have been the first. And thus it was that our Lord recompensed at length all the toils and privations, the humiliations and sufferings, the vigils and penances which his servant had so patiently borne, particularly the many weary voyages that he made to Rome for this long-wished-for approval. In one of these he and his brother John Baptist narrowly escaped with their lives, for they were exposed in their usual scanty clothing to the rigors of an uncommonly severe winter. Pierced through and through with the intensity of the cold, they must have fallen dead upon the road if Almighty God in His compassion had not wonderfully delivered them. It was the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. Out of gratitude for their merciful preservation, as well as for many other favors obtained by the intercession of that apostle, Father Paul caused this feast to be celebrated every year in the Congregation with particular solemnity.

CHAPTER XXIII

How Paul, after Obtaining the Papal Approbations by an Apostolic Brief, Was Joined by Some New Companions

After the Rule had been approved by the papal Rescript, God was pleased to send Paul some associates who were of great assistance to him. Amongst these we may mention Father Marc Aurelio Pastorelli, first a priest of Christian Doctrine, and afterwards a religious of the Passion

under the name of Marc Aurelio of the Blessed Sacrament. He was a man of much learning, but of still more piety, and although of delicate constitution, was thoroughly imbued with the spirit of penance. Father Paul wrote of him, “A valuable laborer has been sent to us and to our missions. Oh, how good is Providence!” Animated by the words, and far more by the example of their holy Founder, these new disciples gave themselves up to a life of such fervent penance and uninterrupted retirement that upon Monte Argentario might be seen revived the sanctity of the ancient anchorites. They vied with one another in mortifications and self-abasement. They were all men of prayer and spent many hours of the day and night in that holy exercise.

Father Paul could not but deeply rejoice in beholding the graces with which he was given by God and the loving-kindness with which he was treated by his Vicar on earth, the Sovereign Pontiff. All this gave him fresh courage to pursue his work, and his next step was to ensure its stability by obtaining another confirmation from the Pope in the form of an apostolic Brief. Accordingly, he went again to Rome, and as he had already contracted obligations to his eminence, Cardinal Albani, who had both the power and the will to forward every good work, he applied to him with great humility and confidence to request that he would be the bearer of the petition to His Holiness. The Pope received it graciously, and as it was necessary to re-examine the Rules and Constitutions, he appointed for this purpose a Congregation composed of the Cardinals Annibale Albani, Anthony Saverio Gentili, and Giovacchino Besozzi. Such a deputation must have given great hope to Father Paul, for they were all men of singular prudence and piety. Cardinal Crescenzi, who had not lost his love for the poor Congregation, nor his desire for its speedy establishment, wrote of the affair in these terms, “The choice which His Holiness has made of the Cardinals Albani, Gentili, and Besozzi for the revision of the Rules is greatly to be praised, since their eminences are full of virtue and piety, and will doubtless draw a special grace from God upon their decision. I have written to Cardinal Gentili upon the subject and begged him to communicate my opinion to his colleagues.”

The deliberation, however, proceeded slowly, and as it was impossible to hasten the conclusion, Father Paul determined to go back to his solitude, leaving all his fears and anxieties to the tender care of Divine Providence. There had not been wanting, even during his stay in Rome, in the midst of all his distractions and inquietudes, some of those sweet consolations which our Lord is often pleased to drop into this bitterest chalice of His servants' troubles.

Before his return, he had received into the Congregation, D. Thomas Struzziere, a priest well known for his learning and piety, and who had already labored in the apostolic missions with much fruit. When clothed with the habit of the Passion, he took the name of Thomas of the Side of Jesus, and he lived in the Order with so much regularity and fervor, that Paul spoke of him in a letter thus, "Father Thomas is a true instrument of the glory of God; he is a pillar of the faith; he suffers and does great things; and he is ready to give up his life for the Congregation." This faithful priest, so full of the Spirit of God, had hardly been made known to Father Paul in the Church of the Conception of the Capuchin nuns, than there grew up between them an intimate union of holy charity, which increased as long as they lived. When Father Tommaso was admitted into the Order, which his friend had founded, he became remarkable for his lowliness and simplicity of heart, for his love of penance and his special gifts of prayer. During missions, the grace of God which had abounded in him showed itself in the power he had of touching and winning the hearts of all who approached him. In the management of secular affairs, he was distinguished for a rare and Christian prudence, joined to undeviating meekness and perfect integrity of soul. He was sent in the role of theologian to the Island of Corsica, with Bishop Angelis, the apostolic visitor. He was then appointed by Clement XIII, to whom he was well known, Bishop of Tiene, and afterwards declared Vicar General and Suffragan of the Visitor. Upon the sudden death of the latter, he was himself constituted apostolic Visitor in Corsica, in which office he was loved and revered as a Father by the whole island, and held in such honor by the officers and troops of the French army, that his most Christian Majesty, by a gift worthy of his liberality, was pleased to testify the esteem with which his virtues had inspired him. Afterwards, as Bishop of Amelia, he governed the church to the great profit of souls. Then he was transferred to the See of Todi, where he ended his labors full of years and good works by a peaceful and happy death.

After making this valuable acquisition for his Order, Father Paul commenced his journey back to Monte Argentario. He had hardly reached Orbetello before he fell ill and was confined to his bed for nearly six months with the most acute sufferings. He never entirely recovered from this violent attack, and during all the rest of his life remained feeble and lame. The torments he endured in his sickness were so terrible that he could not swallow the least food without intense pain, and for forty days and nights he never closed his eyes in sleep. He used to turn towards the

image of his dear Lady which stood near him, begging her to obtain that he might be able to sleep at least for one hour. When this was not granted him, he implored half an hour's repose, and at last only a quarter, but the Blessed Virgin, doubtless knowing it to be the will of her Son that his servant should receive no relief, did not obtain his request. He asked the prayers of all his spiritual children, but they seemed of no avail, and his sufferings only increased. To his pains of body were united those of the mind. He was overwhelmed with a desolation of spirit and tormented with attacks of demons, who were frequently the companions of his illnesses. Nevertheless, he preserved his interior constancy, and full of strength in his Lord who was at hand to console him, he pursued his labors, even from his bed of sickness, and continued to take all the necessary steps to procure the papal Brief which he had so much at heart. For this end he wrote the most urgent letters, he smoothed the difficulties which were placed in his ways, and he carefully watched that nothing should be done in the matter which did not tend to the greater glory of God.

Having heard that it was being considered to concede to the retreat the power of possessing certain revenues, the venerable Founder thought this contrary to the spirit of poverty which Almighty God demanded from his new Congregation. He therefore called Father Thomas of the Holy Side of Jesus, and having discussed the affair, assisted by those lights which always guide the true servants of God, he wrote to Cardinal Annibale Albani a letter full of so much zeal, supported by such strong arguments, and expressed in such convincing words, that his eminence was thoroughly persuaded to abandon the design. Hardly could our saintly invalid rise from his bed of suffering, than he hastened to his dear children at Monte Argentario, from where, though still weak and lame, he very shortly set out for Rome. When there, his eminence Cardinal Albani caused him to be charitably received in the convent of St. Andrea of the Minims, of which he was the patron. Father Paul was welcomed there with affectionate kindness and gave great edification to the whole house by his saintly and innocent life. During this sojourn in Rome the good Father suffered more than ever, for he had to exert himself almost beyond his strength and to drag himself about oppressed with his bodily infirmities and tormented by the severity of the weather. It was no slight fatigue to ascend the long staircases of those lofty Roman palaces and, when he had at length reached the waiting room, to wait a considerable time before he could obtain an audience. It may be imagined, too, how painful this was to one who so much loved

solitude, retirement, and silence. With all his exertions it was two months before the Brief could be expedited. New difficulties were continually arising to try his patience just when everything appeared settled, so that the poor Father's exertions at last reduced him to such extremities that he could scarcely stand upon his feet. He, however, kept himself closely united to the cross of Jesus and waited meekly and patiently until our Lord was pleased to come to his aid. The cardinals were at last unanimous in deciding that the Rules should be approved by Brief, and Cardinal Albani entrusted to a suitable person the task of translating them into Latin. This man, being one day visited by Father Paul in the midst of his occupations, displayed some rudeness and ill temper towards the servant of God. But the good Father, who had still more humility in his heart than abjection in his dress, threw himself on his knees before him, and thus disarmed his anger and restored him to tranquillity. The Rules, being translated and presented with a favorable recommendation to His Holiness, this great Pontiff was pleased to command the immediate publication of the Brief, which was accordingly done on the 28th of March, 1746, an ever memorable day, as Father Paul himself said when he wrote the following to one of his spiritual children, "Most dear and beloved Father Fulgenzio. In this place I am deprived of your valuable letters. I have already made a gentle complaint to your Reverence and your charity will doubtless cause you to compassionate my poor and imperfect soul, but in the meanwhile I ask your pardon with all my heart. Thanks be to God, on Monday in Passion week, when the Gospel for the day was, "*Let the one who is thirsty come to me and drink...*" (Jn. 7:37), the Vicar of Christ gave with his own hands the Rescript of the Brief for the confirmation of our Rules. It is now being drawn up by the proper authorities. I went yesterday to the feet of His Holiness to thank him and to beg further favors of him; he told me that he would speak for me to the Cardinal-Secretary of Briefs. I say nothing of the wonderful Providence of God, who, notwithstanding all our efforts and diligence, would not permit us to obtain our desire before these mystical days of his Son's passion. Your Reverence will recall that despite all the efforts we used, we could not enter into our retreat nor celebrate the Divine Sacrifice until the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. The first song we sang in our church was "*May I never boast of anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Gal. 6:14). These are marvelous things, which, together with many others, must be long remembered among us. I cannot relate them now; but when God permits it, you will hear of them. The Brief cannot be expedited before Low Sunday;

his eminence will send it to me. All goes on well respecting the ordinations, indulgences, etc. I can do nothing but thank God for his loving care of the Congregation, and I feel daily more assured that it is his own special work. All Rome (so to speak), both prelates and religious, think the same. God has powerfully helped me; I can truly say it is a miracle of his mercy that the affair has been brought to this happy conclusion. I will let you know when the time comes for our solemn thanksgiving; in the meantime, you will not cease praising and blessing the Almighty. March 30, 1746.”

After the approbation of the Rules came that of the rites of clothing and professing. Then Father Paul adopted as the seal of the Congregation the shield, like the emblem which he carried on his breast, with the palm on one side and the olive branch on the other, to signify the victory of the cross of Jesus and the peace and reconciliation brought into the world by his passion and death. Father Paul writes again in these words to Father Fulgenzio, “Upon the day of the Commemoration of St. Paul, the 30th of this month, you will have the goodness to begin the solemn Triduum *for thanksgiving* with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, to be terminated on the Feast of the Visitation of Most Holy Mary. Let all pray with great earnestness and fervor for an apostolic spirit; let all implore Jesus to send down upon us the Holy Spirit. I have said all in a few words. But for myself, a poor sinner, spoiling the work of God by my unworthy life, what shall I say? Casting myself down at the feet of all, after having asked pardon for the scandal given by my negligence and tepidity, I entreat of them to implore the forgiveness of God for my many grievous sins. Since I cannot give them the example of a good life, let them beg of Almighty God to take me away from them by a holy death. For the love of God, let them not refuse me this charity. I have a firm belief that if they comply with my request, God will make them all saints, and I know well what I am saying. 4 June 23, 1746.”

CHAPTER XXIV

How the Regular Novitiate Was Formed, and Father Paul Elected at the First Chapter Superior of the Whole Congregation. How Clearly His Conduct Manifested That He Was Convinced by the Spirit of God.

Father Paul went home to his *ritiro* of St. Angelo (the foundation of which we have already related) full of joy and consolation, bringing with him the Apostolic Brief, like a loving father carrying to his children a precious gift from distant lands. His first thought upon his arrival was to form a perfect novitiate, which, like a nursery of young plants, might bring forth plentiful fruits to the glory of God. Knowing that the progress of the novices depends principally upon the direction of their master, who can make them assume whatever form he pleases, he chose for this important office Father Marc Aurelio of the Most Holy Sacrament, whose doctrine, prudence, and piety were well known and whose reputation was increased by the singular profit which the novices derived from his guidance. The postulants, who were twelve in number, commenced their novitiate upon the solemn Feast of Pentecost. So great was their fervor in their exercises of piety, that they were more like persons experienced in virtue than young beginners on the road of perfection. A holy emulation rose up among them, and they vied with one another for who could best serve Almighty God. Singing the divine praises, solitude, and prayer were their greatest delights. In the observance of their Rule they were most exact and in the practice of mortification most eager. One there was among them, who, during the whole period of his novitiate, never raised his eyes to look at a building that was being erected close by, and by which he had to pass several times in the day. All of them doubtless enjoyed many sweet communications with God or they never could have supported the hard and suffering life they had undertaken to lead. The holy Founder never lost sight of them, and ceased not to encourage them to fresh efforts. The delight he took in their ardor may be easily imagined.

It was now the spring of the year, and Father Paul was advised by his doctors to visit the baths of Vignone in order to restore in some degree his failing health. Unfortunately, the benefit he derived therefrom was scarcely sufficient to compensate for the fatigues and trials of his journey. But if he gained but little by the excursion, the inhabitants of the place had reason to rejoice at it, for, as soon as he arrived there, he began to catechize and hear confessions, and his life gave such general edification that his virtues were like balm, spreading around the sweet odor of Jesus Christ. The duke, who was lord of the place, with his duchess, entreated him to come sometimes to their palace, that they might profit by his devout conversation. Father Paul took advantage of their invitation to turn their house into a sort of school for giving instructions upon the method of mental prayer. He had nothing in view but the glory of God and the good of

souls. He declined the hospitalities which were offered him, and he even refused the slight refreshment of a little chocolate, which the duchess herself pressed him to accept.

It was his great desire to live always in dependence upon the loving Providence of God, who never fails to take special care of those who trustfully confide in Him. And, in fact, our Lord was pleased to show, in a wonderful manner, the effects of His particular Providence over Father Paul. For, one day that the good Father, while suffering great bodily weakness, was taking a bath, he heard an internal voices which said, "Leave this bath quickly." No sooner had he obeyed the admonition, than he fell fainting to the ground, an accident, which, had it occurred while he was in the water, would have placed his life in imminent danger.

Upon his return from Vignone, he spent some months in solitude at St. Angelo, and then proceeded to the Retreat of Monte Argentario, where, with much consolation of spirit, he received the solemn profession of his fervent novices. When they had pronounced their vows, he sent them to St. Angelo to pursue the studies necessary for their missionary duties. Having discovered, notwithstanding the pains which holy men always take to hide their acquirements, that Father Marc Aurelio was endowed with uncommon piety and wisdom, together with a peculiar facility for imparting his talents to others, Father Paul determined that he should still remain with the novices as the master of their studies, in order that they might preserve their devotion in all its freshness, amid the distraction of science and the pursuit of learning. This decision was blessed with particular graces from God. So well did the novices unite application of the mind to recollection of the heart that they aspired to the highest practices of virtue, and it became necessary to moderate rather than to excite their zeal. They were to be seen walking barefoot in the very depth of winter in order to suffer more of the torments of their Lord, although the recent mitigation of the Rule permitted the use of sandals. Now, the Retreat of St. Angelo was intensely cold, both on account of its situation on a mountain in the middle of the woods and by reason of the unfinished state of the house itself. Hence, the poor novices suffered most painfully in consequence of this exposure to the weather, and some of them lost the nails off their hands and feet. The Fathers, Marc Aurelio and John Baptist, and, above all, the venerable Founder, contemplated these acts of heroism with joy and admiration, beholding the singular graces with which Almighty God favored these good youths. They sought by every means in their power to animate them to correspond to the inspiration of Heaven and to

persevere in their courageous ascent up the steep and rugged path of perfection. Whenever Father Paul was not called elsewhere for the missions, spiritual exercises, or other affairs of his Congregation, it was his delight to retreat to St. Angelo, where he could remain in holy solitude and partake of the counsels and devout conversation of the earliest and most faithful of his companions. At these times he used to give frequent discourses to the novices and to all the members of his religious family, and it was one of the greatest privileges of this retreat to be so often instructed by his wise maxims and valuable experience.

On Sunday mornings he was accustomed to hold a conference with those who were preparing for the priesthood, and then, like a kind nurse, he would make himself, so to speak, little with the little ones, accommodating himself to the capacity and to the interior spirit of each separate soul.

The time had now arrived when, as Pope Benedict XIV had determined, a Chapter should be convened to elect the particular superior of the Congregation, the General of the Order. The first Chapter of the Congregation of the Passion was small indeed, if we consider the number of those who met together, but great if we look upon the men, full of heavenly light and burning zeal, who composed it, and the venerable servant of God whose spirit animated and directed it. It assembled in the Retreat of the Presentation, and there, upon the 10th of April, 1747, Father Paul was chosen superior guardian angel by his children, who as we may well believe were desirous to continue under that direction which had already proved so profitable to their souls. As the number of men capable of filling positions of authority was necessarily very limited in those early days of the Institute, Father Paul was also chosen superior, or rector, of the house of the Presentation upon Monte Argentario. The venerable Father, whose conduct knew no other rule than the holy will of God, humbly bowed his head to the ordination of Divine Providence, and undertook the heavy responsibility which he was virtually to carry to the day of his death, for his religious could never afterwards consent to be deprived of the great benefits they derived under so holy a government. Their Rule, forbidding them to elect the same person twice, they always procured a dispensation, without his knowledge, whenever the time of election came, and thus he was compelled to remain superior. Feeling, however, all the weight of so important a charge and believing also to be totally unworthy of it, he frequently besought his brethren, with tears in his eyes, to choose someone else in his place. But his prayers were of no avail. They only became more convinced that he, who had received so many lights for the foundation, was the most fitting

person for the government of the Congregation.

As soon as this man of God was once convinced that his renunciation could not be accepted, he took upon himself, cheerfully and trustfully, the charge of his little flock. As God guided his every action, nothing was wanting to his success. Hence, his government was the very ideal of a just and religious rule, a rule in which prudence directed every step, in which firmness was tempered by sweetness, and in which charity was the main spring of the whole. Nothing was ever done until Almighty God had been first consulted, and it may be truly said that he learnt first in heaven what he afterwards taught upon earth. Hence came those marvelous results which we have all beheld with so much consolation. The good Father knew how to insinuate himself into every one's heart, and he possessed the talent of always making himself more loved than feared. Therefore, it was that his exhortations and gentle entreaties never failed to effect all that he desired. He was more solicitous about intentions than actions, and he wished his religious to be guided by interior principles so that, being perfectly united to God, they might learn in the heavenly school of prayer whatever was most conducive to their souls' good. One of his favorite maxims was, "Interior virtue is to work with the spirit and to labor with the heart." He carefully observed the spirit of each of his brethren, and he undertook long journeys to visit those who were absent, that they might be animated and consoled by his presence. These journeys were very painful to him, both on account of the bodily sufferings which they caused him and because they obliged him to give up the only time of peace and quiet which was left him, when his missionary duties were over. The monastery itself, however, could scarcely have been a greater retirement than these very travels. Father Paul generally kept profound silence, and to avoid distractions, he walked on a little before his companions. If he ever spoke, his discourse was calculated to inflame those who listened to him with the love of God and to inspire them with esteem for their holy vocation. Contemplating the works of God around him, he used to exclaim, as he looked alternately on heaven and earth, "To whom does this country, to whom do these fields and pastures belong? Is it not to God alone? *'The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof'*" (Ps. 24:1). Such were the devout exclamations which would occasionally burst from his lips, and which were enough to alleviate the fatigues of his companions and, at the same time, to sanctify their journey.

As for himself, however tired he might be, he never allowed himself more repose than was

absolutely necessary. His chief anxiety was to reach the retreat he was about to visit – to arrive there at a convenient hour so as not to disturb the religious or to inconvenience the brothers employed in the domestic offices. Directly upon entering the house and without losing a moment of time, he opened the visit with the usual ceremonies, and as long as he remained at the retreat, he devoted himself with the utmost patience and charity, listening to all that his dear children had to say to him. In the spiritual conferences his instructions were so opportune and were given with so much sweetness, that none who heard them could fail to be consoled as well as enlightened. If he perceived the slightest relaxation or abuse in the community, he laid aside all human respect and rested not until he had made the necessary correction and entirely eradicated the evil. To the end that all might be inspired with fresh energy and serve God “*with a great heart and willing spirit,*” he went through the spiritual exercises with that fervor and zeal which come so naturally from a heart like his, on fire with divine love. It is not wonderful that, at the conclusion of his visits, he left the retreat in the most perfect peace and union, renewed in the spirit of devotion and animated to the exact fulfillment of all their religious duties. Years later, when Father Paul’s failing health compelled him to depute others to make these visits in his place, he gave them the most minute instructions lest anything should perchance escape their vigilance, and he strongly impressed upon them the necessity of putting in practice all the means which his own experience had taught him and were so efficacious upon these occasions. When the visitors returned, he required an exact account of all that had passed. It is not easy to describe his joy when the report was a favorable one and he could see that the work of God stood securely upon the strong foundation of solid virtue.

But the care of this good shepherd for his flock was not confined to the times of visitation, for he was never weary of giving advice by letters to the local superiors, whenever he saw that they were in need of help. His sincerity, tenderness, and ardent zeal can hardly be fully appreciated without reading the letters themselves, wherein every word reveals the vigilant parent intent upon the welfare of his beloved children. Father Paul’s correspondence was indeed no little labor for him. He had to write very frequently upon the subject of the missions and exercises which he was requested to give, and he had, besides, numbers of persons constantly begging for his counsel and direction in the affairs of their souls. But the good Father, who was never known to find fault with anything that brought him more work and greater suffering,

performed all these laborious duties with scarcely any assistance. Every week he was obliged to spend several entire days at his desk, but as long as his strength lasted him he toiled on. All this time he was enduring so much oppression on his chest and so great a weakness of stomach that, when he went to his scanty meal, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could swallow anything. His pains and weaknesses could not abate his ardent charity, and he thought himself only too happy to be allowed to contribute to the peace of his brethren and the good of souls at the expense of his own comfort.

Almighty God was pleased to bless in a visible manner the industry and solicitude of his servant, insomuch, that Fr. Paul himself exclaimed, “Oh, how wonderful has been the conduct of God in this work! With how lofty and mysterious a Providence has he guided us! Well do I now remember what was said to me by a great servant of God, many years ago, that this was God’s own work, and that I knew not the marvelous and secret ways through which he meant to lead it. And many other holy souls have addressed me in the same terms.”

He said again, that he doubted not that all the religious who had died before him (and their number was over sixty) were saved and were already enjoying the glory of paradise because they had faithfully corresponded to their vocation and had led a true interior life, as none could know better than he, who had been from the commencement their superior. He spoke with special confidence of one who, he was assured by divine revelation, had been face to face with God immediately after his death. Of a young cleric who died in the Congregation at an early age in the odor of sanctity, he wrote in these words, “Brother Thomas has died the death of a saint, and I feel convinced that he has gone straight to heaven. Some there are who know not how to pray for him, on account of their interior certainty of his blessed state, but recommend themselves confidently to his intercession. Happy soul!”

CHAPTER XXV

How Fr. Paul Pursued with Great Fervor His Apostolic Ministry in the Mission to Which God Called Him

The Almighty, who appeared to have specially chosen Fr. Paul to touch the hearts of sinners

and to awaken in the faithful the memory of the Passion of his only Son, destined him to preach Jesus crucified in many different places. The servant of God, well aware of his vocation, did not hesitate to devote himself with all the energies of his soul to the duties of the holy missions. To his former penitential life, he joined these new labors, which were so much the heavier for him, that his ardent zeal allowed him no other repose when one mission was concluded and beginning another. It is impossible to describe the success which everywhere attended him. But some idea of it may perhaps be formed from the account we shall presently give of the wonders wrought by this apostolic priest. The mere listening to a man whose words were like so many sparks from a furnace of charity, whose thirst for the glory of God and the salvation of souls was as intense as it was insatiable, who felt nothing but tenderness for sinners and compassion for those who groaned under the weight of their crimes, who, ultimately, was all on fire with Divine love and breathed only Christ and him crucified, might well be enough to touch the hardened heart and bring back the prodigal son in tears to his Father's house. If there were any so obdurate as to remain unmoved by his exhortations, he would sometimes conclude his sermon by summoning them before the tribunal of their Almighty Judge, in language so glowing, that his terrified audience almost thought they heard the voice of God Himself. Wiping from his forehead the perspiration with which his energy and zeal had bathed him, he struck his moistened hand upon the wall and declared that its impression would remain there to witness against the obstinate sinner for all eternity.

Wherever this servant of God was seen, sins and disorders disappeared, and flames of love towards Jesus crucified were enkindled in the hearts of men. All his missions seemed to have a peculiar blessing on them, renewing the face of the country wherever he went. The conversions God wrought by his means were innumerable. An eyewitness of his labors at Orbetello furnishes us with the following account:

“At the time that I lived at Orbetello, the inhabitants of that place were conspicuous for their piety. This was the happy result of the indefatigable labors of Fr. Paul and his brother John Baptist, who preached here with so much force that many of the officers of our garrison completely changed their lives, frequented the sacraments, and became models of virtue. The intensity of Fr. Paul's zeal sometimes lighted up his countenance in a marvelous manner, which startled sinners and converted them as suddenly as if they had seen a vision from

heaven. Indeed, I myself, with several of my brother officers, have felt the like emotion while listening to him. But he did not always terrify, for he had a touching way of alluding to the mercy of God, which never failed to fill the people with compunction and make them shed bitter tears over their sins. While his sermon sowed the seed, his labors in the confessional gathered the fruit; and many of the soldiers, who were afraid to confess themselves to other priests, went willingly to confess to Fr. Paul and returned with changed and contented hearts. Some who had absented themselves from the sacraments for twenty years and more, he received again and again at his own house, until they were completely reconciled with God. I myself have seen persons, many of whom were of high rank, who had lived for years in mutual enmity, so moved by his exhortations that they became reconciled in the public streets and asked aloud for each other's pardon. I have seen soldiers of the garrison who had been addicted to the sins of blasphemy and gambling, who after confessing themselves to Fr. Paul, gave public signs of conversion and brought their dice and cards to be burned by him before all the people. Ultimately, so complete was the reform effected in Orbetello that I who lived there beheld the greatest possible change and saw with astonishment the officers and soldiers, as well as the citizens, avoid the occasions of sin and abstain from even allowable diversions."

This deposition agrees perfectly with the testimony of other credible witnesses, whose precise words we do not quote for fear of fatiguing the patience of the reader. The mission of Orbetello may truly be called a blessed one, especially if we take into account the miracles and prodigies which were wrought – "*While the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs*" (Mk. 16:20). At this time the town was subject to the emperor; hence, it happened that the garrison was partly composed of German Lutherans, very few of whom spoke Italian. When our good Father began his mission, the General in command obliged all the soldiers to attend the sermons; but what fruit could be expected when they did not understand the preacher? Our Lord, however, who desired the salvation of these poor souls, renewed in their favor one of the most wonderful miracles of the early church, and His faithful servant, although speaking only Italian, was perfectly understood by every one of the Germans present. His burning words produced their usual effect, and there were evident signs of the impression they made upon these poor unbelievers in their crowding round the pulpit and

imploring to be allowed to renounce their errors without delay.

We distinctly remember that, during that mission, seventy of these heretics were received into the church. One young man, seized with extraordinary fervor, rushed upon the platform in the middle of the sermon and proclaimed with a loud voice, "I repudiate, detest, and abominate the sect to which I have hitherto belonged, and I acknowledge, believe, and confess that the Roman Catholic Church is the true Church founded by Jesus Christ."

Among the soldiers of the garrison, there was a certain obstinate sinner whom nothing seemed to touch. He was present one evening at the sermon, which terminated, as usual, with the benediction of the crucifix. As he knelt to receive it, the miserable man beheld the right hand of our Lord's figure detach itself from the cross and stretch forward to bless the people. At the sight of this prodigy, the poor sinner was completely overcome. Moved by divine grace, he instantly repented, confessed his sins, and returned, like the lost sheep, into the fold of the good Shepherd. Another soldier, who had resolved to reconcile himself with God, went to confession to one of Father Paul's companions; but he had no sooner begun to accuse himself of his faults, than he felt grasped by an invisible hand and forced out of the confessional. He clung to the spot with all his strength, but such was the violence with which he was pulled, that the confessional itself moved along with him, as well as the confessor within it. The spectators ran to fetch Father Paul, who instantly hastened to the relief of the terrified penitent. He placed upon his neck a rosary of our Blessed Lady, knowing well that it is she who crushes the serpent's head. Then, taking the poor man under his cloak, he conducted him to the sacristy, where he himself heard his confession and gave him absolution without any further obstacle. The converted soldier left the feet of the servant of God so penetrated with contrition and gratitude, that he desired nothing more than to die in the state in which he then was, and ignorantly believing that he might, without sin, hasten his own death, he opened a grave in the church and threw himself into it. Father Paul's distress, when he heard of what had happened, may be easily imagined. He hurried to the spot, and peremptorily commanded the soldier to come out of the tomb. But the poor penitent, in his ecstasy, could not, without difficulty, be induced to obey. Father Paul, in relating this story afterwards to one of his friends, remarked that he had more trouble in bringing out of the sepulcher this repentant sinner than in rescuing him from the power of the devil.

Although our Paul never failed to reap abundant fruit from all his labor, yet, upon some

particular occasions our Lord was pleased so to inflame his zeal and inspire his words, that he seemed to carry all before him. He preached a mission once in St. Lorenzo delle Grotte, near Montefiascone. At the last sermon, when he gave the papal benediction, he appeared completely on fire with Divine love, and every syllable he uttered was like a flaming dart piercing the inmost hearts of those who listened to him. No one could doubt from where came these burning words of his. Almighty God Himself made known that they were the direct effect of inspiration to a pious priest. D. Joseph Paci, canon of St. Lorenzo, relates the miracle in the following terms:

“On the last day of our mission, I assisted, by Father Paul’s desire, at his discourse, wearing my surplice and standing at the left hand of the great crucifix. The sermon had scarcely begun when I heard a low voice whispering, as it were, into my ear the very words uttered by the preacher, so that everything which he said I seemed to hear first. I was very much surprised at this circumstance, which has never happened to me upon any other occasion, and I marveled at what it could mean. I observed that there was no one upon the platform except Father Paul and myself, and I could not help concluding that the voice I heard was no human voice, but a divine one. The words were touching enough to melt a heart of stone, and there was not a creature present who did not weep most bitterly during the whole sermon.”

Can we wonder that after such discourses as these, conversions should be suddenly effected, reconciliations brought about, disorders amended, and scandal removed? Who could doubt but that God had endowed his servant with the most abundant and efficacious graces for the salvation and sanctification of souls?”

CHAPTER XXVI

How Our Lord Took Special Care of Father Paul While He Was Employed upon the Holy Missions

A man who, forgetting himself, seeks nothing but God and the divine glory can truly say that he dwells in the aid of the Most High and abides under the protection of the God of heaven. With how singular a love divine Providence watches over such men may be clearly seen in the life of our Paul, who, as we shall presently relate, was several times delivered in a miraculous manner

from the most imminent perils.

He was once summoned to Pisa by the Marquis of Montemare, General of the Spanish army, to preach a mission to the troops. The good Father never refused any opportunity that was offered him of procuring the glory of God or of helping the souls redeemed with the blood of Christ. He embarked, therefore, without delay at St. Stefano for the port of Livorno. But he had hardly set sail when a terrific gale arose and the ship became half filled with water. The sailors were exceedingly alarmed, and not without cause, for several vessels near them went down in the storm. Father Paul, who in all accidents placed his only trust in God, no sooner perceived the danger than he had recourse to him whom the winds and seas obey. He invoked, also, the Mother of divine grace, most holy Mary; he recited her litanies and then abandoned himself peaceably into the hands of Providence. The mariners, despairing of safety in any other way, lowered their sails and began to row; but in a few minutes the violence of the waves broke one of the principal oars, and at this last misfortune, in utter hopelessness, they gave themselves up to their fate. The servant of God, who felt a secret confidence that the boat would not perish, now ascended the rear deck of the ship and addressed the drooping sailors, "My children," he said, "fear not, but confide in God and in our dearest Lady, for this storm is only raised by the devils who pursue me." In fact, notwithstanding the contrary wind and the raging tempest, they found themselves suddenly transported in safety into a bay below the Tower of Montenero, by the hand, doubtless, of that God, "who above works great wonders."

Father Paul received a similar favor in another voyage which he made from Genova to St. Stefano, upon the vessel named "Despatch," commanded by Captain Nunzio. Here again, when the ship was nearly filled with water, to the terror of the sailors, Father Paul encouraged them by telling them they would be saved. His prediction was verified as speedily as before.

A still more wonderful miracle occurred when he was on his way to preach a mission in the Island of Elba. He could find no other vessel than one, which had run aground at Fullonica, and which the venerable Father caused to be launched against the judgment of the sailors, who all believed it unfit for navigation. He, however, full of faith, performed his voyage in the rickety vessel as far as Porto Ferrajo. No sooner had he landed in safety, than the boat went to the bottom, as if our Lord wished to show that it had been only preserved by the presence of the fervent missionary.

We can, however, scarcely be surprised at the marvelous graces which everywhere accompanied Father Paul, when we consider what manner of life he lead during these voyages. Instead of taking advantage of them to diminish his penitence, he rather made them fresh occasions of suffering by enduring the presence of others when he naturally longed for solitude and quiet. Captain Fanciulli, whose passenger he was in that storm near Montenero, relates that after the whole crew had landed and were refreshing themselves, he perceived that Father Paul was absent. He went to look for him in the woods near the shore and found him cruelly scourging his bare flesh with an iron discipline. Thus did he draw down upon himself the loving eyes of God and secure that tender and jealous care which his heavenly Father always took of him.

Upon one occasion, when he was preaching from a pulpit, from some unknown cause he suddenly fell back in a manner which, naturally speaking, must have given his head a severe blow against a large stone in the wall. Instead of being hurt, he seemed protected by an invisible hand, and recovering himself instantly, he went on with his sermon as if nothing had happened. We could here relate many more signs of God's Providence over him in the missions, but we prefer speaking of them a little later in a more appropriate place.

CHAPTER XXVII

How Father Paul Wrought Many Marvelous Conversions

The salvation of souls being the most wonderful work of divine power and the most precious attribute of his infinite goodness, we feel assured that the devout reader will desire a distinct account of some of the miracles operated by the right hand of the Most High through the means of his faithful servant, Paul. The good Father was preaching in Orbetello and laboring indefatigably to deliver sinners from the tyranny of Satan when one night, after his sermon, a great noise was heard in the quarters of the Namur regiment, which formed part of the garrison of the town. A crowd of persons ran to the spot and beheld one of the soldiers being apparently dragged away by some invisible force. A sergeant was sent to summon Father Paul, who was then taking a little repose after the labors of the day. As soon as he reached the house, the

messenger called out, "Father Paul, come without delay; the devil has seized upon one of the soldiers!" The good Father was filled with horror at these words; he immediately arose, and taking with him his crucifix, hastened to the barracks. There he saw the unhappy man pale with terror, struggling with some unseen foe, and crying out, "Help, help, for the devil is carrying me away!" The servant of God began by boldly asserting his authority over the infernal enemy, and then addressing the soldier, he said, "Fear not, I am with you; you have only to repent of your sins." With great fervor he animated him to confide in the mercy of God, to make acts of sincere contrition, and to renounce all commerce with Satan. The bystanders were paralyzed with fear, but Father Paul undoubtingly stood his ground, and the devil was at length constrained to obey his commands and to take flight. The poor victim was so overcome that he could scarcely stand and his countenance was more like that of a corpse than of a living man. Well knowing why he had been thus suddenly possessed, he desired to repent of his past life and to confess his sins without delay. The good Father encouraged him in his good resolutions and promised to hear him on the following day. In the meantime, to secure his safety he placed his own rosary round the poor man's neck, telling him that would suffice for his defense. The next morning, the soldier presented himself at the confessional at the appointed time. Father Paul, finding him unable to express himself with ease in Italian, took him to the chaplain of the regiment, who completed the work of his entire reconciliation with God. The gratitude of this poor sinner knew no bounds. Many years afterwards, he testified his deep sense of the benefit to one of our Fathers in Rome, saying with lively emotion that he had been delivered from the devil through the help of Father Paul. The impression which this extraordinary occurrence created in the town of Orbetello was so profound that it sensibly increased the fervor of the mission and caused the confessionals to be crowded with penitents.

It has generally been found that the souls most hardened against grace, and most difficult to convert in the missions, are robbers and public criminals who live continually in the occasion of mortal sin. It would appear, however, that our Lord had given His faithful servant both a strong desire to aid these unhappy men and a peculiar influence over their wayward hearts. Not a few of them, after simply hearing him preach, hastened to change their lives and to reconcile themselves to God. Our holy missionary treated them with such gentleness and sweetness that they could hardly tear themselves from his side. They often accompanied him upon his journeys, and

whenever he had to pass through any rough and thorny path, they dismounted from their horses and spread their cloaks for him to walk upon. Father Paul, unused to such attentions, tried to avoid them, but he could not refuse the little services which these poor people delighted to offer to one whom they regarded with filial affection. We should never finish if we attempted to recount all the conversions of these public sinners brought about through his means. We will refer, therefore, to only a few of the most remarkable.

He was in the country of Rocca Albigna in Tuscany, where he was solicited by a certain gentleman to assist him in reclaiming an assassin, who had lately attempted to take his life. The servant of God sent for the culprit; he came to the church fully armed and demanded fiercely, "What is it you want with me?" Father Paul, who knew that pride and hard heartedness are best conquered by humility and gentleness, knelt down before him with his crucifix in his hand and meekly replied, "Son, I want your soul." The words were few and simple, but nothing more was needed to touch that obdurate heart and to lay the foundation for a solid repentance. In the year 1750, he gave a mission in Camerino, which produced wonderful fruit among the people of that town. There lived in this city a person named Corporal Orazio, who was the head of a notorious band of smugglers. Now this man was guilty not only of smuggling but of numerous homicides. As he went about followed by all his companions, he was enabled to defy the officers of justice and to make himself dreaded by the whole neighborhood. He grew bolder every day, and at last carried his audacity so far as to open a public shop in the town for the sale of contraband goods. Strange to say, he attended some of the sermons without any particular motive, through a careless curiosity. Father Paul was informed of this, and he accordingly fixed his eyes upon him with the firm and steadfast intention of converting him. Nor were his hopes deceived, for at the sound of the awful threats, as well as the merciful invitations of this faithful minister of good, the unhappy sinner began to recognize the fearful state of his soul. Seeing himself covered with the hideous leprosy of sin, he wished for a physician to cure his disease. But, not having that sincere will which is necessary for obtaining the special graces of God, he put himself into the hands of a confessor who did not possess all the science and zeal requisite for his delicate ministry. No sooner was Father Paul aware of this, than full of grief he exclaimed, "Now indeed there is little hope for him, for when once he has attained absolution without proper disposition, his conscience will no longer torment him, and he will sleep securely in his sins." But as charity

hopes all things, the good Father resolved to make one more attempt in behalf of this erring soul. He called him into his presence and, in his own gentle, winning way, he spoke to him of the misery of his past life. Orazio did not deny his guilt. He replied, "All this is very true, but I have been to confession." "Well," answered Father Paul, "and where then is your resolution of amendment? You still keep an open warehouse of contraband goods, and you continue in the occasions of sin." "What then," said the smuggler, "had not my confessor the power of absolving me?" "Not without the necessary dispositions," quickly rejoined the servant of God. The poor man was at length undeceived, and he then declared that he would make a fresh confession to Father Paul with a firm purpose of doing all that should be required of him. With Orazio came those who had been his companions in guilt, and the holy missionary had the happiness of reconciling them all with God. Desiring to remove the now penitent smuggler from his former temptations, he had recourse to his kind patron, Cardinal Albani, and through his means obtained from Benedict IV a full pardon for the criminal. He himself presented this document to Orazio, and then the poor man, full of gratitude for so much charity, retired to his own home where he led a Christian life and in the year 1765 made a happy end.

The endless labors of Father Paul were indeed admirable; but still more astonishing were the consolations which our Lord bestowed upon him in permitting him to gain over these sinning souls, who were far more precious to him than the richest earthly treasures. While in Tuscany he was much grieved at the public scandal given by a certain person who led an abandoned life. He hardly knew how to remedy this crying evil, until Almighty God sent him a sudden inspiration one day to go straight to the miserable being, to reprove him in the very house of his sin, and to call him upon the spot to come out of the noisome sepulcher in which he lay. When he reached the door, he was met by the man himself, who, fully armed and with a menacing air, exclaimed, "What do you seek here?" The man of God held up his crucifix and answered in all the boldness of his zeal, "I want you to dismiss that woman from your house." "But, Father," said the libertine, "there is no harm in her being here." "There is nothing but sin in it," rejoined Father Paul, "and if you will not do as I ask you, I will appeal to the Grand Duke." The poor sinner, in spite of his assumed haughtiness, began to tremble in his heart. He lowered his tone and said, "When must I do this? How much time do you give me?" "Not a moment," returned the Father, "you must act without delay." Humbled and convinced, he yielded at length to the words of him

who spoke with so much power and authority in the cause of God. "I will obey you, indeed," he said, "and then will you hear my confession?" "Yes, my dear son," replied the tender Father, "I will confess you. I will console you and restore your peace." This poor man was as good as his word. He repented of all his sins, he approached the sacraments, and he removed the enormous scandal which he had so long given to his fellow citizens.

Among the penitents who openly manifested their compunction, and could not be restrained from publicly confessing their sins, were some who, after imitating in their guilt the sinful woman of the Gospel, followed her also in her repentance. While Father Paul was preaching in Mont'Alto, he heard of a woman who had caused much disedification by her wicked life. The Bishop of Viterbo had been obliged to make use of his authority to punish her, but without any effect, for she continued miserably bound in the chains of hell. She went one evening to hear the sermon which the holy missionary preached with his usual fervor. Her heart became gradually so inflamed by his burning words that, unable to contain herself any longer, she rose up and before the assembled Congregation asked pardon for her public scandal. The audience was inexpressibly moved at her address and frequently interrupted her by their tears and sobs. As for the penitent, her conversion was as sincere as it was sudden. She broke through the snares of Satan and gave herself irrevocably to God. The remainder of her days were spent in practices of piety, and she died in the truest sentiments of Christian virtue after patiently bearing the cross of a lingering illness. No less marvelous a change was wrought in the person of a young girl named Elizabeth who during Father Paul's discourse upon the Passion of Christ, made an open avowal of her guilt, confessed to the servant of God, and began from that time to lead a life of holiness. These were far from being the only persons who gave extraordinary signs of repentance. There was a lady in the Diocese of Acquapendente, who, hearing one of the sermons against scandal, recognized her own faults in complying with the maxims of the world and violating in her dress the rules of holy modesty. Penetrated with the truths announced by the missionary, she rose from her seat, went up to the platform, and exclaimed aloud, "I am that sinner who by my vanity have scandalized the people." She then asked pardon of all in the most touching terms of humility and sorrow. From that time forward she commenced a course of virtue and holiness, in which she had the grace to persevere until her death. She was imitated by another lady of the same place, who after the mission afforded as much edification by her devout example as she had formerly given

scandal by her worldliness.

In his sermons Father Paul was accustomed first to terrify sinners by his threats and afterwards to invite and encourage them by his sweetness. He showed them how much had been suffered for their love. In revealing to them all the tenderness of the Sacred Heart of their Savior, he often caused them to burst into tears of shame and sorrow. The affection with which he received all those who went to confession to him is not easily expressed. He was like an anxious mother healing the wounds of her children and preserving them from the future attacks of a venomous serpent. Knowing by experience the happy effects of kindness upon these poor creatures, he inculcated the same treatment to all others who had the charge of souls. He was accustomed to say that gentleness gains the most obstinate sinners, while harshness drives away contrition. Upon this subject he used to relate an instructive fact. He was sitting one day in the confessional when a poor man came up and whispered, "Father, hear my confession. It is twelve years since I have approached the sacraments." Father Paul, struck by his earnestness, begged him to wait a little and follow him as soon as he left the confessional. He conducted the penitent to a retired spot and with the greatest charity disposed him to make a general confession. When this was over he asked his penitent what had been his motive for neglecting his religious duties for so long. The poor man replied, "The last time I went to confession my director scolded me with great severity and sent me away, saying, 'Go, you will be damned.' I have been too frightened ever since to enter a confessional again." Father Paul, upon hearing this, encouraged him all the more, and after giving him absolution, dismissed him in peace. Several years afterwards this person met the servant of God again. When he saw Fr. Paul, he ran to kiss his hand, saying, "I must tell you, Father, that ever since I saw you, I have remained faithful, by the grace of God, and have been preserved from the sins I then confessed."

The same sweet and gentle manners, which won the heart of this unhappy sinner, drew many notorious criminals and malefactors to the confessional, even when there was no mission going on. These poor people mutually encouraged one another to go to the good Father, and they always came back satisfied and consoled. Even when he journeyed about the country, he was often stopped by persons entreating his spiritual aid. He was going once to Monte Marano in Tuscany, and as he passed through a woods, a little in advance of his companions, he was suddenly stopped by an armed man who insisted upon accompanying him into the forest. The

Father was naturally somewhat alarmed, and after walking a few steps, enquired what was wanted of him. "Let us go farther," replied his conductor, drawing him by the arm as he spoke. The man of God now became really frightened, not knowing how this adventure might end. However, disregarding his fears, he continued to advance until his companion stopped and turned to him with an altered countenance, saying, "Father, hear my confession." "My son," replied Father Paul, "you should have told me that a little sooner. Stay here while I go and inform my companions." He speedily returned and with his usual charity he listened to the tale of sin and had the happiness of bringing back, thus unexpectedly, an erring soul to God.

The Almighty, who looked down complacently upon the toils and labors of his servant, was pleased to cooperate in his ministry by many wonderful miracles. Sometimes sinners were permitted to hear a miraculous noise or were expressly directed to go to Father Paul, as was the case with a man whose conversion we will here relate. The good Father had been giving the general communion after a missions and was going to take some repose, when at the door of his house he found a person waiting for confession. Almost exhausted from fatigue, he candidly told the man that he was compelled to seek rest for his aching head, and therefore begged him to go to the church, where he would find one of his companions who would serve him instead. Having spoken thus, he was entering his chamber when he heard a clear internal voice, saying, "Confess that poor man." The faithful servant instantly obeyed the command of God. He called back the penitent and was told by him that during the preceding night he himself had appeared to him and had desired him to come to confession. "But, how could this be?" said Father Paul. "So it is," replied the penitent. "You said to me these very words, 'Come to confession.'" The Father adored the inscrutable designs of God and piously believed that the apparition had been made through the means of his guardian angel, who doubtless delighted to help him in the blessed work of the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER XXVIII

How the Missions of Father Paul Were Marked by the Miraculous Interposition of Providence, and How All His Predictions Were Exactly Verified

The common enemy of souls could not see, without malicious rage, the great good performed by Father Paul. Hence, the enemy endeavored by every means in his power to destroy the fruit of the missions, but he was never able to succeed in his infernal purpose. The devout Father was preaching once in the public place of Orbetello, when, all of a sudden, two young bulls detached themselves from the cart, which was conveying wood to the garrison, and ran furiously towards the square where the people were assembled. The terrified multitude began to disperse in great confusion and to escape some one way, some another. The servant of God, perceiving this to be the work of the devil, commanded them in a loud voice not to stir from the spot. Then, taking up his crucifix and full of confidence in God, he turned towards the ferocious animals and ordered them to depart. The beasts, as if they both understood and respected the voice of the minister of their Creator, quietly turned into another road, and thus the people were delivered from danger, and the devil was defeated in his malignant design.

At other times, the evil one attempted to disturb the missions by unexpected changes in the weather and violent showers of rain. This happened once at Santa Fiora, where Father Paul was addressing the people from a platform raised opposite the door of the principal church. The day was serene and the sky cloudless, when suddenly the rain came down in torrents, and the audience was compelled to seek refuge in the church. The holy missionary, with his usual faith, held his crucifix on high and exhorted those who still remained in the square not to move, and the rest to return to their places. The shower instantly ceased and, wonderful to relate, not so much as a drop of rain had fallen either upon the preacher himself or upon those who followed his advice. During another mission in Santa Fiora, the devil raised terrific peals of thunder to alarm him, but, full of courage, he told his hearers not to be dismayed by the tricks of Satan, for Almighty God was ready to defend his servants from the snares of hell. The tempest broke in torrents, which were sufficient to inundate the whole country around and to cause the water to overflow the fields. But in the square, where the people were gathered together with the missionary, the ground was not even moistened by the rain. At the sight of this touching evidence of the loving protection of God, the good Father could no longer restrain his fervor. He seized his discipline and exclaimed that he would do penance for those whose ingratitude was undeserving of such favors. He scourged himself so violently that the discipline broke in two, one part fell upon the roof of a house, the other upon a height at some distance from the

platform. Instead of desisting at this accident, he soon made himself a fresh scourge with the chain he wore about his neck. He continued his cruel blows until a priest rushed up to the platform and took it from his hands by force. Thus did he confound the tricks of the enemy and sacrifice his innocent body for the souls which Satan labored to destroy.

Similar to the wonders we have related was the interposition of Providence during a mission at Sutri, where, upon the day when the papal benediction was given, the sky became densely clouded and the rain fell all around except upon the spot where the people were listening to Father Paul. These miraculous events were renewed in many other places in which he preached, in order that his apostolic labors might be prosecuted without intermission or disturbance.

We must now speak of other wonderful signs and marks of approbation with which our Lord vouchsafed to fortify the minister who so faithfully followed the inspiration of His grace. It frequently happened that the voice of Father Paul was heard at a distance which it could not naturally reach, as was the case during a mission he preached in his youth at Castellazzo. The same thing occurred after the foundation of the Congregation at Tolfa, Civita Castellana, and the Island of Elba, where his voice was distinctly heard five miles off.

In the year 1738, when the servant of God was at Piagaro, in the Diocese of Pieve, he repeated several times during the mission the following words, "There are many among you to whom my departure seems a thousand years off. But when I go, I shall leave one who will preach far better than myself." When the mission was over and the blessing had been given, he quitted them to seek fresh fields for his zeal in other towns of the diocese, accompanied on his way by a great part of the people, while the remainder stayed in the church to pray. All of a sudden, wonderful to relate, a large crucifix carved in wood suddenly was seen to pour forth a copious sweat of the color of blood. The spectators were struck with awe and astonishment, and as they looked upon the wonder, they called to mind the last words which the holy man of God had spoken to them and were filled with compunction. The priests hastened to wipe up the miraculous sweat with linen cloths, while some of the people ran after the venerable missionary. When they related to him what had happened, he calmly replied, "I knew it already." He asked what color the sweat was, and being told that it was red, "It is a good sign," he answered. Then he went on his way in silence, like one who well understood the meaning of the miracle.

The inhabitants of Piagaro, seeing how mercifully Divine Providence thus called them to

repentance, performed now what they could not be induced to do before. Those who had not been moved by the exhortations of Father Paul were conquered by this supernatural appeal. The blessed image was ever afterwards held in particular veneration; a new chapel was built to receive it, and the following inscriptions in Latin recorded its marvelous history, “In the sight and in the midst of the tears of the people of Piagaro, this image poured forth a crimson sweat after a mission preached by Father Paul of the Cross of Monte Argentario in the year of 1738.” On the epistle side are these words, “*The officials of the people of Piagaro and Anthony Pazzaglia, priest and rector of the church, with money freely offered in 1738, erected and adorned this church as a memorial of the precious Blood.*”

That Father Paul received from Piagaro a full amount of the circumstance which he foretold appears from the following words in one of his letters, “Besides the event at Civita Vecchia” (what this was we do not precisely know, but he doubtless alluded to some other miraculous occurrence), “there happened at one of our missions in Umbria a no less remarkable phenomenon. An image of our Lord upon the cross became covered with streams of sweat. A verification of the fact was sent to Rome, and the crucifix is now held in great veneration by all the people. This was related to me in a letter from the doctor, Domenico Anthony Ercolani of Civita Castellana, dated from St. Angelo, June 28, 1749.” Thus far the servant of God. The pious citizens of Piagaro have ever since had a singular devotion towards that sacred image, the very sight of which invites to compunction and renews the memory of this touching miracle; for it still preserves visible the imprint of the streams formed from the head to the feet through the means of the miraculous sweat, as I myself have seen with my eyes during the mission which I gave there in the year 1777. Thus was fulfilled what Blessed Paul had said, that after him there would be another mission of greater efficacy made with the voice of wonders.

Other predictions uttered by the venerable Father were verified with equal exactness and certainty, especially some in which he prophesied a miserable end to those who, instead of receiving with a good heart the loving visits of the Divine Mercy, drew down upon themselves by their obduracy the tremendous chastisements of His justice. A priest of the Diocese of Monte Fiascone, who led a corrupt and abandoned life, came once to confession to Father Paul, while he was there giving a mission. What passed between them in that confession is related by the ecclesiastic himself, who, shortly afterwards, fell dangerously ill. When about to receive the holy

Viaticum in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, which was already in his room, and in the presence of the priests of the village, after having asked pardon from all present and from the absent for the scandal he had given, said these words, “Know, my brethren, that during the late mission of May, I confessed myself to Father Paul, who refused me absolution, although I returned to him with tears after having promised to abandon that house. He then told me these words, ‘Go, and know that if you set your foot again in that house, you will be summoned to the tribunal of God before the end of the month of July.’ Not long afterwards, I returned there as before, and now you behold the consequence. Pray for me.” And thus, after having given authentic testimony to the prediction of the venerable servant of God, he went before the Divine tribunal, where the supreme Judge called him to render an account of his life.

During a mission in another part of the same diocese, the good Father was told of a young priest of a lively temperament, who was guilty of certain evil practices which gave considerable disedification. Desiring to remove the scandal, he began by speaking gently to the culprit, and at last told him that, if he did not reform, he would meet with a sudden death in the house of his sin. The priest, who was at that time in robust health and of a strong constitution, turned his words into ridicule. Woe to those who deride and despise the corrections of the servants of God. They are chastised when they least expect it. The prophecy was uttered towards the end of May, and it was in the month of October, while Father Paul was still continuing the missions in the Diocese of Monte Fiascone, that the curate of the place came to tell him that the miserable delinquent had been struck by apoplexy and had died upon the spot in the midst of his sins in the very house where he gave the scandal and without a moment’s time to make his confession.

A similar death happened to another priest, belonging to the Diocese of Viterbo. Father Paul was giving a mission there in the year 1759, and returning one day to his house, he showed himself very much grieved because he had been informed that a priest, together with a certain family of that place, not only derided him, his Congregation, and the sermons, but what is worse, never came to the holy exercises in the church to the great astonishment and scandal of the public, who knew their aversion and evil dispositions towards the servant of God. The holy missionary was perfectly indifferent to the injury offered to himself, but he was indignant at the contempt displayed for the word of God and the hindrance which this bad example placed to the salvation of souls. Speaking, therefore, one day of this fact, he suddenly broke forth into these

words, “That priest will die a sudden death and that family will be dispersed.” The inspiration with which he spoke was fully recognized some time afterwards when his prophecy was fulfilled to the very letter. On the 7th of May, 1764, the priest was sitting down to table when an unforeseen accident deprived him of his senses. The archpriest, who is our authority for the fact, ran to his assistance; but so quickly did the poor man pass into the other world that there was hardly time to administer Extreme Unction “with one anointing.” The family, which had united with him in opposing the glory of God, began gradually to decline from the time the prediction was made until it was at last reduced to the extreme of misery. Thus terribly did God, for the instruction of all, avenge the outrage done to his holy word.

With his accustomed fervor he was giving a mission in the year 1751 in the same place in the Diocese of Viterbo. There was a certain old woman who obstinately refused to pardon another who had offended her. The persons, appointed during the mission to reconcile those who were at variance, had spent all their industry and charity upon her in vain to induce her to pardon and to be reconciled with the person who had offended her. The affair was represented to Father Paul, and his ardent zeal induced him to make fresh attempts, but with no better success, or rather she became more hardened in her obstinate refusal. The servant of God was extremely grieved in his heart and predicted that in a short time God would punish her. And so it happened. A few days after his departure, the wretched woman fell down dead all of a sudden without being able to receive any sacrament. She was found dead in her house with a countenance so deformed and horrible, that it struck terror into all who beheld it. We might here relate many other awful interpositions of God’s Providence, but not to be too long, we refrain from so doing, as those we have referred to are sufficient to know how clearly God showed His approbation of the labors of His servant by honoring them with so many wonders.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Method Which the Venerable Servant of God Pursued in Giving the Holy Missions

The devout Father, when about to give a mission, was accustomed to give previous notice of the arrival day of the missionaries by a letter, full of respect and humility and breathing zeal,

addressed to the curates of the place. He and his companions then set out barefoot. When they came near to the place of the mission, he sent word to announce their entrance. He proclaimed to the people peace and reconciliation with God the moment they entered the town. Having entered with great devotion and good order, and having intimated at the very commencement the great end of the holy mission, Father Paul delivered his first discourse in the church, and thus began the apostolic ministry. In its continuation, leaving aside the processions and other functions which are laudably practiced by other missionaries and which he himself had sometimes made use of in his early missions, he insisted principally upon instructions, sermons, and confessions. He had the catechetical instructions twice a day; the first very early in the morning for the laboring poor, in order that they might not be prevented from attending to the labors necessary for their subsistence, and might still have an opportunity to receive the food of the Word of God so necessary for their spiritual life. This instruction was to be entirely devoted to the explanation of the Decalogue in a slow, easy, insinuating manner, for the space of about one hour. The second, in the afternoon, before the sermon, lasted for half an hour only; in this were unfolded the ordinary faults committed in confession. The true manner of being reconciled with God or of participating more abundantly in the fruits of the sacrament of Penance was explained. After this Father Paul ascended the platform to deliver the sermon, after having prepared himself, not by study only, but also, and much more, by holy prayer. Before he ascended he used to visit the Blessed Sacrament, and there, prostrate on the ground, recite with great sentiments of faith the Creed of St. Athanasius, in order thus, having revived faith in himself, to preach according to the advice of St. Paul, *“As from God and in the presence of God, we speak in Christ”* (II Cor. 2:17). Having arrived on the platform, and given to the people some practical advice according to the light which God gave him or the wants of his hearers, he began his sermon according to the common rules of sacred eloquence. But as he proceeded, feeling some internal impulse, he suffered himself to be guided by the Spirit of God, whose movements he so well understood. Hence, it often happened that he departed from his principal subject to digress upon other points. This produced such admirable effects that none could doubt his inspiration. His delivery, according to the testimony of one who was his companion in many missions, and as can be attested by all who have heard him, was always earnest and striking. He inveighed against vice with equal boldness and zeal, without flattery or human respect, and with so much animation that

his countenance became all inflamed and seemed to be a living flame of fire so that, when he express strong disapproval, he struck fear and horror into his listeners. A public highway robber often said to him, "I shake from head to foot, Father Paul, when I see you on the platform." And an officer of rank, after having confessed to him, told him, "Father, I have been on the field of battle; I have been under the cannon's fire; I have never trembled; but you make me tremble from head to foot." Towards the end of his sermons, he assumed, or rather was penetrated with, so gentle, so moving a spirit, that he dilated the hearts of all in such a manner, with confidence in God and holy affections, that the coldest and hardest among them were moved to compunction and melted into tears. After the sermon was over, he gave the meditation upon the most sacred Passion of Jesus Christ, but with so much unction and fervor of spirit, and with so much affection and compassion for our innocent Redeemer, that his audience again shed abundant tears of compassionate love towards Jesus, through the wonderful gift he had for revealing to the world Love Crucified and proclaiming to all his most bitter sufferings. Hence, it might well be said that even then was seen verified the prophecy of Zachary, "*In that day there shall be much weeping in Jerusalem. And it shall be said, 'What are these wounds in the midst of your hands?'*" (Zach. 12:11; 13:6)

Knowing the great profit men derive from public practices of penance, because by these they dispose themselves to make a good and holy confession, he assembled them in some church in the evening, half an hour after the Ave Maria. Having proposed with great energy some strong and powerful motives to invite everyone to do penance, each one was at liberty, as the lights were extinguished, to offer up to God a little sacrifice of bodily mortification, in satisfaction for his own sins. He rigidly excluded all women from this exercise, not even allowing them to approach near the door of the church during that time. He enjoined them all to unite at the same time in prayer at their own homes by saying five Paters and Aves for the conversion of sinners. This he did for five or six evenings during all the period of the mission. An hour after sunset every night he caused the bell of the parish church to be rung to remind the people to recite five Paters and Aves in honor of the most Sacred Wounds of Jesus Christ and to beseech the divine clemency in behalf of all who were plunged in the abyss of sin. He desired that the chimes should be slow, solemn, and lugubrious, in order that the sinners themselves might feel that they were dead to God and to grace. As the sanctification of the laity depends in great measure upon

the sanctity and good example of the clergy, he used to give separate spiritual exercises for the ecclesiastics, in which they were strongly exhorted and encouraged to correspond with the sublime dignity of their calling and ministry. This function was generally entrusted to Father John Baptist, his brother, who fulfilled it with much depth of learning and true wisdom and with a zeal extraordinary, wonderful, and surprising.

All the remainder of the time he desired to be faithfully employed in hearing confessions, wisely distributing a portion of the hours of the day for the men and a portion for the women. It is not to be supposed, however, that he, who had established so many practices and exercises in the method of his missions, was unmindful of that prudence and moderation in laboring so necessary for carrying on well all good works, and especially those which are most fatiguing. It is true that in his first years he used to hear confessions even during the day before the sermon, but finding his strength give way, he moderated himself in this respect. He employed all the morning in that onerous duty, beginning at a very early hour and leaving off towards midday. In the evening, after having taken some little repose after the sermon, or to speak more truly, after passing some time in great recollection of spirit, recommending to God the fruit of the sermon, he again returned to the confessional. All the leisure he had, he spent in giving audience to those who sought his spiritual aid, which employment was so fatiguing to him that he said to his companion, who was afterwards his confessor, "If I could do like a certain missionary, who gave no audience outside of the confessional, it would seem to me as if I were taking a pleasant walk, but I must hear those who come. I feel myself urged to do so."

As he did not expect from his children all the great fatigues and penances which he had endured, especially during his first years, he desired, after the mitigation made by the Sovereign Pontiff, that they should exactly follow the advice which Jesus Christ gave to His apostles, "*Eat what is put before you*" (Luke 10:18). Nor in this respect would he tolerate any singularity, but required everyone to conform to the common practice of the others. One day, Father Marc Aurelio of the Blessed Sacrament, asking him what he would have done if any of our laborers had desired to abstain from flesh meat during the time of mission, as was practiced by another missionary of great virtue and merit, he frankly replied with great earnestness, "I should prevent him from going on the missions, seeing that our Rule on this is clear. If others do it, their Rule prescribes nothing on that point, but ours does." He then added, "By regulating ourselves

according to the prescriptions of our holy Rule, we preserve our health and humility; by acting otherwise, we are in danger of losing both one and the other.” Hence, he was accustomed to recommend his missionaries, when he sent them on the missions, to take all the nourishment that was necessary, saying, “If our Lord shall be pleased to communicate to you an extraordinary spirit, you will remain even many days without food; but not having such a spirit, you must regulate yourselves according to the dictates of holy prudence, since the labors are great.” And he used to repeat, “*He made him honorable in his labors,*” and then the Lord, “*completed his labors*” (Wis 10:10). As for himself, however, he always ate sparingly during the time of the missions; in fact, after the first days, owing to the weight of labor, he generally lost all appetite so that he could no longer eat without repugnance and doing violence to himself, but this only increased both his mortification and his merit.

When the missions were terminated, which always lasted a discreet time, regulated by that wisdom and prudence which knows how to discern the wants of the people and the fervor with which the mission is attended, he immediately took his departure, but did not lose, nor in the least diminish, the ardent desires he entertained for the good of the souls he had helped in the way of perfection. Sometimes God even performed some great miracles to satisfy his ardent zeal. Upon one occasion, he had already terminated with the papal benediction the mission in Piombino, and, in the presence of a large concourse of people, of many gentlemen, and in particular of Doctor Gherardini, who accompanied the servant of God, together with the others, had embarked off the quay. The vessel, which had sailed with a favorable wind, was already out of sight. Afterwards this same Gherardini, having returned into the town and entering the house of a gentleman to settle some business, to his great surprise, he saw Father Paul coming out of one of the rooms. At first he remained astounded and, as it were, out of himself, but afterwards, to assure himself of what he saw, he exclaimed, “What, Father Paul, you are here! Why, I accompanied you to the quay and saw you embark and sail at a distance out to sea, and now I find you here!” “Hush, Signor Gherardini,” replied the man of God, “do not speak.” Paul then told him that he had been miraculously conveyed to this spot to perform an act of charity in behalf of his neighbor.

CHAPTER XXX

Foundation of the Retreat of St. Angelo in the Territory of Vetralla, and of That of St. Eutizio in the Territory of Soriano

It is a special mark of that holy confidence in God, which is possessed by the saints, that each favor they receive is to them an encouragement to hope for future graces. Thus Father Paul, seeing himself so favored by the Divine Goodness, and looking around upon the many companions full of zeal and virtue, whom God had already sent him, felt emboldened in his undertakings. His generous soul allowed no good opportunity of founding new retreats to pass by, trusting that God would send him other subjects of equal goodness to edify their neighbors by their penitential life, and for awakening them to a grateful remembrance and compassion of their Redeemer, by announcing His most bitter passion and dolorous death.

It was so disposed by Providence that the venerable Father should be requested by Monsignor Abati, Bishop of Viterbo and Toscanella, to give a mission at Vetralla in the year 1742, and with the Divine blessing it succeeded extraordinarily well. The principal people of the place were struck by the immense good which ensued therefrom, and they became very desirous to possess the advantage of a retreat, like that of Monte Argentario, in their own neighborhood. A general meeting was held on the 20th of May to discuss the subject, and one of the council spoke thus, "Since we have all observed the benefits that have accrued to the people of this place through the preaching of the celebrated missionary, Father Paul of the Cross, and since we cannot doubt that these benefits would be more widely extended and more permanent if the good Father could be induced to form a retreat in our hermitage of St. Angelo, it appears to us that the most illustrious Signori Priori should be instructed to give notice of this our desire to Father Paul, and to take all the necessary steps for carrying it into effect." The votes of the number of twenty-five were all united in support of this resolution. As the affair proceeded there were not wanting the usual difficulties which rise up against every good work, but Father Paul was not easily daunted when the glory of God was concerned, in whom he had full confidence. With every means in his power, he sought to bring it soon to a happy conclusion. He therefore wrote a letter full of energy to his great friend, Canon Biagio Pieri, a worthy ecclesiastic, who was held in high esteem in Vetralla, his native country. "Your Reverence," he says, "ought to be a great

promoter of this work, which will be of so much spiritual profit to your own country and to the other places around. Oh, my dear Canon, now is the time to show God a brave, loving, constant, and generous heart, and to overcome all the opposition of the enemy armed against this holy work. If I could only speak to you in person, I would make known to you some of the hidden designs of God and the marvelous things that he will perform for his glory. “

Again, on the 26th of August, he writes, “I hear from the governor that matters are now nearly arranged for the establishment of our retreat, which is indeed much wanted in that locality. Mother Gertrude Salandri tells me that the governor wishes me to apply to the Sacred Congregation about it. To satisfy him, therefore, I have done so and sent the petition to a qualified person in Rome, in order that being put in good form, it may be presented to the Sacred Congregation.”

The prudent servant of God took still further precautions to ensure his success. He wrote to several influential persons at Rome, among whom were their Eminences Cardinals Colonna, Sciarra, and Rezzonico. From the first he received the following cordial reply, “I am never weary of reminding Cardinal Riviera of the Retreat of Vetralla, and considering the zeal of that prince and his particular regard for me, I look forward to obtaining all that you desire. He contributes his prayers for the same intention, that the will of God may be accomplished.”

The second answered with no less kindness, “I rejoice to find by your last letter that you have agreed to accept the Retreat offered at Vetralla. Even if you are not able to open it with more than three or four priests, I trust you will not abandon it, for I feel assured that Providence will know how to fill it for you (these words are well worthy of remark, seeing that at the present moment this very retreat is quite full). Do not fear the opposition of the Enemy of all good; he is making war against you, but he will soon be shamefully defeated. I cease not to beg Almighty God to give you courage and strength. I thank you for the charity with which you remember me in your prayers, and I implore for you all the fullness of the gifts of Heaven.”

The good Father was greatly assisted in this foundation by the Abbate Count Garagni of Torino, who had some influence with Pope Benedict XIV. He had already, as we have related, been of no little service to Father Paul in the beginning of his Congregation, and now he employed all his credit in the establishment of this new house of the Order. In a letter dated October 12th, 1743, he writes, “I can tell you for your consolation that I see many openings for

the propagation of your Institute, for which I am constantly praying and getting prayers, feeling certain as I do that God wishes for you to be in more than one place near Rome.”

When all the necessary faculties had been conceded, the Passionist Fathers took possession in the month of February, 1746, of the hermitage of St. Angelo. The spot is said to have been occupied formerly by a community of Benedictine religious, whose presence has sanctified so many solitudes. The retreat was opened with a devout and solemn function. Father Paul, with a rope about his neck and a crown of thorns upon his head, presented himself with his companions in the collegiate church of the town. There he took the cross and after having intoned the litanies, they all went in procession to the hermitage. Upon their arrival, the deed of possession was read and Mass was sung at the high altar. All present were greatly edified, and it appears that a deep impression was produced by an ancient painting of the crucifixion, which vividly placed before the eyes of the beholders the idea and object of the Institute. The venerable Founder chose his brother John Baptist as the superior of the new house and left him there with several Fathers. The poverty of these good religious was extreme, their habitation was very small and their provisions scarce, but the more they suffered, the more fervent they grew. St. Angelo was ever afterwards Father Paul’s great delight. He loved to come and seclude himself there in holy retirement. It was indeed a spot which inspired recollection, being three miles from any human habitation, in the center of a dark and shady forest.

At the same time that the good Father was establishing the Retreat of Vetralla, he was requested to found another at Soriano near the sanctuary of St. Eutizio, which belonged to the illustrious family of Albani. He gives notice of it in these words to his friend Canon Pieri, “Cardinal Albani wishes me to set off immediately for Soriano; he has taken upon himself the charge of settling everything with His Holiness, and the mission of Nettuno is put off till the end of May so that Cardinal Alessandro may be present. These pious princes have very much at heart the foundation of St. Eutizio. The designs of Providence are most admirable in all things! I have before me the letters of the Pope on the same subject. Have the charity to tell Sister N____ that now is the time for helping the work by her prayers, and particularly for recommending to God a great laborer who shows some inclination for our Congregation.” (He probably is referring to D. Tommaso Struzzi.) “He would be a great gain to our little band; and oh, how much do I desire him! Let her make an earnest petition and I feel assured that she will be heard. Let her remember,

also, my poor soul, my companions, and our house at Monte Argentario. I beseech her not to forget us day or night, and you, too, Reverend Father. Bear us in mind in your holy sacrifices. I conclude in haste and am always yours,” etc.

At the instance of the above-mentioned cardinals, Benedict XIV commanded Cardinal Valenti to write to the governor of Soriano and to the bishop of Civita Castellana to this effect, “His Holiness, having learned that certain secular priests have been invited for a time by Cardinal San-Clementi to the Church of St. Eutizio in the territory of Soriano, and have left the place after doing much good among the people, has determined for the benefit of these souls to establish there some other missionaries who belong to the newly founded Congregation of the Passion. The aforesaid cardinal has received with gratitude this decision of His Holiness, and I now desire to inform you of the same in order that your authority may supply all that is wanting for the execution of the pontifical design. You are therefore entreated to promote, assist, and forward this holy work by the most prompt and effective measures which it is in your power to employ. Wishing you every blessing, I am your devoted servant, Cardinal Valenti. “

In this manner was the negotiation respecting St. Eutizio brought to a successful conclusion, to the great consolation of all the parties concerned, and to the special satisfaction of the good Bishop of Orte, the diocesan who wrote to Father Paul in these words, “With inexpressible joy do I learn that the glory of God is to be still further promoted by your Institute, and that some of your religious are to take possession of the Retreat of St. Eutizio. Most willingly do I grant the faculties which you demand for hearing confessions and for reserved cases, extending them to Father Marc Aurelio. I am fully satisfied of your learning and piety, and convinced of the benefits my flock will derive from your presence. In the meantime, I will not cease to offer up prayers for you, and if they are united to your own, I shall promise a successful outcome. Varro, Bishop of Orte.”

Father Paul began by preaching a fervent mission at Soriano, and then with the same touching ceremony we have before described, he entered the house of St. Eutizio. It was a sort of sanctuary annexed to the church, where are preserved those venerable relics of the holy martyrs, which are sometimes seen to distil drops of miraculous manna. Father Marc Aurelio, a man of singular virtue, was appointed rector.

From this time forward, the excellent Albani family entertained a special affection for our

poor Congregation and loaded it with benefits. When our Fathers were settled at St. Eutizio, Prince Orazio wrote to Father Paul in the following terms, “Among the many obligations which I am under to my uncles, the cardinals, I reckon none greater than their having procured for my territory the great advantage of possessing a house of your exemplary Institute. The joy which this event has given me increases every day, when I reflect upon the seeds of holiness which you are daily sowing among my people. I thank your reverence with all my heart for the wisdom and charity you have shown in this affair, and it will be my great care to attend to all your wishes and to assist you and your colleagues by every means in my power. I recommend myself earnestly to your prayers, in which I place no little confidence.”

So far this pious prince. His zeal and charity were wonderfully blessed by our Lord for His greater glory and the good of souls.

CHAPTER XXXI

How Father Paul Founded the Retreat of St. Mary of Corniano at Ceccano, and Our Lady of Dolors near the City of Terracina

The clergy and people of Ceccano in the Diocese of Ferentino, having heard of the marvelous good wrought by the new Congregation, conceived a strong desire to have near them a retreat of the Order. In the year 1747 they made known this wish to Father Paul. Ceccano is a fief of the excellent Colonna family, to whom our obligations are so great not only for the houses they have founded at Palliano, Falvaterra, Monte Cavi, and Ceccano, but also for the abundant alms which they have ever been ready to bestow on us.

At the request, therefore, of the inhabitants of Ceccano our holy Founder agreed to give them the consolations and advantages which a monastery of the Congregation would afford them. Accordingly, he sent Father Tommaso of the Holy Side of Jesus (afterwards Bishop of Lodi) with Father Anthony of the Passion to make the necessary arrangements for the foundation and to preach missions in the surrounding villages. A hermitage was quickly prepared with all that seemed indispensably necessary for the little monastic family. In the middle of the winter of 1748, Father Paul set out with his brethren for their new retreat. It may easily be imagined that he

had much to suffer on the way as the weather was most inclement, the snow lay upon the ground, he was always on foot, and he had received a painful wound in the leg from a thorn. But he never ceased to animate his companions to proceed courageously and to bear their toils with patience. When these good religious approached the town of Ceccano, the people came out in crowds to meet them; they welcomed them with every sign of gratitude and joy, and conducted them to the abode of the Abbate Angeletti, one of their principal benefactors, who received them with the greatest affection and kindness. Upon the 14th of January, 1748, the Feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Father Paul accompanied Bishop Borgia, the Bishop of Ferentino, to the spot named Our Lady of Corniano, and there took solemn possession of the place for his Congregation.

Upon the same day that the cross was planted upon the site of the future retreat, our Lord was pleased to show in a special manner His peculiar satisfaction in this holy work. A large concourse of people had assembled to witness the ceremony. They were taking some refreshment afterwards when it was found that the wine which had been brought there in a little flask was not sufficient for the guests. Father Paul, perceiving the deficiency, quietly desired everyone to drink from the flask, assuring them that Providence would supply their wants. They replied it was useless to expect to find any more wine in the vessel, and in proof of what they said they turned it upside down. Still Father Paul insisted, and in the same confident manner repeated his command. One of the most docile at length obeyed, and he had no sooner applied his mouth to the bottle than he discovered it to be really full of wine. All who were thirsty drank abundantly, and the provision lasted until everyone was satisfied. This was the beginning of the House of Our Lady of Corniano.

The venerable Founder, anxious to unite several good works in one, immediately commenced giving spiritual exercises to the inhabitants of Ceccano. But he was compelled to interrupt them by an attack of illness, which confined him to his bed and obliged him to sacrifice his zealous intentions to the holy will of God. It is related that during the whole time Father Paul was employed in these foundations, Father John Baptist, who remained at St. Angelo, often exhorted the religious to pray for his brother because he foresaw the malady which would seize him.

When the servant of God was a little recovered, he went back to St. Angelo, leaving as superior at Ceccano Father Thomas of the Holy Side of Jesus. On his way through Rome he

stopped to kiss the feet of Pope Benedict XIV, who testified to the satisfaction he had felt upon hearing of the foundation of the new retreat and the advantages he expected to be derived therefrom. It may easily be conceived that Father Paul felt no ordinary gratification at the kindness and friendliness of the Sovereign Pontiff, in whom he beheld with the eyes of faith the person of our Lord Himself, and whose words he therefore received as if they came from his Divine Redeemer. But as the Almighty is accustomed to temper the sweetness of his consolations with some drops of the bitterness of his chalice, so he permitted that His servant should meet in the very antechamber of the Pope some persons who were opposed to his recent foundation, and who were then going to present some petitions against it to His Holiness. Committing, however, to Almighty God the care of his little Congregation and trusting that our Lord would protect his own work, he quickly left Rome for St. Angelo, where his presence, and the happy intelligence he brought of the successful commencement of the house at Ceccano, afforded universal consolation. Father Paul made but little stay among them, for we find him soon afterwards at the Retreat of the Presentation upon Monte Argentario, once more beholding the first and dearest of his children and stirring up within their hearts new fervor and earnestness in the service of God. From here, also, he chose the religious who were to accompany him to Santa Maria del Corro, near the city of Toscanella, where a fresh demand had been made for his missionaries.

We have already related how the servant of God, after the last foundation had, in consequence of his many sufferings and labors, fallen seriously ill. While he was thus indisposed at Ceccano, he received a present of some peas, which Bishop Oldi of Terracina sent to Father Thomas for the benefit of the poor religious in the newly founded house. Since Father Thomas was absent upon a mission, Father Paul was obliged to reply himself to the note of the good bishop. He was lying in bed in a debilitated and prostrate state, thinking of writing this answer, when he heard an interior voice which said, "Rise and write to the bishop about the establishment of another retreat." In his weak and reduced condition he felt a great repugnance to the exertion, but, accustomed to distinguish the motions of grace from the delusions of Satan, he recognized the spirit of God in this unusual impulse and feared to resist the Divine Will. He rose, therefore, from his sick bed and commenced his letter.

After having offered his thanks to the good bishop, he added that it appeared to him

conducive to the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls that his Lordship should procure the establishment of another house of his Institute upon a mountain, situated near the city of Terracina. It was said there had formerly been on this hill a palace of the Emperor Galba, and some ruins are still to be seen, which attest the ancient magnificence of the edifice. The retreat is founded upon the very walls of this building and the vaults are now converted into the various domestic offices of the community. In this place, once the palace of a pagan emperor, did God cause a church to be erected to his honor with a monastery annexed to it, where religious might sing his praises day and night. Twenty-five years before our Lord had favored Father Paul with a foreknowledge of this event; for one day as he was silently passing with John Baptist along the road beneath the mountain, he was given to understand that near that spot would be established a retreat of the Congregation which he had already been inspired to found. Therefore, it was that when the servant of God wrote to the above mentioned bishop he knew that he was only acting according to the Divine Will in suggesting this foundation. Most willingly did the pious prelate give his consent; and after causing the spot to be examined, his Lordship replied, "The place you mention is particularly well calculated for your proposed end, being both commodious and spacious. To begin the work, I promise for the love of the five precious wounds of Jesus to bestow five hundred crowns." With this generous assistance they were enabled to commence the new building, not however without much opposition from other quarters, of which we shall speak more distinctly hereafter.

The holy prelate, full of faith and courage, stood by them constantly and became, so to speak, their wall of defense against all opponents. He contributed several considerable sums of money, besides his first gift of five hundred crowns. If he had not the satisfaction of beholding the accomplishment of the undertaking, his zeal was not less meritorious in the sight of God. After his death Bishop Palombella, a man of singular learning and integrity, took his place in the diocese, and under his protection the rising edifice was speedily completed. Upon the 7th of February, 1752, after having preached the exercises to the inhabitants of Terracina, Father Paul took solemn possession of the retreat amidst the universal joy of the people and the unspeakable consolation of the good bishop who, belonging as he did to the Order of the Servants of Mary, had a special desire to promote, together with the devotion to her dolors, the memory of the life giving Passion of her Son, the source of every grace and the channel of every good.

CHAPTER XXXII

How Other New Retreats Were Founded, among Which Were Those of St. Sosio, Santa Maria Del Cerro near Toscanella, and the Most Holy Trinity at Monte Albano

We have already related how Father Paul, after having returned from Ceccano and undertaken the establishment at Toscanella, set out for Monte Argentario in order to choose the religious who were to serve this latter house. The pious little town of Toscanella earnestly desired to have a retreat within its precincts and the bishop had written to Rome respecting it in these terms, "Father Paul, the Founder of the new Institute of the regular clerks of our Lord, would doubtless be most useful with his companions in sanctifying the spot called Santa Maria del Cerro. They are especially successful in converting and instructing, and of this I can assure your Eminence with particular confidence, since I have myself listened to their sermons and frequently made use of them to give missions in different parts of my diocese." Thus wrote Bishop Abati in the testimony he gave to the usefulness of the desired foundation. When everything had been decided by the "*motu proprio*" of Benedict XIV, our venerable Father had not a little to suffer in establishing his monastic family. He had traveled but one day's journey from Monte Argentario when he had to encounter a bitter north wind, which blew so violently and directly in his face that by the time he reached Toscanella he was thoroughly exhausted. Upon entering the town he found nothing ready for his reception. The servant of God, however, could not be discouraged. Placing all his confidence in him who has promised not to abandon those who trust in His Providence, he resolved to proceed in the work and to carry out, at whatever cost, the desires of the bishop. Accordingly, he and his brethren entered their future abode amidst privations and sufferings which will be best described in Father Paul's own words to Father Fulgentius, "Besides the suffering of my body, I had to endure in this journey terrible conflicts in the spirit. The new house, which we opened yesterday with what little solemnity we could, had much opposition to encounter. No retreat has ever yet commenced in such a helpless state of poverty and never have I felt so much anxiety about a foundation. God knows I am not yet free from these troubles, but I hope for the best. The brethren are joyful and content, and I

trust they will be of great service to their neighbors.”

Thus wrote Father Paul on the 5th of February, 1748, the very day when, by special dispensation of God, who doubtless wished to try his servant's faith to the utmost, they found themselves more destitute than ever and in want of common necessities. Undismayed by difficulties, Paul cheerfully said, “As this is a fast day we will make but a slender breakfast and trust to Providence for our supper.” Before night an unknown benefactor presented himself at the gate with a basket of provisions. Father Paul had some nourishing soup prepared, which he took special care should be first partaken of by the young Fathers whom he had brought with him to the new foundation and who were less able than the rest to go without food. Never was table spread in a truer spirit of holy poverty. They had no knives or forks and were obliged to use rude instruments which they had fashioned out of sticks and reeds. The next day the servant of God exhorted all to reanimate their faith and confidence, and he added there was a certain pious woman in Pianzano, who, if she had known of their arrival, would certainly not have allowed them to want. He had hardly left the retreat when a woman came to the church to confession and addressed herself to Father Domenico of the Conception, he being the superior of the house. The following morning she returned with several beasts of burden, laden with provisions for the good Fathers, who were full of gratitude for this timely succor. They had tasted nothing all the preceding day but a few vegetables given to them out of compassion by a hermit. From that time forward, they were never again in want but were abundantly rewarded by God for what they had borne in the beginning for His sake.

All the other foundations cost the venerable Father many labors, anxieties, and prayers; but God gave him the consolation of seeing, before he died, twelve flourishing retreats with numerous families of his spiritual children.

In order not to detain the reader too long with details, which will not be considered of general interest, and to pursue without interruption the life of the servant of God, we will do no more than mention the names of the foundations. St. Sosio, near Ceprano, was founded on April 2, 1751; Santa Maria of Pagliano, November 23, 1755; St. Giuseppe on Monte Argentario (a probation house for the novices) in 1761; and our Lady of Dolors. near Corneto, March 7, 1769. Father Paul took a particular interest in this last establishment, in the hope that the numerous shepherds who kept their flocks in the neighboring pastures would derive particular benefit from

the spiritual assistance of his missionaries. Another house of the Institute, which we cannot pass over without a few remarks, was that of the most Holy Trinity, at Monte Albano, commonly called Monte Cavi. Now it was that the prophecy of Isaiah seemed verified. "*The abode where jackals lurk will be a marsh for the reed and papyrus*" (Is. 35:7). For upon the very ground where had stood the altars of paganism was now erected a church to the God of the Christians. A famous temple of Jupiter had formerly attracted many blind idolaters to this spot; the woods around were sacred to their gods, and it was here that the celebrated Latin feasts were solemnized. The Monte itself was desecrated by many superstitious and profane practices, among which, it was said, was the sacrifice of human victims. Some Trinitarian Fathers had been the first to consecrate this unholy solitude to God, but they had deserted it long before the time of which we write, and their house and church had fallen into decay. Ruinous as the habitation was, Father Paul rejoiced to fill it once more with those who would make an atonement of prayer and praise to Him whose Majesty had been so much insulted there.

The religious whom he sent met as usual with plenty of sufferings. The house, though partially restored through the munificence of the Colonna family, still admitted the rain on all sides and was open to the fogs and mists which hang perpetually over Monte Albano. Their venerable superior, though he could not be with them, sympathized in all they had to endure and encouraged them by his fervent letters to offer up everything for God's greater glory. One of these epistles, to the rector of the new retreat, was couched in the following terms, "I have received with the greatest pleasure yours of the 20th, and I assure your reverence that the narration filled me with so much comfort and edification that I could not restrain my tears. I caused it to be read aloud in the refectory, that all might share my consolation. The peculiar circumstances attending this, our last foundation, lead me to expect great results for the honor and glory of God. The inconveniences and the poverty which your pious community has had to endure are so many precious gifts which the Divine Mercy vouchsafes you, in order to render you the cornerstones, so to speak, of his new dwelling place and to purify you in the golden furnace of faith and charity, so that you may be burning holocausts before the Most High and spread abroad the salutary odor of your generous sacrifices. Oh! how much do I hope that all these new establishments in the very sight of Rome may redound to the honor of God and the particular advantage of your reverence who has had to bear the burden thereof. How many

inestimable graces hath not our Lord in store for him, who by his vigilance and solicitude maintains his religious in fervor of spirit and strict observance '*before the Lord.*' I conclude that you have been informed that I accepted this new foundation upon the express condition that we were to have a branch house in a situation less exposed to the damp and the south winds; but this promise has not yet been fulfilled. I am told that the owner of the land is dead; still I trust to Providence to open to us some road to the possession of so desirable an addition to our retreat. In the meantime, God will protect you from the fury of the winds and the inclemency of the seasons. He will take care that 'no harm will come to you.' I write in haste, embracing you in Christ with all my heart and making this one petition to you all, '*Pray very much for us.*'"

The desires of the servant of God were fully accomplished some time afterwards, when another house of the Institute was established upon Monte Albano and a stately church erected there, more spacious and more beautiful than the old one, by the munificence of his royal highness the Cardinal of York, Bishop of Frascati. It was consecrated by the same pious prince, who could have said with absolute truth, "*O Lord, I have loved the beauty of your house.*"

CHAPTER XXXIII

How the Whole Congregation of the Passion, and the Separate Foundations in Particular, Are Opposed and Resisted

One of the peculiar marks of God's favor upon an undertaking would have been wanting to Father Paul's work if it had not met with contradiction, opposition, and ill will among men. And as the storm which was raised against him threatened to overthrow not only the newly established houses, but the Institute itself, we think it necessary to give a distinct account of it here.

Certain persons moved by a false zeal did not content themselves with speaking disparagingly of Father Paul and his religious brethren; they went so far as to present a memorial against them to Pope Benedict XIV, part of which was as follows, "N. N. (the names are concealed for obvious reasons), throwing themselves with the deepest sentiments of humility at the feet of your Holiness, beg to lay before you their fears respecting a considerable abuse which has lately shown itself among the religious Orders of the church. This novelty threatens not only

to disturb and disorganize cloistered communities but to give scandal to the whole Catholic world, to throw discredit upon the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and to imperil in some sort the hitherto invulnerable orthodox faith, as may be clearly seen by those who can discern the wolf in sheep's clothing. Such indeed, it is greatly to be dreaded, are certain men styling themselves the missionary Fathers of the most holy Passion of Jesus Christ who believe that they can succeed in all their designs by the power of the title they have assumed and by the help of a new device of a pierced heart which they bear. Desiring in this manner to distinguish themselves above all other holy Institutes, it is their singular prerogative to sow divisions, to excite tumults, and to disturb both clergy and laity. If the spirit of this new Institute in these early days consists in causing lawsuits in depriving poor seculars of their property and in putting an end to the pious customs practiced by other mendicant Orders, it must be evident to all that, when more firmly established, they will be too strong to be resisted." So far the memorial. When the wise Pontiff heard all these calumnies, in order to make clear the truth and to shut the mouths of slanderers, he deputed a secret Congregation of cardinals to examine the affair and to give him an account of the character and mode of life of the religious of the Passion. The result of this inquiry confirmed the Pope in his already high opinion of the evangelical spirit of the new Congregation. He was filled with spiritual joy and consolation and was ever afterwards more gracious and affectionate than ever towards Father Paul and his brethren. That he granted them many special graces and favors and held them in the highest esteem may be drawn from a letter written to Father Paul by Cardinal Rezzonico, who was himself afterwards raised to the papal chair, "I have made known to the Holy Father the sentiments of your paternity for which His Holiness returns his thanks . He regrets to hear of your illness and heartily desires your perfect recovery. Your singular zeal and piety, no less than the interests of religion, render me also particularly desirous for the preservation of your health, etc."

The tempest, however, which threatened if not ruin at least great injury to the work of God, was not yet lulled. The venerable Founder had still a great deal to suffer; but the more his trials increased the more calmly did he abandon himself to Divine Providence. Speaking one day during recreation to his religious of the violent hurricane which was raised against them, he seemed unable to contain his spiritual joy and said, "Sometimes it happens that a great thunderbolt, darting from the clouds, falls upon a barren mountain, and behold a mine of gold is

discovered. Let us hope that this storm may produce in us a similar mine, and that our Lord may work it for our greater good.” With these sentiments of confidence and conformity to the Divine Will, he patiently submitted to the labor and fatigue which this opposition cost him, replying to a numbers of letters and taking all the means of defense in accordance with Christian prudence. Opening his heart to Father Fulgentius of Jesus, a man of marvelous sanctity, he wrote in the following words, “Our affairs go on as usual; the tempest still threatens us, but we shall gain the victory in Christ after having endured the greatest misfortunes and having seen our cause, as it were, almost overthrown. But let us continue to pray. Either our good God does not desire our Congregation in his Church or He intends us to do great things for his name. Know, beloved Father, that petitions have already been presented demanding that the retreat of Ceccano be destroyed and no new houses founded in that part. The Sacred Congregation has granted them everything. Does your Reverence still believe that we shall triumph? It will be so indeed, but we must go through many trials first. I am tossed upon a stormy sea, and I tell you in confidence that I am in desolation ‘within and without’ and tormented by devils in a horrible manner, so that I no longer appear to have faith, hope, or charity. Oh! what a state I am in! But no one knows it or perceives it.”

And in another letter to the same Father he says, “Our affairs are still as much embroiled as ever; we are summoned to appear in court, but we shall not defend ourselves because the poor cannot afford to go to law. The devil is always on the watch to discover some loophole by which to enter and ruin the work. Recommend us and all the Congregation to God for our wants are extreme and my necessities urgent. I am, however, secure of this, that the Congregation will flourish when I shall be no more.”

The opposition grew more violent, and the servant of God wrote again to Father Fulgentius, “Our annoyances continue, and I know not what will be the result; everyone here expects that we shall triumph in the end, and I, too, am of the same opinion; the clouds which hang over us scarcely permit us to see the sun behind them. *Thanks be to God.*”

Almighty God was pleased at length to console His faithful servant, and his next letter to Father Fulgentius relates the good news thus, “The particular Congregation, appointed to examine the petition of our opposers, has decided that the consent of the ordinaries is sufficient for the expedition of Briefs for the generality of our foundations. As to the retreats of Ceccano,

Terracina, and Palliano, they have decreed ‘*according to their intentions and their intention is,*’ that with the information and approbation of the bishop, we shall retain the peaceable possession of them. Marvelous things have come to pass upon this occasion. Great have been the outward persecutions, but the interior trials have been worse. I have been allowed to taste some drops of my Savior’s chalice, and if I had not remembered the Divine Will, I would have sunk, for I am weakness itself. Tomorrow, I shall leave Rome as happy as if I carried away a Bull for all the foundations in the world, because I am fixed in the belief that “*He who began the work will bring it to perfection*” (Phil. 1:6).

Thus wrote Father Paul of the Cross with a heart full of conformity to the holy will of God and burning with love for opprobrium and sufferings. Whenever he spoke upon the subject, he would conclude by saying, “*We give You thanks,*” or by repeating the words of Scripture, “*Blessing and glory and thanksgiving,*” etc. (Rev. 5:12,13). Hence it was that he obtained in the end from that merciful Lord, in whom he fully confided and for whose love he had endured so much, the object of his desires and the confirmation of all his hopes. While these things were passing in Rome, and those who had little affection for Father Paul were calumniating him and his Congregation, he behaved as a true follower of that great apostle, whose name he bore, and continued his holy ministry through glory and shame, through good report and evil report. He preached missions in the towns of Corneto and Camerino, and also at Rome for the opening of the Holy Year in the Church of St. Giovanni dei Fiorentini. Upon his return to his solitude, he confirmed his brethren by his holy discourses, encouraging them to abandon themselves entirely into the hands of Providence and to dispose themselves for new crosses.

One evening, after the meditation in which he had been shown many future sufferings, he said to his religious, “I know, my brethren, that the Congregation will have to pass through many trials.” He added, “A great persecution has arisen in the church.” He repeated this several times, saying that he knew not how to explain himself in any other way. The light with which the devout Father was inspired was fully evident a short time afterwards, when several members of the Institute became tired of their penitent life, and although they had been treated with so much kindness, they turned their backs upon their venerable superior and left his Congregation. Father Paul must have felt their defection very sensibly, particularly as he had only a limited number of titles for ordination, and they were not available without the dismissory letters of the bishop,

often difficult to obtain. He tried to repair the loss by strengthening the vocations of those who were beginning to waver, but finding his charity thrown away, he submitted to the designs of God, exclaiming, “Every tree that any heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.”

CHAPTER XXXIV

How Father Paul Visited His Retreats

The foundation of religious houses is scarcely more important than their preservation in a spirit of fervor, because it too often happens that the holiest commencement gradually falls away into a miserable end. Our Paul, being persuaded that superiors are often lost through their sins of omission, dreaded nothing so much as neglecting the work of God. Like a careful gardener, he set himself to watch with the utmost vigilance the young trees which had been planted in the courts of the House of the Lord. He visited in person all the houses of his Order, never thinking of his own convenience when there was any necessary reformation to be made or regular discipline to be established. His holy zeal was rewarded by our Lord with many sensible consolations, particularly with the gift of perfect interior recollection, which he enjoyed during all his journeys. Sometimes it was clearly perceptible that while his body was walking, his soul was being brought into communion with the Spirit of God and was drinking at the everlasting fountain of wisdom, life, and love. Upon one occasion, when on his way to the retreat of St. Eutizio, he suddenly stopped and asked, “Whose territory is this?” He was answered that it was the land of Gallese. But he again demanded in a louder tone, “Whose territory is this, I say?” Seeing that his companion knew not how to reply, he looked upon him with eyes that seemed on fire with love and said, “To whom do all these lands belong? Ah! you do not understand me – to our great God!” He was so carried away by his feelings that he quickened his pace and took a leap of seven or eight feet, while his companion remained astonished and edified at the fervor which consumed him. Another time, as he was going to Ceccano through the forest of Fossanova after visiting the monastery in which the angelic doctor, St. Thomas, expired, he burst out into the following exclamation, “Ah! do you not hear the trees and the leaves calling out to us, ‘The love of God – the love of God!’” He desired his companion to go before him, that he might give

vent to his fervent aspirations; and when the wondering disciple looked back, he saw the countenance of his venerable Father so inflamed that it seemed to dart forth rays like the sun. He was still repeating, “What, then, do you not love God – do you not love God?” Meeting some persons on the road, he said to them, “My brethren, give all your love to God, who deserves it so well. Listen to the leaves, the trees, telling you to love Him. Oh, the love of God! – the love of God!” These words were uttered with so much earnestness and ardor that not only his companion but all his hearers were penetrated to the heart, and several could not restrain their tears. With these celestial consolations did our Lord repay His servant, even in this land of exile, for the labors and journeys he undertook for his sake.

When he arrived at the retreats, he was again comforted by the sight of his religious, full of happiness in their poverty, serving Almighty God in simple faith and joy of spirit. He felt renewed confidence that their merciful Lord would continue, as he had hitherto done, to provide for all their wants. One day, as he was making his visitation at the House of our Lady of Corniano, the provision of bread at dinner was so scanty that there was barely enough for two or three mouthfuls each. But, just as the religious were sitting down to table with their venerable Founder, a person arrived at the door with a great basket of loaves. The porter accepted it with every demonstration of joy and carried it to Father Paul, who ordered him to go and thank their benefactor. But upon his return to the gate, he could see no one, nor was he able, therefore, either to express his gratitude or restore the basket. The religious acknowledged with overflowing hearts the special care of that Providence who feeds the birds of the air and never forsakes those who trust in Him.

What method was pursued by Father Paul in his visitations, what spirit guided him, and what solicitude animated him must have already been observed by the pious reader, but we shall speak more fully upon this subject hereafter, when we have to treat of the prudence of the saints, which God had bestowed so abundantly upon this His servant.

CHAPTER XXXV

How Father Paul Went to Rome to Place His Congregation under the Protection of the Newly Elected Pope Clement XIII

The death of the great Pontiff Benedict XIV caused deep affliction to Father Paul, both for the sake of his Congregation, which lost a faithful protector, and for that of the church, which was deprived of a wise and Holy Father. But he received much consolation in the election to the papal chair of his friend Cardinal Rezzonico, whose unfailing kindness towards him encouraged him to form new hopes for his Institute.

As soon as he heard of his accession, he hastened with his brother to Rome; and the Holy Father, who had so often testified his affection to Father Paul and assisted him in his struggles, received him most graciously and appeared disposed to do everything in his power for the stability of the Order.

The venerable servant of God wrote thus to his master of novices, July 8th, 1758, "I have to inform you that the Lord Cardinal Rezzonico has been raised to the Pontificate, and I set out immediately with Father John Baptist for Rome to embrace his most holy feet. During our interview, I introduced the subject of the permission to take solemn vows and the retreat which we hope to have in Rome." Some time afterwards he wrote to the same person in these words, "There is no necessity of returning to Rome, for the Pope is most propitiously inclined towards us. The Holy Spirit has inspired him to take an interest in the firm establishment of our Order, and to further this purpose he is about to appoint a particular Congregation of cardinals."

In the meantime Father Paul continued to recommend the affair to God with the greatest earnestness, begging prayers from others with a firm confidence that by this union of supplications, he should obtain whatever was expedient for the successful progress of his holy work. In one of his letters to an ecclesiastic of great virtue he said, "It is indeed true that the elevation of Cardinal Rezzonico to the Pontificate will prove for us a happy event, if God will deign to bestow upon us, as I sincerely trust he will, the abundance of His graces. Thus, it behooves us to implore with fervent prayer, in order that our holy Institute, with the help of the papal approval and the addition of solemn vows, may take root and be firmly planted in the evangelical field. Already the approbation which I announced to you is rendered more valuable by the expedition of an Apostolic Brief, wherein are inserted the Rules and Constitutions which were examined by their Eminences Cardinals Albani, Besozzi, and Gentili. I entreat you to add your prayers to ours, that we may be spread all over the Christian world and even beyond it; for

our Congregation has already been offered a mission among the unbelievers, which it only awaits the decision of the Propaganda to accept.” This mission was prevented by the unexpected deaths of several of the Fathers.

The particular Congregation which the Pope appointed was very slow in coming to a decision; and the venerable Father, whose health was now weakened by his declining years, had to undergo the constant fatigue of making toilsome journeys and of writing frequent letters with scarcely any help, since Father Thomas had gone with Bishop De Angelis to Corsica. The man of God, however, never lost his interior peace, nor ceased to await with perfect indifference the fulfillment of the holy will of God. Writing again to the ecclesiastic we have so frequently mentioned, he said, “The affairs of our poor Congregation are in full progress at Rome, where His Holiness has chosen five cardinals to advise His Holiness and to determine whether we shall be constituted a regular Order and be permitted the usual solemn vows of religious men. If this should be their happy decision, it will be a miracle of grace for these deplorable times. As for myself, I am equally content with success or failure, our Lord having given me the grace to will and desire nothing but his good pleasure.”

It appears, nevertheless, that shortly afterwards Father Paul found himself in many interior doubts and perplexities, whence he wrote thus to Father John Mary Cioni, “I am in the midst of contradictions, between doubts and fears, and the dread of interfering too much in this matter. What this may mean I know not, but I beg of you to give me your opinion.” In order to be more certain of the Divine Will, he again directed that the Congregation should offer up continual prayers and sacrifices. As the day of decision approached, he seemed to have a foresight of what would happen, for, upon the morning that the cardinals sat for the last time, he said to his companion, “You will see that they have done nothing for us.” And so indeed it proved. Their Eminences, taking into consideration the extreme severity of the Rule, judged it more expedient to leave the Congregation with no more than the simple vows, in order that a door might be open to weak souls, and that there might be among them no discontented religious, but only the cheerful givers, whom our Lord regards with so much complacency. The venerable servant of God, who in the declaration of the cardinals recognized the Divine Will, adored the designs of Providence and returned thanks to the Almighty for so clear a manifestation of his good pleasure. He even acknowledged that it was better for the Congregation to be able to liberate itself from

turbulent subjects; and, in fact, one of the last instructions which he gave to superiors before his death was, "Take care of the wheat and throw away the tares." Although he did not obtain the particular favor which he had applied for, he received upon this occasion many gifts and privileges for his Congregation from the paternal charity of Pope Clement XIII.

CHAPTER XXXVI

How His Brother John Baptist Died. How He Visited His Provincial Retreats⁹ for the Last Time and Was Taken Seriously Ill at St. Angelo

The time had now arrived when, by the inscrutable wisdom of God, the brother and faithful companion of Father Paul should be removed from this earth, upon which he had only remained until he became a fitting ornament for the heavenly sanctuary, and be taken up to an eternal union with that Sovereign Good for whose possession he had never ceased to sigh. After an illness of two months, which he bore with admirable patience, being at last, on account of the weakness of his stomach, totally unable to take nourishment, his happy spirit passed away and went, as we confidently hope, to rest in peace with God. The grief which this bereavement occasioned to Father Paul can hardly be properly estimated, unless we remember that in his brother he lost a man of holy life, who from his earliest days had been the companion of his prayers, his vigils, and his penances; one who had been gifted by God with an extraordinary fervor of spirit, which made him fearless of any difficulties when he was following the designs of Providence; one who, being the partaker of all his secrets, was enabled to relieve him of many of his solitudes in the first foundation of his Congregation; and (what was the greatest deprivation of all to the servant of God) one who offered his advice with freedom and his corrections whenever he conceived them needed. To understand what even the saints themselves must feel upon the loss of such a brother as this, it is enough to recall the touching lamentations of St. Gregory Nazianzen upon the death of St. Cesarius, those of St. Ambrose upon the loss of his dear Satirus, and those of St. Bernard upon that of his Gerard. Bitterly, however, as Father

⁹ Retreats south of Rome.

Paul sorrowed, he was at the same time full of submission and resignation to the Divine Will. “I was silent,” he said, “and humiliated.” He did not wish to be thought possessed of a virtue which is above all feeling. He offered the tribute of his tears to him whom he had lost. But amidst all his grief, his firmness and fortitude never left him. During his brother’s long illness, he was always at his bedside, serving and assisting him with his own hands. As he loved him entirely in Christ, he took care to comfort him spiritually as well as corporally, to animate him with the holy love of God, and to dispose him to embrace the tender invitations of his Redeemer, who showed Himself, so to speak, by the means of the sufferings which He sent.

He suggested to the sick man the liveliest sentiments of faith. He inspired him with the most complete trustfulness and the most entire abandonment to the Father of mercies, sometimes repeating for him acts of repentance and contrition, and sometimes purifying him more completely in the Blood of the Immaculate Lamb, by giving him the sacramental absolution. The venerable Father was severely inconvenienced at the time by an attack of gout, but he used to drag himself on crutches to his brother’s room and, several times when he supposed him to be in danger, he recited with great fervor the Recommendation of the Departing Soul. When he was really in his last agony, all the Fathers assembled around his bed, as is the custom of the Congregation, and Father Paul intoned the *Salve Regina*, which the rest took up in a solemn chant. He then went through the sorrowful function of the Church towards the departing soul with so much courage and fervor that an eyewitness declared it was enough to make all present desire the same assistance in their last passage. He did not cease until the innocent spirit of John Baptist had passed away in peace. Father Paul was now deprived of his beloved brother. He could render him no further assistance except by his prayers. But he had not lost his fervor nor his courage nor his heroic confidence in God. For all these he obtained such rewards as saints alone can appreciate – the grace of new crosses from his loving Redeemer, who was pleased to enrich his faithful servant by permitting him to drink deeply of the bitter chalice of his passion.

Seeing his trials increase, Paul sought for nothing but help to endure them patiently; and he thus disposed his soul for a singular consolation which our Lord was already preparing for him. He was now in a state of utter abandonment and desolation, and when he turned towards God, it seemed as if his heavenly Father rejected and deserted him. To the afflictions of his spirit were added the sufferings of his body and the malicious assaults of demons. The loving hand of

Divine grace, however, invisibly sustained him. With the hope of being of some use in visiting and consoling his spiritual family, he determined to go around, once more, to all the retreats in the provinces, and to give his blessing to his children for the last time. It was in the year 1766 that the venerable Father, burdened with old age and infirmities and oppressed by interior trials, set out upon this visitation, of which he gave notice in these touching words, “Now that my life is well nigh spent and I see myself upon the verge of the grave, I have resolved, ‘in the Lord,’ to come and say my last farewells and give my parting embraces to my dearest brethren in the country retreats.” Passing through Rome, he beheld with no little joy of heart the site of the small hospice which the Pope, after many entreaties, had ceded to our poor Congregation. His visitation produced the greatest consolation among our religious, who saw with delight and admiration their beloved superior devoting to the service of the Congregation the last remains of a life which had been almost worn out in the struggles of its foundation. It was also a sensible satisfaction to Father Paul to see the good fruit ripening in the little vineyard which had been planted by the hand of the Lord. During his journey, the servant of God had a new torment in the honor and veneration which were paid him in all the places through which he passed. The fame of his virtue had become diffused abroad, for the more the saints endeavor to be unknown, the more does Almighty God procure their glory. The marvelous gift of prophecy and the power of working miracles, which he had bestowed upon the venerable Father, will be fully described in the sequel.

Upon his return to Rome, he established a retreat at the hospice under the title of Jesus Crucified, and he felt renewed hopes of obtaining one day that particular house upon the Celian Hill which he knew the Divine Goodness had destined for him. After this he went back to his dear brethren at St. Angelo, and he was here attacked by what he called a precious infirmity. This illness rendered all his usual sufferings more grievous and oppressive, but Father Paul, although he felt pain as acutely as other men, knew how to bear it with invincible patience and perfect peace, like a true servant of God, who through His grace, “*When he is weak then he is strong*” (II Cor. 12:10). His brethren were in the greatest fear of losing him. His advanced age, his habitual indisposition, his serious illness, all combined to threaten his life, but it pleased the Divine Mercy to spare him a little longer for the perfect establishment of his Congregation. He recovered from his sickness, but he remained for a long time weak and suffering. He revived a

little in the month of May, 1769, when the General Chapter was held for the election of superiors. Upon that occasion Father Paul prostrated himself before the Fathers, and after confessing his faults and performing the usual acts of humiliation, he sincerely protested that he desired to end his days in obedience as a simple subject. But the religious, looking more to the stability of the Institute than the humility of their good Father, confirmed him again as guardian angel superior. He publicly renounced the dignity, but his opposition was useless. The capitular Fathers refused to accept his resignation, and, together with his confessor, using affectionate violence, they constrained him to continue in his paternal office. The servant of God, who was as obedient as he was lowly minded, submitted to the decision of others and undertook once more the government of his Congregation.

CHAPTER XXXVII

How Father Paul Obtained from Pope Clement XIV the Entire Approbation of His Institute

The Apostolic See had become once more vacant by the death of Clement XIII on February 3rd, 1769. The venerable servant of God, who considered it incumbent on every true son of the Church to pray for her necessities, offered up many fervent supplications that the Divine Goodness would send a worthy pastor to His flock. He replied in these words to the letter which brought him the news of the Pope's death, "I have received with grief your sad news; I celebrated holy Mass this morning to obtain a happy election, placing in the Sacred Blood of Jesus the hearts of all the Conclave, particularly that of Ganganelli." He had, in fact, remarked to his companion after Mass that day, "I have offered up with the most precious Blood the hearts of all the Cardinals, and oh! how that of Ganganelli shone among them." These words of Father Paul agreed with what he had said upon other occasions, sometimes to the Cardinal himself, clearly predicting his elevation. But we shall return to this subject in the sequel when we come to speak of his spirit of prophecy. With this interior illumination he waited from day to day to hear the expected news proclaimed. He occupied himself in the meantime by looking over his Rule and improving the method and form of that part which had been altered under the direction of

Benedict XIV. Directly the news of the election of Fra Lorenzo Ganganelli reached him. On the 25th of May, he started for Rome. He stopped at Ronciglione, where many persons sought his advice and were consoled by his admonitions. Continuing his journey on the following morning, he arrived towards night at the little hospice near the Lateran Basilica, where his beloved children welcomed him with delights.

The new Pope had not forgotten the saintly Passionist, whose prediction he now beheld so wonderfully verified. Discoursing one day with his private secretary, Monsignor D. Carlo Angeletti, a great friend and benefactor of the Congregation, he said, “We shall soon see Father Paul in Rome.” “Impossible,” replied Bishop Angeletti, “he is so ill; he can hardly move.” “Never mind,” returned the Pontiff who well knew the heart of the venerable Father and the affection he entertained for his person, “you will see if he does not come.” His Holiness was soon informed that the servant of God was already in Rome, and desiring to have the pleasure of conversing with him as soon as possible, he sent his carriage on the 29th of May to fetch him from the hospice. The good old man, as he went along to the Papal palace, calling to mind the weary Roman journeys of his younger days, could not forbear exclaiming to his confessor, “Oh! how often have I trodden this road barefoot! How much have I had to suffer in this city.” To which his companion replied, “Behold, now the fruit of your labors.” The Pope received him at the Vatican with the tenderest affection. His Holiness appeared full of joy at seeing the man whom he so truly esteemed. He spoke to him with complete unreserve, and in order to make known to his companion the reverence in which he held him, he said in a tone too low for Father Paul to hear, “I have with me one of his letters which I always carry about my person; it went with me even to the Conclave.”

After a long audience Father Paul, being firmly convinced of the Pope’s favorable dispositions towards his Institute, presented the memorial, praying for its formal approbation as a Congregation with simple vows and for the concession of all the favors and privileges of other Congregations. His Holiness declared that he was ready to grant whatever he desired, and he dismissed him full of new hopes for the firm establishment of his holy work. The Sovereign Pontiff lost no time in deputing Bishop Zelada, Secretary to the Sacred Congregation of the Council, and Bishop Garampi, Secretary to the Signet – both of them well acquainted with the affairs of our Institute – to make the required examination and pronounce an opinion. During

forty days these wise prelates were employed in considering the Rules. At last, they represented to His Holiness that they wished to recommend two alterations – one respecting the night’s repose and the other with regard to fasting. The changes they desired were that five entire hours should be allotted to sleep all the year round, and that the fasting should be limited to three days in the week. This discreet proposal was very agreeable to the Pope, as he foresaw that the Order, by being less rigorous and better adapted to the weak, would become at the same time more stable and permanent. He refused, however, to come to any decision without consulting Father Paul. No sooner was the servant of God made acquainted with the suggestion, than, recognizing the Divine Will in the wishes of the Pontiff, he gave his entire consent to the mitigation. This was the happy conclusion of the affair which Father Paul had had so long at heart. Everything was finally arranged on the Vigil of the Assumption, and upon the morning of that great feast, the Pope sent his confessor, Fr. Maestro Sangiorgio, to tell him that his desires had been granted and that his consolation was at hand. In order to understand the full meaning of these words, it must be premised that the servant of God had signified to the Holy Father his wish of visiting on the Feast of the Assumption the image of Our Lady in the Borghese Chapel at St. Maria Maggiore, to thank her for the secure establishment of his Congregation and for the numerous favors it had obtained through her intercession. Fifty years ago, upon that very spot and before the same image, he had for the first time bound himself by vow to promote in the hearts of the faithful the devotion towards Jesus crucified and to unite companions for the same purpose. And now the Vicar of Christ himself assured him that it was time to testify his love and gratitude towards the powerful protectress who had assisted him through so many difficulties and had at last procured him the crowning object of all his prayers. The venerable Father therefore performed his little pilgrimage; afterwards, tired as he was, he assisted at the function in the Papal chapel, and there again returned his heartfelt thanks to Almighty God for the singular favor bestowed upon him after so many years of labor, anxiety, and fear.

He gave a general order for a *Te Deum* to be said in all the retreats and a solemn Mass of *thanksgiving*. The Brief for the confirmation of the Rule, and the Bull of approbation were expedited on the 15th and 16th of November in 1769. Upon the 23rd of the same month, the day of the commemoration of the glorious martyr, his patron, Pope Clement XIV sent the precious document to Father Paul. He received it with the greatest joy and devotion. Kissing it reverently,

he placed it upon the altar in the chapel of the hospice, and then calling together his little community, they all poured forth anew their gratitude to God, whose benefits they felt they could never sufficiently acknowledge.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

How Father Paul Preached His Last Mission in the Church of St. Mary's in Trastevere, and Then Fixed His Residence in Rome

The venerable servant of God, believing in his humility that his infirmities rendered him incapable of public preaching, had for some years desisted from giving missions. He still, however, retained as freshly as ever his ardent zeal for the good of souls, and he was always ready to take the field against his old enemies, vice and sin. Upon the publication of an extraordinary jubilee in 1769, the Pope expressed his desire that by the means of a public mission the inhabitants of the holy city should be renewed to fervor and disposed to receive the many spiritual favors of that year of grace. The Cardinal Vicar, Bishop Colonna, was commanded to appoint the missionaries, and he immediately informed our venerable Paul that he intended to name him as one of them. The humble Father modestly excused himself, saying that his strength was failing, that he was almost an invalid, and so deaf that for four or five years he had discontinued preaching in public. The good Cardinal smiled and replied, "At all events, your voice is good enough, and as for your hearing, it matters not provided that your audience be not deaf." At these words, obeying as usual the Divine Will in the wishes of his superior, he gave his consent without any further hesitation, and, although he was very weak and the heat of the weather increased his indisposition, he immediately began his preparation for the duty he had undertaken.

The missionaries were to be distributed in the different quarters of the city, and the Cardinal Vicar gave Father Paul the choice of three churches: St. Carlo in the Torso, St. Andrea delle Fratte, and Our Lady of Consolation. He fixed directly on the last, because it was chiefly

frequented by the poor, saying it was to them our Lord sent him. “*To evangelize the poor, God has sent me*” (Lk. 4:18). His Eminence, however, did not approve of this choice; he wished Father Paul to have a larger field for his labors, so he assigned to him the Basilica of St. Mary’s in Trastevere. All was arranged when, upon the very day that the mission was to begin, the poor old man was attacked with fever and was obliged to have his place supplied by one of his companions. As soon, however, as he was able to ascend the platform, his ardent desire to announce the truths of faith to the people of Rome caused him to take upon himself the labors of the mission, without any thought of his own weakness or of the danger of a relapse into the illness, from which he could not be said to have recovered. An unusual crowd assembled to listen to the man of God. People of all ranks and conditions were gathered together in the Trasteverine Basilica – religious and secular priests, prelates and cardinals, and the first nobility of Rome. The fruit produced by his sermons was marvelous. Uninfluenced by a shadow of human respect, and burning with pure zeal for the glory of God, he inveighed with bold and thrilling words against all the common abuses of the day. It was a strange thing to see that vast audience hushed into breathless silence or melted into tears of contrition by the voice of one feeble old man. The mere sight of his venerable form, with uncovered head and sandalled feet, scarcely able to stand upright and tottering up the platform steps with the help of several assistants, was enough to win the inmost hearts of all beholders and to produce the most unheard of effects upon their souls. His discourse was no sooner ended than the people crowded round him to kiss his hand, to touch his habit, or to receive his blessing. His friends were often obliged to protect him from the numbers who pressed upon him. Upon the last day of the retreat, the concourse was so great that the Basilica, with the piazza in front of it, were both quite full, and still many persons had to go away without the consolation of hearing him. Cardinal Panfili, the titular of the church, caused some soldiers to be stationed among the people to preserve order. This, the last sermon ever delivered by Father Paul, was crowned with perfect success. But as he detested nothing more than public applause, he escaped as soon as he could from the crowd that surrounded him and hastened home to his brethren at the little hospice. Thus, in the Church of St. Mary’s in Trastevere was concluded the apostolic ministry of Father Paul of the Cross, which had been exercised with so many blessings and advantages during the space of fifty years.

While the venerable Father was giving this mission, the Sovereign Pontiff used to enquire

every night how the sermon had succeeded and how the poor old man had borne the fatigue. Hearing that all had gone well, he would exclaim joyfully, "That is right, let him go on." After these labors, Father Paul was able to spend some time in retirement and recollection. In the month of October, out of gratitude for the favor he had received in the confirmation of his Institute, he resolved to make the pilgrimage of the Seven Churches. During his visit to these holy sanctuaries, he conceived new and ardent desires to live entirely to God. He felt particularly inspired in the basilica of his great advocate, St. Paul, and in that no less consecrated spot, the scene of his martyrdom and of the miraculous Tre Fontane. Returning again to the hospice, he began to feel an inward longing for the more perfect solitude of his earlier days, wherein he had enjoyed such intimate communications with God. His Holiness, however, whose chief consolation it was to have Father Paul near his person, made known to him his desire that he should remain in Rome, "I know very well," said the Pope, "what you would do at your St. Angelo; you would meditate, and you would pray for yourself, for us, and for the church. Now all this, and even more, you can do without leaving Rome." These words were enough for the humble servant of God; he instantly gave up his private wishes. The Pope knew how to appreciate the prompt obedience with which Father Paul sacrificed so innocent an inclination. Upon the Feast of St. Thomas, Father Paul went to offer his congratulations for His Holiness' birthday and was honored with unusual marks of affection and esteem. Causing him (as he always did) to be seated in his presence, the Pope said to him, "Well, Father Paul, since you have submitted so willingly to the desires of our Cardinal Vicar and ourselves, we must think of providing you in our city with a house and church for your little community. This is only justice, but you must give us time." In order that the venerable Father might have the consolation of offering up the Holy Sacrifice on Christmas night, he granted him a special faculty for celebrating in the domestic chapel of the hospice. He returned home with a grateful sense of this new favor, and kept the great solemnity of our Lord's Nativity with extraordinary devotion, and with a mind full of the contemplation of the touching mystery it commemorates. On the vigil of the feast he seemed unable to contain his holy joy and walked about the house exclaiming to all whom he met, "Oh prodigy! Oh miracle. *Deus nascitur!*" What were the heavenly communications he received upon that night of benediction can be known only to himself, although his tears and sobs were sufficient indications to his religious of the fire which the

Redeemer had lighted in his heart. In the morning, after saying two more Masses, he went to venerate the holy cradle in the Basilica of St. Maria Maggiore, he then proceeded on foot to assist at the High Mass which was sung by the Sovereign Pontiff, nourishing his spirit all the time with tender meditations on the ineffable mysteries of the Divine love.

CHAPTER XXXIX

How Father Paul Made His Last Visitation to the Retreats in the Papal Territories

Satan, who had never ceased to persecute the servant of God, assaulted him with increased fury now that he had received such special graces from on high. The very day after those celestial favors we have just mentioned, he was most cruelly tormented by the enemy of mankind. He did not, however, lose courage; but, animated by the blessings which had been bestowed upon him, he summoned all his fortitude and resolved more firmly than ever to serve Almighty God with generosity and love. For the greater glory of his heavenly Master, he determined to undertake a journey to all his retreats which belonged to the patrimony of the Pope. But as he decided nothing without the advice of Christ's Vicar on earth, he sought an audience to demand the necessary permission and to obtain at the same time the apostolic benediction. The Sovereign Pontiff could not oppose the desires which proceeded solely from a burning zeal for the good of the Congregation. After tenderly blessing our Paul, he referred him for his leave of absence to the Cardinal Vicar. Before he left him, he lovingly complained that he never asked for any benefits, saying, "I admire your modesty, but I beg of you to speak freely of all your wants and do not fear that I can ever find you troublesome." We can easily imagine what Father Paul, with all his affectionate veneration for the successor of St. Peter, must have felt when he heard addressed to him such words as these. After taking his leave, with a full heart he went to the Cardinal Vicar to explain the motives for his journey. His Eminence allowed him at length to depart, upon condition that he would return to Rome at the latest by the Feast of St. John the Baptist. He could not, however, go away, even for a short time, from the holy city without saying a farewell prayer at the Confession of St. Peter and placing the success of his undertaking in the hands of the blessed Apostles.

Upon the 27th of March, 1770, he started for Civita Vecchia. It was a dreary time of the year for traveling, and he had to suffer from the neglected state of the roads, as well as from the cold and bitter winds. When he reached the inn at Monterone, he was almost frozen, but finding himself among country people, who rarely enjoyed the advantages of hearing the word of God, he would not lose the opportunity of giving them a little pious instruction. Accordingly, he delivered an exhortation full of simplicity and fervor, which being adapted to the capacity of all, was listened to with the most profound attention. His first visit was to our house at Corneto, one of his earliest foundations. As he found many of the religious there in weak health and declining years, he determined to give the spiritual exercises himself. Thus, he employed Holy Week to the great advantage of the community. Throughout his exhortations and conferences, as well as in the touching ceremonies of those solemn days, it was evident to all that his whole heart was fixed upon "*Jesus Christ and him crucified*" (1 Cor. 2:2). After Easter the venerable Father, ardently desiring to embrace his dear children at Monte Argentario, determined to go there at all risks, though he was assured that the roads were in a dangerous state and in some places almost impassable. He consented to make the voyage by sea as far as he could, and he embarked in a small vessel from Corneto, but he was compelled by contrary winds and tempestuous weather to land at Mont'Alto.

While he was detained at this place, unable to remain idle, he employed his time in giving instructions and teaching an easy method of meditation on the Passion. It was here that some devout persons seized the opportunity of procuring some pieces of his cloak while he was intent upon his discourse and did not observe what they were doing. Finding it impossible to procure a carriage at Mont'Alto, he was obliged to continue his journey on horseback. It was a weary ride of twenty-six miles, and he was lame and weak. Placing his confidence in God, he went trustfully on his way, and he arrived safely at the town of Orbetello as the bells were ringing the Ave Maria.

Here he was detained one entire day by the rain, and the good citizens, who were delighted to have him once more among them, testified in the most lively manner their consolation and joy. They flocked around him as he left his house; they thought themselves happy if they could kiss his hand; some even prostrated themselves to embrace his feet, while others tore off shreds from his cloak and habit to keep as relics. It was not without some difficulty that he escaped from their

affectionate importunity The following day he rejoiced to be freed from the honors which were so distasteful to him, and he hastened onwards to his beloved retreat. Weeping as he went along the well known road, he exclaimed. "Ah! with what recollections are not these mountains associated!" And well, indeed, might this holy solitude recall to his mind the memory of many a bitter trial and many a precious heavenly grace! He conducted his visitation at Monte Argentario in the same manner as that at Corneto. He spoke with singular tenderness to the novices, treating them as children who rather needed milk than meat, and he addressed to them so touching a discourse as to draw tears from the eyes of all.

While he was here the Sovereign Pontiff gave him a new proof of his fatherly love and condescension. Father Paul, knowing that His Holiness desired to have news of his journey, had written him a letter, telling him of the proposed convent of the Passion at Corneto, and speaking of the fervor and peace which he had found among his religious in the retreats there. The Pope was much gratified by this epistle, and he sent him in reply a Brief full of kindness and affection, as our readers may judge by reading the translation of it which we here subjoin.

CLEMENT XIV, POPE

"Beloved Son, Health and Apostolic Benediction in the Lord.

"From the paternal love which, you are aware, we entertain for you, you can easily conceive the pleasure with which we read your letters, which breathe so much affection for ourselves and veneration for our Apostolic See, and which assure us also of the prayers you and your Congregation cease not to offer for our weakness, which the clemency of God has raised to the dignity of His Vicar. Nothing, indeed, could have more fully proved your piety towards us, nor could you have done anything more agreeable to the Rule of your Institute, in aid of our affairs, which depend so entirely on the Divine support. Continue, beloved son, to deserve our gratitude, and that of the whole Church, by persevering with your brethren in those petitions which are so necessary for our help. In this manner you will respond to the entire confidence we repose in you, and you will still further stimulate that benevolent feeling, which we promise shall always be displayed in your need. With these sentiments we trust to behold your Congregation increase every day in merit and in all Christian virtues. The account which you give of your Institute is most satisfactory to us; we rejoice to see it propagated in the odor of sanctity; and we shall always be ready to assist it by our authority,

protection, and favor. We wish that these, our letters, should remain as a memorial of our singular good will in your behalf. We earnestly desire that, persevering in what you have begun, your paternal government, joined with our assiduous supplications, may, with the Divine blessing, maintain and increase the Congregation to your own great joy. In the spirit of humility and charity we impart to you, beloved son, our Apostolic Benediction. Given at Rome at St. Maria Maggiore, under the ring of the Fisherman, April 21, 1770, the first year of our Pontificate.”

The servant of God received this Brief with profound humility of heart. Kissing it and with tears of joy he exclaimed, “Ah, poor me! Well may I fear lest I have addressed to me at my death those words of our Lord, ‘You have received good things in your life.’” He was so overwhelmed with his own unworthiness that he was inconsolable until he was reminded that the favors he received were necessary for the establishment and progress of his little Congregation, scarcely yet out of its infancy.

He had a fresh cause for humiliation upon his journey from Monte Argentario to Rome. As he approached Mont’Alto, all the inhabitants came out to meet him and to testify their joy at again beholding him. It was edifying to see sick persons who could hardly drag themselves along and mothers with tender infants in their arms pressing round his carriage and begging for his blessing. In vain did he tell the driver to hurry on. It was some time before the horses could be extricated from the crowd, and when at last he had escaped, he burst into tears, exclaiming, “Ah, how miserable I am! I ought to keep myself locked up rather than allow the world to be so deceived about me!” After a most fatiguing journey, a great part of which he had to perform on foot, on account of the dangerous state of the roads, Father Paul found himself once more in his home in the eternal city. And now, as a reward for his toils and labors, he received from our Lord the loving visitation of a severe illness. He was confined to his bed by gout and sciatica, pains in his head and a weakness in the eyes. But in all his prayers and meditations he had only more perfectly learnt the lesson of accepting everything from the hands of God and of finding tranquillity and peace in the Divine Will.

CHAPTER XL

How Father Paul Employed Himself in Rome and How He Was Cured of a Dangerous Illness

As soon as Father Paul was sufficiently recovered from the fatigue of his journey, he hastened to throw himself at the feet of His Holiness, who was anxiously expecting him. He carried with him the Rules for the proposed Convent of the Passionist Nuns at Corneto, which the Pope graciously received, and then entrusted for revision to a person of great learning and piety. Upon the Feast of St. Anne, the servant of God again asked for an audience, and although the Pope had refused to see any one that day because of illness, he no sooner heard it was Father Paul than he instantly admitted him. He made him sit down by his side and gave him the most tender and delicate marks of his affection. Turning to the Father who accompanied him, the Pope exclaimed in the warmth of his heart, "Oh, what pleasure this interview affords us! We had determined this morning to receive no one, not even our secretary, but our dear Papa (Babbo) is always an exception." Finding the Pope so graciously disposed towards him, the man of God ventured in all humility to offer an opinion upon a subject which he had already discussed with many persons noted for their prudence and zeal. He exposed to His Holiness the necessity for a reform of the clergy, especially of regulars, and he laid before him the means by which he conceived this might be peacefully and prudently accomplished. Clement was equally pleased with the sincerity and the wisdom which dictated these remarks. He replied that his sentiments perfectly coincided with Father Paul's, and he applauded his project as the best mode of furthering the end in view. He begged of him to use his private influence among the clergy for this purpose, and in particular to exhort all priests who came to him for advice to that constant prayer, wakeful vigilance, and earnest preaching so necessary in those who serve the sanctuary and are the watchmen on the towers of the holy city.

It was not long before the Pope, being about to leave Rome on a visit to Castel Gandolfo, again admitted Father Paul to a private audience. He gave him fresh marks of his esteem, repeatedly expressed how much he valued his Congregation and begged, that while he was away, the venerable old man would add to his usual prayers one Ave Maria for his particular intention. Upon this occasion as he was leaving the palace, he met the secretary of State, Cardinal Pallavicini, who addressed him with singular reverence and affection. When the humble servant

of God spoke of the gratitude he owed to his Eminence's parents, who had once hospitably entertained him in their house at Genoa, the Cardinal testified his joy and exclaimed with much cordiality, "You see, Father Paul, what an old friendship ours is." All these honors, however, were but fresh occasions of interior humiliation to our Paul; entering into his own nothingness, he went quietly back to the little hospice and began to prepare himself in a special manner to celebrate the Presentation of our Blessed Lady, which is a special feast of the Congregation. During the novena preceding this festival, he passed his days and a great part of his nights in a close and intimate communication with God. In this blessed union, beholding by the Divine light his own destitution and unworthiness, he turned to his crucified Redeemer and offered himself up to the Eternal Father, clothed with the infinite riches of the merits and sufferings of his Savior.

About this time Father Maestro Sangiorgio, the Pope's confessor, was seized with a sudden and violent illness which deprived him of the use of one side. The servant of God, who loved and venerated this excellent religious as a true friend, hastened to visit and console him. "Padre Maestro," he said to him, "you are now at the gates of death, but take courage, you will get well, and I am as certain of your recovery as that I hold this handkerchief in my hand." The prediction was speedily verified, for Father Maestro was so completely cured, that he suffered none of the usual consequences of so severe an attack.

As Advent approached, Father Paul, notwithstanding his advanced age and weakened constitution, was desirous of observing the fasts and abstinence of that holy season, but his physician and his confessor both obliged him, under obedience, to seek a dispensation. He therefore took the usual nourishment, but so sparingly and with so little relish that what strength he had began daily to diminish. On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, His Holiness wished to see him and sent his carriage to fetch him. It happened, however, that during the previous night he had been assaulted by devils in so extraordinary and terrific a manner, that he was scarcely able to defend himself. In vain did he seek a refuge in his own interior by uniting himself with God, as an utter desolation of spirit and an internal abandonment deprived him of all consolation. He passed the night in anguish, and the next morning he was so exhausted that he was unable either to leave the house or to offer the Holy Sacrifice. The Pope was greatly concerned and, fearing to lose him, sent frequently to know how he was. Father Paul suffered

continual nausea and weakness of stomach for about a week. As he was less oppressed in the day and always worse at nights, it was difficult to prescribe anything for his relief. At length he was bled and ordered to take bark, which he forced himself to swallow, although he had a great dislike to the medicine. Knowing from where his malady proceeded, he said to his confessor, "This is not a medical case, for my illness is caused by devils." Notwithstanding this opinion, he would not act upon his own feelings, but obeyed his physicians in everything. Finding that he grew worse, he began to prepare himself for his last hour with the most perfect conformity to the will of God. Speaking unreservedly before his spiritual director, he exclaimed, "I die contented and I care not to live longer. To some death is an object of horror, but to me it brings no fear; I willingly accept it in penance for my sins." Upon the Feast of the Expectation of our Blessed Lady, he begged to be allowed to receive the holy Viaticum, and, as but little hope was entertained of his life, his request was granted. His confessor deposed that upon the previous evening he disposed himself with the greatest fervor to receive his Savior in the Adorable Sacrament, and in the morning he desired to go to confession, saying, "I have nothing upon my conscience that disquiets me, but I wish to confess myself as an act of obedience." He accused himself with the most lively sentiments of contrition and after the words of absolution had been pronounced, he said, "I place all my hope and confidence in the Passion of my Jesus; He knows that I have ever tried to promote his glory. I have endeavored to make others love Him, and I trust that He will show mercy to me now. The prayers of the poor sinners whom I have assisted will plead for me in this my hour of need." He frequently repeated with great devotion, "Mercy, my Jesus, mercy!" When the Viaticum was administered to him, his fervor moved the hearts of all present. Towards evening his illness increased so rapidly that the doctors, finding their skill of no avail, declared his case to be well nigh desperate. Being left alone with his confessor, the sick man asked, "And am I really in such danger?" Being answered in the affirmative, he rejoined, "Now, indeed, do I understand the light which our Lord once gave me to foresee that I should pass through a great trial, but that my life should be spared." He did not, however, appear to confide entirely in this interior conviction, for he spoke of disposing of everything as if his death were at hand. "If I die," he said, "have the charity to perform my obsequies privately in the chapel here. Let my body be carried secretly, late in the evening, to the Church of Saints Peter and Marcellinus and buried there without ceremony. When my flesh has decayed, cause my

bones to be taken to St. Angelo at Vetralla and deposited near those of my brother John Baptist.” The humble servant of God little knew how differently others had arranged his interment. His Holiness, when he heard that his death was hourly expected, decided that he should be buried in the Basilica of the Apostles and then removed to one of the churches of the Congregation, if his religious desired it. His confessor, being well aware of this intention, replied to Father Paul’s observation by saying that the Pope would take care of his funeral. The countenance of the sick man fell, and he remained for a while silent. Then sighing deeply, he murmured, “All I wish is to die in some place where my body could receive no honor.” To console him, his spiritual guide suggested, “Obedience in life, in death, and after death. Jesus Christ suffered His body to be buried wherever His faithful servants pleased.” After this he seemed to have no more will of his own. He spoke not again upon the subject but, continuing to converse about his illness, he said that, notwithstanding his dangerous state, he felt assured he had yet some time to live. During the night which followed, he reposed more tranquilly and in the morning found himself well enough to take some food. He was no sooner aware of this improvement, than, turning to the Source of all good, he exclaimed with tears in his eyes, “As the nobles of the world are accustomed to receive memorials when their birthdays approach, so my sweet Jesus has been pleased to accept the petitions presented by my religious before His holy Nativity. By the grace of God, when I am recovered, I shall amend my life. “ He was visited that morning by Canon Pirelli and Bishop Zelada. Conversing with them, he remarked, “I never had so little fear of death as upon this occasion. In fact, I could not help thinking that it was an event more to be wished for than dreaded since it is only a deprivation of life by the same Hand that gave it to us.”

He now acquired fresh strength every day, and he even hoped to be able to say Mass upon the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord. But the Pope, fearing lest he should exert himself too soon, sent him word not to celebrate on that day. He obeyed with his usual alacrity, and upon Christmas night, although he was lying on a sick bed, instead of officiating in church, he did not fail to contemplate in spirit the ineffable mysteries of love which were being commemorated. His recovery was unfortunately considerably retarded by an attack of a different nature, which so weakened him that on the 12th of January he was in a kind of delirium. Various remedies were tried, but all in vain. The servant of God again resigned himself to the Divine Will and during several days waited for our Lord to do what He pleased with him. Upon the 22nd of January he

requested the holy Viaticum, and upon the Feast of our Blessed Lady's Espousals, after confessing himself with tears of contrition, he fervently received the Blessed Sacrament. After his thanksgiving, his confessor entered the room and found him unusually calm and tranquil. He cried out, "I am not afraid to die, for my Jesus has assured me of paradise. When a great king sends one of his ministers upon a long journey, he provides him with a prudent guide to ensure his safe arrival, so my good God has given me for my voyage to eternity His Divine Son as Viaticum." He again repeated, with tears in his eyes, "I am not afraid; I have nothing to fear; I see not yet the hour of departure." After this there was some improvement, but it was not permanent and he continued to alternate between recovery and relapse. The poor invalid was worn out with suffering, and he was tormented besides with interior desolation, which our Lord sent him for the greater purification of his soul. He adored the dispensation of Providence and abandoned himself entirely to the good pleasure of Almighty God. He passed his days in prayers of thanksgiving and praise, often repeating with particular devotion, "We give You thanks because of your great glory." This had always been his favorite ejaculation, and he had frequently exhorted his religious to use it whenever they had any particular undertaking in hand, saying, with peculiar earnestness, "*We give You thanks because of your great glory.*" At other times, prostrating himself in spirit before the throne of the most Blessed Trinity, he fervently exclaimed, "*Holy, Holy,*" or, "*Blessing and glory,*" etc., which he used to call the song of paradise.

Father Paul was now, naturally speaking, in imminent peril of death. Out of love for holy poverty, he stripped himself of all his little possessions, which he placed in the hands of his first consultor, and asked as an alms a poor habit to be buried in. Calling to mind with deep humility all the faults of his life he said, "He who has committed high treason deserves death; I am guilty. Therefore, it is just that I should die." One of the bystanders answered, "By the grace of God you have been pardoned." But he rejoined, "Ah, which of us knows whether he be worthy of love or hatred? But my trust is in my God, and the merits of Christ are the foundation of my hopes." He now left nothing undone which could contribute to his salvation, and he entreated that when he drew his dying breath the last absolution of the Church might be given to him. His confessor, having asked his benediction, the tender Father took up his crucifix and made the sign of the cross, saying, "May our Lord impart to you His Holy Spirit." One thing more remained. He had

not yet received the blessing of His Holiness, and it seemed impossible that he should die without this last mark of affection from him who bore him almost a brother's love. Accordingly, he despatched his confessor to tell the Pope that he was a true son of holy Church and as such he wished to die. In return the Pontiff sent him, with the deepest tenderness, his apostolic benediction "*in articulo mortis.*" The most marvelous part of Father Paul's illness was that though his dangerous symptoms increased and the doctors declared further remedies useless, he still retained the government of his Congregation as if he had been in perfect health. He had made arrangements for his intended convent at Corneto, gave all the necessary orders for the establishment, and dictated, with the greatest energy, the letters and documents which the occasion required. His whole conduct was an example of zeal and vigilance, self forgetfulness and patience, and, in fact, the only remedy for his malady seemed to be the fulfillment of the will of God and the performance of all his ordinary duties. Nothing disturbed him so much as the attentions that were paid him, as he sincerely believed that his sufferings were unworthy of the least consideration.

But while his dear children in the Congregation were expecting every day to hear the sad knowledge of their beloved Father's death, our Lord had resolved in His mercy to spare him a little longer for those who so much needed him on earth before he went to be their protector and advocate in heaven. He was destined to arise from his sick bed and to celebrate a joyful Mass of thanksgiving for a sudden and unexpected recovery. The manner in which this took place will be best related in the simple words of his infirmarian, the truth of whose recital is attested by several other witnesses. "While our Father Paul of the Cross was in Rome at the hospice of St. John Lateran, he was seized with a mortal illness which reduced him to the last extremity. Doctor Giuliani attended him and declared that he did not expect him to survive the week. I went with Father Procurator to tell the Pope that the servant of God was dying. His Holiness, whose affection for Father Paul was increased by the fear of losing him, answered in these words, 'I will not allow him to die yet. Tell him he must stay with us a little longer; I command him under holy obedience.' We returned to the hospice, well pleased with the kindness shown to us by the Pontiff, and with our hearts gladdened by the hope we began to conceive of our Father's recovery. We repeated to him the Pope's message; he wept as he heard it. Turning to the crucifix by his side, he thus addressed it, "My crucified Lord, I desire to obey Your Vicar." From that

moment he began to rally, was gradually freed from suffering, and restored to his former state of health.” And thus Almighty God made known that a lively faith and a generous obedience act with gentle violence upon His loving Heart and obtain the most wonderful favors.

CHAPTER XLI

How a Convent of Passionist Nuns Was Founded in the City of Corneto

Through the mercy of God there were now twelve religious houses in which the Rules of the Congregation of the Passion were observed and continual prayers offered up, that the Divine Goodness would vouchsafe to pour the abundance of His Spirit upon those Christians who, looking upon their Blessed Redeemer transfixed for their sins, should weep with compassion for His cruel death. “I will pour out,” said the prophet Zachary, “upon the house of David and the habitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and of prayers, and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn.” It appeared, therefore, suitable that there should also be some convent where holy women, consecrated to God and secluded from the world, might contemplate the same Man of Sorrows and compassionate the same agonizing death. “And the land shall mourn,” continues the prophet, “and the women apart.” Carrying upon their hearts the symbol of His Passion, their whole conduct was to exhibit a lively image of their crucified Spouse. By their fervent prayers they were to implore him to turn to Himself the eyes and hearts of those for whom He died. By their words and actions they were to promote a practical devotion towards His bitter sufferings. For this end our Lord so ordained that a design should be formed and put into execution after the manner we are about to relate. We have already alluded several times to the establishment of this convent. Since we wish to give the reader an entire history of its foundation, we will go back to the origin of this holy work and see how, by the mercy of God, it was at last happily completed.

In the very beginning of the Congregation of the Passion, a special light was received upon this subject by a holy soul named Agnes, who was a penitent of Father Paul’s. How much she profited by the enlightened direction of her confessor may be inferred from what he himself said of her after her death, “I earnestly desire that the life of that great servant of God could be written

by some learned and devout pen.” This saintly woman was inspired by God to know that Father Paul would one day found a monastery of Passionist nuns. But he, who in the direction of souls proceeded with the greatest caution and weighed with the scales of the sanctuary all the operations of the Spirit within them, refrained from a sudden approval of the revelation. In order to increase his penitent’s humility, Father Paul took little notice of what she said. All the time, however, he was offering continual prayers to know the will of God in this matter. At last he was given to understand that a convent of nuns of his Institute was really to be established. Upon the 18th of January, 1749, he wrote to another holy soul whom he guided, “We cannot tell when Almighty God will perform what we wish in favor of the holy virgins. I look for it in all peace. God desires that we should not cease to pray for this is a work which must be the fruit of prayer.” Many years had passed; the Rules of the Congregation of the Passion had been confirmed and approved; houses of the Order had been founded and retreats built, when God put it into the hearts of Signor Domenico Costantini of Corneto, D. Nicola, his brother, and Lucia, his wife, to establish at their own expense a convent of nuns, wherein the rigorous Institute of Father Paul of the Cross might be observed. They communicated their intention to the venerable Father, and he, knowing how greatly such an undertaking would promote the glory of God, encouraged them to persevere and invoked upon them the choicest blessings of Heaven. The pious benefactors, therefore, began to think seriously of commencing their work. They sought for a fitting locality, and after some difference of opinion they at last all agreed (not without a particular inspiration) upon the spot where the convent now stands. They themselves possessed several houses in Corneto, but finding that the ground which they occupied was not sufficient for the purpose, they bought a piece of land which lay contiguous, and having privately obtained the permission of Bishop Saverio Giustiniani, they laid the foundations of the edifice. As the workmen were pulling down the old buildings, they brought down by inadvertence an image of our Lady, which had been bricked up between the walls. The upper part of the statue fortunately escaped injury, and it is now venerated with particular devotion on the altar of the convent church. The venerable servant of God rejoiced to see himself relieved, by the charity of these good persons, from all the usual difficulties of a new foundation. He wrote, full of confidence, to a devout woman, “We want to have a community of great and holy souls, who in their virtues and penances will imitate Jesus crucified, their Spouse, and His most afflicted mother, their abbess

and guide.”

There were not wanting, however, to the fulfillment of this enterprise some of the usual obstacles which are so commonly permitted in all the works of God. No sooner did the pious design become generally known, than plenty of persons were found to oppose it and turn it into ridicule. And for a little while it met with a still more effectual hindrance in the financial losses of Signor Domenico, which obliged him to suspend the progress of the building, which increased the scorn of those who had derided him. But Father Paul was his chief comfort and support under all his misfortunes. He wrote to him frequently and upon one occasion used the following words, “Arm yourself with unbounded confidence in God, who, if He will, can overcome all your difficulties by the marvels of His power. Be encouraged, therefore, to persevere with a great heart and willing spirit, in humility and purity of intention throughout. Remember that you are forming a nest for the pure doves of Calvary, and that you are pouring into the wounds of Jesus the precious balsam of their tears. Go on then bravely for the love of the most sacred Passion. Oh, how high and holy a work is this! Return thanks to God, who has chosen you to do it for His Glory, and utterly annihilating yourself before Him, exclaim, “My very substance is as nothing.” Animated by the advice of so bold and trustful a spirit, Domenico Costantini recommenced the work and became full of zeal for its speedy progress, while Father Paul on his side labored to have the Rule and Constitutions ready for the inhabitants of this new sanctuary. When the edifice was at a state of forwardness, the founders presented to Monsignor Giustiniani a deed by which they engaged themselves to pay for the maintenance of the convent, 400 scudi annually during their natural lives, and to leave, for the same purpose, all their property and possessions at their deaths. The worthy prelate, however, was not satisfied with this allowance and required, instead, a revenue of 50 scudi a year for each nun. The benefactors were discouraged by this unexpected reply, and although they did not renounce their holy project, yet the demand of the bishop and their own recent losses obliged them to interrupt its execution for the present.

During the pontificate of Clement XIV, as Father Paul was celebrating Mass in Rome upon the Feast of St. Mary Magdalene, his countenance suddenly became inflamed and his eyes overflowed with tears. One who was accustomed to discern his spirit guessed that our Lord had favored him with some peculiar light. So indeed it proved to be, for he had received a clear indication of the manner in which God willed the establishment of the Nuns of the Passion. He

became aware that it was necessary, for the greater security of the undertaking, to speak of it to the Sovereign Pontiff, and he observed about this time in one of his letters, “In reply to yours, which I received with much joy this morning, I have to tell you that we shall really have our monastery this year as we expected. But because great enterprises must meet with great difficulties, it is fitting that we should have to struggle for awhile and thereby increase the splendor of the glory of God. Our work, too, will possess all the more solidity for having withstood the persecutions raised against it by devils and also sometimes by men, “who think they are offering worship to God” but are opposing His own special projects and desires. I shall petition the Sovereign Pontiff for an ample Brief of approbation of the Rules and Constitutions, and I have complete faith that I shall obtain all that I want.” The venerable Father determined to go in person to Corneto, to enquire into the state of the building, and to solicit its speedy completion. But in order to assure himself of the Divine Will, he thought it right first to make known the whole affair to the Vicar of Christ. Accordingly, on the Feast of St. Joseph, 1770, he threw himself at the feet of His Holiness, and after manifesting his own desires and the intentions of the founders, besought his blessing on the undertaking. The Pope listened to him with great attention and cordiality. He granted him the permission for his journey to Corneto and declared his entire concordance in the pious design. The Rules and Constitutions were committed for revision to the Father Maestro Pastrovichi, afterwards Bishop of Viterbo. This holy and learned man expressed himself of them in the following terms, “The characteristics of this Institute are not only in perfect conformity with purity of faith, holiness of life, and strict religious discipline, but they breathe a spirit of prudence, discretion and fervor, which encourages us to hope much for the spiritual advantage of those who will have the happiness of professing them.” They underwent a further examination by the secretary of the Council, Bishop Zelada, who pronounced an equally favorable opinion of them.

In writing the Rules Father Paul’s great ends were perfect detachment from creatures in order to live only to Christ and the ever-present remembrance of the bitter death of Him who was sacrificed on Calvary for the redemption of the world. For the instruction of his religious in the science of the love of God and in the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of the Incarnate Word, he ordained that their meditations should be almost always upon the Divine perfections or the mysteries of the sufferings of Jesus, trusting that by this means they would obtain the light

and strength to walk faithfully and fearlessly in the footsteps of their Spouse. Every Friday they were to make a more special commemoration of the most holy Passion. “Fridays are to be observed by the religious with peculiar solemnity, the whole mornings are to be employed in recalling the touching scenes which that day brings to mind by meditation or reading or the Way of the Cross, not omitting some special mortification for the greater honor of their crucified Lord. On that day, also, one of the nuns, chosen by lot from among the rest, shall be dispensed from all other labor in order to visit thirty-three times the most blessed Sacrament.” The Rule prescribed that each religious should perform her work in her own cell, maintaining herself as much as possible in the presence of God and enjoying the blessing of uninterrupted communications with Him, after the example of the ancient anchorites, who, while they labored with their hands, kept their hearts in peace before God. All was to be done in sweetness and tranquillity, and the life of the Nuns of the Passion was to be one of simplicity, meek love, and spiritual repose. They were not, however, to be content with the nourishment which they themselves received from the five precious wounds; they were to have very much at heart the extension of the devotion to the sufferings of Jesus and the Dolours of Mary. “They shall go,” says the Rule, “like tender children to the feet of the Immaculate Mother of God and invoke her in all their wants. Every day they shall accompany her in spirit to Calvary, and shall compassionate her in the sorrow which pierced her soul during the death-agony of her only Son.”

The Rules and Constitutions, having been fully examined by competent judges, Clement XIV proposed to expedite the Brief for their approbation. But Father Paul begged His Holiness to defer this last step until experience should have more fully proved the wisdom of the Institute, and he therefore received for the present a simple Rescript, dated September 3rd, 1770. Everything now seemed to promise the final success of the undertaking. The young virgins, ten in number, who were to inhabit the new monastery, had already arrived at Corneto and had been welcomed by the new founders with exultation and delight. But an unexpected obstacle arose, just as the work appeared upon the very eve of completion. It is not easy to express the affliction of the good benefactors, who saw themselves exposed afresh to public curiosity, criticism, and contempt, nor of the devout virgins, who, after journeying from distant parts to shut themselves up in a hidden solitude, found themselves without a refuge and uncertain of their fate. These poor Sisters could only pray, but the prayers of their innocent souls did gentle violence to the loving

Heart of Jesus and obtained all that they asked. The venerable servant of God was very ill at the time, but another Father had been appointed to take his place at the solemn function which was to have marked the opening. From him the Pope heard of the circumstances which retarded it. His Holiness immediately ordered that the postulant Sisters should receive the habit, and he generously assigned a pension of 300 scudi for the support of the community.

Upon the day which had been originally fixed for the clothing of the religious, Father Paul lay upon his sickbed in Rome. After communicating in the morning, he told his infirmarian that he felt sure the ceremony at Corneto had been deferred. Whether he had some suspicion of what had occurred or had received upon the subject a special light from God, we know not. But it was soon ascertained that his presentiment had been a true one. It must have been no little cross to Father Paul to see the work for which he had labored so indefatigably thrown, as it were, to the ground in the very triumph of success. But he lost not a moment in submitting to the Divine Will and in abandoning all his hopes and wishes into the hands of the Almighty. He was not insensible to the discredit which would be thrown upon him and upon all who had taken part in the enterprise; but he had resolved to serve his Lord “in disgrace or in honor,” and he could not be moved by these opinions of men. His first thought was of the poor postulants, and it was at his instance that permission was obtained to clothe them. Finding that the ceremony could not take place, as had been intended, upon the Feast of the Annunciation, he fixed upon that of the Finding of the Holy Cross, a day of particular devotion in the Congregation. And as the first church of our Institute, after many obstacles, had been opened at Monte Argentario thirty-five years before upon that glorious feast, so our Lord ordained that the first Passionist Convent should date its commencement from the same memorable day.¹⁰ They alone, who understand what it is to seek God only and to be intimately united to Him, can sympathize in the joy of those holy souls who, upon that happy morning in May, entered into the repose of the children of God.

The new religious were not of the number of those foolish virgins who are at no pains to keep their lamps burning with the fire of holy love. No sooner were the monastery gates closed upon them, than they commenced the observance of their Rule so fervently and persevered in it so

¹⁰ The Feast of Finding of the Holy Cross was May 5, when the Passionist Nuns entered their convent; the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross is September 14, when the Passionists entered the Retreat of the Presentation on

faithfully that Bishop Banditi, a prelate worthy to be compared to the primitive pastors of the church, wrote of them in these terms to Father Paul, “I cannot conclude, my much esteemed Father, without informing you of the singular consolation I experienced in receiving the religious profession of eleven nuns of your Institute. Their convent, which is full of the spirit of God, already contributes greatly to the Divine glory in this city and will bring many future blessings on us all. I can hardly express to you how affecting a ceremony it was, and how much I myself was touched by it. I had previously spoken to each of these holy virgins apart, and I felt convinced they were inspired with a true vocation and an ardent desire to consecrate themselves to God in a religious state. The president, vice president, and consultor were elected according to the Constitutions on Thursday morning, and every thing was conducted in my presence with the greatest order and unanimity.”

The Nuns of the Passion, when they were settled in their convent, wrote to inform the Sovereign Pontiff that they had pronounced their vows. In return he sent them the following Brief, which gives a true idea both of the spirit of the Institute and of the interest which His Holiness felt in the new foundation.

“To our beloved daughters in Christ, the Nuns of the Passion of Jesus, in our city of Corneto.

“ Beloved daughters in Christ, health and apostolic benediction. The letter in which you inform us of your solemn profession and the pronouncement of your religious vows was received by us with singular joy, inasmuch as nothing can be more pleasing to us than to see your Institute, which has our entire approbation, crowned with all those virtues which tend to holiness and perfection of life. The peace and consolation which you experience give us every reason to hope that we shall have to rejoice more and more in your perseverance and in the uninterrupted charity and union which will reign among you. Although we look in all trustfulness for this consummation, still we cannot but exhort you to be careful to imitate the prudent virgins of the Gospel, who were found watching when the bridegroom came. Endeavor then, with particular earnestness to turn yourselves completely from that world which you have forsaken and to fix your whole attention upon Him who has conferred upon you so special a favor and privilege. In your hearts, as well as in your minds, have engraved the image of the Passion of Jesus Christ our Lord, which is your motto and your emblem, and

in which consists all the vigor and beauty of your Order. Let meditation upon this subject be your occupation, your study, and your principal delight. Nothing can be irksome or difficult while you have those bitter pains before your eyes; and in all your labors and trials, the thought of your suffering Spouse will bring you consolation and peace. Hence, there is no joy so boundless, no pleasure so unalloyed, as that which Jesus gives to those who seek none other but himself. When in this manner the world is crucified to you, and you to the world, when in all simplicity and strict observance you live entirely to your Spouse, then will your monastery diffuse around a grateful odor of sweetness. Thus, of you and of all who succeed you, it shall be said, “These are the fairest among the daughters of Jerusalem. In conclusions, beloved daughters, we ask of you what we are sure your piety and charity will grant, namely, that you will offer your fervent prayers to the Father of Mercies for us and for the church which is committed to our weakness. We promise that we shall let no opportunity pass in which we may assist you by our protection or our favors. In proof of which, we impart to you, beloved daughters in Christ, our apostolic benediction. Given at Rome, at St. Mary Maggiore, under the ring of the fisherman, July 20, 1772, the fourth year of our Pontificate.”

Thus spoke the supreme pastor to his tender lambs, who had abandoned the world to cling to their crucified Spouse and who found their pasture and their nourishment in His life-giving wounds. Happy they, if faithful to their high vocation, who imitate their Blessed Redeemer in all things and are at length called by Him to the eternal glory and ineffable joy of paradise. *“If only we suffer with him so we may also be glorified with him”* (Rom. 8:17).

CHAPTER XLII

The Sovereign Pontiff Presents Father Paul, after His Recovery, with the House of Sts. John and Paul for His Community in Rome

The venerable servant of God passed eighteen months upon his sick bed, enduring with marvelous patience and resignation the sufferings which Almighty God sent him for the greater purification of his soul and as a preparation for the new graces which he was destined to receive. Towards Holy Week, 1772, he was able to rise and dragged himself, with the aid of his crutches

and the infirmarians, to the chapel to receive Holy Communion. His strength gradually increasing, by the Feast of Corpus Christi he was able to say Mass. It cost him, it is true, no little pain, but his consolation of spirit was so great that he would have celebrated every day if the weakness of his muscles had not prevented his standing upright. The summer season, which always agreed with him, improved his health so much that, after the Feast of the great St. Bernard, he began to say his usual early Mass every day. He had as yet scarcely left the house, when hearing that His Holiness had returned from the country, he resolved to pay him an unexpected visit. When the Pope was told who had come to see him, he was taken completely by surprise. Causing him to enter, he welcomed him with the warmest expressions of joy and delight. "Holy Father," said the servant of God, "if I am still alive, I owe it after God to your Holiness, for I had the greatest faith in obeying your command, and you see how I have been rewarded for it." It may be imagined with what pleasure the Pontiff listened to the recital of his marvelous recovery, and how he spoke to him once more in all the fullness of his heart's affection. As it was a public audience day, the Pope could not have him as long as he would have wished. When he was obliged to dismiss him, he took leave of him with his usual marks of tenderness and esteem. All this time the Sovereign Pontiff had not forgotten his promise of providing the poor Congregation with a church and retreat in Rome. In the year 1773, before he went to his summer residence in the country, he gave an audience to our Father Procurator, who had been sent by Father Paul to wish him a pleasant journey. In the course of conversation, he asked whether the servant of God had not had a brother in the Congregation named John. Being answered in the affirmative, he muttered "John and Paul" and was then silent. Upon his return to Rome he again testified the warmest affection for Father Paul and signified his desire of benefitting his Congregation. After some further consideration, he at length finally decided upon giving him the Church of Saints John and Paul, with the house annexed to it upon Monte Celio. The Fathers of the Congregation of the Mission, who at that time occupied the place, were transferred to St. Andrea at Monte Cavallo. Upon the 9th of December, 1773, after the first Vespers of the Translation of the Holy House of Loreto, about three hours before the Ave Maria, Father Paul and his companions took possession of their new dwelling, returning their most humble thanks to God. Shortly afterwards, they recited Compline and from that day forward officiated day and night in the devout basilica of the glorious martyrs.

The venerable Father, as soon as he heard of the intention of the Pontiff, lost no time in expressing his gratitude for this last and greatest favor, which he had received from his generosity. This is the letter which he addressed to him upon the occasion:

“Most Holy Father, while I praise and bless the Divine Mercy for permitting your happy return to the apostolic residence, I cannot refrain from expressing, likewise, my humble and heartfelt thanks to yourself for the charity with which you have deigned to bestow on us the church and house of Saints John and Paul. I rejoice in our Lord that your Holiness should have founded in the metropolis of the world a house wherein will be made a constant commemoration of the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer, and which will be a lasting monument to Christendom of the piety, earnestness, and zeal of your beatitude for promoting in all hearts an undying devotion towards the most holy Passion. As for me, Holy Father, I find myself improved in health, although I cannot depend much upon my strength on account of the suffering state of my nerves. Still I am able to celebrate every morning in the little chapel, which is so close to the hospice where we still remain. Besides the prayers, which I offer day and night for your Holiness, I supplicate for you with more power and efficacy at the tremendous Sacrifice of the Mass. Nor can I refrain from placing your heart in the precious blood of Jesus Christ when I place the sacred particle in the chalice, in order that, nourished and watered by that crimson stream, it may produce, as it always has done, fruits of eternal life in the hearts of the faithful. The consolation which I experience is abundant, when I think of the protection of the Almighty over you, and of the care which our dear Lady takes to keep you in her most holy bosom.”

Thus it was that, after all the toils and labors he had undergone, and the vain attempts which he had made to establish his Order in Rome, God was at length pleased to console him and to reward that faithful trusting spirit of his, which had caused him to write some years before, “After the labors of nearly one year, we are finally in possession of our hospice in Rome. In a few days I shall place there three learned, pious, and able missionaries. I look upon this little hospice of Rome, near St. John Lateran, as a grain of mustard seed which the Divine Majesty sows for the present in that great city. But with a lively faith, I think He will one day make it grow into a large fruitful tree. “ In this manner, likewise, was verified another prophecy he had uttered many years before in allusion to the present foundation, which we shall not fail to relate

in its proper place. The servant of God was careful to establish in his new retreat a very fervent spirit of piety, regularity, and exact observance.

The new Rector was appointed before Christmas and upon the night of the Nativity, Father Paul himself sang Mass with a devotion which moved all beholders to tears. Much as he suffered by this exertion, tenderness for the touching mysteries of our dear Redeemer's birth and childhood caused him to go through the same function upon the Feast of Epiphany. During this glorious octave, he assembled all the religious in his room, and delivered to them a devout discourse, in which he took for his text the following words of St. Paul. "*We urge you, brothers, to progress even more, to aspire to live a tranquil life, and to mind your own affairs*" (I Th. 4:10,11). To the end that his community in the new retreat might serve Almighty God in the true spirit of virtue and sanctity, he urgently exhorted them to maintain inviolable holy peace and fraternal charity and to attend most diligently to religious perfection. Upon all the principal solemnities of the year and, from time to time on other occasions, he was accustomed to address his spiritual children. His discourses, full of unction and fervor, were as useful as they were consoling to all. The experience of many years taught him that young men are like tender plants, which require to be cultivated with the greatest watchfulness and care. The venerable Father used frequently to call the students of the house to his room, and treat with them in the most affectionate manner upon the concerns of their souls. He heard their spiritual conferences and, as a loving father, gave to each one the necessary advice, in order that they might become men of prayer and true servants of God. But in all he sought to leave deeply impressed in their hearts the true maxims of virtue and the proper rules for prayer and meditation.

When Holy Week came, as his strength was partially restored, he determined upon officiating himself in all the functions of that solemn time in which he found so much precious food for his soul. The debilitated state of his nerves, however, cost him much suffering during the lengthened services of Palm Sunday. On Maundy Thursday he would not omit the sermon to the religious, which he was accustomed to deliver every year when he was in health. After speaking in burning words, being all the while wholly recollected in God, of the boundless love of Jesus in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, he gave them practical instructions upon the manner of celebrating worthily and with fruit the sacred functions of Holy Week, and of performing what he termed the obsequies and the funeral of our Divine Redeemer. The

tenderness and devotion with which he spoke drew tears from the eyes of his audience. When, after having offered the holy Sacrifice with extraordinary fervor, he carried his Beloved Savior in the Sacred Host to the sepulcher, the floods of tears he shed were so great that it seemed as if his heart would melt into love and compassion for his dear Jesus. He continued to weep so much that he completely moistened the humeral veil which covered him in that sacred function. In short, he spent the whole of that great week in contemplating and compassionating his crucified Love. The servant of God continued thus to rise up every morning from his bed and celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to entertain himself many hours of the day seated in his room, either by praying or reading, or discoursing upon useful subjects with those who came to visit him. When upon the Feast of Saints John and Paul, the titular saints of the Basilica, His Holiness was pleased to go and pay his devotions to these holy martyrs in their own church. He was received by Father Paul and all the religious habited in their surplices, as was becoming, and after satisfying his piety, he kindly visited the retreat. Father Paul was full of joy at beholding the Vicar of Christ in their new dwelling, and with his usual fervor and devotion he exclaimed in the words of the Gospel, "*Today salvation has come to this house*" (Lk. 19:9). The Holy Father was conducted to a throne which had been erected for him, and he there received with the greatest kindness and courtesy the homage of our Fathers, as well as of many other ecclesiastics who were in the house at the time. He afterwards retired into an inner room and discoursed for a long while in secret with Father Paul. In taking his leave he expressed the joy and satisfaction his visit had afforded him and declared that that was truly a house of servants of God.

The venerable Father, whose affection for the Sovereign Pontiff had been increased by a grateful sense of his unvarying kindness and fatherly attachment to him, prayed day and night for His Holiness and could not hear without the deepest sorrow the knowledge of his expected death. He would certainly have wished to have enjoyed the last consolation of being near a person whom he so tenderly loved and profoundly venerated, or at least of paying him a visit in his last moments, but he was prevented by a violent attack of illness, which seized him upon the 21st of September, the very night when Clement XIV passed to his eternal repose in a better life. When he was told that His Holiness was no more, the poor old man was truly inconsolable and could not dry up his tears. It was only in the Divine Will, in which he was accustomed to view everything which happens, that he found peace and comfort. He caused letters to be written to

the local superiors commanding solemn Requiems in all the retreats for the soul of this great Pontiff and so loving a benefactor of the whole Congregation. During the whole of the Office and solemn High Mass in his own church, being too weak to stand, he sat at the foot of the catafalque, penetrated with lively sentiments of grief, love, and gratitude, and was continually employed in fervent prayer. He felt himself to be now most truly a fatherless orphan and, regarding not only his own private wants but the necessities of the universal church, he prayed unceasingly and caused others to pray for the election of a holy Pastor full of the spirit of God. God vouchsafed to console the whole Church by giving to it a Pontiff, according to His own heart, in the person of the illustrious Cardinal Braschi, now Pius VI, now happily reigning. At the happy news of this auspicious elevation, Father Paul was filled with inexpressible consolation, and being well acquainted with the singular virtues and rare gifts of the new Pontiff, he conceived a lively confidence that he would, with the Divine assistance, spread everywhere, by word and example, the brightest rays of heavenly light. By his authority, united to the splendor of his virtues, the new Pontiff would bring great help to the universal Church.

Nor was the servant of God deceived in these expectations, for from the earliest days of the new Pope's reign, he showed how great was the ardor and purity of his zeal, which desired nothing but the glory of God and the care of the sheep of the fold which had been committed to him by Jesus Christ. Father Paul hoped, likewise, that the new Pontiff would be propitious to the rising Congregation, and in this also did God abundantly console him. For the Holy Father, a few days after his election and upon the first Sunday in Lent, when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for the Forty Hours in the Basilica of Saints John and Paul, going there to adore his Savior, was pleased afterwards to enter into the retreat and to visit in person the venerable Father in his sick chamber, with a wonderful example of kindness, charity, and humility, truly worthy of the Vicar of Him who was the most humble, the most meek, and the most loving of men.

CHAPTER XLIII

New Confirmation of the Rules and of the Institute

Although the venerable Father was able to celebrate Mass and to sit up at his little table for

many hours in the day, nevertheless, ever since his long illness, his weakness and helplessness had rendered him a confirmed invalid. The pains which afflicted him, his extreme debility, the difficulty he had to take food, everything tended to show that at his great age only a short period of life still remained to him. But the more his body was weak and infirm, the more was his spirit strong and full of life and inflamed with a desire to be perfectly united to God. He continued preparing himself for death by the practice of continual acts of different virtues, especially of profound humility. This virtue, which had always been most dear to him, and upon which, as upon a solid foundation, he had built the spiritual edifice of his sanctification, was perhaps never more than at present practiced by him in an excellent manner. It seemed as if he made everything that happened to him serve as a fresh occasion for humbling himself. His constant need of assistance, his exclusion from regular observance, and his dispensation from the rules of the house caused him to look upon himself as one who was not only a useless member of the community, but a charge upon the brethren and a bad example to others. Whenever he spoke to his religious, whether privately or in public discourses, in proportion to the esteem he showed for others was his desire that they should look upon him as a poor, ignorant, and miserable old man. If sometimes he thought that he had offended or given any little displeasure to any one, he humbly asked pardon. A few days before his last illness, he went to the sacristy for a private conference with some devout person. Finding a lay brother there, who remained to finish what he was about even after Father Paul had begged him to leave the room, he said to him, but without the least anger, "But, brother, I told you to make haste as I want to speak with this person." No sooner had he uttered these words, than he was seized with remorse as if he had committed a great crime, because he feared he had offended that brother. He went to him and with great humility said, not once but many times with tears in his eyes, "Brother, pardon me for the love of God if I have offended you." He was inconsolable till the lay brother solemnly assured him that he had not been in the least hurt by the reproof, but had deserved it most justly for neglecting to obey his Father and superior. So truly did this servant of God, through his miseries and improper ways, as he called them, fear to occasion displeasure in others. The low esteem he had for himself had arrived to such a degree that during these very days, with tears in his eyes, he said to one of his friends, "Who knows whether I shall be here tomorrow, for I fear lest God will have to drive me from the earth," as if he could no longer endure him. Thus did this saintly old man

dispose himself for his last passage by the practice of self-abjection and lowliness. Thus did he seek from God, who gives his grace to the humble, that gratuitous grace which is the crown of all the others, namely, holy perseverance, and of dying with great peace in the embraces of his Divine Redeemer, who humbled and abased himself so much for the love of us with infinite kindness. Never, however, for a moment did the venerable Father lose sight of the stability and perfection of the Congregation whose Father and Founder he was. On the contrary, during that last period of his life, he attended with renewed fervor to promote, as much as he could, its welfare and to establish the exact observance of the holy Rules. He made, moreover, with great calmness and deliberation a revision of the Rules and Constitutions, reading only a portion of them at a time, begging particular light from God, and entreating him more than ever to make known to him His holy will. In order to obtain more easily, through the intercession of the saints, the necessary light and assistance, he prayed and recommended himself day and night to all the founders and foundresses of religious Orders. Then, with the counsel of some of the oldest and most experienced of the Fathers, he determined what was to be proposed in the approaching General Chapter, in order that the terms of the holy observance might be so fixed that after his death it might be said with truth to anyone who should try to change them, "*Remove not the ancient landmark which your ancestors set up*" (Prov. 22:28). During the days immediately preceding the Chapter, he gave audience to each one, and, like a most tender father, left them most excellent words of advice. To the different Rectors of the retreats he spoke much of the tenderest charity in governing, and of gentleness and kindness towards their brethren in religion, in order that being thereby more and more animated and encouraged, they might attend more diligently to perfection. The Chapter was held in the month of May. Father Paul assisted at it with the greatest interest and attention. Full of wise and enlightened zeal, his first recommendation to the assembly was that they should make a wise election of a new General for the Congregation. As he guessed what was indeed true, that they had again obtained a Rescript to confirm him in this office, he implored them with the most lively sentiments of humility to remember how unfit he was for it. He exposed his defects, his infirmities, and his sufferings, and ended by saying that his conscience would not permit him to remain in such a situation. But as he was never accustomed to act upon his own opinion, so upon this occasion he did not fail to consult his director, who prudently replied that if the Capitular Fathers wished to re-elect him, he

must first candidly expose his motive for resigning and then submit to their decision, from whom he would hear the will of God. The humble servant of God, as an obedient little child, yielded immediately and regulated himself in everything according to the answer of his director. When all the votes were collected, the venerable Father was carried in upon his chair, as he was unable to walk. He then presented himself before the Chapter in an attitude of the deepest abjection with a rope about his neck, as if he were a public criminal. He accused himself with bitter tears of all the faults he had committed during his government and besought the Fathers to impose a heavy penance upon him. It may be easily imagined how touched and edified all present must have been at such a scene as this. Proceeding to the scrutiny of votes, they found that he was chosen as superior without a dissenting voice. When he again expostulated and repeated his scruples, and with prayers and entreaties sought to be dispensed, being intimately persuaded that he was a man full of miseries and defects, they answered him with love and affection as true children by saying that if their consciences would allow them to elect him, he might with the greatest safety accept the election. After this, Father Paul could say no more, but meekly bowed his head to the will of God, fearing lest he might oppose it. He then addressed a fervent discourse to the Chapter and the religious of the retreat, beginning with these words, "I compassionate my dearest brethren, your misfortune," and continued in the most moving strain of profound humility and heartfelt love. When they came to make their obedience, he embraced each of them separately with the greatest tenderness and gave his paternal benediction. Before the Chapter concluded, he desired that the Rules should undergo, in an assembly called for the purpose, a strict examination by all who had a voice in the General Chapter and also in the Provincial Chapters, and that each one should say what appeared to him, "in the Lord," to be most expedient for the stability and perpetual observance of the Institute. Although the reading of the Rules was a tedious task and occupied for several days many hours both in the morning and afternoon, and although the good Father was worn out with fatigue, he went through it all unweariedly for the sake of his dear children and the advantage of the Congregation. A deputation of Fathers was afterwards sent to lay them at the feet of Pope Pius VI for his approval and he, after submitting them to the consideration of Cardinals Lanze and Zelada, was graciously pleased to approve them by the Bull beginning, "*Praeclara virtutum exempla*," dated September 15th, 1775. And now at length it was time to conclude this memorable Chapter, the last at which the venerable Founder was

destined to preside. He himself, in dissolving it, gave one more earnest exhortation to maintain inviolable fraternal peace and charity, and to preserve as a treasure interior recollection of heart. He most particularly impressed the practice of these virtues upon all superiors. He recommended them in their corrections to proceed with a pure intention, a serene mind, and a tranquil heart, always inclining more to sweetness and gentleness than to rigor and severity. Thus was closed by the Founder his last General Chapter, by strongly inculcating the practice of holy charity in which is included the fulfillment and the perfection of the whole law.

CHAPTER XLIV

Last Illness, Tranquil Death, and Burial of Father Paul

Death for the souls of the just is a repose after labor, a harbor after a perilous navigation, a journey from a painful exile to a happy home. Although in their bodies they feel the suffering of the infirmities which precede it and the pains which accompany it, yet their spirits are in undisturbed peace and tranquillity before God, founded on a firm confidence in Him and animated by ardent longings to be united for ever to their eternal felicity. Such was to be the happy passage of the servant of God whose life we have recorded, and the circumstances of whose death we are now about to relate.

During the fatigue of the Chapter and the examination of the Rules, the diarrhea with which he was habitually troubled increased and, combined with a nausea and loss of appetite, considerably diminished the little strength he had left. At last he could withstand no longer the progress of his disease. He took to his bed and never rose from it again in life. Upon the Feast of Saints John and Paul, he fainted several times and was seized with great oppression in the stomach and violent sickness. This last symptom, which had been partly brought on by his long fasts and other austerities, increased to such a degree that for the last four months of his life he was unable to swallow solid food. Desirous that he should take some kind of nourishment, his attendants procured some weak broth, but this was found too heavy – so weakened was his stomach. With great simplicity he sometimes said, “It seems to me as if I had stones upon my stomach.” They then, by the advice of the doctors, tried the yolk of an egg, but he was unable to

digest it, and at last they had recourse to toast and water, which was his only support during a whole month, of which he took but very little every twenty-four hours, not being able to take more. It was an edifying sight to see this servant of God preserving amidst all his sufferings the most perfect serenity of mind and tranquillity of heart. His courage never failed him at the thought of death or his continual suffering. With his joyful countenance he remained like one entirely recollected in himself and fully resigned to the Divine Will, without ever giving the least sign of impatience or showing the least desire for his recovery. Although completely exhausted in strength, and as it were in a dying state, he did not neglect to watch over, with the greatest attention and zeal, the good government of the Institute, giving wise counsels for the regulation of the retreat in Rome and those outside, and dictating letters full of zeal, prudence, and sound doctrine. The discourses, which he yet addressed occasionally to his brethren, gave great edification and proved that his spirit had not lost its vigor and that his soul was more than ever absorbed in God. He loved to be left alone as much as possible, in order that he might pass his days, as well as his nights, in continual prayer and intimate union with his blessed Lord. He purposely caused his door and window to be kept shut, in order that he might enjoy with greater liberty and quiet of mind the repose which he found in God. He observed a profound silence towards creatures in order the better to relish the interior voice of his loving Creator. He was very faithful during these last days in his tender and loyal devotion towards that Mother and Queen, whose protection he so valued during his early life. We may even say that it was so much the more vivid and fervent as his practices in her honor, which he inviolably fulfilled, cost him more pain and trouble to perform now in his weak and suffering state. He had never omitted, as long as he lived, to recite every day at least a third part of the rosary. But in his last illness he daily recited the whole. One day, while he was repeating it, his companion, perceiving that his weakness hardly permitted him to articulate, could not help compassionating him and exclaimed, "But you cannot go on any longer. Do you not see that you have no breath to speak? Do not fatigue yourself, therefore, by saying the rosary." The servant of God replied, "I wish to say it as long as I am alive. If I cannot say it with my lips, I will say it with my heart." And on the 15th of August, when it was always his custom to spend an hour in particular devotion, according to the Rule of the members of the Confraternity of the Rosary, who had each an hour assigned to them in the course of the year for this purpose, he would not allow his illness to dispense him from

offering this tribute of his sincere devotion to our Blessed Lady. Being unable, since he had taken to his bed, never more to rise from it to celebrate Mass, which was the greatest comfort to his mind, he desired at least to hear it. He caused it to be said every day in a little Oratory, adjoining his room, by a priest who had a clear and distinct voice. At this he communicated for some time every morning. That he might not be deprived of so precious a treasure, he remained fasting from the preceding midnight until the hour of communion. And how great soever his thirst might be, he not only abstained from drinking before communion, but also for a long time afterwards, which he employed in devout thanksgiving and intimate union with his Lord. After which he would swallow a little broth or toast and water. When His Holiness heard of this, and knowing what inconvenience he must have experienced through it on account of his old age and infirmity, he immediately, with the most delicate thoughtfulness, sent the poor old man a dispensation to receive every four days without the obligation of fasting. The servant of God availed himself ever afterwards of this singular privilege during the several weeks he still lingered on. As he grew worse, the doctor thought it time for the Blessed Sacrament to be administered to him under the form of Viaticum. Then the devout Father, filled with joy at the good news of his approaching departure, signified his wish that it should be given to him in the presence of all his religious children, in order that he might express his last sentiments to all and ask pardon for the bad example he had given, and, as superior of the Congregation, make his profession of faith. He signified, moreover, that the Holy Viaticum should be brought to him from the Church.

On the 30th of August his first general consultor brought him the Blessed Sacrament, accompanied by a solemn procession of all the religious, bearing lighted torches and singing devout canticles according to the rites of our holy church. Father Paul, who was unable to move from his bed, no sooner beheld his loving Redeemer, than he lifted up his hands and cried out more with his heart than with his lips, "Ah, my dear Jesus, I protest that I wish to live and die in the communion of your holy Church. I detest and abominate every error." He recited aloud the symbol of the Apostles, accompanying every word with great feeling of heart. Then, as the father and superior of all, and because he had been earnestly requested, he gave them his last and

principal *ricordi*¹¹ in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, which were faithfully written down at the time by two of the religious not seen by the sick man because they were in an adjoining oratory. They were as follows, “Before everything else I earnestly recommend fraternal charity; love one another in holy charity. This is the last advice which Jesus Christ left to his Apostles, ‘*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if you love one another*’ (Jn. 13:35). I exhort all the Fathers, especially the first Father Consultor, to preserve in the Congregation the spirit of prayer, the spirit of solitude, the spirit of poverty. If this spirit be preserved, the Congregation *will shine like the sun in the sight of God and before the Gentiles, and for all eternity.*”

Then, turning to his sweet Redeemer with all the affection of his heart, he said, “*Come, Lord Jesus,*” opening at the same time his arms as if to embrace Him. Striking his breast, in testimony of his great sorrow, he exclaimed, as tears streamed from his eyes, “*Lord, I am not worthy.*” And here, calling to mind what appeared to him the scandalous faults of his past life, he protested that he desired to ask pardon from all the religious, both present and absent, with his face in the dust and sorrow in his heart, for the ill example he had given during the government which it had been the will of God he should exercise for so many years. Penetrated with a deep sense of his miseries, he added, “Unhappy that I am! Behold, I am about to depart from you to go into eternity; I leave you nothing but my bad examples, although I must confess that I have never had such an intention, but have always had at heart your sanctification and perfection. I once more, then, entreat your forgiveness, and I recommend to you my poor soul, in order that our Lord may receive it into the bosom of His mercy, as I hope, through the merits of His sacred Passion and Death. Yes, my dear Jesus, though a sinner, I hope soon to come to enjoy You in Paradise and to give You, at the moment of my death, a holy embrace; to remain for ever united with You in everlasting life, and to sing eternally Your mercies. I commend to You now and forever the poor Congregation, which is the fruit of Your Cross and of Your Passion and Death. Behold then, my dear brethren, the last words which I leave you with all the earnestness of my poor heart. I leave you now and I shall remain expecting you in holy Paradise.”

With humility, faith, and the liveliest sentiments of confidence and ardent love he prepared his heart for his Savior, and he received Holy Communion. Afterwards, again addressing himself

¹¹ Advice, last will and testament.

to his brethren, he desired the superiors to have the Rules translated from Latin into Italian for the benefit of the lay brothers. And then, with his heart upon his lips, he gave his benediction to the religious, both present and absent, of all the retreats. He remained for a short time in silence, and when he spoke again, it was to beg that the superiors would take care that all the future houses of the Order should be founded in solitude, according to the Rule, and that no human respect whatever should induce them to depart from this determination. After this Holy Communion, the servant of God awaited in great peace and tranquillity for the call of his Lord. More brightly now than ever shone the great virtues of which his soul possessed so rich a store, humility, patience, and sincere love to his God, strong and constant in spite of every trial. Always himself, he frequently addressed pious counsels to those about him, both for the public good and for that of individuals, according to the thoughts God put into his heart. Nor did he forget to preserve a grateful remembrance of all his benefactors, especially of some distinguished friends in Rome, whom he mentioned with much affection and promised to pray for them. But his most lively gratitude was given towards the Sovereign Pontiff, to whom he owed so many benefits. He desired that his brethren should never omit the daily recital of the Litanies of the Saints for the intentions of the Pope and the wants of holy Church. He added, “If I am saved, as I hope to be, through the Passion of Christ and the Dolors of our Blessed Lady, I shall never cease to pray for the Holy Pontiff, to whom I leave, as a legacy after my death, this Lady of Sorrows, on account of the many obligations I lie under towards him.” Then he added, “Pray for him, that the Divine Mercy may prosperously preserve him for a long while for the good of the church, and may console him by the good success of his desires. *May he grasp whatever is pleasing to God, and may he work at it with all his strength.*” (With one exception, this pontiff sat the longest on the Chair of St. Peter, after that Great Apostle himself – namely, more than twenty-four years, very nearly approaching the twenty-fifth. Yet he had only been raised to it a little before Father Paul died.)

A few days after he had received Viaticum, his ordinary director arrived in Rome. It was he who had been his confessor when they were together in the same retreat after John Baptist’s death. He was preaching a mission in Caprarola when he heard of the dangerous state of the venerable Founder, and he immediately set off for Rome. When Father Paul saw him, he said with much affection and gratitude, “We have always loved one another, and now you have come

to assist me and to close my eyes.” Upon the vigil of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross,” writes the confessor, “ he wished to go to confession. He said to me, ‘By the grace of God, I have a most tranquil conscience.’ After receiving absolution with the deepest sentiments of contrition and humility, he asked me for some spiritual advice, saying, ‘I wish to save this poor soul of mine.’ I suggested to him some motives of spiritual comfort, and his mind became even more calm and tranquil.” But Father Paul was not one of those whose peace depended upon sensible consolations, and who knew not how to make a generous renunciation of them for the sake of his neighbor’s good. Hearing that his confessor had been engaged to give another mission at Tolfa, he would not allow him to omit such an opportunity of laboring for the conversion of souls. He said to him, “Go, without thinking of me, for I shall not die just yet.” Mindful, in the midst of all his torments, of anything which might lead to the salvation of others, he advised the missionary to stop, as he passed through the little village of Rota, in order to invite the people there to go and profit by the exercises at Tolfa. He gave him other counsels full of wisdom and charity. When the confessor kissed his hand at taking leave, out of humility he insisted on doing the same to him.

And now the nearer Father Paul drew to his happy end, the more closely his spirit seemed to be united with God by greater love. Feeling that he had not much more time to live, he said one day to the local superiors in most humble terms, “I deprive myself entirely of the little I had for my use, and I beg you, in your charity, to bestow on me as an alms a poor, worn-out habit to be buried in.” He then requested that the mattresses, on which he lay in order to relieve his pain, should be taken away as he wished to die upon straw. To satisfy him partly, because charity and piety did not permit them fully to acquiesce in his request, they removed one and placed a thin pad filled with straw in its stead. He likewise earnestly implored that when his death approached, they would put a rope upon his neck, a crown of thorns upon his head, and give him an old habit as a garment, in order that he might die with the dress of a poor sinner. All the time, though his spirit was constantly taking flight to heaven, he always protested that he desired neither to live nor to die, but that only which his good God desired. If any of his brethren appeared to compassionate him, he turned to them affectionately and replied, “My sufferings are sorrowful for you, but they are not so at all for me.” Being most persuaded that he would very shortly complete his sacrifice to the Divine Will by his death, he exclaimed, “Earth calls earth.” A priest,

who was present, suggested to him that he might yet recover. “No,” he firmly answered, “No.” So clearly did he know and adore the designs of Divine Providence upon him. Looking upon death as lovingly disposed by God, he could not be disquieted nor dejected. One day when he had a violent attack of pain, the Fathers by his side were overcome with affliction at seeing how much he had to endure, but rallying his strength, he looked up at them with a cheerful countenance and spoke in the words of Judas Maccabeus, “If our time has approached, let us die with fortitude.” All that he said was accompanied with so much fervor and unction that his words drew tears from those around him. The venerable Father, continuing thus in the acts of great virtue, tranquilly awaited the moment of being freed from the bands of this miserable body. In the meanwhile, his disease became so oppressive that he could not swallow a drop of water without the greatest torment, to which was added a universal suffering over his whole body, for he was tormented at one and the same time with sciatica, rheumatism, a fluxion in the eyes, a severe toothache and utter prostration of strength, so that, as he said to his companion, “It seems to me as if my soul wants to detach itself from my bosom, and I have not the space of four fingers all over my body free from pain.” But throughout all these torments, there was the same example of perfect patience in the saintly sufferer. When they offered him the nourishment which occasioned so much repugnance to nature, he only said, raising his eyes to heaven and wringing his hands, “Blessed be God,” or testified by his gestures how completely he adored the Divine Will and embraced it with all his heart.

Weakness had now rendered his voice so faint that he spoke with great effort, and it was very difficult to hear him without being close to his side. Knowing how near he drew to his last combat, he begged with much humility and devotion to be fortified with the sacrament of Extreme Unction. He prepared himself by going to confession to Father John Maria, who had just returned to Rome after leaving some one in his stead to conduct the mission at Tolfa. Father Paul wished to receive the last anointing upon the 8th, the Feast of Our Lady’s Maternity, and he entreated that it might be given to him after Vespers when all the community might be present. Upon this occasion, the man of God, who left nothing undone that could help him in this last struggle, earnestly implored his confessor to be careful to recommend his soul when he should be in his agony and to pronounce over him again the words of absolution. On the morning of the 8th, he called one of the religious to his bedside and asked him to assist him in preparing for the

sacrament by recalling to his memory its power and efficacy. So humbly did he, who was a master of others, stoop to be taught by his own disciples, and so great was his diligence when he had to receive the holy sacraments. At the appointed hour the brethren were gathered together in his room, and the priest who was to anoint him began by explaining the marvelous effects of this holy rite, and he made signs that he had them all present to his mind. During its administration the venerable old man remained in perfect recollection with his hands devoutly joined together. His attitude was one of utter humility and interior devotion, and when they came to apply the sacred oil to his eyes, they found them quite swollen from the tears he had been shedding. When this ceremony had been performed, Father Paul begged his infirmarian, Brother Bartholomew, to admit no one else to see him but the religious. He desired to pass the last moments of his life alone with God. He, who from his earliest youth had fled the society of creatures and made his heart a solitude wherein he might converse with his only Love, determined to enter into a still more perfect retirement in order to meet courageously the death which was coming upon him. For some days he continued in this oppressive state, suffering intensely in his body, but calm and peaceful in his mind

On the 18th of October, the Feast of St. Luke, towards whom he entertained a particular devotion, he asked for Holy Communion, and out of greater respect, he refused to swallow the toast and water which he had a dispensation to take. Before communicating, he gave notice to his companion to admit no one that day, as he wished to remain in holy silence with his Jesus. But the lay brother could not prevent the visits of some distinguished persons, who would not forego the edification they derived from the sight of the dying saint; so, trusting to the Holy Father's kindness of heart, he introduced the Bishop of Scala and Ravello, and afterwards a monk of St. Gregory who was accompanied by a gentleman from Ravenna. Father Paul spoke a few words to each and presented them with some little brass crucifixes, making them signs to remember the Passion of Christ. All this he did with so much fervor and piety, his countenance still expressing such entire serenity, peace, and resignation, that the monk turned to his companion as he went out and exclaimed, "One truly sees that his face breathes sanctity! Happy they, they have a saint! Truly, he is a saint." Towards midday, the Bishop of Todi, Bishop Thomas Struzzi, who was a member of our Order, arrived to see him. He had written a few days before to say that he was coming and to beg that the venerable Father might be asked to wait for him. When this message

was delivered, the good old man smiled and replied with simplicity, "Yes, write to him that I will wait for him." And he kept his word, for scarcely had a few hours passed after the arrival of the bishop, than Father Paul died, as if he had waited until that time in order that he might see him once more for the last time. The bishop went immediately to Father Paul's room, and when the servant of God beheld him, he took off his scull cap and would have proceeded to show him other marks of respect had not the prelate prevented him and tenderly taken his hand to kiss. He seemed to derive fresh strength as well as comfort from the visit of one so dear to him, for he raised his voice and said, "I am delighted to see you in such good health," adding other expressions of the most cordial affection. When the bishop left the room, Father Paul, ever full of thought for others, called his attendant and inquired who Monsignor brought with him. "Go," he continued to Father Rector, "and beg him to entertain the bishop with all possible care, to let our brothers wait upon him, and not to forget the poor people who came with him."

About the hour of Vespers he began to feel the chills of death and desired to be turned to the other side of his bed, that is to say, with his face turned towards the great crucifix which stood in his room, in that position precisely in which he afterwards died. He then said, "Call Father John Mary to assist me, for I am very near death." His companion replied that the doctors saw no immediate danger, and they had pronounced him better in the morning, but he quickly returned, "Yes, yes, call Father John Mary to me in order that he may come to assist me." Instead of going immediately, the brother sat down by his side and said, "But, Father, do you not die willingly for the love of God?" Father Paul, who in his extremist agony never lost his presence of mind, answered very earnestly, raising his eyes as if to confirm his words, "Indeed, I die most readily to perform the holy will of God." His attendant added, "Be of good heart, then, and have confidence in God." The sick man took out his hand and pointing to the crucifix and said, "There are all my hopes, in the Passion of Jesus Christ and the Dolours of the Blessed Virgin Mary." The other spoke a few more words to him and then, Vespers being concluded in the church, he went for Father John Baptist of St. Vincent Ferrero, the first consultor, that he might judge the state of the sufferer. Directly upon entering the room, Father Paul exclaimed, "Let them come and assist me for my death is at hand." The Father consultor, not believing that his chillness indicated approaching death, said to him, "Perhaps you are cold on account of the change in the weather." But he replied, "No, no, I am dying. Let them come to assist me." Father John Mary was then

sent for, and afterwards Bishop Struzzi and the whole community, who were just coming out of the choir after Vespers. When all were assembled in his room, seeing that his life was fast ebbing away, the bishop and his confessor began the recommendation of a departing soul, suggesting to him devout sentiments, in order that he might die in the more fervent exercise of the theological virtues, entirely united to his God. In the meanwhile Father Rector read the prayers of the Church. They were responded to by all the religious, by Signor Anthony Frattini, and several other seculars.

It was a touching thing to see Father Paul, who had spent his whole life in the practice of union and conformity with the blessed will of God, now placidly abandoning himself into the merciful hands of his Lord and encouraged in his last moments by a great prelate, the faithful companion of his great austerities and his spiritual child. In order to animate his fervent soul, to take a generous flight like the pure dove into the bosom of his God, the holy bishop suggested to him the most urgent motives for confidence and hope, and he repeated to him with great unction, *“I, however, will always hope and will praise you more and more.”* The servant of God testified the comfort and strength which these words afforded him. His confessor, seeing that but few moments of life still remained to him, again gave him absolution according to his promise. The Father Rector pronounced the last blessing in the moment of death by a special delegation from His Holiness. He also gave him the benediction of the rosary, which Father Paul had requested a few days previous, from Father Thomas Mary Boxadors, General of the Dominicans, and afterwards cardinal; and lastly, that of the Order of Mount Carmel. While they were invoking the graces of heaven for him and enriching his soul with so many precious treasures so that it might be all beautiful and adorned before the pure eyes of his Divine Redeemer, he kept his eyes immovably fixed upon the two images of Jesus crucified and our Lady of Sorrows, glancing from one to the other with a serene and joyful countenance and with ineffable tenderness, and clearly manifesting that, though his speech had left him, his understanding was unimpaired. All around him were absorbed in prayer and in the attentive consideration of this edifying scene, when suddenly Father Paul made several signs with his hands, as if he were beckoning some persons to approach and making room for them to come to his side, whence it was concluded that he was favored with some joyous celestial vision. And this opinion was confirmed by his appearing after death to a devout soul, and relating that before he died he beheld coming into his

room the Divine Redeemer with His Blessed Mother, St. Paul, St. Luke, St. Peter of Alcantara, and with them his brother John Baptist, and other departed members of the Congregation, besides the souls of many he had converted. All came to assist at his happy passage and conduct his spirit to heaven. At the sight of so wondrous a company, the dying servant of God, as the priest nearest him plainly observed, received a special infusion of consolation and strength and seemed to take fresh delight in the reading which was being made to him of the Passion of our Savior according to St. John. It was as if, from that fountain of salvation to which he was going to unite himself more perfectly, he drank in abundance peace, joy and love. *“You will draw water with joy from the fountains of the Savior”* (Is. 12:3).

The bishop, who in his great affection for the Congregation, wished to recommend it once more to its Founder, said to him, “Father, when you are in paradise, remember the Congregation which has cost you so many labors and pray for us, all your poor children.” The dying man, unable to express his assent in words, signified by signs how cordially he desired to comply with the request. At length, the servant of God, a quarter of an hour before he breathed his last, shut his eyes forever upon the visible world, which had always been to him as a place of exile. Then, full of days and consumed with labors and penances, at the age of eighty-one years, nine months and fifteen days, towards evening on the 18th of October, 1775, he gently gave up his spirit to his Creator, while listening to the words of St. John, “With his eyes lifted up to heaven,” as if these very words, which he had devoutly recited every day, together with the prayer which follows, in order to animate himself more strongly to the acquiring of his blessed country, had been to him the herald of a happy eternity at the last moment of his life. All those who beheld this calm and tranquil departure, exclaimed one to another, “Now we have seen how the saints die!” And his religious, afflicted as they had been throughout his agony, experienced a kind of sweet consolation after his death.

When the servant of God had expired, Signor Anthony Frattini went to inform the Sovereign Pontiff. His Holiness entertained a true esteem and affection for our venerable Father, and he manifested great grief at having lost him. Remembering the virtues and sanctity of the departed, he clasped his hands and cried out, “Ah, happy soul! happy soul!” He then expressed his desire that the corpse should not be interred in the common burial place but in some reserved spot, and that it should be enclosed in coffins of wood and lead at his own expense.

In the meantime two lay brothers were performing the last duties to the body. According to the usual custom, they clothed it in the holy habit with a stole about the neck and a crucifix between the hands. They then placed it, as the Rule directs, upon some boards with some bricks to support the head in the very same room in which he had died. The sight of this blessed corpse, serenely beautiful with its usual expression of interior recollection, inspired devotion in all who looked upon it. Many persons arrived that very evening at the retreat (notwithstanding the distance from their houses) in order to see it; but, as it was late before the brothers had finished their last offices, only the religious and a few particular friends were admitted that evening. All night long the brethren watched in turns beside the bier and prayed for the repose of his soul. About twelve o'clock on the following morning, they carried the body down the inner staircase into the Basilica, chanting as they went along the solemn prayers of the ritual. They placed it in the center of the church without any pomp and only four torches burning around it. No sooner were the doors opened than numbers of persons crowded in anxious to obtain a sight of the remains, and, in spite of the unfavorable state of the weather, in a very short time the church was quite full. Nobles and plebeians, ecclesiastics and seculars, all were equally eager to approach the corpse of the servant of God to kiss his hand and to take away with them some part of his habit or a portion of his hair. This was carried to such an extent that, to prevent the body being completely stripped, they were obliged to form an enclosure around it with benches, and a German cavalier, a great friend of Father Paul, stood within to protect the body and to distribute little pieces of the clothes. The same concourse of people and the same devout enthusiasm continued throughout the day. All this time Masses were being celebrated by our Fathers and by several other priests who, out of affection for the departed, wished to offer the Holy Sacrifice for his soul. Among these the most distinguished were Cardinal Boschi, the Titular of the church, Bishop Marcucci, the Vicegerent, and Bishop Tiberio Ruffo. At ten o'clock Office for the Dead was chanted by the whole community, and High Mass sung, followed by the customary absolutions. It was a beautiful and moving sight to see the multitude of people remaining unweariedly in the church, weeping and praying and reminding one another of the heroic deeds of him whom they already considered a saint. It was more touching still to see that pale and placid corpse lying upon the boards in the habit of penance with ashes sprinkled upon the head and a crucifix clasped in the hands – it seemed to bring so vividly before all eyes the road of

mortification, abjection, and contempt of the world through which he had so faithfully trod in the footsteps of his crucified Lord. There was a glory on his countenance which made those marvel who gazed upon it and forced them to exclaim, "A Saint is dead!" One holy priest of spotless life noticed when he took Father Paul's hand to kiss it that there came from his virginal body an odor of ineffable sweetness. He confidently mentioned this circumstance to the attendant who had waited upon him, asking if he had poured any scented water upon the corpse. The brother replied that nothing of the kind had been near it.

In the evening of the 19th of October, the remains were placed in a wooden coffin, which was to be enclosed in a case of lead, according to the command of His Holiness. Bishop Marcucci then ordered the church to be cleared, but it was found impossible to send all the people away. Many insisted on remaining, among them several persons of distinction. The doors were closed and a plaster cast was taken of the venerable Father's head, after which the coffin was carried to a room called the sepulcher, at the bottom of the basilica on the left side of the entrance, opposite those holy remains. For two entire days they remained in the room we have already mentioned. On the evening of the 21st, Bishop Marcucci superintended the removal of the wooden coffin into a case of lead, which was sealed up like the first, and then deposited in a third chest of wood. It was finally deposited near the room beneath the spot where may now be seen a little piece of masonry bearing an inscription.

Thus, to the great sorrow of his spiritual children, who were now completely deprived of their loving Father, and to the regret of many devout persons whose last consolation it had been to look upon his corpse, was Father Paul of the Cross buried in the Basilica of Saints John and Paul. Thus was taken from their eyes one who had begun, in the innocence of his youth, a tenor of life so severe and rigorous as to cause wonder to a great penitent and who, in his maturer years and old age, far from obscuring its luster or diminishing its first fervor, had added to its merit and perfection by generously combating and overcoming everything that could impede his perfect union with God. And thus did he leave a glorious example for the imitation of all who know how to appreciate that crown of justice and glory which we trust he has received from his loving Lord. And as the features of the exterior are often all indication of the virtues of the interior and help to render them more admirable, so Almighty God was pleased to bestow His gifts upon the body, as well as the soul, of his servant. Father Paul possessed a grave, majestic and, at the same

time, an amiable appearance, a tall stature, a placid and modest countenance, clear and calm eyes, an elevated and wide forehead, and a distinct, sonorous and penetrating voice; his manners were full of affability and respect without any affectation; his temperament was sanguine and very sensitive. So well did his outward appearance correspond with the movements of his heart, that in his exercises of piety, his sermons, and his studies, his features revealed the fervor of his devotion, the ardor of his zeal, and his diligence in nourishing his soul with eternal truth.

BOOK II

OF THE VIRTUES PRACTICED BY FATHER PAUL, AND OF THE GIFTS WITH WHICH HE WAS ENRICHED BY GOD

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the events of the Life which we have endeavored sincerely and faithfully to record, we have seen how Father Paul, after devoting from his earliest years all the earnestness of his heart to serve and please Almighty God, continued to increase in union with his Sovereign Good, and to advance step by step towards a sublime and heroic degree of perfection. It behooves us now to contemplate more leisurely in what this perfection consisted, and to revere, as well as recognize, the treasures which the Divine Goodness had hidden in his heart, in order that the consideration of his particular virtues may inspire us to imitate so rare an example.

Hardly had the childish devotion of Father Paul begun to assume the character of fervor, than he manifested his ardent desire to deliver himself from the cares and solitudes of the world, to purify his spirit, and to unite it intimately with God. Fully persuaded that from him alone comes all the graces which we need, he eagerly thirsted after that fountain which is an eternal torrent of celestial love. It was clearly perceptible to those around him that his communications with God were neither imaginary nor fruitless, for he was one of those Christians, of whom St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote, that their Christianity was an imitation of the Divine nature. In fact, several of his friends deposed that in his early youth he made such progress in sanctity, that his life already

appeared less to be imitated than admired. And Fr. Francesco Antonio of Castellazzo, a Capuchin, spoke of him in these terms, “I can truly certify that the conduct of Father Paul at the time I knew him, when he was quite a young man, was most admirable and well nigh beyond the bounds of imitation. He was remarkable for his great piety and devotion, his love of retirement and solitude, his severe austerities, his love of God and zeal for the Divine glory, his labors for the salvation of souls, his rigid poverty, and his eagerness in removing scandals and abuses. All these virtues I myself observed in him.” This was Father Paul’s character at an age when the innocence of so many suffers a deplorable shipwreck at the very outset of their voyage in life. Nor shall we marvel at these precocious fruits of holiness, remembering what is related in the Processes of his application to prayer and of the many hours, both by day and night, which he consecrated to uninterrupted meditation. It was then that he received those wondrous lights which he afterwards displayed, and that he conceived that burning love which gave him no other thought or hope or longing but the attainment of a perfect union with the Sovereign Good, in order that, as St. Paul says, he might be one spirit with God. “*Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him*” (I Cor.6:17).

But as he well knew that God, however faithfully we serve Him, deserves far more than we can give Him, and that the crown is promised to those only who persevere, he did not halt or linger in the road to perfection. Firmly believing that he had done nothing well, and that he was full of faults and frailties, he was never satisfied with his own actions but animated himself day by day to the acquisition of fresh virtues. The most arduous and exalted practices at length grew easy and natural to him, and in times of trouble and misfortune, when men’s minds are generally most apt to give way to irritation and dejection, he possessed that strange peace and serenity which is the peculiar characteristic of the saints.

The lessons which we learn from the example of the servants of God form by far the most important part of the study of their lives. For this reason we have determined to consider separately each particular virtue which adorned the interior of blessed Paul, and to make our readers acquainted with that noble edifice, which Almighty God raised like a spiritual tabernacle in the soul of his faithful servant.

CHAPTER I

Of Father Paul's Faith

Faith is the first foundation of the edifice of a Christian life, and the only secure guide amidst the darkness and dangers of this world. Hence the souls who are called by a loving Providence to a high degree of sanctity repose with tranquil confidence upon the Divine revelations and follow with simple obedience the path which faith points out. Father Paul was favored by God not only with the faith so necessary for all who desire to be saved, but with that special gift which exalts and distinguishes the faith of the saints. He entered very early into the school of the sanctuary, where he learnt how to contemplate the deep meaning of the sacred dogmas of his creed and how to fulfill in actions what he professed in words. The maxim, which he there first understood, was ever afterwards his favorite advice to his disciples, "Walk in faith; walk in faith." He inculcated the same in his letters, "Oh, how much do I love!" he wrote, "those souls who walk in pure and simple faith, abandoned in the hands of God. Above all, do I desire that we should all walk in faith. It is the only true way.

Faith blind and lowly
Is the guide safe and holy
Of all perfect love;
Oh, certainly sweet
To my heart to repeat,
And ever to prove.

And he added the stanza composed by St. John of the Cross.

O dark and deeply clouded night,
Yet lovelier far than brightest morn,
Which loved and loving doth unite,
And loved into loving doth transform.

Thus sang a great saint. Another time he wrote in these words, "Oh, how noble an exercise is it to annihilate ourselves before our Lord in pure faith, and to cast our nothingness into that great

All which is God, that is, to lose ourselves in the ocean of His charity, and to have our souls entirely penetrated with His love, to be transformed into Jesus Christ and to make His sufferings and His sorrows ours. This is a lofty lesson, but God teaches it to those who wish to learn it. Love speaks little, and he who loves most speaks least, I mean in holy prayer. The language of love is fire, which burns, liquefies, and consumes itself as a holocaust before God; then the gentle breath of the Holy Spirit stirs up our worthless ashes and raises them till they are lost in the abyss of the Divinity. O happy loss! O fortunate soul thus absorbed in infinite love! All this is done purely by faith, and God teaches it to meek souls.”

One so truly rich in faith could never forget that he was to be a citizen of heaven. He lived upon earth as an exile from his country, and he kept his heart so continually lifted up to the thoughts of divine things that his whole life might be called a life of faith. Those, who have lived with him and have heard him discourse, can bear testimony to this truth. When he spoke, either familiarly in private or openly in public, he talked of the maxims of faith with so much certainty, vivacity, and reality that he appeared to see them with his bodily eyes. Ardently desiring to impress the hearts of those who listened to him, he succeeded admirably in his design. His discourse seemed made not of words but of darts which transfixed the soul, and no one could hear him speak without being pierced by them. It was his frequent custom, in his familiar conversation, to introduce, quite naturally and without affectation and restraint, some discourse upon the mysteries of faith. During the recreations of the community, he used to converse in such a manner that the recreation became a sort of spiritual conference. But the practice which he inculcated with the greatest warmth and earnestness was the continual recollection of the presence of God. He had a singular facility for imparting this exercise to others, insomuch that the most ignorant of his brethren became, by his means, deeply versed in this science of the saints.

It would seem that Almighty God had chosen Father Paul, in a special manner, to teach men how to seek Him in the interior of their hearts. “I can truly say,” adds the authority already quoted, “that though I have been acquainted with many holy men, I have met no one who equaled him in the zeal and unction of spirit with which he treated this subject.” In order to make himself better understood, he used to employ various parables, by which he gently insinuated his ideas into the minds of others and drew them powerfully towards an intimate union with God.

“Look,” he used to say, “at a ball of cotton/wool on which a drop of scented balsam drops! The balsam spreads itself all through the wool, and renders it as odorous as itself. Thus an aspiration which we make in our interior embalms the whole soul with the Spirit of God and makes it odorous in His sight. Look at an infant which throws itself into its mother’s bosom for nourishment and rests perfectly happy; we, like little children, ought to abandon ourselves in simple faith within the bosom of God and to enjoy perfectly His divine communications. Some there are,” he added, “who visit with great devotion holy places and solemn shrines. I do not condemn their piety, but I would remind them that faith teaches us that our own interior is also a sanctuary because it is the living temple of God and the dwelling of the most Holy Trinity. Let us enter, then, into this temple and adore our Lord there in spirit and in truth. This is a most sublime devotion.” He spoke of these things with so much energy and devotion that his brethren never grew tired of hearing him. With the same lively faith, he sometimes exclaimed, “The kingdom of God is within you. Fail not to renew this belief when you study, when you work, when you eat, and when you sleep, saying in spirit, ‘O Infinite Bounty!’ or any other ejaculation which your heart may suggest.” He once said to a soul whom he directed, “The same great God, who for our love was made man, is nearer to you than your skin is to your flesh, closer than you are to yourself.” Ultimately, Father Paul’s faith was so animated and so deeply felt, that he seemed scarcely able to express it in words.

One day as he was talking familiarly upon pious subjects with his religious community, after having spoken of the amorous communications of God in prayer, the fire which inflamed him burst forth in the following words, “I cannot understand how it is that any one be found who does not think always of God.” He then seized the hand of one of the religious, and said, “Is it not true that this skin is truly yours, that this arm, these veins, these muscles, are truly yours? It must be so because they are united with your body. We are more certain however that Almighty God inhabits our souls than that our arms belong to our bodies, because, in proof of one we have only the fallible evidence of our senses, while in support of the other we have the infallible teaching of faith.”

He never let pass an opportunity of alluding to the presence of God. He was constantly saying to one or other of his community, “*The just live by faith; you are the temple of the living God*’ (Hab. 2:4; Cal. 3:11). Make frequent visits to this interior sanctuary, and see that the lamps

be ever burning there.” These lamps, he used to explain, were the three virtues of faith, hope, and charity. At other times he would say with pious pleasantries, “Stay in your own house, go to your own home,” or “How do you get on at home?” And if he was not immediately understood, he would continue, “Ah, your house is your soul, the temple in which the living God dwells by faith.” It is not to be marveled at, that the servant of God should take such pains to induce his disciples to walk always in the Divine Presence. It was a favorite maxim of his, that those who practice this holy exercise may be said to spend their lives in one uninterrupted prayer by the continual aspirations which they offer up to God. This, indeed, he taught no less by example than by instructions, for he never turned away the eyes of his soul from the contemplation of his Sovereign Good. However distracting might be the affairs which engaged his attention, he knew how to keep God always before his mind, and it was his delight to return as speedily as possible into his interior cell and to resume his sweet communications with his Heavenly Master. Everything served to remind him of God, and he used to imagine that all creatures cried out to entreat the love of man for Him who made them. He was often observed, when walking in the fields, especially during the spring season, to gaze earnestly at the flowers as he went along, and to touch them with his stick saying, “Be silent, be silent.” And he used to tell his religious that the flowers were always calling upon them to lift up their hearts in love and adoration towards their Heavenly Creator.

Father Paul gave many proofs of the profound and cordial respect with which he venerated all the truths of Faith, and of the heartfelt and earnest manner with which he put them into practice. He was frequently heard to say, with peculiar fervor, that he was ready to spill every drop of his blood for his holy religion, and that he should consider it the greatest grace our Lord could grant him if he were allowed to lay down his life in confession of his belief. In uttering these words, the eagerness of his countenance and the enthusiasm with which he spoke clearly showed that his heart was upon his lips. All his conversations were alike, illumined with the heavenly light of faith, and we may safely say that this is confirmed by the testimony of all those who ever had any conversation with him. But since he had been called by our Lord to serve His Sanctuary and to labor in His vineyard, his faith was destined not only to edify his brethren but to instruct and convert whole populations. The knowledge he displayed of the truths which he announced and the zeal with which he taught their practice were so surprising that he almost

appeared to have forgotten the world and to have become another being. It often happened that during the missions his habitual illness obliged him to remain in bed a great part of the day; all this time, instead of resting himself, he would receive his penitents and hear confessions. When the time arrived for his sermons, he was scarcely able to stand, and none who beheld him could imagine it was possible for him to preach. No sooner, however, had he mounted the pulpit and begun his discourse, than he seemed animated with a new spirit and fresh strength. His movements became active and vigorous like those of a person in perfect health. The impression made upon his audience, and the conversions which followed, we have elsewhere related. Who indeed could have looked unmoved upon that saintly missionary, at one moment so inflamed with zeal that his eyes appeared to dart forth sparks of fire, at another so touched with fear and compassion for those sinning souls that he became pale and trembling and frequently shed torrents of tears?

But the following account, given by an eyewitness, will best describe the effects produced by Father Paul's discourses:

“During the first mission preached by Father Paul of the Cross in Vetralla in 1742, he appeared all the time of his sermon on death perfectly pallid, and literally shaking from head to foot, so that it was very evident he was penetrated, heart and soul, with the awful truth he announced. The same was witnessed when he preached upon hell; he drew so vivid a picture of that place of horrors, that his hearers shuddered with the fear he awakened in them. The blows of the discipline, which at these times he was accustomed to inflict upon himself, proved his own terror of the divine justice and his desire that they should all be saved from the wrath of an avenging God.”

Thus wrote Don Giuseppe Cima, then Archpriest of Vetralla. Similar accounts were given by various other respectable witnesses in allusion to the holy fear which inspired the servant of God. They deposed that they had frequently seen Father Paul's hair stand on end while his whole countenance assumed an expression of fright. The burning words, which accompanied all these demonstrations of feeling, produced, as we have elsewhere related, the most wonderful effects, not only upon hardened sinners and obstinate heretics, but even upon Jews, among whom many edifying conversions took place. We ourselves preserve a distinct recollection of a Jew, who was so struck with the preaching of the servant of God, that he renounced without delay his creed,

embraced the faith of Christ, and died in truly Christian sentiments, assisted by one of our Fathers. In order to form an idea of the faith of Father Paul, it was not, however, necessary to hear him preach; it was sufficient to look at him. Sometimes his eyes lifted up to Heaven with an expression of intense devotion; at other times, the reverent inclination of his head proved how completely his heart was inspired with the awful presence in which he stood. For this reason it was that, many years before our Rule was finally altered and approved, he always wore his head uncovered. When one of his companions enquired about the motive for this custom, he replied, "Respect for the presence of God." After the alteration in this Rule, he covered himself, like the rest, to avoid singularity. He still retained his original practice whenever he preached, and although occasionally persuaded while suffering from one of his frequent indispositions to wear something upon his head in the pulpit, he frequently refused, exclaiming, "I cannot bear my head covered when I speak of God." He generally endeavored without being noticed to take off his cap when conversing with holy persons, whom he recognized as the friends of God and the living temples of the Holy Spirit. Those who had the happiness of speaking with him could not but animate their own faith and excite themselves to greater recollection after the example shown them by this great servant of God.

From the love and esteem which he entertained for the sublime virtue of faith, there sprang up within him at the same time an ardent desire to see the whole world gathered into the Catholic Church, the fold of Christ, under the conduct of St. Peter's successor at Rome. It is impossible to express the tenderness and eagerness with which he wept and prayed for the conversion of all heretics, and in particular for the return of England to the Catholic Faith. He was often heard to say that he had England's conversion very much at heart. "Ah, England! England!" he used to repeat in tones of sorrowful affection. At other times he used to say, "Let us pray for England! I could not, if I would, help doing this, for directly when I begin my prayers, this poor country comes into my mind, and it is now fifty years since I have prayed for its conversion. I remember it every morning at holy Mass. What is God's will to do with this country, I know not; probably He will have mercy upon it, and of His mercy bring it one day to the true faith – it is enough for us to ask for this and leave all in the hands of God." Upon one occasion, it appeared that while pondering the destinies of that unhappy kingdom, once so faithful in saints, he was for a time almost deprived of his senses. He was recovering from an illness, and the infirmarian had entered

his room to bring him some restorative, when he found the servant of God in a state of unconsciousness, in a sort of ecstasy. Having shaken him three times, he at last came to himself and exclaimed with deep feeling, “Oh, where have I been? My spirit found itself in England, considering its glorious martyrs and entreating God for its conversion.” Thus did Father Paul pray for England and all other faithless countries. He used to protest that he would willingly have gone through any peril to gain the souls of heretics to Christ.

It was a mortal wound to his heart to hear of any outrage, however slight, offered to the Faith; he could not tolerate even a shadow of disrespect towards it. He listened with jealous ears to any conversation that seemed unbecoming a true son of holy Church. If any sentence was uttered in our schools, which either from his deafness or from some other cause he did not perfectly understand, he could not rest until he had satisfied himself of the sincerity and good intention of the lecturer and the students; it was an edifying spectacle to see the good Father call them aside, one after the other, to assure himself of what he had so much at heart. He recommended the scholars as well as the teachers, above all other things, to ground themselves thoroughly in dogma, while discussing the subtle questions of the schools.

When they arrived at the study of the Treatise of Predestination, he testified the most anxious solicitude, lest they should unwarily be led astray. Hence, to use the words of one of our Fathers who was a student at the time, “He often interrogated us concerning the Treatise to prevent our taking up any opinion opposed to faith.” “Upon a former occasion,” he said to us “when other young men were engaged like you upon this Treatise, some of them, being tormented with doubts and vacillation, came to me full of perplexity, and I replied to them in these simple words, *‘Those who have done good deeds will enter into life everlasting, those who have done otherwise will go into everlasting fire.’* I say the same to you, and I advise you, whenever your minds are disturbed, to calm yourselves with this sentiment.”

Out of his great desire to keep clear of all perilous novelties, he ordered that our schools should always teach and follow the admirable doctrine of the Angelic Doctor; he expressly commanded this in the Rule, and he left it, so to speak, as his dying legacy, for towards the end of his life he said, “Never depart from our great master St. Thomas.”

He was very careful that those around him should speak with great precision and reverence of all things pertaining to our holy religion, and if any erred, even without malice, he reproved

them with rigor and severity. He used the same holy liberty in correcting not only our Fathers and his own penitents, but any person who transgressed the strict rules of religious respect. And here it may be interesting to relate what passed between the servant of God and a gentleman of rank, who had come to visit him at Saints John and Paul. The good Father was at the time in extreme old age and was suffering from his usual ailments, but he received his guest with great courtesy and, seeing that he was a young man of prepossessing appearance, he began to converse with him on the propriety of avoiding all familiarity with persons of a different sex. The gentleman took offence at what he said and replied that if he could have his way, priests as well as religious, should be allowed free association with such persons. At these words Father Paul, fired with zeal, indignantly reproved him and caused him to see how great was his error, and how directly opposed to Divine Revelation. He quoted several texts from Scripture in support of what he said and declared that, if his visitor continued to entertain such sentiments, he would in some sort be denying his faith. The young man, full of confusion and probably ill pleased with the liberty of the servant of God, took his leave. The venerable Father, careless of the good opinion he had lost, was satisfied to have vindicated the honor of God and the maxims of religion. He was the more consoled as he knew, apparently by a supernatural light, the motive which had caused his visitor to speak so indecorously. In fact, when he was gone, one who had heard the discourse remarked that he thought the gentleman had received too severe a reproof. But the Holy Father replied, "Suppose he had come on purpose to tempt me!" It was afterwards known that this had really been the intention of the young man, for he told several persons that he went to try Father Paul and to see what his spirit was.

But the hardest trials the faith of the man of God had to encounter were those raised against him by the malice of demons. Many and violent were the assaults with which Satan endeavored to deprive him of this precious grace. His confessor speaks of them in the following terms, "The servant of God related to me that, from the very commencement of his spiritual life, he suffered extremely from temptations against faith; and that in his youth these came upon him sometimes with such force that he was obliged to place his head against the altar rail as a defense. At length, one Pentecost Sunday, he was rapt into so high and sublime a state of prayer, that all at once his temptations disappeared and never afterwards returned to molest him. He further told me that, after he had devoted himself to a life of penance, our Lord infused into his soul such wonderful

demonstrations of the mysteries of faith that it would require a whole library of books to declare and explain all that he was taught respecting those divine truths. Once in particular he received so clear an intelligence of the Godhead that hidden things seemed open to him, and faith was changed into evidence. His soul began to desire most earnestly to be separated from its mortal tenement and to be closely united to the Chief Good. It appeared to him that, next to the Beatific Vision, nothing else was worth possessing in this life. Thus it was that he received no harm from his insidious enemies but rather fresh grace from God in reward for his fidelity in resisting their attacks.”

Hence came that filial love which our venerable Father entertained for his holy Mother the Church, in whose bosom our Lord has deposited the wondrous treasure of faith. Often did he protest with touching earnestness that he was a son of the Church, the least of her children. It was but a short time before his death that he sent the Pope a message saying that he was a true son of holy Church, although a most wretched and unworthy one; that he had always lived and now desired to die in her bosom with an entire subjection to the Roman See and to the Vicar of Christ on earth.

The veneration, the devotion, the almost childlike and tender love, which he felt for the supreme Pastor of the Church and common Father of the faithful, can be but faintly expressed in words. The Divine Goodness had so disposed, for his greater comfort and encouragement during the early struggles of his little Congregation, that several of the Sovereign Pontiffs should entertain a peculiar esteem and regard for Father Paul. Their demonstrations of affection were like burning coals upon a heart already inflamed with love, which compelled him to redouble his prayers for an increasing fullness of grace and blessing upon their government.

Upon one occasion Cardinal Zelada came to see him and told him that Pope Clement XIV had said, “Father Paul has forgotten us.” He eagerly replied, “May my tongue cleave to my palate if I remember you not.” He took care that the prayers he so willingly offered up for His Holiness should be joined in by all his Congregation. He ordered that every evening after Compline and before meditation they should recite the Litanies of the Saints and the Collect for the Pontiff. When he received any special favors from the Holy Father he went about repeating, “Whence is this to me who am the very least of his children?” And speaking in confidence to one of his friends he said, “The first time that I presented myself before the Pope and was allowed to

kiss his feet, when I recalled to mind that he was the Vicar of Christ, I felt an unspeakable reverence spring up in my heart towards him. Overcome with his sublime dignity, I dared not utter a word.” Never did the servant of God lose the freshness and animation of these feelings; his pale and trembling aspect testified to others how deeply he was impressed when he stood in that August presence. This was the more remarkable because his was naturally a bold and fearless spirit. He was waiting one day for an audience in the pontifical palace when one of the prelates struck by his silent and thoughtful manner asked, “Does Father Paul say nothing?” The servant of God replied, “What would you have me say? How can I do otherwise than ponder on the thought that I am soon to stand in the presence of the Vicar of Christ?” “Oh, God!” he continued, “if we had but faith, if we only realized this, how reverently should we bear ourselves before the Holy Father!” After these words he relapsed again into a profound silence. When he was admitted to the Pope, he expressed the veneration he felt for his lofty dignity with the simplicity and confidence of a child. His Holiness, alluding to some who entertained very different sentiments towards the Apostolic See, exclaimed, “Ah, they ought to know what I know and understand of this great office. Believe me, most Holy Father, that notwithstanding the goodness with which you are pleased to treat me, I tremble with awe at the insight God gives me of the sublime dignity of the Vicar of Jesus Christ.” Hence he ever felt firmly convinced that the prayers offered up by the Sovereign Pontiff possessed a singular efficacy for obtaining all graces from the Divine Goodness.

Under the pontificate of Clement XIII, there was a year of great scarcity in Rome, and Father Paul, speaking of the penitent processions which were performed there in consequence, said, “I have heard that the Holy Father himself accompanied one of the processions of penance and recited with tears in his eyes, ‘Spare, O Lord, spare your people.’ This pontiff is a saint (he was well calculated to give this opinion, having so intimately known His Holiness). How grateful, therefore, to our Lord must be such supplications from such a Vicar.” He never spoke of the Pope without some exterior mark of respect, such as bowing his head. If he heard his opinion lightly mentioned by others, he would raise his eyebrows and say, “The Pope thinks thus, he is the Vicar of Christ.”

With the same reverential feelings did he regard the ministers of the church, the faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God. He was always scrupulously obedient to the bishops, whom

he knew were appointed by God as rulers over his church. Nor was there a priest to whom he did not bear himself with profound respect. He liked to anticipate them in all little courtesies, to be the first to kiss their hands and to address them with his head uncovered. It was a strangely touching sight to behold that venerable old man, in the last years of his life, after his long career of apostolic missions and the numerous favors he had received from God, behaving in their presence like a little child with a graceful deference and tender respect which could only spring from the most profound humility. And truly it would seem that our Lord had infused into his soul a special knowledge and a special light concerning the royal dignity of the priesthood. While he was staying with Bishop Emilio Cavalieri of Troja and Foggia, an ordination took place in the episcopal chapel, at which the servant of God assisted through devotion. Upon that occasion he conceived so high an idea of the sacerdotal character that he formed the resolution of never again sitting down in the presence of priests. With all the experience, which he must have had of the disorders of the world, he never could entertain a bad opinion of priests. He acknowledged that he had never confessed himself of any rash judgement in their regard, because he esteemed them so highly and looked upon them all with the eyes of faith. He did not, however, hesitate to say that the relaxed manner of life introduced in our own times among the clergy was unworthy of their rank and character and proceeded from a want of faith in the loftiness of their position. Penetrated with grief, he often exclaimed, "Ah, how little faith there is in the world! How little do men believe!"

Still more sensible was the sorrow with which he contemplated the sufferings of his tender Mother, the Church. We find the following passage in one of his letters, "I feel most deeply the calamities of holy Church, but I firmly trust that God will humble those ungrateful children who afflict and torment their loving Mother." Hearing one day that some poor Christians in foreign countries were persecuted for their faith by the infidels, he began to weep bitterly, begging our Lord to have pity on them and exclaiming, "Oh, how deeply does this touch me, who desire to be always a true son of my dear Mother!" When he saw the commands of the church neglected, or her teaching despised, he was accustomed to say, "He who has not the church for his mother, will not have God for his father," according to St. Cyprian's famous declaration. As an affectionate son, when he sees his parent insulted, cannot help testifying his indignation, so Father Paul, in the troubles of the Church, could not contain his grief and displeasure. "Not one

thorn,” he said, “but a whole group of thorns is piercing my heart when I think on these fatal occurrences. Let us hope it is God’s will that the calamities should finish here.” He sometimes declared that, if the number of sins was not diminished, misfortunes would continue, and he desired his religious to pray that the anger of the Lord might be appeased.

He inveighed with much zeal against the books which were written in a spirit of rebellion to the Church, saying that, if he had the opportunity, he would boldly reprove the authors of them for their pernicious writings. He appeared inconsolable whenever he heard anything prejudicial to the purity of the faith and to the progress of the Catholic religion; his grief was so great that in his familiar conversation he was frequently seen dissolved in tears. On the other hand, it was noticed that he experienced an unspeakable joy when he saw anyone employed in the propagation or the defense of our holy faith. He rejoiced to find himself in the company of zealous missionaries and men of an apostolic spirit. He never grew weary of conversing with them. For the same reason he delighted to meet with the students of the Propaganda because he looked upon them as persons destined to carry the light of faith among the infidels and to assist the poor Christians who dwelt in unbelieving countries in the midst of constant perils. He used to exhort these young men to light up in their hearts the flames of celestial love and to form in themselves a lively image of Christ crucified who, together with this doctrine, has given us His life and the last drop of His precious blood.

Such then was the faith of Father Paul – a faith which inspired him with an ardent desire of seeing the whole world embrace revealed truth; which stimulated him to fervent prayers for the conversion of heretics and unbelievers; and which made him desire the palm of martyrdom in the cause he esteemed so glorious and so sacred. Not being able, as he would have wished to die for his faith, he determined at all events to consecrate his life to its defense and assistance. This he did most efficaciously by founding a new Congregation with the special object of reviving in all Christian hearts the blessed memory of the Passion of Him who is the author and finisher of our faith and with the particular obligation of sending missionaries into infidel nations to preach and teach Jesus crucified.

From what we have said, it is not difficult to infer how rich Father Paul was in that faith which works by charity. Hence it was with truth that Pope Clement XIV said of him, “I know Father Paul to be a man of great faith and of living faith.”

CHAPTER II

Of the Lively Spirit of Faith Manifested by Father Paul in Venerating the Sacred Mysteries and Celebrating the Principal Solemnities of Our Holy Religion

It is not wonderful that a soul, gifted so highly with the grace of faith and illumined so clearly with its pure light, should have been raised into a kind of ecstasy in contemplating the tremendous mysteries of religion by the power of that faith which “*works through love.*” The servant of God was overwhelmed with astonishment and awe in considering the mystery of the adorable Trinity, and those around him noticed the deep reverence in his exterior deportment and the lowly inclination of his head whenever he named the three August Persons in the Gloria Patri or any other prayer. He recommended to his religious the faithful observance of this pious practice. If he observed that anyone omitted it during the divine office, he did not fail to reprimand him and to remind him of the chastisements with which Almighty God had been known to visit such negligence. He was accustomed to repeat with particular devotion and consolations of spirit and with tears in his eyes the sublime Trisagion, “Holy! Holy! Holy!” He had very often upon his lips those glorious words of the everlasting song, “*Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might to our God forever and ever. Amen*” (Rev. 7:12).

With the same glowing faith did he honor the mystery of the Incarnation. When he reflected on the wondrous lowliness of the Word made Flesh, he would exclaim, “A God to make Himself man for us!” Out of gratitude for so much love, he advised all to bow while repeating the last verse of the Angelus, “*And the Word was made flesh*” (Jn. 1:14). He never uttered the holy Name without a profound inclination, and he could not bear to hear it pronounced in a careless and unreflecting manner. During the season of Advent he employed himself in animating his faith still more strongly and in inflaming his love towards that Divine Redeemer, who so mercifully deigned to visit us in our wretchedness, and he exhorted others to make good use of that precious time of preparation for the festival of the Nativity. He wrote thus to a devout soul, “The time draws nigh when holy Church will celebrate the memory of the Divine Espousals of the Eternal

Word to our human nature. Contemplate, O my daughter, the depths of this mystery of love, and let your soul be free to engulf and immerse itself in this boundless ocean of every good. Pray and desire that the espousals of love may now take place between Jesus and you, and me, an unworthy sinner.”

When Christmas day approached, he performed a devout novena with exposition of the most Blessed Sacrament and many fervent practices of mortification. The affection of heart with which he disposed himself for the celebration of these tenderest of mysteries may be inferred from the words he used in his letters at the recurrence of this great solemnity. “How astounding is this,” he said, “to see a God become an infant, a God wrapped in swaddling clothes, a God laid upon a little straw between two beasts of burden! Who will refuse to be lowly! Who will not abase himself for God’s sake? Who will dare to complain of suffering! Who will not remain in silence, within and without, under all trials!” And writing to his own brethren, he expresses himself with greater freedom. *“I announce to you great joy for our salvation is coming quickly.”* Behold the poor sinner Paul, at the feet of the pious community of the Retreat of the Presentation, begging pardon of his dearest brethren for all the example of his tepid and vicious life, and entreating them to obtain for him the same forgiveness from the infinite mercy of God. “I take confidence in the merits of Jesus, and although a useless and unworthy servant, I bring to you the glad tidings of joy and peace for the approaching festival of the Nativity. Have I not, O my brethren, the more reason to announce to you this great consolation because, being a miserable sinner, I cannot but rejoice exceedingly in the coming of that Blessed Child who so tenderly invites me to His pardon. Let us then exult, O my very dear sons in Christ. Let us put off the old man with his deeds and clothe ourselves with our Lord Jesus Christ. And even, as in this sweet solemnity, we commemorate the birth of our dear Jesus as a little child, so let us make ourselves little children with Him by our exact obedience, our purity of conscience, our love for holy poverty, our desire for suffering, and, above all, by our childlike simplicity in the observance of our Rule. Let us not dare to interpret this after our own fashion, let us not explain it in a broad sense, for narrow is the way that leads to life. But let us be guided and directed by the superiors, whom God has appointed to govern our little Congregation. Thus shall we be true followers of the Infant Jesus, who abandoned Himself utterly to the care of His Mother, Mary most pure, most holy, and immaculate. With these bright and beautiful virtues you will dispose

yourselves to approach that blessed crib, and with your burning affections you will give warmth to the little trembling Infant, who willingly shivers with cold that He may light the fire of love in your hearts. Ah, my dearly beloved, meditate, consider with earnest thought this great mystery, ponder the inconveniences, the cold, the poverty, the want suffered by Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. And remember that true sanctity cannot be separated from suffering; you must have tribulations "*intus et foris*," fierce battles with enemies, visible and invisible, pains of body and pains of mind, dreary desolations and long aridities, in fine, all sorts of vexations from the devils, from men, and from your own rebellious flesh, since all who would live piously with Christ Jesus suffer persecution.

"Take courage, nevertheless, my dearly beloved, recollecting that as He hath walked so it behooves us now also to walk. We may not serve God for the sake of His consolations, and He often deprives us of all comfort that we may act from pure love. Sometimes, upon these solemn festivals, He takes away from His servants all spiritual sweetness in order to try their faith and fidelity. Lift up your heart then, let us raise up our souls to work with a great heart and a willing mind for our Almighty Lord, and our Savior Jesus Christ, in pure faith and perfect love. Amen.

"And now I come in spirit to embrace you all in Jesus Christ. First, I embrace and wish all the happiness of the feast to the Rev. Father Rector, and the priests, clerics, and laity, his children. May peace be with them, and may they remember to pray for me, an unworthy sinner. I embrace in like manner the Very Rev. Father Director, with his dear sons the novices. May the peace of Christ be with them also and may they recommend my necessities to God.

"Upon Christmas night I shall offer up the divine Mysteries for our poor Congregation. I shall place the hearts of our Fathers and novices in the manger of the sacred Infant Jesus, that He may inflame, strengthen, and sanctify them to do great things for the glory of God. I shall ask our dearest Lady to nourish them with the most precious food of her pure milk. Amen."

Sentiments like these, all burning as they are with the love of God, cannot be thought of or read without imparting some of their fervor to the coldest of those who meet with them. It may be imagined with what ardor the writer of them waited for the night of benediction, which he spoke of in such glowing terms. He always read the martyrology himself on the vigil of the feast, and when he had to chant the sweet words which announce salvation to the world, "*The Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ*," he burst into a sudden fit of weeping and could scarcely utter a word.

Before beginning Matins in the choir, he directed the religious to come to church with lighted torches in their hands while singing a devout hymn. Then, attended by his assistants, he went all through the retreat in solemn procession, carrying a figure of the Infant Jesus. This image was placed in a sort of cradle and dressed in swaddling clothes because, he said, it inspired him with greater admiration and devotion to behold the omnipotence, the goodness, and the wisdom of God wrapped so helplessly in those miserable rags. During this function his weeping was so continual that the sacristan feared his tears might spoil some of the ornaments, the veil in which he carried the Bambino or the sacred figure itself.

The year that Father Paul was in Rome at the little hospice near St. John Lateran, he was in great grief at being unable to say midnight Mass because the chapel was a private oratory. But Pope Clement XIV, who so tenderly loved him, no sooner heard of his difficulty, than he gave him ample faculties to celebrate. Upon that occasion his devotion was so great that his tears literally bathed the altar.

He was accustomed also to solemnize with special fervor the Feast of the Epiphany, and he exhorted his religious to do the same, saying that it was a memorable day because it had witnessed the calling of the Gentiles, and that we ought not to let it pass without returning grateful thanks to the Divine Mercy for permitting us to be born in the bosom of his holy Church, and thus to possess the invaluable gift of faith. He wrote at this season to one of his penitents, “Truly this is a glorious day! Although I have not time now to speak of the Holy Mystery it commemorates, when I am at the altar I will not forget to place your heart in the heart of the sweet Infant Jesus. ‘O Jesus my Love!’ I will say, ‘burn with the fire of charity the heart of this daughter and of another one you have given me. Make them lowly and childlike and transform them with Your holy love. O Jesus, Life of my life, Joy of my soul, God of my heart, receive their hearts as altars whereon will be sacrificed the gold of ardent charity, the incense of constant prayer, the myrrh of continual mortification. Amen.”

How lively and how fruitful were the affections of love, gratitude, and compassion with which the servant of God was impressed in meditating and preaching upon the most holy Passion may be inferred from the whole tenor of our narratives and will be treated at full length in a distinct chapter in the sequel. Father Paul, having attained to such an intimate union with God, it may be imagined that he was penetrated with deep feelings of devotion towards the Holy Spirit,

the Sovereign Master and sure Guide of those who would walk in the paths of prayer. He writes to his religious, “The inexpressible, more than joyful Festival of the Holy Spirit being near at hand, when we must all be prepared to welcome in the interior of our hearts that sovereign Guest, who is our Lord and God, I would not willingly omit the duty of admonishing you by this poor letter, and of reminding you of the strong desire God has imprinted in my heart to see you all great saints, according to the perfection of the Institute to which the Divine Mercy has called you. Therefore, my dearly beloved in Christ, to dispose yourselves for the High Festival you are about to keep, examine yourselves and see if there be anything within you which is not purely of God. Discover if all your actions have proceeded from a pure intention, and if you have each day endeavored to direct your aim, so that all your works might be performed from the sole love of God and united to the works of Jesus Christ, our only Way, Truth, and Life. My beloved sons, ‘You are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God.’ Since, then, you are dead to all that is not God, strive to preserve your minds in complete abstraction from all created things in true poverty and nakedness of spirit and in perfect detachment from those sensible consolations, which are so dear, while they are so dangerous to our fallen nature and so often deprive us of more solid blessings. Direct all your efforts to acquire interior solitude and to become adorers of your Sovereign Good in spirit and in truth. All will go well with you if you are gentle and lowly in your own conceit, for God loves childlike souls, and to them He imparts that sublime knowledge which He has hidden from the wise and clever of the world. Never depart from the wounds of Jesus; let your souls be clothed and penetrated with the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer; and do not doubt that he who is the universal Pastor will conduct you as His beloved flock into His everlasting fold. And where is the fold of this good Shepherd? It is the bosom of His heavenly Father. For as Jesus is always in the Bosom of His Father, ‘Christ Jesus who is in the bosom of God,’ so to this same secure sanctuary will He conduct you, while you remain in pure faith and holy love, in forgetfulness of the things of earth and in perfect interior solitude. But so high a grace is only granted to those who study to become everyday more humble, simple and loving. Believe me that the great pests of religious communities are judging the actions of others while we lose sight of our own – misinterpreting the motives of our brethren, murmuring at their defects, and repeating to one another our uncharitable ideas. Oh! what ruin do not these things cause in religious houses.” He concludes in these words, “Ah, my dearly beloved, pray

and entreat the Most High God that He would deign to increase and extend our poor Congregation, that He would provide it with zealous men, who, as so many trumpets of the Holy Spirit, may sound and make known in all parts what Jesus has done and suffered for the love of those who live in forgetfulness of Him, a thing to be lamented with inconsolable grief, the cause of all the miseries which abound in the world.”

In order to excite a more fervent love towards the divine Spirit, he desired that in all the retreats of the Congregation a novena should be performed with the Exposition of the most holy Sacrament and the extraordinary mortifications prescribed by the Rule. When the solemn day arrived, the ardor of Father Paul’s feelings betrayed itself in his countenance. He himself intoned the *Veni Creator* at Tierce and appeared rapt in a trance of delight, love, and astonishment.

CHAPTER III

Of Father Paul’s Wonderful Devotion Towards the Blessed Eucharist and of His Lively Faith in Celebrating Mass and in Reciting the Divine Office

The faith of the servant of God shone forth most conspicuously in his affection for the most blessed Eucharist, which is, properly speaking, the Sacrament of Faith. From his very earliest youth he had been remarkable for his lively devotion towards this divine mystery. He spent many hours of his nights, as well as of his days, in church before the sacred tabernacle, without so much as changing the position of his body. He used to kneel upon the bare ground without anything for support, his hands crossed upon his breast, his head bent downwards, so still and immovable that he scarcely seemed to breathe. He appeared to have forgotten everything else when he was allowed the blessedness of being alone with Jesus. One day, it happened that he went to benediction at the church of the Capuchin Fathers at Castellazzo; he had hardly knelt down when some boys let fall a heavy bench upon his foot, which wounded him most severely. But with an undisturbed countenance, he gently raised the bench, kissed it, and then went to the altar rails to continue his devotions. His companions, who knelt behind him, noticing that the foot was bleeding profusely, could not help approaching him to tell him of it, but he paid no attention to the observation and, without either moving or answering, pursued his prayer as

before. When the function was over, his companions begged him at least to have his wound dressed in the monastery, but he still took no notice. When at last, upon reaching St. Stefano, he was again urged, he replied, "Such pains as these are roses. Jesus Christ suffered much more, and I desire far worse in punishment for my sins."

It was the young Paul's greatest consolation to receive Holy Communion; and if his director was absent, he would travel miles to see him in order to obtain permission to communicate. When he went to inhabit the hermitage of Our Lady of the Chain, near Gaeta, he and his brother John Baptist gave great edification, to all who beheld them, by their recollected countenance whenever they visited the Blessed Sacrament in the churches of the town. If by chance they came at a time when the doors were closed, they used to retire to some secluded spot, where they could uninterruptedly adore in spirit their only Love. It was the fame of their piety towards the most Blessed Sacrament, that, as have before related, induced Bishop Emilio Cavalieri of Troja, to invite them into his diocese in order that their example might inspire the same fervor in his flock.

The riper years of Father Paul's life were distinguished by no less tender devotion. Upon entering any town or village, his first act was always to throw himself before the Blessed Sacrament. Even upon his journeys, whenever he noticed any churches in the distance, he knelt down immediately to adore his Lord, who dwelt there under the lowly eucharistic species. It may be truly said that his piety in paying homage to the Blessed Sacrament fully corresponded to his lively faith in contemplating that priceless treasure in which Jesus has given us himself. He ardently desired that all should benefit by this wondrous gift. Hence, in his familiar discourses, as well as in his sermons, he tried to make all his hearers understand and appreciate the inestimable advantages which the Catholic Church enjoys by being enriched with Jesus Christ. He told them that our Lord remained in the tabernacle for them alone, although they knew it not, advising them to unite themselves frequently with Him at least by spiritual communions. During the missions which he gave, he often spoke with great force on the reverence due to the holy Sacrament. He earnestly exhorted all those who had it in their power to accompany the Viaticum when carried to the sick, and if possible, to bear torches in their hands. When he gave the spiritual exercises to the people, he used to recite fervent acts in honor of the Blessed Eucharist, which was exposed to public veneration. Sometimes he began by a renewal of faith in these words, "I know in whom I believe, I am certain." Or else with an ardent aspiration of love, such

as, *“O! How sweet, O Lord, is your spirit.”* And by the earnestness with which he spoke, he drew abundant tears from those who heard him. Through his zealous exertions, he introduced in many places the pious practice of visiting the Blessed Sacrament every evening; and in order to facilitate the devotion to poor laborers, the good Father prudently adapted himself to their condition and only required that they should go to church when their work was done, there to ask the blessing of Jesus before they retired to rest. This beautiful custom is still retained; and it is a touching thing to enter those quiet country churches by twilight and to see numbers of devout persons kneeling before the altar of the Most Holy, where two lighted candles seem to typify their faith and love. Their day is thus peacefully concluded under the shadow of the tabernacle. Father Paul’s zeal, which led him to exhort so many upon this subject, did not cause him to forget his own brethren. With still greater industry he endeavored to impart to their hearts the love which burnt so brightly in his own. To animate their faith and increase their love, he desired that they should go very frequently to visit Jesus hidden in the adorable Sacrament.

The joy and consolation felt by the venerable Father when he possessed, in the retreats of our Order, under his own roof, so to speak, the gracious Presence which so filled his soul, will be best described in his own words to a devout youth who was directed by him, and who afterwards joined our Congregation. Speaking of the first church on Monte Argentario, he said, “The cells are finished and now there is nothing more required but a little interior decoration to prepare the Church for the reception of the Blessed Sacrament. Oh! how each single hour appears to me a thousand until my Savior comes and I can spend my solitary hours at the foot of His altar. Ah! who will give me the wings of the dove, that I may take a loving flight to His Divine Heart.”

Long afterwards in his extreme old age, when he was suffering from habitual indisposition, his love for Jesus caused him to make frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament and to remain before it during long hours of unwearied adoration. The respectful veneration with which he conducted himself was admirable to behold; as his infirmities prevented him from genuflecting when he passed the altar, he uncovered his head and made a profound inclination, uttering at the same time some devout aspiration. It happened that he had to repeat this ceremony very often in the day when he was at the Retreat of St. Angelo, for to reach his little miserable cell he had to pass the choir where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved. The servant of God, although he liked to see all the altars of the Church decently provided, wished that the principal decorations should

belong to the high altar where the Blessed Sacrament was kept. He caused it to be ornamented with vases of natural flowers, and if he saw these faded or neglected, he reprehended the person whose duty it was to renew them.

In the latter years of his life, he was generally confined either to his bed or his cell on account of his frequent illnesses. But if he ever had a little interval of convalescence, oh, how eagerly did he seize the opportunity of visiting his dear Jesus and pouring out before Him all the loving affections of his heart. In the year that he died, being at Rome, in our Retreat of Sts. John and Paul, during the novena of the Assumption, he would be carried down to the Church every day to assist at the devotions in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. And when the Forty Hours was kept that year, at Sts. John and Paul, he insisted on being carried to the organ gallery, and there locked in, desiring to be kept undisturbed and to be denied to everyone, even to his most distinguished friends. It happened that a person of high rank came that day to visit the Blessed Sacrament and asked to see Father Paul, but was refused the consolation of speaking with him because he was shut up alone with Jesus. A prelate from the pontifical palace also arrived, wishing to obtain for the Pope news of Father Paul's health – this was thought a sufficient excuse for disturbing him. One of the Fathers went to the gallery to tell him, but he, scarcely heeding the interruption, abstractedly replied, "This is not the time for speaking with creatures, because the Master of the House is giving audience, the Lord of Lords! The Master of the world!" It is not to be supposed that so singular a devotion could pass unrewarded by him who is the source of all graces, and we know that his loving Redeemer made him frequently experience the admirable effects of such constant communion with His Sacramental Presence. During the many years that he passed in preaching missions, he used to be tormented with a burning thirst after his sermons, but out of mortification he would never seek any other refreshment than visiting the Blessed Sacrament. With simple faith, and holy confidence, he turned to our Lord and exclaimed, "You, oh my Jesus, have said, '*If anyone thirsts let him come to me and drink*' (Jn. 7:37), it is for You, then to give me to drink," and "truly," he himself related, "truly, Jesus did so for me, and once in a special manner most wonderfully refreshed me. A certain doctor afterwards told me that enduring my thirst without drinking was likely to bring on a malignant fever, and that I ought not in conscience to expose myself to such danger. This induced me to take something to drink after my sermons, but ah! that doctor has ruined me! Patience!" To the same ever-flowing Fountain,

the servant of God came when he was tired and exhausted, after serving the sick, visiting the imprisoned, and performing other works of mercy and charity; begging our Lord to refresh and invigorate him with the torrent of His celestial sweetness.

In recompense for his faithful devotion, Almighty God permitted him to have miraculous indications of the Sacramental Presence. And so, when he entered into a church, he became aware by an amorous correspondence in his heart which altar his treasure inhabited. Upon one occasion his companion was going to an altar, which by its exterior appearance he judged to be that of the Blessed Sacrament, when Father Paul stopped him and directed him to another part of the church. In the same way he was allowed to feel equal certainty of the Divine Presence when a wretched man brought him a consecrated particle, which he had sacrilegiously taken. In this instance it seemed that our Lord wished to console and indemnify Himself in His faithful servant, for the enormous injury He had received, as it is written, "God will be consoled in his servants." He often perceived from a great distance whether the Blessed Eucharist was in any particular place, and these celestial favors excited him to still more ardent affections of devotion. This fervor never showed itself in a more lively manner than when he was celebrating Mass. At those times the venerable Father appeared all tenderness and ardor, transformed into a seraphim of love. After a long and fervent preparation he ascended the altar, and then his face was often seen to change color and become inflamed, while his eyes overflowed with tears of interior sweetness. For many years he could never say Mass without weeping. Afterwards, being placed by our Lord in the crucible of aridities and desolations, his tears were not so continual, but he was often observed to shed them from the consecration to the communion. When he sang High Mass, he generally fell into so deep a contemplation, that he was obliged to do violence to himself before he could proceed; in chanting the Preface and Pater Noster, he was constantly interrupted by his sobs, which gave edification to all who heard him. He was particularly exact in the observance of the rubrics and of the prescribed holy ceremonies. After Mass he retired to some quiet spot, where he could give vent to the burning affections of his heart and enjoy the possession of his only love. He was most careful that everything belonging to the altar should be suitable for so high a service, and he was not content with bare decency, but he desired to see the most extreme cleanliness and purity. He sometimes sent away one corporal after another, until he got one that was perfectly clean. The smallest thing, he said, that is employed in the Holy

Sacrifice ought to be spotless. Our Lord was pleased to show by miracles how grateful in His sight was the faith and devotion of His servant in that sacred function.

Upon one occasion, when he was celebrating in the Monastery of St. Lucia at Corneto, the assistant, who was Signor Domenico Costantini, observed, to his great surprise, that when the venerable Father drew near to the consecrations, there arose from the steps of the altar a kind of smoke, like that of incense, which after the elevation gave forth a marvelous fragrance quite indescribable and unlike any common odor. A still greater wonder was seen at the same time, which was that the servant of God was raised in the air, two palms above the altar steps, both before and after the consecrations. Each time that he offered up the Holy Sacrifice, Father Paul imagined it to be the last Mass that he should say, and he told one of his religious, “Whenever I celebrate I receive the Holy Communion as a Viaticum.” He recommended others to perform not only this sacred function but every action of the day, as if it were the last of their lives.

As it is natural to one who loves, enjoys, and possesses an immense good, to desire to communicate his happiness to those especially who are capable of appreciating it, so Father Paul’s ardent wish was that all priests, and particularly that the Fathers of our Congregation, should know how to enrich themselves with the priceless treasures of the adorable sacrifice, and that for this end they should prepare their hearts with the utmost care for the presence of Jesus Christ. “Endeavor,” he said, “to be always ready to celebrate with the deepest devotion, watch day and night before the interior tabernacle, which is in the hearts of all priests. Guard with anxious care this living temple, keep always burning there the lamps of faith and charity and let it be decorated, as for a perpetual festival, with all Christian virtues. Jesus celebrated the divine mysteries in a furnished room. He inculcated to his religious that they should not only prepare themselves for Mass by serious meditations upon the mysteries of faith, but that even while celebrating they should follow Jesus in spirit through the different stages of His passion, performing His obsequies with the mournful tenderness of Mary, St. John, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, and then depositing Him in the sepulcher of their hearts, “*In which no one had yet been buried*” (Jn 19:41). He said that the Mass was the most appropriate time for negotiating with the Eternal Father, while we offer to Him His only Son Incarnate for our salvation. “Before you celebrate,” he wrote to a priest, “clothe yourself with the sufferings of Christ by a sacred colloquy, placidly made in the midst of aridities. Carry to the altar the necessities of the whole

world.” With the same earnestness he sought to impress upon all the priests of the Congregation the utmost exactness in the observance of the rubrics. He particularly insisted that those who were newly ordained should be well instructed and exercised in the ceremonies, and he often took upon himself the charitable duty of assisting them. He could not bear to see the least disorder or mistake in the sacred functions, and if he noticed any who failed in the correct performance of them, he took an opportunity of reproofing them, saying, “The rubrics ought to have been studied beforehand.” He could not tolerate the idea of a priest abandoning Jesus almost immediately after Mass without making the proper thanksgiving. He declaimed eagerly, and upon every opportunity, against this abuse, and he employed all the power of his ministry in engaging priests to render thanks to their loving Lord for so inexpressible a benefit. As far as he could, he endeavored to prevent from approaching the altar all those who gave little reverence for the tremendous mysteries or who were not attired in the clerical garb.

An ecclesiastic of distinction came to say Mass at one of our retreats, dressed in a colored coat and without the dignity required by the sacerdotal character. The good Father immediately reproofed him and would not permit him to celebrate, saying, “This is not the dress for a priest to wear at the altar.” Full of these zealous sentiments, he wrote thus to a devout soul, “You must fly in spirit to the heart of Jesus in the adorable sacrament, and there weep with grief for the insults he receives from worldlings, from wicked priests, and from tepid religious, who return ingratitude and sacrileges for his infinite love. In reparation for all these outrages, let your soul offer herself up as a holocaust, all burning with love and praise, and thank him in place of those who ill-treat him. Above all, go to visit him at those times when he is most neglected and forgotten.”

The love which consumed Father Paul while he offered the Holy Sacrifice manifested itself in no less striking a manner when he administered Holy Communion. When he uttered the words, “*Behold the Lamb of God*” (Jn 1:29,36), he spoke with so much energy, fervor, and reverence, that it might well have been imagined that he beheld his Divine Redeemer with his own eyes. And so also it was observed in carrying the Blessed Sacrament on the Feast of Body of Christ, his face was bathed in a torrent of tears. This festival was to him a day of peculiar solemnity, and he kept it with a marvelous spirit of faith. If he was at one of the retreats, he himself sang High Mass and carried the Sacred Host in procession round the enclosure; but if

some urgent business separated him from his brethren, as was the case one year when he was at Ronciglione, he disposed himself with equal devotion to do homage to the Blessed Sacrament. Beholding the procession, he melted into tears, exclaiming, “O, what wondrous love! O, what a day is this! O charity! O love!” Alluding to this feast, he spoke thus in a letter to a devout person, “As the moth flies round and round a light until it is burnt in the flame, so does the soul turn about and within Divine Love, until it is utterly consumed in this great and blessed octave of the adorable sacrament. O, my daughter, eat, drink, and inebriate yourself; fly, sing, exult, and feast with the Divine Spouse.”

Well knowing the boundless treasures which lie hidden in the Blessed Eucharist for all the children of holy Church he exhorted the laity to communicate often, and with the deepest feelings of affection. “Holy Communion,” he once said, “is the most efficacious means of uniting ourselves with God. Be always prepared for the holy table, purify well your heart. Above all, carefully guard that tongue which is the first to touch the adorable Sacrament. Go not away until you have made a fitting return of grateful thanks; let your heart remain a living tabernacle of Jesus. Visit him often who wearies not of staying within you, and offer him all the adoration, affection, and thanksgiving with which love can inspire you.”

The mere sight of the servant of God was enough to confuse any person who said the Divine Office with tepidity, or who was wanting in reverence for what the Holy Fathers call the “divine work.” In his heaviest infirmities he insisted upon reciting the breviary himself, nor would he take advantage of the dispensation granted him by Pope Clement XIV, until his last illness, when he was so oppressed by suffering, that he was obliged to give it up and to procure the assistance of a priest, who read it aloud to him with a clear and intelligible voice. He always kept his head uncovered during the divine office, even when he journeyed through the open country during the coldest days of winter. During his last illness his companion begged him so earnestly to cover himself that he did so for a time; but soon taking off his cap, he exclaimed that he could not say his office with his head covered, adding, “We must remember what it is we are doing,” as if he would say that this is the time for speaking to the Divine Majesty, of whose presence he had so constant a recollection.

Still more clearly did he manifest his faith and love when he was present in choir with the rest of his brethren to praise and adore Almighty God. He was most exact in appearing there both

by day and night; at night with still more fervor than at any other time, because he was persuaded that the prayers offered up to God at an hour when the greater part of the world either forgot him in sleep, or neglected Him for their pleasure, were most grateful and acceptable in the Divine sight. Then it was, he said, that we ought to sing serenades to God. It was a touching sight to see the venerable old man dragging himself to the place of prayer, when he could scarcely walk and, in spite of his pains, standing upright and motionless while he offered up the sacrifice of his praise to God. None could doubt how deeply he felt the maxim which he so often inculcated, “When we assemble to recite our office, we must animate our faith and remember that we are joining the angels, who descend into our choir to sing with us to the honor of God.”

He took care that the chant should be regulated by true devotion and accompanied by pauses which contribute so much to fervor. He used to repeat emphatically the words of that hymn, “*Mouth, tongue, mind, sense, strength – all sound forth with praise.*” If any one made a mistake, he was fired with zeal and struck his little staff upon the ground, saying, “This is not the way to recite the divine office in the presence of God.” He once saw a religious in choir leaning against a bench in an unbecoming attitude; he instantly went up to him and admonished him to pray with reverence and attention for at the hour of death our Lord would show him what it was that he had neglected.

Such were the words and thoughts of one who, with a lively faith, saw not with his bodily eyes, but with those of the spirit, the immediate presence of the invisible God.