

A scenic waterfall cascading through a lush green forest. The water flows over several rocky tiers, creating a misty spray at the bottom. The surrounding vegetation is dense and vibrant, with some pink blossoms visible on the left side. The overall atmosphere is serene and natural.

# *Listen Little* Daughters

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## CHAPTER I

### Our Consecrated Life

*Consecrated life is rooted in baptism and fully expresses the Christian vocation to follow Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit. It calls for a total commitment to the way of Christ, to the Evangelical Counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience and to the Gospel values. These vows serve as a spiritual antidote to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, and an effective means to transform and transcend them.*

*Consecrated life demands of the one called the gift of self in a total and undivided manner: a gift of one's whole being in response to Christ's total gift of self. The gift of the consecrated life is a call to affirm the primacy of God in the lives of consecrated persons and to continue discovering "the beauty and freshness of the person of Jesus" and the centrality of Christ and his message as the foundational element of one's dedicated life. Hence one has to be wary of allowing anyone or anything to snuff out the first spark that was lit in the heart when Christ called her to follow him and she responded to that call with vibrant love and fervour. The Church expects of the consecrated to live an intense life of prayer, and not to sink into apostolic activism.*

*Each Consecrated person is invited to turn her life "into a tale of friendship with Jesus" and to allow oneself to be transformed and transfigured into the image of the Crucified. Consecrated life becomes a gradual identification with the attitude of Christ: a progressive "collaboration in the work of the Father who, through the Spirit, fashions in the heart the inner attitudes of the Son." (VC: 66)*

*Consecration implies mission. For consecrated life demands a passionate love affair with the Lord and His Kingdom. The consecrated men and women are invited to continue the mission of Christ in the world: to make visible His loving and saving presence. Each person, according to the charism of the Institute is to show forth Christ "to believers and unbelievers alike – Christ in contemplation on the mountain, proclaiming the Kingdom of God to the multitudes, or healing the sick and the maimed, converting sinners to a good life, or doing good to all – always, in obedience to the Father who sent him." So exhorts the Second Vatican Council Document, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. (LG. 46)*

*One's mission is to be the extension of one's intense communion with the Triune God. Only then can one invest fruitfully her time and energy in the endless labour of building communion: become a good Samaritan by uncovering the needs of our "neighbours" and be caring, tender and kind to all those in need.*

*The greatest challenge facing the consecrated life today is to generate meaningful relationships, to communicate joy, mercy and compassion among all, especially among the less fortunate and the voiceless.*

- 1) "The Charism of the Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Most Blessed Sacrament is the very nature of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament. A life of prayer and contemplation that equips us for the apostolate: an apostolate that does not hinder contemplation... In contemplation one learns the secrets of Divine Love as well as the ways and means to conquer souls for Christ... Our life and activities should spring from intimate union with our Divine Spouse in the Eucharist. The role of Magdalene is the essence of our vocation and that of Martha its actualisation."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nov-Dec 1897, First draft of the Constitutions, Ch II

- 2) "Let the name, the Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament, make the sisters understand that they have a special vocation to preach with their lives the Eucharistic Jesus and the Immaculate Virgin, to propagate their names, worship and glory. In order to succeed in it, let them strive to imbibe the spirit of the Seraphic Founders Francis and Clare, and their love for the Eucharist and the Virgin – the legacy they have bequeathed to us."<sup>2</sup>
- 3) "A complete immolation of ourselves to Jesus and with Jesus in the Eucharist, continuous reparation and an untiring apostolate: this is our objective, the way of embodying the Eucharistic Jesus in us. To live always with him, in him, through him in the ciborium and to make him live in the hearts of all men as one heart and one soul in the heart of Jesus. Therefore, the life force of the Clarist Franciscans is the spirit of Jesus in the most Holy Eucharist. A life of prayer and contemplation which is not incompatible with the apostolate, an apostolate that does not stand in the way of contemplation."<sup>3</sup>
- 4) "The name of the Franciscan of the Blessed Sacrament is derived from the very nature of the Institute. The Rule as applicable to and stated in the Constitutions, is that of St. Clare who is closely associated with the spirit of the Eucharist. St. Clare can be called the Saint of the Eucharist. A ray of divine light from the tabernacle irradiates her face, illumines her mind and inflames her heart. The Seraphic virgin is truly the only Saint who is portrayed (in iconography) with the Mystery in hand."<sup>4</sup>
- 5) "Let the Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament, after the example of the Immaculate Virgin, embrace the active-contemplative life seeking in prayer blessing for their apostolate and the goal of prayer in their apostolate: to intertwine marvellously the contemplative and active life in such a way that the latter is not deprived of the sweetness of the former, which accompanies and brings to perfection every act of the latter."<sup>5</sup>
- 6) "As our Lord Jesus Christ became man and immolated himself on the cross and continues to offer Himself daily in the Eucharist for the salvation of the souls, so the Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament, following his example, should devote themselves to expiation and apostolate, offering themselves as victims along with Jesus Christ for the Church and for the souls."<sup>6</sup>
- 7) "The Institute that I have dedicated to Christ the Redeemer, the eternal victim on our altars, will become a seedbed of saints who expand the kingdom of God on earth and increase limitlessly the number of dwellers in Paradise."<sup>7</sup>
- 8) "A spouse of Christ should always live for God, with God, in God, in Jesus her every good...May you be faithful to our beloved Spouse with fidelity to the promise you have pledged Him! May love, purity, ardour and self-denial be the inseparable companions of your thoughts, affections, desires, aspirations, words and actions, all

<sup>2</sup> 1904-05: Second Draft of the Constitution, Art. 8, Fasc. 27

1) <sup>3</sup> Nov-Dec.1897: First draft of the Constitutions

<sup>4</sup> Nov-Dec 1897:First Draft of the Constitutions

<sup>5</sup> 1904-05: Second Draft of the Constitution, Art. 9, Fasc. 27

<sup>6</sup> Constitution 1915, Art. 5

<sup>7</sup> 25.12.1900: Cir.Let. 8, Fasc.28.

of which should be oriented to the attainment of our objective, namely union with God, towards which every religious should constantly strive.”<sup>8</sup>

- 9) “If we can rise above our senses and contemplate God’s infinite goodness, His incomprehensible perfection and the splendour of His beauty, we cannot but be gripped by an overflowing love and ecstasy of wonder that makes us cry out: ‘How great you are, O Lord! How loveable and adorable! How infinite is your generosity! How pleasant it is to serve you and love you! How sweeter still to suffer for you and with you, and to do your will through and through!’”<sup>9</sup>
- 10) “Whoever has left everything behind and has found God can say with reason that she has left nothing but received all things. So do the chaste virgins who consecrate themselves to the spotless Lamb.”<sup>10</sup>
- 11) “Let us examine our heart to find if we are seeking Jesus or the creatures... Along with Jesus who surrendered himself to the Eternal Father in the Garden of Olives, let us offer ourselves as victims in the Eucharist and through other acts of expiation...

Let us hide from others – even from ourselves, whatever aches we have and deny us all gratification... Let us gladly carry after Jesus the cross that Providence sends us today, bearing patiently with physical discomforts, or the inclement weather, or difficult persons.

Mortifying our senses isn’t enough; we have to search our interior to find if and how we are dead to self-love and pride. Let us cling to the Crucifix daily for five minutes, beseeching the Lord to reveal to us our predominant fault and to uproot it by acts contrary to it... It is essential to possess true love: the pure love that breeds deeds and not words.”<sup>11</sup>

- 12) “We should not leave out any spiritual exercises that can renew our interior self; for our exclusive aim should be the conversion of heart and mind through acts of self-denial.  
Our soft, gentle voice should be indicative of our inner recollected spirit. In short, we should cleanse our mind and heart so that they may be penetrated by God’s light, the wisdom of the Word and the love of the Holy Spirit... so that dying to ourselves, we may live for God alone.”<sup>12</sup>
- 12) “*I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine knows me.* If we truly wish to be known by Jesus and hear His sweet whispering, He should be in our thoughts, and recognised by our words and deeds. Let us glory in being learners at the school of Jesus Christ... If we do not acknowledge Jesus... a day will come when He will deny any knowledge of us.”<sup>13</sup>
- 13) “Whatever might happen, I’ll always believe that you Lord want me to be a Franciscan in the way pleasing to your Sacred Heart and not as I want... What a great favour to be called to the Seraphic Order for which I am indebted to the maternal kindness of Mary! With all my heart and soul I love the Order. I know I’m

<sup>8</sup> 27.03.1881: Let. to Sisters of Forli, Let.16, Fasc. I

<sup>9</sup> Undated: Seraphina’s Let. to Catherine Farolfi, Let. 20, Fasc. I

<sup>10</sup> 10.03.1881: Let. to Catherine, Let.15, Fasc. I

<sup>11</sup> 05.06.1890: *Prayers and Acts of Mortification*, Fasc. XX

<sup>12</sup> Undated: *Annotation*, Timetable, Fasc. XX

<sup>13</sup> 12.04.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX

unworthy to belong to it. I want to be a saint in the very place and the very way it delights Jesus, whatever it might cost me.”<sup>14</sup>

14) “As the religious awakes, she delightfully converses with God, invoking Him with the words of David: “*Lord, my God, I watch for you at day break.*” She raises her mind to the Mysteries she would be receiving. In preparation for Holy Communion she offers all the Masses being celebrated throughout the world... She hears the voice of her spouse as the bell rings for rising and revives her ardour saying with our Seraphic Father: *‘Today is the first day that I begin to serve God.... It could as well be my last day. What shall I not do to please Him!’*”<sup>15</sup>

15) “What is **life**? A constant detachment, a continuous bitterness, and uninterrupted disenchantment which teach us that we are truly living in exile. Oh, we shall be united in Paradise and there will be complete joy in the gentle embrace of the love of Christ.”<sup>16</sup>

### **Spiritual Direction**

*Spiritual direction is the process of accompanying people on a spiritual journey. Its goal is to seek discernment of how the Holy Spirit is leading in a particular person’s life. James Keegan, SJ defines spiritual direction as “the contemplative practice of helping another person or group to awaken to the mystery of God in all of life, and to respond to that discovery in a growing relationship of freedom and commitment.”*

*The spiritual director helps a person to develop a closer relationship with God and to better discern how the Holy Spirit is leading in her life. Discerning God’s will and the Lord’s action in our lives is undertaken in an atmosphere of prayer, inspired by the Holy Spirit.*

*Consultation with a director is all the more necessary for a religious who aims at the attainment of perfection, as no one is a good judge in her own cause. Besides, human passion often invents motives for unlawful indulgence. As Cassian writes, “by no vice does the devil draw a monk headlong and bring him to death sooner than by persuading him to neglect the counsel of the Elders and trust to his own judgement and determination.” Not one of us is more intelligent than Superiors, spiritual directors, and all of us put together.*

*Discernment about the depth of our commitment begins with recognizing some inner movement of restlessness in the situation in which we presently find ourselves. This recognition of a need to enter into a discernment process may come from:*

- 1. The quality of our committed life, and the values that give meaning to our lives.*
- 2. Inner doubts or questions of one’s meaning and purpose in the present moment (especially when threatened by the standards and values of the society, in which we live, work and relate to others).*
- 3. Increased responsibilities or new assignments.*

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<sup>14</sup> *Memoirs*: Jan. 1892, Fasc. XXIX, p.21

<sup>15</sup> December 1902: *Practical Guide*, Ch. III, Fasc. XXV

<sup>16</sup> 23.05.1893: Let. to Sr. Bernardina, Let. 98, Fasc. III

*The inner movement of restlessness is a personal call from God to walk more humbly with Him, for a deeper experience of the Trinitarian life, for a greater desire to have the Spirit of the Lord working in us.*

*Discernment is a sincere search for the will of God, not just to know it, but also to carry it out. Discernment of God's will, both personal and corporate, is a Spirit-initiated, Spirit-led activity that supports conscious choices and commitments to do His will. Our insights and decisions are not safe-guides in the important task of following God's living plans for us. Only too frequently, our personal limitations can deceive us by making the will of God coincide with what we want to do ourselves. Seeking Counsel / direction from competent Spiritual directors is to test the validity of what we think is the divine will for us. It is well to "avoid, both an excessive agitation and pre-occupation for making the attraction of current opinion prevail over the profound meaning of the religious life." (ET. 25)*

*Right from her teens, Mother Seraphina had placed herself in the hands of her confessors and spiritual directors to guide in her journey of holiness. She not only accepted their counsel with profound humility and deep faith, but also took utmost care to follow it to the point of scrupulousness. She sought the advice of the Major Superiors of the Franciscan Order not only in solving her inner struggles in the pursuit of perfection, but also discerning God's will in opening new foundations.*

16) "Your gentle, paternal correction has probed the innermost fibre of my being, giving me deep contrition and making me see all my failings... Your Lordship, please obtain for me from the Blessed Virgin – especially during these days of novena to Our Lady of the Fire, the grace to find a spiritual director who would effectively help me to divest myself of my ego, so that my childhood longing to become a saint might not remain a sterile wish. A true guide is a treasure... I'm ready to face any hardships in order to become a saint... I would reveal all my failings to the mentor whom Jesus would provide. But if you won't pray for me, if you won't obtain for me from the Virgin Mary the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, all my efforts will be fruitless; for they are ineffective without His gifts..."<sup>17</sup>

### **Silence**

*True silence is rest for the mind. It is to the spirit what sleep is to the body: nourishment and refreshment. The essence of the value of silence is to free ourselves from influences other than those from God. A certain amount of withdrawal and vigilance over our thoughts and the inner and outer dialogue are essential for leading an intense living in relative peace, freedom from emotional disturbance, temptation to the vices and distraction in prayer. Solitude and silence facilitate attention to the more profound murmuring of the spirit dwelling in our hearts.*

*The religious discipline of silence is a state of inner tranquility: a quieting down of not only our urgency to speak but also of the inner noise due to the multiplicity of thoughts. Our ego raises an inner clamour by its aggressive and ambitious drives, its tendency to manage, control and organize all of life for its own glory. We have to still those drives that may deaden our sensitivity to the Word and silence of God. We have to*

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<sup>17</sup> 18.01.1892: Let. to Bp. Svampa, Let. 19, Fasc. LXVIII

*quiet and empty the chattering of our imagination and memory in order to have our mind filled with the things of the spirit.*

*Silence is the spiritual knife which lays open our souls. In the spiritual stillness we see our own sinfulness, how we fall short, and we become acutely aware of our need for God to redeem us. In the stillness we also become much more aware of the depth of God's love for us. The spiritual discipline of silence is intrinsically connected with the goal of contemplative life: loving union with God through continual prayer.*

*We experience God's presence in a prayerful, reverent silence: a silence that meets and merges with the silence of God. "Be still and know that I am God!" (Ps. 46:11): to commune with the divine silence – the silent emptiness where God dwells in the depth of one's heart.*

- 17) "External quietness without interior stillness is of little avail. With God's grace inner solitude can be created anywhere. Hence, watch over the movements of your heart and see that there is nothing but what belongs to God, nothing that might frighten you, so that your heart is always united with your loving Spouse. Enter often the inner chamber of your heart and carry on your colloquy there."<sup>18</sup>
- 18) "Here in the countryside I'm having a quieter time than at Rimini, where I often felt lonely and desolate, despite having a lot of company. Though I am alone here, I enjoy true peace found only in that stillness where one can experience God, the sole Spouse of our souls. I have now understood well that no earthly beings can satisfy the human heart. For having been created to love the supreme God it cannot find true happiness in the ephemeral things of this world. Oh, love your future Bridegroom with all your heart and you will enjoy remarkable peace."<sup>19</sup>
- 19) "The religious should love the seclusion and solitude of the enclosure. For it is in silence that Jesus speaks to the soul, as the Holy Spirit speaks through the Prophet Hosea: "I will allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart." And what does the religious do in the wilderness? As the Prophet says, 'She shall sing there as in the days of her youth and call the Lord, "my husband". He will make a covenant with her. He will destroy the bow and the sword and make her sleep secure. He will espouse her to Him forever in love and mercy. She will be the spouse of God in fidelity and will know that her spouse is the Lord.' (Cfr. Hosea 2:16 – 22)

I have quoted the Prophet so that the sisters may cherish quietude more and more and treasure it all their lives. Therefore, the religious does not leave the Cenacle (common room<sup>20</sup>) except to fulfil her duties and return to it as soon as she is free.

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<sup>18</sup> Undated, Let. to Catherine, Let. 20, Fasc. I

<sup>19</sup> 06.10.1876: Let. to Giannina (Sr. Catherine), Let. 1177, Fasc. XIX

<sup>20</sup> Before the advent of the T.V., the Common Room was a hallowed place where the community members gathered together during the course of the day and late into the night for spiritual reading, recreation and personal work (embroidery, tatting, crochet, knitting, drawing, painting etc., during which the rosary would be often recited. The purpose of coming together in one place was to foster fraternal spirit through the sharing of everyday events and exchange of ideas, besides saving on fire place/ candle or oil-lamp/light/ electricity etc.

Silence should be observed in the common room except during the hours of relaxation or recreation during which one should always speak in a moderate voice. It is in such sanctuary that a religious perfects her bearing and external modesty which edify others, and accustoms herself to be dignified and serious but not ostentatious, affable yet not flippant, as she goes about doing her work. Light-footed in her movements, hardly anyone is aware of her passage yet is edified. All know that she comes out of the Upper Room and returns to it in order to be renewed by the visit of her Spouse who waits for her in the bower to let her savour the sweetness of His Love.”<sup>21</sup>

20) “One has to keep Magdalene in view when she approaches the Mysteries as well as in one’s meditation, adoration and visit to the Blessed Sacrament. One listens with her to the words of Jesus that converts, transforms and initiates that life which brings her to intimate union with Him. O Blessed Magdalene, grant us also the inestimable grace to listen to and receive the word of Jesus!

Silence and attentive listening are quite delightful to the person who seeks Jesus along with Magdalene, because she will find the One Who enchants and thrills her.”<sup>22</sup>

#### **A: Fast and Penance**

*Fasting in the Old Testament denoted abstinence from all food as a religious rite for a specific period of time. From early times the wearing of sackcloth and ashes accompanied by fasting indicated self-abnegation. In Israelite history fasts were proclaimed as a response of national emergency or distress (Judges 20: 26), or as an accompaniment to private or public prayer (Esther 4:16).*

*The classic case of fasting is the 40 day fast of Moses when he was on Mt. Sinai with God (Ex. 34: 28). David and Ahab fasted in order to seek God’s forgiveness for their sins (2 Sam. 12: 16-17 / 1 Kg. 21:27). Usually people fasted and prayed to obtain favours (Judith 8:6 / Dan 9:3), or to avert God’s wrath (2. Chr. 20:3 / Jon. 3:6-9).*

*We have Isaiah chastising the Israelites for their unrighteous methods and motives of fasting, while defining the fast acceptable to Yahweh and listing some of the physical and spiritual benefits that accrue from true fasting (Is. 58).*

*In the New Testament we have the prophetess Anna who spent her widowhood worshipping the Lord with fasting and praying (Lk 2:37), the Pharisees who fasted to gain favours from men (Mt. 6.16 / Lk 18:12). In contrast to the ostentatious fasting of the Pharisees, there are John the Baptist “neither eating nor drinking” (Mt. 11:18), and Jesus who fasted for 40 days in the desert and His admonition to His disciples to fast in private (Mt. 6:17-18).*

*Prior to the changes made by Pope Paul VI, the Church had prescribed strict fasting / abstinence on a number of days throughout the year. Many monastic Rules imposed total abstinence from meat and fasting on all days (Rule of St. Clare II: 7). The*

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<sup>21</sup> December 19: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XIII, Fasc. XXV

<sup>22</sup> 01.08.1897: *Memoirs*, Pious acts for the Novena for St. Clare and Assumption.” Fasc. XXIX, p.35

*Nativity Fast stretched from November 11<sup>th</sup> to Christmas Eve. (It was called St. Martin's Lent as the Christmas Fast began on his feast day) A year in Francis' life was a successive weeks of fasts (LM IX. 3), while Clare had to be prohibited from severe fasting (Leg. Clare: 18).*

### **Eucharistic Fast**

*Since the Council of Constance (1415) the faithful fasted from midnight until Mass before receiving the Eucharist. As Masses in the afternoon and in the evening became common, it was modified to fasting for three hours before the reception of the Sacrament. Current law requires only one hour of Eucharistic Fast.*

- 21) "Fasting coupled with prayer is the most efficacious, rather the unique means to put the demon of concupiscence to rout. As our Lord says: "This kind can go out by nothing but by prayer and fasting" (Mk. 9:29). Jesus has set us an example of fasting and in imitating Him, the saints have high praises for it. What St. Leo the Great says applies to all: "Can there be anything more effective than fasting? Through it we resist the devil, root out the alluring vices of the flesh and draw closer to God. Fasting has always been the food that nourishes virtues. It gives rise to chaste thoughts, noble desires and salutary advice; our flesh dies to its concupiscence, while renewing the spirit of virtues."<sup>23</sup>

### **Scourging**

*Beating with leather straps was a form of punishment administered to slaves, children, various offenders of law et al. The whips were often weighted with pieces of bones or metals or stones. The hands of the guilty were bound to a pillar and the stripes were inflicted upon chest and the back. In the Old Testament, the number of stripes was limited to forty. The Roman law allowed flogging (flagellatio) as a torture to promote the questioning of a slave, or Non-Roman prisoner and scourging as a capital punishment, or as a preparation for execution. The flagellation of Christ-administered under the Roman law, was crueller than the Jewish one.*

*Scourging as a disciplinary measure was adopted in the monasteries from the fifth century onwards. Instead of being excommunicated, offending young monks were scourged. The Canon Law recognized it as a punishment for ecclesiastics for blasphemy, concubinage or simony.*

*Self inflicted flagellation as a form of voluntary penance was practised even before the coming of Christ. We have Esther afflicting her body (Es. 4C: 13), and St. Paul chastising his body to discipline it (1 Cor. 9: 27). Voluntary scourging as a means of penance and mortification, is exemplified in the lives of great many saints like Peter Damian (who popularized it in the eleventh century), Francis (2 Cel. 129) and Clare (Process III: 4), King Louis IX of France and Elizabeth of Thuringia – the Patron Saints of Secular Franciscan Third Order.*

- 22) "Another means to subjugate our passions is self-flagellation as St. Paul says: 'I chastise my body and bring it into subjection' (1 Cor. 9:27). The "discipline" is taken every Friday of the year in atonement for one's own sins and those of the

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<sup>23</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Ch. VI Fasc. XXIV

others. If a solemn feast falls on a Friday, it is done on the day of fast prior to the solemnity.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Mortification**

*Mortification is one of the methods which Christian asceticism employs in training a person to virtuous and holy living. For as the Apostle Paul says, “Those who belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5: 24). By inducing the will to accept hardships and privations, it helps to overcome the temptation to sin. Mortification is a means not only to subdue the rebellion of the flesh against the spirit, but also to cure bad habits and implant good ones. It is practiced likewise as expiation for past sins and shortcomings. Some of the mortifications practiced by devout persons are fasting, hard-beds, custody of eyes, control of the tongue, abstention from lawful pleasures, painful self-inflicted exercise etc. However, external penances are good only so far as they spring from the spirit of internal mortification of pride and self-love. Mortification of flesh in order to bring our body into subjection, corporal fasting and abstinence to cure our intemperance and other form of penitence are aimed at bringing about an inner conversion.*

- 23) “The novice’s favourite act of mortification should be the custody of eyes. It is a powerful means to preserve purity and to raise the soul heavenward. The modesty of a Christian maiden, to quote St. Cyprian, safeguards her chastity. The Virgin Mary had her eyes either raised towards heaven or lowered towards the earth.”<sup>25</sup>
- 24) “Mortification that can be practised by both the ailing and the healthy are the custody of heart, modesty of eyes which is of great advantage to preserve the lily of purity, self-denial: denying our ego even the least gratification, keeping constant watch over ourselves – these are the tools that shape saints.”<sup>26</sup>

### **Acts of Penance**

*The cult of sacrificing to the Deity something very dear to a person in expiation for the forgiveness of his sins is as old as human race. For he believed that sacrifices offered in expiation for the offences committed against God restored broken relationships between the guilty person and the avenging Powers above.*

*However, no sin whatsoever - grievous or trifling – can be forgiven without real repentance and acts of sorrow. Without the personal co-operation of sinners and spirit of contrition, all forgiveness of sin by God is impossible. For the sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken and contrite heart (Ps. 51:19). To repent is a call to turn from our evil ways and wicked deeds (Zech. 1: 4): a call to metanoia – a radical change of heart and mind. Real conversion of heart should accompany our acts of self-denial, fast or abstinence. It calls for a sweeping change of mentality and behaviour and amendment of our omissions and commissions by heart-felt sorrow and deeds of atonement (Zech. 7:9-10).*

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<sup>24</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Ch. VI Fasc. XXIV

<sup>25</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Ch. VI, Fasc. XXIV

<sup>26</sup> December 1902: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XVI, Fasc. XXV

*Such attitudinal change can come only from personal realization of our sinfulness and sinful ways that estrange us from God and wound our brothers and sisters, and the consequent willingness to make atonement for them by altering our mindset towards whole new ways of thinking and acting in line with the Gospel Values.*

*Following the example of Francis and Clare who not only strove to nail their old selves with the Crucified but also to share in His excruciating passion by a life of rigorous asceticism “on behalf of His Body, the Church” (Col. 1:24), Seraphina accepted the everyday stresses and strains of her life. Besides, Clare’s exhortation to Agnes constantly rang in her ears: “I consider you a co-worker of God Himself and a support of the weak members of His ineffable Body” (3<sup>rd</sup> Let. Ag: 8). For as Pope Paul VI says, “if the sin of one injures the others, the holiness of one benefits the others.”*

25) “Those who cannot do voluntary penance can substitute it with calm resignation and joyful acceptance of their infirmity, pain, adversity, tribulation, desolation of the spirit, in a word all that is repellent to our weak nature, as coming from the hand of God. The serene acceptance of trials and suffering is much more meritorious as there is no possibility of deriving any satisfaction that we occasionally feel when we gratify our own will. Nor is there any danger of self-glorification considering ourselves as extraordinary persons far advanced in the way of perfection... The sickbed is an altar on which one offers continuous sacrifice to God...”<sup>27</sup>

#### **Food**

26) “Food is necessary for sustaining life, but it should be taken like medicine. We should mortify our appetite for savoury food, eating simple fares and not looking for exquisite and delicious dishes. Overeating and taking frequent nibbling will harm the body. We shouldn’t eat between mealtimes, or gobble up greedily or ravenously. Neither should we undertake indiscreet abstinence and fasting. As a rule our supper should be light, for however pressing the urge for food be, it can easily be a false craving. Taking even a bite more than the proper measure can make a person all indisposed the next morning and so sluggish and incapable of doing any spiritual exercise.”<sup>28</sup>

27) “Frugal is the food of the Franciscans; but I recommend that it be healthy, substantial and cooked well; for well prepared dishes are beneficial and appetising... Let the sick be treated with that creative charity that knows to anticipate their needs and sweeten the humiliation of being given preferential treatment, to accept which is more painful than their physical suffering... Let the Superior provide for the sisters with maternal tenderness.”<sup>29</sup>

28) “Stick to the common food as far as possible. If one doesn’t like a particular dish, let her think of the labourers, or the poor who, even after so much toil and exertion, do not get a piece of bread either for themselves or for their children. What an agony for the head of a family! And we? O Jesus, how good you are to us! Whenever I see our

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<sup>27</sup> December 1902: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XVI, Fasc. XXV)9:27

<sup>28</sup> *Memoirs*: 03.01.1892, Fasc. XXIX, p.18

<sup>29</sup> December 1902: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XV, Fasc. XXV

table sumptuously laid out, I think of the poor and soon become gripped by an ache to assuage their hunger. In the light of such reflection, can we afford to grumble?”<sup>30</sup>

### Sacrifice

- 29) “Shouldn’t Jesus reward the sacrifices made for the sake of our most lovable Spouse? Jesus...Jesus... How sweet it is to repeat His name! Sweeter still its vibrations in the unfathomable abyss of the heart! If we always love Jesus, we shall enjoy the joys of paradise even on earth.”<sup>31</sup>
- 30) “With a brave heart repeat ‘Yes’ for the love of your Spouse to whom you have consecrated your life right from the very beginning. Remember that only with sacrifices can we sanctify ourselves.”<sup>32</sup>

### Illness

- 31) “Let us visit all our sick persons and do them some service with the self-same spirit of charity that the Virgin Mother had for Elizabeth. Let us refrain from the slightest act that goes against charity and spend all our energy in serving those in need”<sup>33</sup>
- 32) “...Time is a coin with which one buys Paradise. The Seraphic Father Francis used to say, “so much good awaits me, that every pain is a delight to me”. May this maxim be yours too! Suffering is only for a day but eternal is the reward... Every morning at daybreak tell yourself: ‘I want to suffer for Jesus today.’... My little darling, sanctify yourself through your suffering, privation and seclusion... Jesus on the cross, Mary at his feet; what a noble example to be imitated!... Your agonizing torments are the treasures to sanctify you. Be a saint. I wish you to be one.”<sup>34</sup>
- 33) “Sincerely do I sympathize with you for being transferred to the isolation ward, but I wish that you were a bit generous with God. Don’t you want to be a saint? Compare your suffering with His. Remember that God’s chosen ones are formed exclusively in suffering, that the Lord communicates in the silence of one’s heart – away from the company of others. Intense is your misfortune, but greater and grander the glory and the crown that awaits you. Eternal is your reward. Courage then. Look at the Crucified, unite your pain to His and pray to Him to make you worthy of Him.”<sup>35</sup>
- 34) “Where there are sick persons, there you find heaven’s blessings... Cheer up, my daughters! Suffering is a precious gem; all emeralds with which the crown of immortality is interwoven.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> December 1902: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XV, Fasc. XXV

<sup>31</sup> 19.11.1898: Let to Sr. Germana, Let. 293, Fasc. VI – VII

<sup>32</sup> 20.02.1914: Let. to Sr. Fosca, Let. 1220, Fasc. XLI

<sup>33</sup> Undated: *Acts of Mortification for the Month of May-June 1890*, Fasc. XX

<sup>34</sup> 15.12.1894: Let. to Zenobia Baratti, Fasc. LXV

<sup>35</sup> 07.01.1895: Let. to Zenobia Baratti, Fasc. LXV

<sup>36</sup> 06.12.1897: Cir. Let. 1

- 35) “More than all the others, the sick can sanctify their Lent by often repeating ‘yes’ on their bed of Calvary, gratefully kissing the cross, gladly bearing with the lack of care and concern, being satisfied with the food and bearing in mind all the poor deprived of warmth, food, bed, company and every other comfort. How many forsaken youth die of terrible disease! How many old persons die for want of nourishment and assistance! Oh, how the poor ailing people deserve our sympathy!”<sup>37</sup>
- 36) “How did you spend the days in the hospital? Was it really a terrible ordeal? To be alone in the hospital with the superior herself ill and unable to tend you! What an agony! But hadn’t Jesus, our Celestial Spouse supplemented everything? Didn’t He sweeten your suffering? Wasn’t He speaking to your heart? Were they bringing you Holy Communion daily?”<sup>38</sup>
- 37) “See that Sr. Cleofa gets well and is a mother to the children. I feel that she is not too happy to be at Trieste and so her illness gets worse. If she has faith she will be healed and get better if she takes care of those dear infants.”<sup>39</sup>

## B. Suffering

*God uses suffering – the consequence of sin, as the very weapon by which to make atonement for sin. For in the power of Christ’s supreme sacrifice, believers may see a sacrificial value in their own sufferings in His name, for His sake, and for His cause. The people of God are never more powerful in their ministry than when they suffer and even die in their work.*

- 38) “Calm down, my darling sister! Don’t be so dismayed by the troubles, which evidently indicate God’s love for us. The cross is the sure hallmark of the elect; you’re really fortunate, Caterina. When the day is over and I find that I’ve done nothing for Jesus, I feel so sorry and I beg Jesus to give me a share in His passion... Raise your mind to heaven. There awaits the crown for your suffering.”<sup>40</sup>
- 39) “My dear Catherine, remember that one who is not insulted or maligned for Christ’s sake, cannot be called a true lover of Jesus. In the midst of your suffering fix your mind on Calvary. Can there be a scene more lamentable than that? What joy is hidden in real suffering! My heart yearns for it, knowing well that whoever is not purified by afflictions cannot enjoy on this earth union with the One who should wholly possess our heart.”<sup>41</sup>
- 40) “I wish for the rest of my days to dedicate and consecrate to Jesus alone all that I have. **I offer myself to Him as fragrant incense**, as a victim of earnest reparation, generous sacrifice and ardent love, working wholly for the glory of God and for the

<sup>37</sup> 13.02.1907: *Pious Acts for Lent* 1907, Fasc. XX

<sup>38</sup> 14.11.1912: Let. to Prisca, Let. 985, Fasc. XVI

<sup>39</sup> 15.11.1914: Let. to Sr. Giovannina, Let. 27, Fasc. LVII

<sup>40</sup> (03.03.1881: Let. to Caterina, Let. 14, Fasc. I

<sup>41</sup> 27.04.1881: Let. to Caterina, Let. 5, Fasc. I

salvation of souls. I am glad to immolate myself so that everyone would be led to the adorable Heart of Jesus.”<sup>42</sup>

- 41) “ ‘I thirst’. Jesus thirsts for souls... What do I seek after? ... How awfully is He tortured! What consolation does He get...? In my affliction to whom do I run? ... The crucified Jesus is bereft of all comforts; and would I deny Him the sacrifices that come my way? ... Jesus undergoes harrowing ordeal, but His spouse revels in bliss! ... Jesus is abandoned by all; yet His spouse relishes honour! ... He is thirsty and His spouse refuses to offer Him a drink! ... He forgives; yet His spouse nurtures rancour! ... Oh, isn’t it she who has caused Him all that torment?”<sup>43</sup>
- 42) “True love is revealed in suffering. If I have to deny myself every time, I should gloriously do so during my most serious illness, making the best use of the suffering that Jesus sends me everyday. When nature revolts against the wracking pain, when my feeble body can not the spiritual exercises, when I think of my poor health, when I experience lack of care and concern... oh then, I gaze upon Jesus on the cross, on Mary motionless at His feet... When my body writhes in pain I must repeat, “Thank you Jesus. How glad am I to suffer for you. Make me worthy to suffer and to rejoice in my sufferings”... When I think of the martyrs and missionaries, I feel ashamed of advertising my pain. To suffer quietly, without looking for sympathy from my dear ones, to hide from others my own aches and pain as if they did not exist: this is what Jesus wants me. Will there be any unwelcome pain if we cling to the crucifix?”<sup>44</sup>
- 43) “If you want to be worthy of God’s love, endure patiently the crosses and tribulations that come across your path. Surrender everything to God and He will lighten your burden.”<sup>45</sup>
- 44) “How did you spend the feast of St. Clare and the Assumption? They were the sweetest days for me. Late in the evening I was in the grip of bitter pain which became doubly sweet as we should find true joy in suffering.”<sup>46</sup>
- 45) “Let us unite our sufferings with the anguish of Mary at the foot of the cross and her merits will make up for our shortcomings. Let us join Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane and above all, with the Eucharistic Lord who suffers, groans and aches for us in this continued humiliating situation of ours. Nevertheless, let us not blame anyone but accept this affliction as ordained by the loving Providence for our own good; and we shall see everything set right sooner than we expect... Meanwhile, let us cherish this harrowing torment as a precious pearl for Paradise. During the day make frequent acts of true sacrifice, and make a gift-offering of your oblation to thank Jesus for having made you a partaker in His Passion. In fact, suffering in the

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<sup>42</sup> Christmas 1888: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXIX, p.11

<sup>43</sup> Retreat: 20<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September 1888: *Memoirs*, Fasc. LV, p.8

<sup>44</sup> 1890: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXIX, p.19

<sup>45</sup> Undated: Let. to Catherine, Let. 20, Fasc. I

<sup>46</sup> Undated: Let. to the sisters, Let. 1162, Fasc. XVIII

true sense of the word is an inestimable treasure of infinite value. Therefore, let us embrace the Cross and repeat, “To suffer, but not to die.”<sup>47</sup>

- 46) “Doesn’t the soul become refined and embellished in suffering? Isn’t suffering the bread of saints? You are fortunate to have something to offer Jesus; do not delay in presenting it to him. Give your gift immediately, wholly; otherwise it wouldn’t be accepted. Present all your thoughts, afflictions and temptations to our Blessed Mother and she will transform them all into gems of grace and glory.”<sup>48</sup>
- 47) “My heart bleeds to let you know the sacrifice that Jesus demands of you and me. The heart recoils but aren’t we the spouses of the Immaculate Lamb? Shouldn’t we immolate ourselves in our pursuit of perfection? ... Nevertheless, we must offer our sacrifices without pulling on a long face but with great joy, rather thanking Jesus for offering us an occasion to earn merits. With the Mysteries in our hearts let us make our sacrificial offering to Jesus.”<sup>49</sup>
- 48) “You shouldn’t be worried about my sudden departure. Jesus has his own purpose. I’m sure that every morning you’ll be generous to offer to the Lord of the altar the bitter sacrifice of staying there: a sacrifice that I am fully aware of and feel deep within my heart. The angels are noting it down in golden letters in the book of eternal life. How nice that you have been made worthy to suffer something for Jesus, our Love. Remember that I want you to strive for your own sanctification as well as that of the girls entrusted to your care. Yours is a noble mission and in order to have the light and strength to fulfil it, put into practice what the Monsignor preached on November 3<sup>rd</sup>.”<sup>50</sup>
- 49) “After having borne terrible suffering, abandonment and disappointment caused by all sorts of people – with which Jesus has chastened my infidelities and cleansed my spirit – there rises within me a singular yearning: “*Union with Jesus - the fruit of that love which fashions Heaven.*”
- Nothing but the eternal is of worth. Jesus is absolutely everything. Quietude is a precious gem, suffering sweet. Let nothing disturb us, or daunt us. If nature recoils at the first step, let our next move be an act of profound humility insistently repeating, “Thank you Jesus.” Let those who have been unfortunately disagreeing with it, begin today to hide along with me under the mantle of the Immaculate Mary who should be our true guide, counsellor and Mother.”<sup>51</sup>
- 50) “What is the whole world before the Lord? It is necessary to undergo a lot of suffering in order to be a saint. During this month dedicated to Mary, place on her

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<sup>47</sup> Jan. 1892: Let. to the Sisters, Fasc. 2b

<sup>48</sup> 19.01.1892: Let. to Sr. Bernardina, Let. 64, Fasc. 2b

<sup>49</sup> 22.11.1905: Let. to Sr. Imelde, Let. 803, Fasc. XIV

<sup>50</sup> Undated: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 1148, Fasc. XVIII

<sup>51</sup> 08.12.1907: Cir. Let. 30

altar the triple flowers of prayers, silence and suffering. You will be fortunate if your days are studded with crosses.”<sup>52</sup>

- 51) “I feel your anguish at your brother’s sad demise deep within my heart. I pray for you and suffer along with you. Fix your mind on Calvary, dear daughter, and embracing the Cross along with the Virgin Mother, repeat together with her, “Thy will be done!” Gather these gems thrown on your path in suffrages for your beloved brother. As an author says, ‘flowers and tears are of no use to the departed souls, but prayers and sacrifices’.”<sup>53</sup>
- 52) “I would like to erase all sorrow, all sadness, every painful memory from your heart. Would that I could encompass it within and without with that peace which is the fruit of charity, with that joy born of the soul’s intimate converse with Jesus; and with His love that is always sweet and ever faithful! Everything comes to an end; everything changes; but Jesus is always the same yesterday, today and forever...”<sup>54</sup>
- 53) “This morning the whole community including the boarders offered the Holy Mass for your dear departed. May Jesus console you in your great sorrow! Would that I could expunge your grief and pour the Magi’s joy into your languishing heart! Life is but a breath! Blessed are those who depart, while those who remain must be patient! With all my being I’ll pray before the Crib day and night imploring the Blessed Virgin to let you see those two dear souls rapt in beatific vision. You will then have the strength to say “yes” along with the Blessed Mother on Calvary. Repeat yes as often as possible and you’ll find solace. This year the bloodshed caused by the European War brings in its wake grief, tears and death. Let us pray that the saintly Pope Pius X put a stop to this appalling scourge and bring peace to this world.”<sup>55</sup>
- 54) “Just think, dearest Beniamina, you have had the consolation of seeing your dear ones pass away. All these years you have enjoyed their company, a boon not granted to many others. Let your thoughts fly to that devastated region in Marsica. Look at those fifty villages razed to the ground. Hear the lament of those widows searching for their husbands. Hearken to the cries of the children looking for their mothers. Listen to the heart-rending groans of the injured. Walk along the roads lined with corpses and prowling dogs. Watch the people fleeing for their lives but are being swallowed by the earth into its crater. People, towns and possessions vanished in the twinkling of an eye! The half-naked survivors will soon die of hunger, cold and snow if they aren’t sheltered by the charity of others. O my beloved daughter, if you can compare your loss to the terrible tragedy of those unfortunate Marsicans, you’ll be able to find a great solace in your grief.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> 10.05.1910: Let. to Angela, Let. 929, Fasc. XVI

<sup>53</sup> 20.02.1912: Let to Sr. Magdalene, Let. 25, Fasc. LVII

<sup>54</sup> 02.06.1913: Let. to the Dean of Serrone, Let. 30, Fasc. LXIX

<sup>55</sup> 07.01.1915: Let. to a Noble Lady, Let. 144, Fasc. XLVI

<sup>56</sup> 09.02.1915: Let to Sr. Beniamina, Let. 1256, Scr. 46, p. 16-17

## Transfer

- 55) “Hosannas are followed by the cry, ‘crucify Him’; the glory of Tabor is succeeded by Calvary erected by those very persons who had earlier acclaimed the Messiah. How happy would I be not to go back there at all! But certainly I’m ready to return there, recharged by the idea of continual sacrifice.”<sup>57</sup>
- 56) “Entrusting my journey and its aim and objective to the Virgin Mother, I left Forli in the company of Sr. Maria, Angela and Veronica. All through the way I strove to purify my intentions more and more and to render myself worthy of the Lord’s work... I wanted nothing but Jesus and the fulfillment of His will. I wanted to be rid of everything that smacked of self. I felt like someone who had to do something in an alien land, determined to remain a stranger throughout the task and to leave the place as soon as it was performed with the maximum solicitude.”<sup>58</sup>
- 57) “It is one and the same to me whether I stay here or am sent elsewhere. Places make no difference to me. Nothing can bring me happiness until I know that wherever I am transferred, it is the very place where Jesus wants me to be.”<sup>59</sup>
- 58) “For the sake of the souls in Purgatory I beg you, my sisters, not to pressurize me, nor to approach a third party to forward an appeal to me, because it is for the common good and not for my pastime that I ask for one or the other sister. I can’t express my deep distress when some sisters turn to a Major Superior entreating him to ask me for the very thing that I have already refused them. Jesus alone knows my anguish at such a moment. You know well my generous nature and how much it costs me to deny a sister her request. Hence, try to co-operate and make my task easier.”<sup>60</sup>
- 59) “I’m going through a terrible ordeal due to the new foundations and hospitals, but I have warmly welcomed them for your sake – for the good of the young members who will come after us oldsters. However, it is essential that every member contributes her share and helps me, each shouldering the work of four persons. The difficulties are only for a short while, but the resulting good is forever.”<sup>61</sup>

## Travel

- 60) “It is desirable that we travel second class; sisters are also permitted to travel in third class compartment provided that there is no unbecoming crowd. We should avoid travelling by stagecoach wherein we have to rub shoulders with people of all sorts. Better to spend a bit more on the fare in order to preserve the dignity of the habit. Providence will never fail us.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Undated: Let. to Catherine, Let. 131, Fasc. III

<sup>58</sup> 05.12.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXIX, p.29

<sup>59</sup> Corpus Christi Eve, 1894: Let. to Bp. Svampa, Fasc. 70

<sup>60</sup> 12.11.1916: Let. to Sr. Agnesina, Let. 33, Fasc. LVII

<sup>61</sup> 30.12.1916: Let. to the Sisters at Bagno, Let. 34, Fasc. LVII

<sup>62</sup> 1902: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXVII, Fasc. XXV

- 61) “On May 28<sup>th</sup>, I explained to the boarders the difference between going on a **pilgrimage** and an outing and how to get ready for the former. To be united in the spirit with all the pilgrims, to make up for our coldness during the month of May with a befitting pilgrimage, to undertake it in the spirit of penance, expiation and thanksgiving. To pray for the others is to pray for oneself. I told everyone to keep general and particular intentions for the pilgrimage: health for the ailing, good results at the public examination, our parents, our near and dear ones, our personal needs etc.”<sup>63</sup>
- 62) “Jesus went about with his disciples in Jerusalem. So too the companions of my journey will be sanctified if I keep my Divine Master before my eyes. God’s love flows constantly, unbroken by time or place or circumstances. It always grows and expands. Therefore, if my inner life is nurtured by God, my exterior will be nothing but its sheer reflection.”<sup>64</sup>
- 63) “Your ‘alms-seeking trips’ should be a means to inculcate in you the mendicant spirit and on your return to concentrate on living with God alone. May modesty be your guide and your deportment edifying to all! Take care that you do not omit your exercises of piety, spiritual communion etc. Often recite some ejaculations and walk in the presence of Jesus. May each step of yours be an act of reparation and love! In short, make your journey in the spirit of sacrifice.”<sup>65</sup>
- 64) “Pain is a good teacher of life and in my suffering I have understood various things that Jesus wants of us:
1. Not to rush to one’s own family, thus denying oneself the satisfaction of assisting the parents. More than our presence, our sacrifice will be of more benefit to them. For our own good we should be glad to be sick in the convent than healthy out in the world. In case anybody needs a change of air, residing in any of our convents situated in the varying climatic regions will be more beneficial than one’s own native air. If we wish to be true religious, we should look upon the house of God as our only home.
  2. All unnecessary travels must be avoided. It is forbidden to go from one convent to the other, or to the neighbouring cities or places without written permission.
  3. Our dealings should be discreet, our demeanour sober, serious and dignified. In general we are gentle in our dealings; people like us for our cordial relationships. Hence, be on guard, for our movements are closely watched...In the past, in the simplicity of our hearts there was refreshing naivety and cordiality. It would be wonderful if such naïve candour finds its echo in the whole world. But alas, the corruption that sweeps across the society does not know how to appreciate sublime things! Therefore, with our reserved and mature demeanour let us get rid of whatever has soured our amiability.
  4. Do not ask me for the impossible; there isn’t anything more painful than it. I cannot immediately create a sister to substitute those who fall ill in any convent...You should understand that when members are distributed, my conscience always pricks me to dismember the Badia in order to satisfy your

<sup>63</sup> 30.05.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX, p.15

<sup>64</sup> March 1892, *Memoirs: ‘My Duty as a Principal’*, Fasc. XXIX

<sup>65</sup> 10.06.1893: Let. to Orsolina, Let. 103, Fasc III

request. But henceforth, I cannot do so. The local superiors are kindly requested to instil in the young the idea that there should be at least four older members with me for the formation and governance of the Institute...<sup>66</sup>

### **Providence**

*Divine providence is God's action in the continuation of His role as Creator. He imposes His own purpose on the world and overrules, accompanies, maintains and preserves it on its course with a view to the fulfillment of this purpose. The task of Providence is the shaping of natural historical events in such a way that the purpose is fulfilled.*

*God is the one who in fatherly providence cares for men and women. He disregards the righteousness or unrighteousness of the human recipients as He gives the good things of creation (Ps. 145: 9, 15-16, Mt. 5:45). He feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field (Mt. 6: 26f). On the other hand, people can be struck down by disease and accident, by poverty and bereavement, by disappointment and disaster. Yet, they can all be blessings; there is the smiling face of God behind the stark drought or devastating earthquake or the raging tsunami.*

*The problems of evil, suffering, or events even in the lives of the just may seem to show little sign of the beneficent power of God. However, had humans chosen to obey God, they could have even controlled natural evils, quite apart from prevention of all the monstrous injustice and carnage of history.*

*God's providence is neither impersonal fate nor a determination of every event. Human freedom and natural processes have real existence within divine providence. The dealings of God are not always evident on the surface, but there is always a purpose of grace which time or eternity will reveal. We can expect to suffer under the fatherly providence of God (Heb. 12: 3-13). For under God's providence the vicissitudes of life serve the good of others as well as our own good, and the true boasting of the Christian is in God's strength, not in exemption from affliction but in deliverance and triumph through it (2 Cor. 11: 23 ff). Hence we are to view our life with the eyes of faith: "Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning" (Ps. 30: 5)*

65) "I have boundless faith in Divine Providence on which our Institute is founded; and I must say, glory be to God, it has never failed me."<sup>67</sup>

66) "I seek Jesus, his glory and he will take care of me. This sweet trust in Providence is so unshakable that I would not only not give it up, but also find great comfort in it, eager that the Institute is founded on the nakedness of the cross."<sup>68</sup>

67) "Carry on trusting in Providence and Jesus will never fail to help you. Difficulties are inevitable in all God's works, which should be overcome with unbounded faith in the loving Divine Providence."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> 14.12.1906: Cir Let. 27

<sup>67</sup> 05.03.1898: Let to Cardinal Parocchi, Let. 26, Fasc. 58

<sup>68</sup> 05.02.1898: Let. to Bp. Vespignani, Fasc. XXX

<sup>69</sup> 13.03.1897: Let. to Mr. Grilli of Cesenatico, Let. 20, Fasc. LXVIII

68) *“My Jesus, have mercy on me! Eradicate, strip away pitilessly from my heart whatever is not Yours. In my utter darkness, I offer my life to You so that it may be illumined. By Your mercy alone, may I not fail even for a moment in my complete abandonment to Your Providence! I rejoice that the creatures may have just abandoned me, so that I may experience Your Divine assistance, and cry out to you: ‘Jesus, I trust in You alone, help me’ ... You always come to my aid.”*<sup>70</sup>

69) “The bank of providence never fails”.<sup>71</sup>

70) “In the lives of the saints we read about astounding things worked by Divine Providence. For example, the miraculous feeding of the friars during the Chapter of Mats. Would such a miracle have occurred, had our Seraphic Father St. Francis listened to St. Dominic and sent some Friars to stock provisions for that packed throng and got into debt as we do? Would the half loaf of bread have multiplied at the command of St. Clare had she sent the sister to buy bread from the bakery? It was the same with St. Theresa, St. Chantal and others. I have read that God tries the faith of some communities subjecting them to utter penury on certain days. Could we have read about such God’s providential care, had these persons been running into debts like us? Shouldn’t we walk in the footsteps of the saints? If we do not trust in the providence, our vowed life will be of poor quality and there would hardly be anything to distinguish us from lay persons. We hear people say that there are no more saints as of old. I do believe it. There are no saints because the religious are leading a worldly life.

Let us begin during these novena days to live as religious, aiming at acquiring virtues one at a time. Let the first virtue be trust in God, living from hand to mouth, serving and loving our Celestial Spouse with all our being, certain that He will provide for us and happy if He leaves us in want of something, so that we can imitate His life in absolute poverty... Appeal to the benefactors to come to your aid. You shouldn’t be ashamed to beg for alms as the Creator of heaven and earth did, but **never run into debt** –not even of a penny. I keep repeating often, “If a sister falls ill and I have nothing with me, how do I meet her needs?” Do not be afraid, run to the tabernacle; He will tell you whom to request and you will soon be heard. A superior of one of our convents had a sister seriously ill and there was not a penny in the house. She wept and prayed. On her way back from Mass, a lady gave her a lira and sometime later another presented her 50 cents. Providence indeed!”<sup>72</sup>

71) “The miracle of providence is repeated here at the Mother House everyday... Yes, it is true that Jesus comes to the aid of those who trust in Him alone. In those dire moments that you know well, I tell Jesus, “Lo, provide for your spouses!”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> 1900: Memoirs, Fasc. XXXII

<sup>71</sup> 26.10.1899: Let. to Veronica, Let. 332, Fasc. VIII– IX

<sup>72</sup> 19.03.1901: Cir. Let. 9

<sup>73</sup> 18.12.1905: Let. to the Sisters at Trieste Let. 807, Fasc. XIV

## CHAPTER II

### Our Prayer Life

*“Every vocation to consecrated life is born in contemplation, from moments of intense communion and from a deep relationship of friendship with Christ.” An authentic spiritual life requires that each religious regularly dedicate everyday, appropriate times to enter deeply into silent conversation with God, discern God’s will and receive enlightenment to continue on the daily journey. Like our human relationships, our God relationship needs time, attention, effort and love, if it is to develop and grow.*

*“The call of holiness can be cultivated only in the silence of adoration before the infinite transcendence of God. This involves great fidelity to liturgical and personal prayer, to periods devoted to mental prayer and to contemplation, to Eucharistic adoration, to recollection and to spiritual exercises.” (Cfr. VC. 38)*

*The root paradigm for our prayer life is Jesus of Nazareth. Though He lived in intimate, close union with the Father during His earthly sojourn discerning and obeying God’s will, He often retired into some solitary place to receive from Him new strength for His mission in the world. Our Seraphic Father Francis has left us his own vibrant example of prayer life. He was prayer personified; prayer was his lifeline with the Father, and God’s presence pervaded every aspect of his life. In fact his very life was a prayer; “he was not so much praying as becoming totally prayer.” (2 Cel. 95)*

*Prayer to a religious is much more than theoretical thinking about God, or simply weaving together many words. It is a loving staying with God. It is to **“Gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him, as you desire to imitate Him.”** (2<sup>nd</sup> Let. Ag. 19) It is the prayer of the heart: a loving look at God. To fix one’s gaze upon Christ is to rest in His presence, looking at Him not with one’s eyes, but with one’s heart. Gaze upon Jesus and be gripped by the tenderness of His love, the depth of His mercy. Gaze upon Him with a heart welling up with gratitude for the countless blessings one has received and continues to receive from him daily. Consider God’s love, unveiled in the self-emptying abasement of Christ in His Incarnation.*

*“Your Spouse, though more beautiful than the children of men, became for your salvation, the lowest of men, despised, struck, scourged untold times throughout His whole body, and then died amid sufferings of the Cross.” (2<sup>nd</sup> Let. Ag. 20)*

***Contemplate** the love of “the Lord of heaven and earth who is laid in a manger”, who “chose to appear despised, needy and poor in this world”, who “suffered on the wood of the cross and died thereon the most shameful kind of death”. To contemplate God’s love is to be invaded by Love enabling Him to take complete possession of us. It is to welcome God into our lives, offering Him a heart cleansed of all the “works of the flesh”.*

*Only a heart that is capable of loving God as Francis did, can pour itself out in continued, uninterrupted prayer like the cardiac muscles that never tire of beating continuously.*

***Imitate Christ:** As one begins to walk the path of “praying without ceasing”, God begins to free us of all that holds us captive (Gal. 5: 19-21) and draws us completely into Trinitarian life of His eternal love.*

*“Look upon that Mirror each day and continually study your face within it, so that you may adorn yourself within and without with the flowers and garments of all the virtues” (4<sup>th</sup> Let. Ag. 14-17)*

*Gazing at the Mirror is a painful exercise geared towards the realization of our emptiness, the crippling effect of sin and the need for God at every turn. An exercise that impels us to undertake the journey of self-emptying, creating an empty space which can be filled by God alone.*

*“Place your mind, soul and heart in the figure of the divine substance and transform your whole being into the image of the Godhead itself through contemplation.” (Cf. 3<sup>rd</sup> Let. Ag.: 12-13)*

*Such transformation can be brought about solely by continuous prayer of reflection and contemplation. If we are to have a rich interior life, it is essential to prioritize our God relationship by setting aside special times, places and occasions for intimate conversation with God.*

*We should remember, however, that our prayer and activities are not compartmentalized entities; they interact in a circular mode – each flowing into the other. Union with God is not necessarily interrupted when one devotes oneself, according to God’s will, to work and to care of one’s neighbour. We must communicate to others our experience of God’s love and mercy. In fact, genuine prayer stirs up an ardent charity which moves the person to collaborate in the mission of the Church. The joys and sorrows of the world outside must seep into our hearts and colour our relationship with God, just as our action should be tinged with our contemplation. Hence the need to develop a contemplative attitude towards life in general, if we are to nurture and sustain a rich healthy inner life. “Whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10: 31). So we are to “work faithfully and devotedly for the common good without extinguishing the spirit of prayer and devotion to which all external activities must be subordinated” (Cf. Rule VII: 1-2).*

#### **A. The Eucharist**

*The centrality of the Eucharist in the life of Mother Seraphina needs no elaboration. She believed whole-heartedly what the Council of Trent taught namely, that the Eucharist – the sacramental perpetuation of Christ’s passion, death and Resurrection – is the supreme sacrifice of adoration, thanksgiving, atonement and petition. “Oh, who can grasp even a shadow of the preciousness of this ineffable Mystery! Foolish is the person who doesn’t bother about such a priceless treasure!” (Practical Guide, Ch. II)*

*Seraphina drew from the Eucharist nourishment for her soul and the strength and power to carry out her arduous mission. She ardently desired to obtain daily the “fruits of the Mass”, participating in it with great devotion, fervour, personal holiness, purity and above all, with the faith and love of the Blessed Virgin and Magdalene at Calvary as they witnessed the harrowing scene of Christ’s death on the cross. In fact, she not only was consumed by a burning desire to participate daily in the Holy Mass, but also to immolate herself to God in union with Christ and to offer prayers of petition for her sisters, students, for the conversion of sinners and the Non-Christians, the souls in Purgatory, those in the grip of freemasonry and the rising political and social ideologies that undermined the Catholic faith in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, et al.*

Therefore, Seraphina urged her sisters to unite themselves daily with the Sacrificial Victim in the Eucharist, offer themselves along with the Sacramental species, intercede for a variety of persons in need of God's mercy, so that they may be purified, receive forgiveness of sins and apply to themselves and to others the merits of redemption won by Christ in His sacrifice on the cross.

To Seraphina there was no part of the Eucharistic sacrifice that was less important even though the consecration is its pivot. "Because every ritual, every act comprises a Mystery, a sentiment, a prayer." Hence, she encouraged her sisters to follow every part "with the contrition of Magdalene, the purity of St. John and the love of the Virgin Mary", as "every action has a profound meaning." To conclude

*"We should remember that the holy sacrifice of the Mass is the unique act of worship which gives to God the glory that is due to Him, which renders Him thanks for His innumerable blessings, which expiates our sins, and which pleads for and obtains for us divine favours"... Hence, "one should participate in the Holy Mass - the sacrifice par excellence - everyday except for reasons of health or assistance to the sick, because from no other act of worship do we draw so much grace as from it." (Practical Guide, Ch. II)*

1. "The Eucharist is the **compendium of our faith**, for it contains Jesus its author and victim. In it there is the incarnation, passion, death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus. In other words, it comprises of all that He is and all that He did for our redemption.

The Eucharist is the **basis of our hope** because through His self-gifting in the Eucharist, Jesus gifts us His grace, applies His merits to us and clothes us in His virtues by means of which we are able to attain eternal life.

The Eucharist is the **flame of our charity** for the God who imprisons Himself for love stirs us to love Him and communicating Himself to us, enkindles in our hearts the fire of Divine love. This in essence is charity."<sup>74</sup>

2. "Jesus dwelling on our altars as a Victim, makes a continuous immolation of Himself to His Eternal Father; and it can be said that He renews His sacrifice on the Cross not only in the Holy Mass, but every moment of His sacramental presence among us...

For whom does He immolate Himself? For whom does He make reparation? For all the human being created by Him, and whom He has made His brethren. Not being content with his hidden life of thirty years, or having evangelised the world with His teaching for three years, or dying on the cross shedding His precious blood even to the last drop, Jesus willed to remain with us, giving us His flesh and blood as our food in the infinite charity of His most loving heart."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Undated, Memoirs: Fasc.LXVIII, p.4-5

<sup>75</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Chapter XIV,

Fasc. XXIV

3. “Neither creatures, nor places where the Eucharistic Jesus is not present, can satisfy you. I feel strongly this emptiness which pulls me away from the creatures and makes me yearn for Jesus, the Eucharistic Lord.”<sup>76</sup>

4. “Oh that we knew the gift of God! Would that we knew the gift of the Eucharist...”<sup>4</sup>

5. “I’ll always remember the Mass celebrated by Mgr. Polloni on 30<sup>th</sup> March 1897...You were ministering through him O Jesus, for it was you who dazzled my mind with a brilliance, flooded me with joy and rained down on me a shower of sweet nectar... Perhaps you wanted me to have a taste of heaven in order to prepare and strengthen my soul against the bitter ordeal in store for me.

I’m ready to renounce everything than cause you the slightest offence: ready to die a thousand times than sully my soul. Alas, I have hurt you a lot in the past! But you pursued me when I fled from you. You have borne with me when I offended you. And when I, unfaithful as I am, refused to look at you, you stunned my mind with your refulgence.

During the Mass I felt my heart break into smithereens with contrition, confusion and love. The flame of charity that you poured into the celebrant converted the chapel into Calvary. Even the vaulted ceiling seemed to be wonder-struck at the sight of a God who dies. Clinging to the Cross along with the Virgin Mother, Magdalene and John I persistently invoked a drop of your blood to fall on me, ... to cleanse me from all my sins... and I saw the altar turning red with the precious fluid.

You alone know what I saw in that moment, the vision that enveloped my whole being like a mysterious veil that screens one off from other creatures and makes her see the Creator... You know as well the grace you worked in me (during the Sacrament of Reconciliation)... I felt myself being bathed in a brilliant light, my whole being afire with heavenly charity, flooded with a peace beyond all understanding, suffused with fresh joy and filled with the sweetest celestial nectar that fell on me like invisible dew drenching every fibre of my being.

Had you continued to talk to me (through the priest), I would’ve screamed, “Oh, top for heaven’s sake, or expand my heart, for I cannot bear it anymore! **O Jesus! Jesus! to atone, to love...** Convert these eyes of mine into two fountains of tears so that I may weep over your love and over my sins day and night...”<sup>5</sup>

6. “Jesus Christ who willed to be born in a stable, to dwell in a carpenter’s workroom and to die on the rugged wood of the cross, chose a beautiful cenacle – large and well-decked, to institute the Mysteries. He left Himself to us on that same night when one betrayed Him, another denied Him and the rest abandoned Him...”<sup>6</sup>

7. “In the presence of the august Trinity I pledge in perpetuity all the treasures of merit, all my acts of expiation, all the graces of the Sacred Mysteries and even the suffrages that will be offered for my soul after my death, for the souls in purgatory, willing to

<sup>76</sup> 19.07. 1896: Let. to Srs. Bernardina & Germana, Let. 211, Fasc. V

<sup>4</sup> 29.07.1897: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p.22

<sup>5</sup> 31.03.1897: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p.16 - 18

<sup>6</sup> 08.06.1898: Cir. Let. 4

cede them wholly into the hands of my heavenly Mother, so that through the angels, she may dispense them according to God's will. Amen.”<sup>7</sup>

8. “I am happy about your devotional practices. Persevere in them and Jesus will bless your exhausting journeys, which you should undertake in the spirit of pilgrimage. Pray without ceasing and may your presence be an inspiration for the people to love God. Speak to them about the Virgin, the Guardian Angel etc. Fix your heart on Jesus in the desert.”<sup>8</sup>
9. ... *A complete immolation of ourselves to Jesus together with the Eucharistic Lord, a continuous reparation, an indefatigable apostolate, should be the characteristics of our life.*”<sup>9</sup>

### **Holy Communion**

Communion with the Divine has been the goal of every human being right from time immemorial. For God has placed in human hearts a yearning for communion with Him: a “hunger” which God alone can satisfy. He desires to be fully united with us – to become one with us – so that all of God and all of us can be bound together in a lasting love. “Therefore, hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, so that He who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally.” So exhorts Francis in his *Letter to the Entire Order*.

In the consciousness of the primitive man, he could partake of divine strength and enter into communion with gods by his participation in the sacrificial gifts. Jesus promises eternal life to all “who feed on Him” (Jn 6:57) and offers Himself as our nourishment. For in the Sacred Species the totality of Christ is present: His flesh and blood, body and soul, humanity and divinity. In the Eucharistic Bread we are transformed into His life as Jesus dwells in our inmost being; He breathes in us, speaks in us and lives in us. This is the very paradigm of Eucharistic Life that Mother Seraphina wished to live. In her unquenchable hunger for the Food of Life, she exclaims, “My God, how could I live without receiving Thee even for a single day!”

In an age where daily communion was not permitted<sup>10</sup>, Seraphina not only yearned to receive Jesus everyday but also inculcated in the candidates and boarders an ardent longing for frequent reception of the Eucharist. When the authorities limited Holy Communion to thrice a week for the boarders, Seraphina's anguish knew no bounds. “What an emptiness without Jesus! How to live without Life!” Thus she noted down in her Memoirs on May 2, 1891.

In the initial stages, the community at Palagano had to endure a lot of privations and hardships. But to Seraphina those deprivations were like water off the duck's back;

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<sup>7</sup> 02.11.1897: Let. 15, Fasc. LVI

<sup>8</sup> 04.03.1903: Let. to Srs. Josephina & Michelina, Let. 586, Fasc. XII

<sup>9</sup> Constitution 1915, Art. 1

<sup>10</sup> \* The religious had to wait for the decree Tridentina Synodus of December 20, 1905, wherein Pope Pius X advised daily Holy Communion.

what cost her the most was the absence of Jesus in their tabernacle, for the Sacred Host was not reserved in their chapel.

“Oh, would that I knew what Paradise Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is! Would that everyone were penetrated by so great a truth that for a religious the Blessed Sacrament is the be-all and end-all!” (27.03.1881)

Seraphina exhorted her sisters to make frequent Spiritual Communion, especially on those days when they are unable to receive it sacramentally\*, and to cultivate an ardent desire for the Eucharist. She also urged them to prepare themselves for the reception of the Sacrament with remote and proximal preparation, “stirring up our love with spontaneous acts of faith, hope and love”, which fly “like darts from our hearts and pierce the heart of Jesus.” Throughout the day one is expected to make for the Celestial Lover a garland of one’s daily routine activities. Nor should one “fritter away the precious moments of Holy Communion” in worthless distractions. For it is the best of time for communing with the divine Bridegroom: the most opportune time to ask for favours when Jesus will not turn a deaf ear to any of our petitions. Seraphina gives us a long list of persons to pray for – from the Pope - to the missionaries - to the world at large.

10. “Holy Communion is the life of our hearts, the heart of our lives. What will this earth be without Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? Just as food nourishes our body, the only true nourishment for our soul is the Eucharist. Whoever partakes of this heavenly meal with due disposition, will draw from it the strength to overcome her passions, the grace to grow in virtues and to detach herself from earthly affairs, so that she could be united with Jesus, the most endearing Lover who knocks at our hearts to enter and make His dwelling place therein. Oh, how blessed would we be, if the promise of the Saviour is fulfilled in us: “Whoever loves me will keep my word and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him” (Jn. 15:23)! Undoubtedly, it can be effected through Holy Communion, which transforms the earthly person into a spiritual being, as St. Augustine attests in the tenth chapter of the seventh book of his ‘*Confession*’... Oh, the grandeur of God’s love for His creatures! Who can resist His exquisiteness! Like a thirsty deer, let us run to this wholesome spring...Let us pray to the Virgin, our Seraphic Father, the Guardian Angel, our protectors and all the saints in heaven to cover our unworthiness with their merits. Let us beg all the fervent persons on this earth to make us sharers in their preparation and ardent thanksgiving. Half the day is to be spent in thanksgiving and the other half in preparation for the next Communion. All through the day, let us remember that we carry the Sacred Mysteries within us. Such a thought will give us strength to overcome our evil inclinations and to practice virtue to a heroic degree, provided it is accompanied by acts of love so well expressed in ejaculatory prayers, which are like darts that fly from our hearts, pierce the Heart of Jesus, and return to us tempered anew in the furnace of Divine Love.

An efficacious means to remember that we have received the Mysteries is Spiritual Communion which consists in a vibrant desire to welcome the Eucharistic

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\* The religious had to wait for the decree Tridentina Synodus of December 20, 1905, wherein Pope Pius X advised daily Holy Communion.

Jesus into your Heart and to speak to Him as if you have really received Him. Whoever has tasted this heavenly food, however satiated she might be, will always yearn to relish it. Oh what marvel! Satiety that begets appetite!

When we receive Jesus into our hearts, for God's sake do not leave Him alone. Paradise is within us, and we can get whatever we wish for ourselves and for others. Let us recommend to Jesus the concerns of the Church, the Holy Father, the Bishops, our Order, the ecclesiastical Superiors, our religious Superiors, the priests, heretics, the sinners, the Christians who live a scandalous life, the missionaries, the girls entrusted to our care, the souls in purgatory and whomsoever we are inspired to pray for. St. Teresa of Avila exhorts her daughters: "Don't lose so good an occasion as the hour after receiving Holy Communion for conversing with Jesus. Should it happen that your duty calls you elsewhere, leave your soul with the Lord. But if you let your mind wander the moment He enters your heart, or take no account of the fact that He is within you, how can He reveal Himself to you? I repeat the moments that follow Holy Communion are infinitely precious; it is then that the Divine Master is particularly pleased to teach us. Let us listen to Him, kiss His feet and beseech Him never to depart from us... O my beloved daughters, when you have received the living person of Jesus Christ in the most Holy Eucharist, try to close the eyes of the body and open those of the soul and contemplate Him in the centre of your heart." (*The Way of Perfection*, Ch. 34) If you strive to keep yourself so pure as to be granted the grace to partake of this heavenly banquet often, Jesus will make Himself known to you in proportion to your longing for Him. The more you yearn for Him, the more mist will be lifted, enabling you to discover Him fully".<sup>11</sup>

11. "During Holy Communion yesterday morning, I promised Jesus to do my best to acquire that equanimity which enables one to have a pleasant disposition and perfect charity, to foster interior silence, to examine myself every hour, to cling to the crucifix without being disheartened by my failures, to impose a penance on me while invoking the blood of redemption on my head. To mark in my diary the number of times I failed to keep my resolutions and to begin anew with greater alacrity, sustained by my faithful angel and under the guidance of Mary our tenderest mother, imploring the Mysteries day and night for a complete victory... You also should follow this suggestion, and if all of you or anyone already possess this virtue, remember that there is no good that cannot be improved upon. Therefore, wholeheartedly devote yourself to attain the summit of perfection. And whenever we write, let us speak of our promise, this effort, to encourage each other.... And we shall enjoy Paradise on earth"<sup>75</sup>
12. "Absolutely tangible was the transformation of the body and blood of Jesus in me... a feeling that I've never before experienced ... Oh what a lovely experience! What a heavenly rapture! ... My heart nearly burst out of my chest. O Jesus, broaden my mind so that I may understand you, enlarge my heart so that I may love you ever more!"<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Ch. II Fasc. XXIV

1. <sup>75</sup> 02.01.1903: Cir. Let. 13, Fasc. XXVIII

<sup>12</sup> 02.04.1897: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p.19

13. “I believe, I hope, I love! Unforgettable Holy Communion! Jesus takes complete possession of our heart and mind! The soul embraced by Jesus belongs to God alone.”<sup>13</sup>
14. “The Eucharistic Jesus is the compendium of our faith, the basis of our hope, the flame of our charity. Jesus who gives Himself to us in Holy Communion! Oh if we had true faith in that fortunate moment, we could see Jesus with the mind’s eye just as the saints in Paradise see Him! Do you wish to see Him? Be very humble. True humility will lead you to faith and faith will enable you to have the vision of Jesus, living and true as He is in heaven. Oh unending joy! No, no, my sufferings are not worth mentioning at all, for I yearn for Him with every fibre of my heart.”<sup>14</sup>
15. “Get ready for the ‘food of the Angels’ with pure hands and fervent hearts. Offer yourselves as perfect holocaust to the Lamb who feeds among the lilies. Keep yourself always in the state of grace through the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Hate sin as the greatest evil on this earth and dedicate yourselves wholly to God in the springtime of your life.”<sup>15</sup>
16. “Had Peter remembered of having received Jesus into his heart, he would never have denied Him. Remember throughout the day of having welcomed Jesus into your hearts. Such a remembrance sweetens my pain, mellows the abandonment of creatures – real or imagined, relieves my fatigue and lightens my duty. I carry the Mystery and because of it I am enabled to be impartial with everyone, gentle towards those who hurt me, happy and content in prosperity just as in adversity, gathering whatever comes my way as authentic thanksgiving or in preparation for receiving the Mysteries. I carry the Mysteries! And carrying them I contemplate them ecstatically with Magdalene who absorbed in the Highest Good, loves Him and is loved in return; or like John who leaning on the Divine Master’s breast listens to His words. Like the prodigal son I narrate to Him my faults and kiss His holy feet, bathing them with my tears and imploring Him to cleanse and purify me with His touch...”

Jesus within us! O what Paradise! An eternity of thanksgiving is required for a single communion. But how is it my daughters that we are ever the same today as we were yesterday? Because we do not comprehend the immense gift of the Eucharist, and we do not grasp its grandeur since we do not meditate on it, engrossed as we are in the fleeting things of this world.

In Holy Communion, Jesus enriches us with His virtues and merits and bestows all graces on us. But, why don’t we receive them? ... Oh, the answer is clear... It is because we do not thank Him, or love Him with His own heartbeat. He is within us and we in Him. Don’t we then possess His charity, His meekness, et al? Oh my daughters, may your proximate preparation be great faith, sincere humility and ardent love. Then you will be able to enjoy the desired effects.”<sup>16</sup>

17. “Tomorrow is the feast of St. Agatha, the dear little virgin who gave her life for Jesus. May you be filled with the spirit of this dear heroine of faith! Tomorrow morning when you receive Holy Communion, may Jesus your Spouse inspire you to make Him a self-gift of yourself, renewing your solemn vows and living a life wholly for Him alone.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> 02.04.1898: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p.31

<sup>14</sup> 21.06.1898: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 283, Fasc. VI – VII

<sup>15</sup> 18.06.1881: Let. to the students, Let. 21, Fasc. I

<sup>16</sup> 08.06.1898: Cir. Let. 4

<sup>17</sup> 04.02.1900: Let. to Sr. Agatha, Let. 354, Fasc. VIII – IX

18. “During this year we must truly strive to become holy because time passes by, never to return. Yesterday morning during Holy Communion, I promised Jesus to do my best to acquire that equanimity which enables one to have a pleasant disposition and perfect charity. To foster interior silence, to examine myself every hour, to cling to the crucifix without being disheartened by my failings, to impose a penance on me while invoking the blood of redemption on my head. To mark in my diary the number of times I failed to keep my resolutions and to begin anew with greater alacrity, sustained by my faithful angel and under the guidance of our tenderest Mother Mary, imploring the Mysteries day and night for a complete victory.

You also, my sisters, make the same resolution and if all or some of you already possess such a beautiful virtue, remember that there is no good that cannot be bettered... Therefore, let us whole-heartedly devote ourselves to reach the height of perfection and whenever we write to each other let us speak of our resolution, our pursuit of holiness in order to encourage one another... We shall then enjoy heaven on earth.”<sup>18</sup>

19. “This morning I wrote to the Vatican to grant us the grace to receive Holy Communion everyday. I am sure of getting the permission. Hence, as you get this letter, you can begin the reception of the Sacrament daily.”<sup>19</sup>

#### **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**

*Rendering public worship to the Blessed Sacrament is a tradition that dates back to the eleventh century when the Neo-Manichaean heresies like the Albigenses, Waldenses, Cathari, Humiliati et al undermined the faith of the Catholics. A true daughter of St. Francis and St. Clare – the saint of the Eucharist, Seraphina prized the moments spent before the tabernacle, praising and adoring Jesus in this ineffable sacrament of Love. For her “the adoration of the Holy Mysteries was the natural need of her heart.” She was not only enamoured of the Eucharistic Jesus, but did all in her power to instill in her sisters, students and the people in the parish a gripping awareness of Christ’s powerful presence in the tabernacle.*

*Seraphina appealed to her sisters, novices and postulants to value the priceless treasure of having Jesus with us day in, day out, to spend time with Him in silent adoration and to find meaning and fulfillment to their lives by growing in intimacy and friendship with Him.*

*The Holy Hour - gradually developed as a regular feature of the horarium of the CFMSS, became an inexhaustible source of vitality, enlightenment, renewal and holiness not only for Seraphina but also for all those sisters initially formed by her, especially the pioneer missionaries. Another feature was the **Thursday vigil**, introduced on March 12, 1896 and held specifically as an act of reparation for the sins, negligence, insults, blasphemies and sacrileges committed against the Sacrament of Love by men and women, in particular the consecrated persons.*

*“Oh, in the silence of the night, how sweetly ascends the prayers and sighs to the heart of God. They bring peace to the world, comfort to the afflicted and conversion to the sinners.” (Practical Guide, Ch. IV)*

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<sup>18</sup> 02.01.1903: Cir. Let. 13

<sup>19</sup> 19.04.1913: Let. to Sr. Geltrude, Let. 1240, Fasc. XL

Seraphina wants the CFMSS to be distinguished by their ardent and vibrant love for the Eucharistic Lord. Therefore, to quote Pope John Paul II, “How can we not feel a renewed yearning to spend time in spiritual converse, in silent adoration, in heartfelt love before Christ present in the Most Holy Sacrament? How often have I experienced this, and drawn from it strength, consolation and support!” (Ecc. Euch. 25)

20. “Homage to Jesus in the Eucharist should be a devotion closest to the heart of the novice: the God of love who sacrifices Himself on our altars, who encloses Himself in our tabernacles and who gives Himself to us as our food. The rays emanating from the spotless Host converge on those who ask for light, to set on fire those who ask for love.”<sup>20</sup>
21. “If the hallmark and emblem of our Institute is the devotion to the Most Blessed Sacrament, I would like to see this God of Love exposed everyday and all honour and glory paid to Him, because to me the adoration of the Holy Mysteries is an innate need of the heart. To enjoy on earth the delights of paradise - with the sole difference that here we contemplate Him under a thick cloud, whereas in paradise in the fullness of His glory. When faith is vibrant, when our mind dazzles with light, when the heart is pierced by darts of heavenly gifts, and when His glory is seen beyond the darkness, one repeats with St. Peter, ‘*Lord, how good it is to be here with Thee!*’... May Jesus exposed in the Blessed Host pour out His abundant graces and may His light enliven the whole house! ... If it is possible or if you think it right, I would like the vigil to be kept on the night between the first Thursdays and Fridays, or on similar nights. ... Sitting at the foot of the altar in sweet acts of love, in the silence and solitude of the night, the soul is swiftly raised to God and tastes the repose of contemplation.”<sup>21</sup>
21. “One makes atonement by means of sacrifice, prayer and penance...But what is to be atoned for? Make reparation for one’s own infidelities, the sins of the whole world and in particular, the offences committed against Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar. The expiatory acts of the Franciscans of the Blessed Sacrament are exclusively directed towards this very aim.”<sup>22</sup>
22. “I wish to pay solemn homage to Jesus Christ the Redeemer, with a **Forty Hours’ Adoration** in September. Aren’t we Franciscans of the Most Blessed Sacrament? Doesn’t it befit then, that we offer a solemn act of reparation and love to our Beloved?”<sup>23</sup>
23. “I will be very happy to have the 40 hours’ adoration during the carnival as a deterrent to the innumerable offences committed against Jesus. I hope there will be a crowd in the church.”<sup>24</sup>
24. “The sisters have no other desire or aim than that of becoming excellent religious for the sanctification of others. Though they are involved in active apostolate, they love

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<sup>20</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Chapter V, Fasc. XXIV

<sup>21</sup> December 1902: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XI, Fasc. XXV

<sup>22</sup> Nov-Dec 1897: The First Draft of the Constitutions, Chapter IV

<sup>23</sup> 18.05.1901: Cir. Let. 10

<sup>24</sup> 11.11.1901: Let. to Nazzaarena, Let. 491, Fasc. X - XI

silence and contemplation. They hold the Holy Hour from 11 p.m. to midnight as their special badge.”<sup>25</sup>

### **Eucharistic Day**

25. “Alone with Him in her lonely cell, in those indescribable moments of intimate union with him, before that mesmerizing light, Mother has seen that we have not done what we ought to have done to propagate the adoration of the Blessed sacrament and to earn the beautiful title of the Clares of the Blessed Sacrament... We, His faithful handmaids, should make Jesus known through this new means (Eucharistic Day). By the very fact that we are his and to us is given the task of spreading adoration throughout the world. Aren’t we the humblest missionaries of the most blessed Sacrament? In her burning love, our Mother wishes that Jesus be adored by us day and night.”<sup>76</sup>

### **Visit to the Blessed Sacrament**

*Frequent visits to the chapel are an effective means to remind oneself of the abiding presence of Jesus in the tabernacle and to whisper to him words of grateful love. “Such visits are a sign of gratitude, an expression of love and acknowledgement of the Lord’s presence”, says Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical Letter Mysterium Fidei. Honouring the Divine Prisoner bound to our existence by the fetters of His love for humankind, is a specific devotion intended to console the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the indifference and ingratitude shown Him by the majority of Christians.*

26. “Visit to Jesus in the tabernacle is an act of reparation so dear to the Eucharistic Lord. This devotion is to atone for our own apathy to Jesus who is left alone on our altars.”<sup>26</sup>

27. “If a novice passes by the chapel or church as she discharges her duties, she is free to enter it and greet Jesus warmly, saying: “I love you Jesus. You are my one love, my only love.” How sweet, how exceedingly sweet it is to have heart-to-heart talk with Jesus, express our needs to Him, pledge our love and offer Him to the Eternal Father for us!

The Visit to the Blessed Sacrament done with love is very much an effective means to make us holy. When we feel oppressed, disheartened, or sad let us run to Him in order to be comforted, strengthened and consoled. Yes, my daughters, pay frequent visits to Jesus. Remember that when St. Louis was sent on errands, he would invariably take the road that passes by a Church and if there was no time to stop by, he would open the door and whisper, “Jesus, you already know that I can’t stop here, but I love you.”<sup>27</sup>

**[N.B. For more material on the Eucharist, Communion and Adoration refer to ‘The Blazing Fire’]**

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<sup>25</sup> 17.12.1906, Let. to Can. Lolli, Let. 229, Fasc. LVII

<sup>76</sup> 31.03.1917: Cir Let. 35

<sup>26</sup> 16.03.1898: Timetable for the Sisters, Fasc. XXVI

<sup>27</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Chapter IV, Fasc. XXIV

## B. Liturgy of the Hours

*The custom of reciting prayers at certain hours of the day or night goes back to the Jews. The prayers consisted of the recital or chanting of Psalms and the reading of the scriptures. "At midnight I rise to give you thanks..." "Seven times a day I praise you" (Ps. 119: 62 / 164). "With my Morning Prayer I wait upon you". (Ps. 83: 14)*

*The Apostles observed the Jewish custom of praying at midnight (Acts. 16: 25), Terce prayed at 9 am, Sext at noon (Acts 10: 9) and None at 3 p.m. (Acts 3: 1). Besides the celebration of the Eucharist in private hours, the first Christians preserved the custom of going to the Temple at the hours of prayer.*

*The customary Hours of the private prayers – both with the Jews and the early Christians – became in the course of the fourth and fifth centuries, the Divine Office of the Church composed of Matins (nocturnal Office) with readings from the Old and the New Testaments, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. Traditionally, all 150 psalms were recited during the course of a week.*

*"The Divine Office, in keeping with ancient Christian tradition, is devised that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praise of God. Therefore, when this wonderful song of praise is correctly celebrated... then it is truly the voice of the Bride herself addressed to her Bridegroom. It is the very prayer which Christ himself with his Body addresses to the Father." (SC. 84)*

*This public prayer of the Church "is a source of piety and a nourishment for personal prayer and apostolic activity." (SC.90).*

*Whoever prays the Liturgy of the Hours is not praying it privately but in the name of the Church, in fact in the person of Christ Himself. Since Christ prays to the Father in the name of and for the good of all human kind, "When the Divine Office is said, our voices re-echo in Christ and His in us... As one passes from verse to verse meditating on it, the prayer of the Office becomes truly personal prayer... Hence, the Psalms especially, showing as they do the action of God in the history of salvation, must be better understood by the people of God." (Cfr. Pope Paul VI: Apostolic Constitution, The Canticle of Praise, 01.11.1970)*

*The Divine Office was a living, throbbing experience to Francis; every Psalm a trusting cry to God. He held that during the Office, the Friars should avoid anything that might detract them from their devotion – even worrying about singing. He considered it a serious offence if his mind occupied itself a single instant during prayer with vain fancies, and he hastened to atone for this lapse (LM. X: 6). Hence Francis exhorts, "The Minister General should insist that the clerics say the Office with devotion before God, not concentrating on the melody of the voice but on the harmony of the mind, so that the voice may blend with the mind, and the mind be in harmony with God. Let them do this in such a way that they may please God through purity of heart and not charm the ears of the people with sweetness of voice." (Let. Ord: 41& 42)*

28. "The religious must recite the Divine Office in common, but not sing it as the Rule prescribes. It is a delightful thing to unite ourselves first of all to the Seraphic Order and to every priest in the whole world, in order to praise God with His own song of praise. All are to take part in the Liturgy of the Hours, except in case of illness or urgent work... Nevertheless, everyone should vie with each other for praying the Hours that contain the most perfect praise of God, for we are praising Him with His

own words... One should, however, recite the Office privately if unable to attend it in common.”<sup>28</sup>

29. “As for the Divine Office, it was Jesus who suggested it in various ways. To make sure that the inspiration came from the Spirit, I tried to instil in the sisters a love for the Liturgy of the Hours. O how delightful it is to be united to the Church in praising God with His own praises! The Divine Office is a prayer that enlightens and warms up the tepid souls and unites us to Jesus, infusing inner joy and happiness.”<sup>29</sup>
30. “The recitation of the Divine Office is our soul’s delight. When we are weary, or weighed down with the travails of our apostolate, or unhappy about the offences against God, the recitation of the Office comforts and gladdens us and heals all our wounds”<sup>30</sup>
31. “To me the Divine Office is as refreshing as balsam oil on the wounds. In the past whether I was sick, or studying, or frequently busy with teaching, or engaged otherwise, I have recited the entire Office, or at least a part of it.” (08/11.07.1907: Let. to the Secretary General<sup>31</sup>
32. “We recite the Divine Office and keep vigil from 11 p.m. to midnight, blending contemplative life with the active one in such a way that the latter is not deprived of the sweetness of the former which accompanies and perfects every act of the other.”<sup>32</sup>
33. “Tell your dear Superior that if you cannot recite the entire Matins because of extreme heat, it is enough to pray one nocturne.”<sup>33</sup>
34. “If we had a hospice close to the protomonastery, one could see the harmonious life of Martha and Mary. It would be a wonderful souvenir of the septennial centenary of the birth of the Second Order. We are the first Clarists of active life reciting the Divine Office.”<sup>34</sup>

### **Meditation**

*Meditation is the centering of the faculties of our mind and heart upon God: memory, knowledge, intelligence, will and love. It is the silencing of all our senses, the quieting of our mind and soul in the process of turning our heart and love towards God. It is an effective technique to quiet and clear the mind, as preparation for God’s inspiration.*

*Formal meditation began with the early monastic practice of reading the Bible slowly. As a result of the thoughtful reading and pondering of the deeper meaning of each verse, meditation turns into spontaneous prayer and the prayer would in turn lead to a simple loving gaze upon God. For to ponder over the Word of God is not to acquire informatory knowledge of Him, but to have a deeper experience of His goodness so that*

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<sup>28</sup> December 1902: *Practical Guide*, Ch. V, Fasc. XXV

<sup>29</sup> 21.11.1906: Let. to Cardinal Vives, AGCFM – b Doc. 17

<sup>30</sup> 18.04.1907: Let. to Abbot A. Lolli, Scr. 52

<sup>31</sup> 08/11. 07. 1907: Let. to the Secretary General (OFM), Let. 2, Fasc. XLV

<sup>32</sup> 19.03.1912: Let. to Pope Pius X, Fasc.LXVI

<sup>33</sup> 29.05.1903: Let. to Sr. Angela, Let 613 Fasc. XII

<sup>34</sup> 21.09.1912: Let. to the Abbess of the protomonastery, Let. 1260, Fasc. LIV

we derive energy for the life-giving happenings of everyday reality. Being attuned to Gods' Word means, allowing oneself to be penetrated by the Word so that gradually we put on the thoughts and desires of Christ and allow Him to be alive in us.

This way of reflecting on the texts of Scriptures leads one to commune with the heart, and prayer becomes a personal, intimate and profound dialogue between the person and God. As the religious chooses a subject for meditation and focuses her mind upon the various facets of the subject, she becomes engaged in a quiet introspection. She asks herself, "What does it mean? What does it mean for me? What has it to do with my life?" It is a way of listening to the Scripture as if we were in conversation with Christ and he were suggesting the topics of conversation. The daily encounter with Christ in the reflection on His Word gives way to "resting in God".

Eastern Christian meditation values psychophysical symbolism which can range from a specific bodily posture to the basic life functions, such as breathing or the beating of the heart. For example, the exercise of the "Jesus Prayer", which adapts itself to the natural rhythm of breathing. In St. Francis, meditation became affective prayer wherein the heart is engaged to a greater extent than the mind. He used repeated ejaculatory prayers like "my God and my All", "Have mercy on me, a sinner", or "Who are you, my dearest God, and what am I, your vilest worm!" Francis' whole being was involved in such short repetitive prayers that raised him to God on its wings.

34. "Meditation and Visits to the Blessed Sacrament are two spiritual exercises that serve wonderfully to intertwine the contemplative and active life in such a way that the latter is not deprived of the sweetness of the former which accompanies and perfects every act of the other."<sup>35</sup>
35. "Meditation is my daily bread, my delight after Communion. I've always experienced its soothing effect and the recent sweetness I tasted here at Bagno confirms once again that I should never omit it. The time devoted to meditation facilitates all my work to be done quickly and efficaciously. Therefore, I wouldn't leave out a minute of the scheduled time for meditation, that is, an hour daily."<sup>36</sup>
36. "Meditation is a sheer fountain of light and grace. Happy are those who can spend hours in heart-to-heart talk with Jesus."<sup>37</sup>
37. "I would have been a saint by now, had I known how to meditate. It is a secret known only to a few and appreciated far less."<sup>38</sup>
38. "What will a religious be without meditation? Meditation turns out saints. Next to the Eucharist and Communion, it is the most efficacious means to keep the fire of Divine Love burning in our hearts. Rightly has the Prophet David said: 'In my meditation, a fire shall flame out.' (Ps. 39:3) But it is necessary to do the meditation effectively, opening our soul to Jesus like the sick or the blind, so that He can carve in us the

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<sup>35</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Chapter IV,

Fasc. XXIV

<sup>36</sup> Christmas 1888: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXIX, p.13

<sup>37</sup> 23.07.1896: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p.6

<sup>38</sup> Lent 1900: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI p.41

image He wishes... However, I recommend the practical resolution without which the meditation will be of no use.”<sup>39</sup>

39. “I beg you never to omit meditation so that you may draw light and strength from it.”<sup>40</sup>

40. “*Profound meditation on earthly frailty; let us examine at length whether we are looking for Jesus or the creatures... To deny our feelings all kind of satisfaction. ... It is not enough to crucify our senses; rather we should completely crush them. During the meditation, let us examine ourselves deeply and see how and to what extent we have died to our self-love, to our pride. Hidden acts of self-denial, silence, recollection, awareness of the presence of God, the very absorption in God that draws us closer to Him... He rejects a distracted heart...*”<sup>41</sup>

### Spiritual Reading

*In spiritual life the reading of holy books is as important as mental prayer. Many saints like St. Augustine and St. Ignatius have been induced to begin a life of sanctity by reading either the Scriptures or a spiritual book. As St. Augustine says, good books are, as it were, so many love letters that the Lord sends us. In them he warns us of dangers, teaches the right way, strengthens us to suffer adversity, enlightens us and inflames us with Divine Love. When we pray we speak to God, but when we read God speaks to us.*

*According to St. Jerome, spiritual books show us the defects of the soul, just as a mirror reflects the stains of the countenance. Reading of spiritual books has not only contributed to the conversion of saints, but has also given their whole life great aid to persevere and to advance continually in perfection. The reading of the lives of the saints should at least humble us, making us realize how little is what we have done and still do for God.*

*In order to draw fruit from spiritual reading, firstly, it is necessary to recommend oneself beforehand to God, that He may enlighten our mind. We must not read just to acquire learning, or to indulge curiosity, but for the sole purpose of advancing in Divine Love. To read for the sake of knowledge is not spiritual reading. Secondly, we must ponder over what we read, applying to ourselves what is there inculcated and raise our heart to God in fervent spontaneous prayer.*

41. “Spiritual reading recreates the spirit and detaches it from the earth... But to savour it, I believe that it is necessary to read the text oneself. I strongly recommend personal reading ... The *Lives* of saints and martyrs, especially those of the Franciscan Family, books on asceticism etc., are veritable pasturelands for the spirit of a religious. As we read about the heroism of our brethren, we feel humbled and there springs in us the desire to imitate them.

Let us not neglect spiritual reading for our own sake. Let us read above all the Gospel and the *Imitation of Christ*. Would that we relished a passage everyday! The

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<sup>39</sup> December 1901: *Practical Guide*, Ch. VI

<sup>40</sup> 23.05.1893: Let. to Sr. Bernardina, Let. 98, Fasc. III

<sup>41</sup> 30.4.1890: Prayers and flowers for the months of May and June, Fasc. XX)

words of Jesus enlighten and enkindle us. The more we read it, the more we discover its fresh beauty and newer concept. It is like the mustard seed that gives out better flavour the more it is crushed.”<sup>41</sup>

42. “Spiritual Reading: Even if I have done it with the sisters and the students, I always do a little of it by myself, because the spirit is in need of nourishment. The Office of the Readings and the Sacred Scriptures are my daily food. In fact, if I find some spare moments I try to fill it with a chapter from the *Old Testament or the Gospel or the Imitation of Christ* (by Thomas A. Kempis). ‘Nourish your Spirit with Spiritual reading’”. (29.2.1892)

### **Recollection**

*Recollection means the interior solitude in which the soul is attentive to the presence of God in the soul. It includes the withdrawal of the mind from external and earthly affairs in order to be alone with God. It is called ‘recollection’ because the soul collects together all the faculties and enters within itself to be with God. One restricts the attention to a single subject, principally the love of God. Recollection means an effort of the will to keep the senses and the intellect in check and not allow them to stray. No person can make progress in virtue without acquiring the habit of thinking of God’s presence.*

*A religious needs certain periods of retreat into solitude to be engaged in quiet introspection and rediscover her path in God’s presence. In this spiritual self-examination we become aware of those dark corners of ourselves that we don’t like to admit. Yet such confrontations are integral facet of our spiritual journey. In the spiritual silence in which we open ourselves to God, we can discern our soul’s conditions much more clearly. This can be a humbling experience, for we see the truth about ourselves.*

Most religious take one day a month to do this: a day spent in “getting their lives back in order”. A catch up day: the re-opening of mind and heart to God.

*To withdraw outwardly is meant to facilitate being inwardly alone with God, to be able to be silent, to be able to listen and to pray. Multiplicity of occupations is an obstacle to recollection. Hence, one has to avoid distracting and dissipating occupations not dictated by reason, or required by necessity. At the same time we should keep in mind that one may be recollected amidst the duties of an active life.*

*Besides interior silence and solitude, an effective means to fix our attention upon the Divine Presence within us, is to frequently call to mind that our souls are the temples of God. (1 Cor. 6:19 / Eph. 2: 22)*

43. “I feel the need and the obligation to live detached from the world in order to converse with my Spouse: to be in perfect silence and solitude to scrutinize my affections and to orient them towards God so that I may learn for once to love Him and fulfill better my duty. Yes, I feel the need to live in God and for God.

My little angels, enter the desert with a firm will to become what the Lord and your Principal wants you to be. Pray for me, pray without ceasing so that I may become a true bride of Christ. Detach your heart from earthly things and you’ll taste

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<sup>41</sup> December 1902: *Practical Guide*, Ch. V, Fasc. XXV

the inexplicable joy that the Lord reveals to His hidden virgins. Tasting it you will prove its effects and understand for once how sweet it is to love and serve the Lord. My adorable Spouse is not loved by me!"<sup>42</sup>

44. "Let not the duty of keeping company with Martha hurt us, because if we wish, we can very well unite the sublime stillness of Mary to the activities of her sister... I tell you that the height of perfection consists in the perfect fulfilment of the Divine Will and that in whatever state or condition we might be, we can carry on an intimate colloquy with God and carve in the innermost chamber of our heart a sacred niche closed to everyone but God. This should rather be our prime task, the singular aim of our heart, to which all our energy should be channelled. So accustomed, we would be able to enter our locked interior alcove amidst the din and distractions of our routine tasks, and enjoy therein the sweetness of silence and solitude...

In such sublime school we can relish the sweetness of Divine love, gather the rules for our whole life – the sure norms to guide our thoughts, words, affections and actions, learn to be punctual in all our duties, and to gather all our tasks into our prayer. In this school of Divine Love the dawn of each day should be begun and all our activities concluded.

In this school of celestial wisdom we shall come to know how injurious it is to usurp the rights of others; and how fraternal charity is wounded by tale-bearing. These are bad habits that cause ill-will and discord, which even if repressed or kept hidden, feed evil and congeal charity - so beautiful a virtue though difficult to practise, for one's fuller growth."<sup>43</sup>

45. "The Christian soul makes use of quietude to rise Godward in order to taste the sublimity of His love, to know better the way that leads to Him... Set aside all thoughts for a while, enter into your innermost self, adore Jesus profoundly, and beg for His forgiveness for all your past ingratitude. Declare that you want to be His totally and for ever, while resisting all passions and affections that pull you away from Him, and lend your ears to the core of your being where you will hear a mysterious, wonderful, yet sweet voice that fills your soul with heavenly joy.

Look at the world outside and see iniquity taking giant strides everywhere. See how Jesus is offended, scorned and rejected. Open your heart, dear youngsters, and gladly welcome Him into your inner self in order to make up for the insensitivity of the humans. Consecrate the whole day to Him and promise Him to spend it in silence, prayer and recollection in order to make progress in virtue and atone for the atrocities done to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, especially during these Carnival days. Offer Him your whole self and pledge Him eternal fidelity... A beautiful flower you can present Him is targeting the failing you wish to overcome."<sup>44</sup>

46. "Behold me alone with you, O Jesus, eager to spend this day in silence and solitude in order to listen to your sweet voice. I've come before you, humbled and

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<sup>42</sup> 19.01.1881: Let. to the students, Let.2, Fasc. XXXV(a)

<sup>43</sup> 03.12.1882: *A Word to the Teachers*, Fasc. XXI

<sup>44</sup> 07.02.1885: Exhortation for the Recollection Day, Fasc. XX

confused, full of sorrows for my transgressions, resolved to purge my past and to walk the path of holiness.

Encircle me with your light so that I may know my utter nothingness and your grandeur. In flame me with pure love and draw me close to you so that I may taste of the ineffable sweetness of your presence in the innermost chamber of your adorable heart.

Jesus, may you be my sole light, my guide and my all! I desire nothing but you and seek only your pleasures. Jesus and I, behold my total happiness!”<sup>45</sup>

47. “For recollection a preacher is not a must. The saints withdrew into the desert to spend days in solitary prayer.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Retreat / Spiritual Exercises**

*The retreat is a prayer experience lasting normally for a period of at least eight days. It is a process aimed at helping retreatants reach inner freedom in responding freely to the personal call of Christ in their every day lives and to help build God's Kingdom. One enters the retreat putting aside the usual accessories: phone, newspapers, favourite magazine et al, and spends time in extended personal prayer and reflection. We enter our annual retreat in order to address issues in our life, discern our inner desires and to see how God is walking in our lives. The retreatants are invited to become more fully aware of an aspect of God's call, and to begin the process of co-operating with it. At the end of the retreat the retreatants are expected to become increasingly aware of the presence and activity of God not only in their own lives but in all things.*

48. “All the great saints perfected themselves through spiritual exercises. No religious can be exempted from such precious retreat days. All are in need of re-entering the sanctuary of their conscience and of discovering whatever has to be corrected.

Silence - interior and exterior solitude, absolute aloneness during which the soul is presented before God as a blank white paper. He will write on it, provided that it is kept free of all blots, lives in Jesus and listens to His Divine voice.

Stillness of the mind, quieting down all the faculties, quietude all around so that Jesus may imprint His Kingdom, His grace in us, and to make us worthy witness of Christ to the world that denies, despises and insults Him.

Woe to us if we do not steel ourselves against the assaults of the evildoers who are trying to break up the religious communities during these evil days! Woe betides us who allow the enticements of the irreligious to make inroads into our hearts! In the school of Jesus Christ – in total withdrawal from the world and from all that surrounds us, let us learn to set our hearts aflame like red-hot coal of celestial love so that the wicked, finding themselves unable to grab it, would be forced to leave us alone and by God's mercy we shall win over their diabolic snares... O Lord, let everything be quieted down and you alone speak to my spirit, my will, and my heart!”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> 20.01.1889

<sup>46</sup> 09.11.1904: Let. to Sisters at Bagno, Let. 732 Fasc. XIII

<sup>47</sup> 20.09.1888: *Memoirs*, Fasc. LV, p.4

49. “How poignantly sweet it is to spend some days alone with God: to forget whatever is around us and whatever has to be left behind!”<sup>48</sup>
50. “We are in retreat these days; truly in the desert with Jesus as our sole preacher. How mysteriously sweet is the soul’s colloquy with Jesus! To carry on a heart-to-heart talk with the Divine Love! And the Immaculate Virgin is our guide and mistress.”<sup>49</sup>
51. “Oh, how beneficial and pleasant is the retreat! How nice it is to stay alone with Jesus without being interrupted by anyone. Sermons are useful and I have always encouraged them, but for me there is no match for absolute silence.”<sup>50</sup>
52. “Sorry to hear that you can submit your essay only on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. The retreat begins on Friday evening. The two sisters have the freedom to attend it or not. I dare not say they must come, because they can be of help to you and none will be the worse for it. Should I let them stay back, it will be on my conscience, because it is a question of the annual retreat. Therefore, I leave you free. I’ll be happy with whatever you decide.”<sup>51</sup>

### **The Sacrament of Reconciliation**

*The first man Adam, by sinning had wounded himself and his progeny down through the millennia and broken the links of friendship that bound him to God. Every sin acts against the individual sinner and the community. The collective awareness of sin and the social aspect of penitence were very much present in the Old Testament penitential liturgies. Men and women like Moses and Daniel, Judith and Esther fasted and prayed for the sins of the community.*

*Christ reconciled God and the estranged humanity through the mystery of his death on the cross. On the eve of His passion, Jesus instituted the sacrifice of the new covenant in His blood for the remission of sins. Moreover, He gave Peter the authority to bind and loose (Mt. 16:19), and sent His Spirit on the apostles to forgive sins or retain them (Jn 20: 22-23).*

*The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the path of penance for those persons weighed down by sins. In the Sacrament of Penance the faithful “obtain pardon from God’s mercy for the offence committed against Him and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church, which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, example and prayer labours for their conversion.” (LG. 11)*

*However, we cannot be absolved of our sins without true contrition for the sins committed. The Sacrament will remain an empty ritual if it is not accompanied by true sorrow for having been estranged from God and hurting our neighbour. True sorrow or perfect contrition is motivated by the love of God rather than the fear of punishment - of which the Parable of the Prodigal Son is the best model. The tears of repentance in a sinner is expected to lead the person to conversion of heart, which should find expression in a life reformed in the spirit of the Gospel and increasingly pervaded by charity. We*

<sup>48</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. X,

<sup>49</sup> 02.12.1907: Let. to the Minister General (Schuler), Let. 9,Fasc. LXIX

<sup>50</sup> 08.12.1907: Cir. Let. 30

<sup>51</sup> Undated: Let. to Sr. Cecilia, Let.1153, Fasc. XVIII

*should not only repent of our sins but also resolve to refrain from sinning and to make good any losses inflicted on our brothers and sisters.*

*In the Sacrament of Penance, the Father receives the home-coming son, Christ puts the lost sheep on his shoulder and returns it to the sheep-fold and the Holy Spirit sanctifies his temple again or dwells in it more fully.” (Introduction to the New Order of Penance, Misericordiam Suam, 6(d))*

*Thus the Sacrament of Reconciliation provides healing for the soul besides grace of God lost by sin.*

53. “May your confession be humble and full of repentance, recalling that you are a penitent before the minister of God. Revive your faith and see in the Dean not Fr. Gironi but the servant of the Most High and you will reap benefits for your soul. For it is not the priest who grants you the graces but Jesus your faithful Spouse who always loves you even when He is not loved.”<sup>52</sup>

54. “The Franciscan Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament should **confess** to a priest approved by the Local ordinary every eight days with a humble, thorough preparation: an open, concise contrite confession, with living faith in the priest in whom she sees and hears Jesus, as if she were presenting herself humbly and reverently before Jesus Himself. Moreover, she should go with a generous heart willing to accept and welcome corrections and reprimands as well as paternal advice and counsel. Thus and only thus can one amend her vices and faults, uprooting from her heart all passions with earnest resolution and prompt reparation, and learning to practise virtues with the help of the Divine grace imparted in this Sacrament of Mercy...

...I prefer frequent confessions that purify the soul, increase virtues and spur us to holiness. One should reveal not only the sins but also the root causes that prevent her union with the Spouse. She receives absolution embracing the cross on Calvary and praying to the Virgin and Magdalene to have her soul bathed in the Blood of Redemption..”<sup>53</sup>

55. “I made my confession on Saturday. While giving absolution Mons. Polloni said, ‘get up and walk.’ Fortified by these words I got up on Sunday morning and attended the Holy Mass. Sometime later, I received an exciting memo, asking me to go to the refectory. In a word I am healed. I feel much better than what I was on Saturday.”<sup>54</sup>

## **B. Liturgical Feasts**

### **A. Christmas**

*The word ‘Christmas’ is a contraction of the Old English “Christes Mæsse” (= Christ’s Mass). The festival of Christmas has its origin in the Roman celebration of the birthday of “Sol Invictus” (= the unconquered sun) and the birthday of Mithras – a*

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<sup>52</sup> 30.11.1899: Let. to Sr. Bernardina, Let. 347, Fasc. VIII – IX

<sup>53</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. IV,

<sup>54</sup> 11.02.1902: Let. to Catherine, Let. 518, Fasc. X – XI

*Persian God – both of which were celebrated on December 25. Around AD 220, Tertullian declared that Jesus died on March 25, AD 29 on the same day of His Incarnation. The view that the Incarnation occurred on the same date as crucifixion is consistent with a Jewish belief that prophets died at an “integral age”, either on anniversary of their birth, or of their conception. The idea that December 25 is Jesus’ birthday (i.e., nine months from the date of His Incarnation on March 25<sup>th</sup>), was popularized by Sextus Julius Africanus in 221 AD.*

*Meanwhile, the Antioch School had held that Jesus was born human and infused with the Holy Spirit at the time of His baptism, while the Alexandrian school held that He was the Divine Word made flesh (Jn 1:14). St. Ignatius of Antioch writing to the Ephesians states that “Our God Jesus Christ was conceived in the womb of Mary”. A feast celebrating Christ’s birth gave the Church an opportunity to promote the view that Christ was Divine from the time of His Incarnation.*

*Christmas celebration on December 25, was held as early as 336 AD. The Masses at midnight, dawn and in the day, were mystically connected to the triple birth of Christ: in Eternity, in Time, and in the soul.*

*St. Francis of Assisi in 1223, popularized the image of the Nativity scene using live animals, hoping to bring Jesus to life in the hearts of all those who have forgotten Him. By re-creating the manger scene Francis brought home to the people of the Rieti valley the humility, poverty and self-emptying love of the incarnate Christ and the passionate love of the Father who sent His Son to redeem the sinful, sinning humanity(1 Cel. 84-86). Ever since that memorable Christmas celebration on the rocky hillside of Greccio in 1223, the Babe of Bethlehem lying in a manger, has become a traditional sight in every Catholic Church and home. And Clare exhorts:*

*“Look at the parameters of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. O marvellous humility, O astonishing poverty! The king of the angels, the Lord of heaven and earth is laid in a manger!” (4th Let. Ag 19-21)*

56. “See how Jesus strives right from His birth to uproot the three raging frenzies that grip the world: Pleasure, Possession and Pride... And we? May the manger of Jesus ever remain imprinted in our heart and mind! O Jesus, your birth on a bed of straw comforts me as it gives me the hope that you will likewise deign to be born in my heart. It is unworthy than the stall in which you were born, but your coming will make it worthy. This is what I long for. Wherever you are, there is heaven, O Jesus, and my heart will be a paradise when you will be born in it. Come, O Lord!”<sup>55</sup>

57. “During these joyous days let us talk about the Divine Babe who though poor and shivering in the manger, has a storehouse of treasures to enrich everyone in abundance, and so much warmth to melt the frozen hearts and ignite those of his fervent devotees... O Jesus, fill the hearts of all people of goodwill with that peace, which transcends all human delights and is a foretaste of eternal joy!”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Retreat: 20<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> September 1888: *Memoirs*, Fasc. LV, p.8

<sup>56</sup> 27.12.1890: Let. to a Gentleman, Let. 28, Fasc. XXXVII

58. “Oh that the Incarnate Word made you taste at least a drop of that charism He bestowed on the Virgin when He took flesh in her! Would that on the Blessed Night each one of you received a flash of that faith which Mary and Joseph had when they adored the new-born Babe! What a moment it must have been! If we were to receive this gift, then our Communion will be quite different from what they were in the past. Then shall we taste the real presence of Jesus in us... and all the rest will follow. Together let us spend the Novena days with great fervour so that we may be able to see all of us at the cave of Bethlehem, despite the distance.”<sup>57</sup>
59. “Would that each one of you tasted of the true joy of Christmas, the sweetest glance of Mary, the caresses of the Word and the smile of Joseph! I wish the Angels would sing over India as over the stable at Bethlehem”.<sup>58</sup>
60. “May Jesus manifest Himself to you as He revealed Himself to the Magi and make you taste the delights of His heart! May the Immaculate Virgin instil in you at least an iota of the knowledge she had of herself and her Divine Son so that you make great strides on the path of perfection! If you take great delight in making the precious novena of Christmas, you will be able to join the angels in singing the rapturous alleluia on that heavenly night.”<sup>59</sup>
61. “Let us pray to Our Lady to make us know our defects and to prepare our hearts for the joyous feast of Christmas.”<sup>60</sup>
62. “May Christmas 1916 bring overflowing peace and holy joy to each one of you! On that day of mystic happiness we shall find ourselves more closely bonded together at the lowly manger to learn the secrets of celestial communication from the Divine Babe and the Virgin Mother, that will reveal to us our nothingness and the need for perfect charity.”<sup>61</sup>

## **B. Presentation of Christ in the Temple**

*This feast celebrates the consecration of Jesus to the Lord as the first born son, in accordance with the Mosaic Law (Ex 13:2/13). According to the Leviticus, the woman who gave birth to a male child was unable for forty days to enter the temple area by reason of her legal impurity. However, because of her miraculous delivery, the Virgin Mother was not really obliged to make the sin offering of purification. Jesus was taken to Temple of Jerusalem by Mary and Joseph and consecrated to the Lord on the fortieth day of His birth (LK. 2: 22-38).*

*This first solemn introduction of Christ into the house of God was celebrated by a procession in the early centuries. The solemn procession, at which the congregation carries lighted candles in their hands, represents the entry of Christ, who is the Light of the world, into the temple of Jerusalem. Since on this day candles were blessed for use during the year, this feast came to be called “Candlemas”.*

<sup>57</sup> 16.11.1902: Cir. Let. 12

<sup>58</sup> 18.12.1905: Let. to the Sisters at Meerut, Let. 808 Fasc.XIV)

<sup>59</sup> 11.12.1913: Let. to Sisters Benjamina & Gabriella, Let. 1239, Fasc XXXIX

<sup>60</sup> 09.11.1916: Let. to Sr. Luisina, Let. 1138, Fasc. XVIII

<sup>61</sup> 30.11 / 2.12.1916: Let. to the Missionaries at Itambacury

63. "Let us all enter the Temple to contemplate the Virgin Mother, who, though far whiter than the snow, humbles herself to undergo the purification rite like any other woman after childbirth. Let us implore the most loveable Virgin to cleanse our minds and hearts of all that is not of God, and remove all the dross that prevent us from living a life in close intimacy with Jesus and from being holy.

O fair lilies, flourish in the shade of the Virgin. May your cultivator be the Angel; may you find your glory in being an adornment at the Eucharistic table!"<sup>62</sup>

### Annunciation

*The feast of annunciation commemorates the announcement of the conception and birth of Jesus by the archangel Gabriel to Mary (Lk. 1: 26-38). A similar announcement is made to Joseph (Mt. 1: 18-25). In both the instances indication is given of the agency of the Holy Spirit in the conception of the Babe and of the name to be given to Him. His mission is stated to Joseph in terms of redemption from sin, to Mary in terms of His kingly role. The pattern of annunciation occurs in the Old Testament in connection with Samson (Judges 13: 2-5), including his status as Nazirite and his mission as the deliverer of Israel from the Philistines.*

64. "Day after tomorrow begins the novena for the sweetest feast of Annunciation - a feast that gives me an inexplicable thrill. A virgin becoming the mother of God! United in one heart, let us enter the tiny room in the house at Nazareth and dwell there in preparation for the great feast: -

- Communicating every morning and praying to the Virgin to grant us her own disposition in that most solemn moment of Incarnation.
- Reciting the holy Rosary after the angel's greeting - each decade recited kneeling in turn on the floor. Being zealous about praying the "*Angel of the Lord*", never omitting it.
- Scrupulously observing silence during the prescribed hour of the time table, remaining intimately close to the Virgin, speaking to her as if you could see her, kissing her feet and begging her to bless us. Oh the Divine Babe in her womb! **When we receive the Mysteries into our hearts, do we have Mary's faith, hope and charity?**
- Practising everyday some internal and external acts of humility in order to offer them to the Virgin; repeating often, "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me...*" Rising in turn each dawn and spending an hour or at least half hour before the altar of Mary. While reciting the decade, everyone should imagine repeating the Angel's greeting, '*Hail Mary*'.

May the heavenly Mother bless you every morning and evening! May she envelop you in her mantle and bestow on you that peace which is the fruit of perfect charity."<sup>63</sup>

65. "Annunciation, 'the Mystery of Mysteries! The miracle of the love of Jesus Christ! As the Virgin Mary pronounced the words: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to your word*, the Word of God became flesh in her most

<sup>62</sup> 31.01.1917: Let. to the Missionaries at Agra

<sup>63</sup> 13.03.1899: Cir. Let. 5

pure womb. Let us repeat with our hearts and deeds, "Behold your handmaid, O Lord; desirous of nothing but of fulfilling your will in the perfect discharge of my duties." <sup>64</sup>

66. "How thrilling to our heart must be the feast of the Annunciation that marks the beginning of our redemption! ...O that I could make you taste of the marrow of spiritual life! O that I could kindle in your heart a deep devotion to the Virgin most pure!" <sup>65</sup>

### C. Lent

*Lent is the period from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday. The name Lent comes from the Germanic root for spring, specially from the old English word "lenc" for March (since the main part of Lent was in this month). Though originally Lent meant the spring season, the word was used to translate the Latin "quadragesima" meaning "40 hours" referring to the period when Christ lay in the tomb and to the 40 hours of complete fasting which preceded the Easter celebration in the early Church.*

*Initially six weeks of training was imparted during Lent to those who were to be baptized on Easter Eve. The 40-hour fast was in preparation to receive the Sacrament. In AD 331, St. Athanasius enjoined upon his flock a period of 40 days of fasting as preliminary to the stricter fast of the Holy Week. With the acceptance of Christianity as the state religion of Rome in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, quadragesima was thus extended to 40 days of fasting. The ordinary rule on fasting was to take but one meal a day and that only in the evening, while meat and wine were entirely forbidden. Besides fasting, prayer and almsgiving formed the traditional practice during Lent.*

*The 40-day period is symbolic of the 40-days spent by Moses, Elijah and Christ in the wilderness. Fasting during Lent is a way for Christians to identify with Jesus in his suffering, which He underwent for the sake of humankind.*

*In his Apostolic Constitution Paenitemini (1966), Pope Paul VI recommended that all Catholics voluntarily fast during Lent and abstain on Fridays of the Year. Today, in the west, the practice is considerably relaxed; but in the Eastern Orthodox and Oriental Churches only vegetarian meals are consumed during Lent.*

*In his passionate love for the Crucified, Francis not only fasted during the Lent but also for days at a stretch, taking as little food and drink as possible. Besides, he prayed for the grace to feel in his soul and in his body the pain, which Jesus sustained in the hour of His bitter Passion (Fio. Part 2, Third Consideration). "Crying over the Lord's Passion was well known to Clare... She taught the novices to weep over Crucified Christ... During the Hours of the day, at Sext and None, she was usually afflicted with a great sorrow as she was immolated with her immolated Lord." (Leg. Clare: 30)*

*Our focus during the Lent is not so much to be on Christ's suffering as on "His excessive love with which He was inflamed in willingly enduring the excruciating suffering for us sinners" (Cfr. Fioretti. Ibid). To contemplate the suffering of the Beloved is to yearn to share in His pain and love for the sinful humanity: to enter into a life of total absorption in the Crucified till we become one with him. Hence, especially during the Lent, let us follow St. Clare's exhortation:*

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<sup>64</sup> 25.03.1902: Cir. Let. 11, Fasc. XXVIII

<sup>65</sup> 25.03.1906: Let. to the Sisters at Meerut and Sardhana, Let. 824, Fasc. XIV

*“Never let the thought of Him leave your mind but meditate constantly on the Mysteries of the Cross and the anguish of His Mother as she stood beneath the Cross” (Let. Ermen: 11-12).*

67. “As you know the period of Lent is instituted by the Church to imitate in some way the fasting undertaken by Jesus in the desert. He who is the Truth, Goodness and Beauty retreats into the desert to do penance! He abandons human company! He withdraws into aloneness! What lesson does He teach us by this? He instructs us to go (more than usual) into solitude, to listen in silence to his sweet voice, and to target the vice that we want to subdue.

Dearest daughters, let us gladly march forward on the path of Christian perfection, fighting off our predominant passions: anger, laziness, envy, or tepidity. Let us vie with each other to see who would be more successful... Let us ask ourselves, ‘*If this Lent were the last one for me, what would I do to please the Lord?*’ ”<sup>66</sup>

68. “O Jesus, I burn with the desire to be totally yours. Instead I’m groping around amidst my passions. Let me enter the desert with you and grant me the grace to attain what you yourself have asked me to achieve: to understand and fine-tune the goal, to subjugate my passions and to drive away the evil forces.”<sup>67</sup>

69. “By the merits of your Temptation make me victorious over mine. Grant that I may remember nothing but the offences given to others and obliterate the memory of the wrongs done to me. Let me fix my mind on Thee, O Jesus, and reflect that nothing save eternity is worthwhile, that you can make me a new creation only when I withdraw into aloneness.

By the merit of your Fast grant me your abundant mercy so that my mind may cling to you, my heart love you and I be ready to undergo every sacrifice for your sake. You are my rest, my food, my portion on this earth and the sure pledge of eternal possession in heaven.”<sup>68</sup>

70. “During these Novena days for the feast of **Annunciation** you must be at Nazareth contemplating the Virgin in her ecstasy of love, kissing her garments and holiest feet with devotion... Then with Jesus in the desert, from there to Palestine to see the miracles, to gaze upon Him with the Samaritan Woman and to listen with Magdalene to His holy teachings, His words of eternal life... Then you’ll be entering the Cenacle to contemplate the marvellous love of God who institutes the Sacrament par excellence... From the Cenacle to Gethsemane to gather the blood of Redemption. Oh, wonderful Mystery! Then to the Praetorium along the excruciating way of the Passion, up on to Calvary, and finally down to the Sepulchre. There you’ll find Jesus with Magdalene, if you have sought and loved Him with her. If you keep company with Jesus, you’ll surely share in His Resurrection.

May the Blessed Virgin enable you to savour what she had tasted on that Easter day when she saw her beloved Son again! May the Angels bring you the same

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<sup>66</sup> 10.03.1881: Let. to the Boarders, Let. 4, Fasc. XXXV

<sup>67</sup> Lent 1900: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p.40

<sup>68</sup> Lent 1900: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI, p.43/44

message that was given to the women! And may Jesus reveal Himself to your soul as He showed Himself to Magdalene! This is my Easter wish for you.”<sup>69</sup>

71. Your **acts of penance** are quite all right, provided they do not harm the frail ones. Supplement them with the observance of our customary perfect silence: speaking in low tones, being gentle in our movements, closing the gate quietly, the windows and the doors still more silently, etc....”<sup>70</sup>

#### **D. Holy Week**

*Holy Week is the last week of Lent, i.e. from Palm Sunday to Holy Saturday. St. Athanasius of Alexandria writes in AD 331, “During the Holy Week we should observe more prolonged prayers and fasting and watching, that we may be enabled to anoint our lintels with the precious blood and so escape the destroyer.” Throughout the Christian world the observance of fasting and prayer during the Holy Week, had been adopted almost everywhere before the end of the fourth century. Some went without food for the whole six days.*

72. “Continue to seek Jesus alone without looking for any other support. Seek Him along with Magdalene. Stay with the Virgin and you will find Him in the Cenacle, on Calvary, at the Sepulchre... Oh, the Holy Week! May you be holy!”<sup>71</sup>

#### **E. Triduum**

*The Easter Triduum is the space of three days beginning Holy Thursday evening with the Eucharist and concluding with Easter Vigil. Silence and fasts were observed during these three days. While Good Friday is a traditional day of fasting, an ancient tradition dating back to the first centuries of the Church, calls for no food of any kind to be eaten on Holy Saturday, or for 40 hours before sunrise on Sunday. Hence the term ‘quadragesima’ for the 40 hour rigorous fasting. Earlier the Triduum was called Tenebræ (Latin for shadows or darkness).*

*It is only in walking through the shadows and darkness of Holy Week, especially Triduum, in realizing the horror and magnitude of sin and its consequences, in contemplating the passion and death of Jesus to redeem mankind from its slavery to sin, in meditating on the loss and despair that the disciples felt on Holy Saturday, that we can truly understand the light and hope of Resurrection on Sunday morning. The Services become a powerful proclamation of the transformative power of the Gospel, and God at work in the lives of people, as they are able to draw a parable of their own lives and faith journey from the observances of the Holy Week.*

73. “The CFMSS should never leave Jesus and Mary alone from Maundy Thursday to the Easter morn, following them from the Cenacle to the Garden of Olives, from Gethsemane to Calvary and from Calvary to Sepulchre. On Thursday night there shall be adorers to atone for the abandonment of Jesus by the Apostles. Like Magdalene we shall comfort Jesus and Mary bending down with our forehead on the floor all through the day. How much did they suffer! At noon watch the sun hide his rays and

<sup>69</sup> 20.03.1903: Let. to the Missionaries in India, Let. 597, Fasc. XII

<sup>70</sup> 07.05.1904: Let. to Sisters at Cesenatico, Let. 684, Fasc. XIII

<sup>71</sup> 31.03.1901: Let. to Agatha, Let. 454, Fasc. VIII – IX

shroud itself in a dark pall to mourn for its Maker. The total eclipse had darkened the whole earth. What horror! What terror! But at the same time we should be ashamed! The sun goes into hiding in order to blank out the harrowing scene of a God who dies... and we are so insensible, more callous than the rock that split at His death! Feel that mighty earthquake; see nature shuddering, shaken to its core...

Tonight my heart was frozen by an appalling reflection. I just thought how after that great crime, Jerusalem slept quietly in the drunken stupor of its victory, while only a few hours ago God had signed the sentence of its eternal damnation in the innocent blood shed by His Son. How many persons have been deleted from the Book of Life! Nevertheless unless we are ungrateful, we shall never be blotted out from the Book. Take courage, my daughters, and encourage others to descend from Calvary sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb...

During these most important days our hearts should be flames of love – all united in the wounded Heart of Love.”<sup>72</sup>

### **Holy Thursday**

*The term ‘Maundy’ comes from the Latin word “mandatum” (= commandment). It is the “new commandment” that Jesus gave on the night before He was arrested: to love one another as He has loved us (Jn 13: 34). Maundy Thursday is the most complex and profound of all religious observances saving that of Easter Services: all tied to the theme of remembering: the institution of the Holy Eucharist and that of sacerdotal priesthood, Jesus’ washing the disciples’ feet to illustrate humility and the spirit of servanthood, His agony in the garden, His arrest and the abandonment by His disciples (symbolized by the “stripping” of the altar), the solemn procession of the Blessed Sacrament to the Altar of Repose, the adoration by the people during the night to atone for their sins that caused the humiliation and suffering of Jesus, and to thank Him for His redeeming death.*

*As Jesus and His disciples followed the instructions in the Torah to remember God’s acts of deliverance in their history while they shared the Passover meal together, so Jesus calls us during the Triduum to remember the new act of deliverance by the sacrifice of His own Body and Blood in our history.*

74. “Holy Thursday commemorates the ultimate proof of the love of God who “loved His own to the end.” Having loved His disciples with a passionate love, He loved them till He took leave of them. He loved them to the point of emptying His power, His wisdom and all the treasures of His richness in the institution of the Sacrament of Love on the very night in which one betrayed Him, another denied Him, and all the others forsook Him, abandoning Him alone to the mercy of His enemies.”<sup>72</sup>

75. “*Holy Thursday*, the day of the Mysteries, the most adorable and memorable day! But who thinks about it? It was a splurge and frenzy of love. Poor Jesus, how is He requited! Every CFMSS should be rapt in wonder during that hour when Jesus instituted the Sacrament of Love.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> *Practical Guide*, Chapter XI, Fasc. XXV

<sup>72</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulation for the Novitiate*, Ch.V, Fasc. XXIV

<sup>74</sup> *Practical Guide*, Chapter XI, Fasc. XXV

76. “May a fiery dart fly from the Cenacle and set alight and consume every man and woman!”<sup>75</sup>

### **Good Friday**

*On Good Friday the Church commemorates the passion and death of Jesus. Till the Post-Vatican II Liturgical renewal, all pictures, statues and the cross were covered in mourning black; altar coverings were replaced with black, and altar candles were extinguished.*

*The Veneration of the Cross is a service of great antiquity, which inspired profound devotion. Another service held in the evening was the Office of Tenebræ (Matins and Lauds of Holy Saturday). The Tenebræ was characterized by a series of scripture readings and meditation done in stages while candles were gradually extinguished to symbolize the growing darkness not only of Jesus’ death but of hopelessness in the world without God. The service ended in darkness (Tenebræ), sometimes with a final candle – the Christ candle – carried out of the sanctuary, symbolizing the death of Jesus.*

*Good Friday is a day of mourning, both for the death of Jesus and for the sins of the world that his death represents. The somberness of Good Friday should always be seen with hope of Resurrection Sunday, just as Resurrection is placed against the darkness of Good Friday.*

77. “Under the Tree of Redemption, clinging to its trunk, beside the grieving Virgin, let us sprinkle ourselves with the precious blood flowing from His wounds, and cleansed in His blood let us hide ourselves in His wounded heart never to leave it... To love, to suffer – watched by God alone, should be our sole aspiration for the rest of our life.”

<sup>76</sup>

### **F. Easter**

*Easter has no fixed date, since it is linked to the Jewish spring festival of the Passover which is celebrated at twilight of the fourteenth day of Nisan (Abib), the first month of the Hebrew calendar (Lev. 23: 5). The Hebrew New Year was associated with the vernal equinox occurring on March 21<sup>st</sup>, and the first day of each month began on a new moon.*

*The term “Passover” is derived from the Hebrew verb “Pesah” which means ‘skip by / leap over / spare’. This festival celebrates annually God’s miraculous protection of the chosen people from the tenth plague (Pesach = blow): the destroying angel “passing over” the houses of the Israelites that had their door posts and lintels smeared with the blood of the “unblemished lamb”, while striking down the Egyptian first born (Ex. 12).*

*Since Christ, the true Paschal Lamb, had been slain on the very day when the Jews immolated the figurative lamb to celebrate their Passover (Jn 19: 14 / 31), the Jewish Christians Commemorated the death and resurrection of Christ on 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan, no matter on what day of the week it fell. Hence, the Eastern Christians were called the “Quartodeciman” (= 14<sup>th</sup>). In Rome and Alexandria Resurrection was celebrated on the*

<sup>75</sup>Holy Thursday 1907: Let. to Abbot Lolli, Fasc. 52

<sup>76</sup> (20.04.1892: Let. to the Sisters, Let. 86, Fasc. II b)

Sunday following the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. In 325, the Council of Nicea decided that the Resurrection was to be celebrated in all the Churches on the same day, that is, the first Sunday following the full moon on or after the Vernal equinox. This accounts for the variation in the Easter days from March 23<sup>rd</sup> to April 25<sup>th</sup>.

On Easter day what the early Christians celebrated was Christ's resurrection which encompassed His passion, death and final victory over the powers of hell. Just as Yahweh freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh, the passion and death of Jesus on the Cross not only ransomed humankind from its servitude to the world, but also as Melito de Sardis, a second-century author says, "led us from darkness to light, from death to life, from tyranny to an eternal Kingdom".

The resurrection of Christ – His victory over death that wrought humanity's redemption – is the central point of the Church's faith, hope and proclamation: "God raised Jesus and will also raise us by His power" (1 Cor. 6:14). Every Sunday is the commemoration of the slaying of the true Lamb of God and the Resurrection of Christ.

78. "Today's Gospel presents to us the scene of Magdalene looking for Jesus at the tomb. While the apostles give up their search and return, she continues with her quest and finally finds Him. What an ineffable joy! If you seek Him constantly my dear daughter, you too will find Jesus. Then you'll be able to see things that are not seen, taste what has never been tasted. Be enthusiastic then, go, seek and stay before the tabernacle till you hear your name being called out. Throw yourself at His feet, kiss them, bathe them with your tears and dry them with your love."<sup>77</sup>

## G. Ascension

The Feast of the Ascension of our Lord is celebrated each year on the fortieth day after Easter. In some churches it is commemorated on the Sunday subsequent to the 40<sup>th</sup> day. The Feast commemorates when, on the 40<sup>th</sup> day of Resurrection, Jesus led His disciples to the Mount of Olives, and after asking them to wait for the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit, He ascended into heaven (Acts. 1: 3-11). 'Ascensa' signifies that Christ was raised up by His own power. In the Eastern Church this feast is known as "episozomene" (=salvation) denoting that by ascending into His glory, Christ completed the work of our redemption. The liturgies of the day celebrate the completion of the work of our salvation, the pledge of our glorification with Christ, and His entry into heaven with our human nature glorified.

79. "Today, triumphant over death, Jesus gloriously ascends to heaven. Contemplate His glorious ascension and at the same time be gripped with the experience of the Virgin, the Apostles and Magdalene at the solemn moment. Who can imagine their grief in being deprived of the adorable presence of their Divine Master! And is it too much for us to bear with some distress for the love of Jesus? Even if our afflictions were severe, our pain a successive wave, still they would be nothing compared to theirs.

I already had the permission to pay you a surprise visit, but this morning while meditating on the ascension, I heard a reproof: "Where is your generosity? What has happened to your yearning for suffering? Is five months' separation from your sister

<sup>77</sup> Undated: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 1152,

Fasc. XVIII

too unbearable for you? And Mary? How many years did she spend without the presence of her Divine Son?" Do you follow me? I've been urged by Jesus to forgo my intended trip to give you a thrilling surprise. Quite a painful sacrifice, but I can't deny it to Jesus."<sup>78</sup>

80. "Ascension is a joyous feast because Jesus ascends to heaven in order to:

- 1) Open the gate of heaven.
- 2) Glorify our humanity.
- 3) Prepare a place for us up there."<sup>79</sup>

#### **H. Corpus Christi**

*The Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ is celebrated to solemnly commemorate the institution of the Eucharist on Maundy Thursday. The Feast of Corpus Christi was established in the 13<sup>th</sup> century through the instrumentality of St. Juliana, a Belgian nun of the Augustinian Order. She approached influential persons like Bishop Robert de Torette of Liege and Jacques Pantaleon, the Archdeacon of Liege. Since the Bishops in those days had the right of ordering Feasts for their Dioceses, Bishop Robert in 1246 ordered the celebration in honour of the Sacrament of Love to be held in his diocese every year. Thus for the first time the Feast of Corpus Christi was celebrated in 1247. When the Archdeacon Jacques Pantaleon, later Patriarch of Jerusalem, became Pope Urban IV on August 29, 1261, the Bishop of Liege requested him to extend the celebration to the entire Christendom. On September 8, 1264 Urban IV always an admirer of the feast, ordered the annual celebration of the Body and Blood of Christ on Thursday next after Trinity Sunday. The Office composed by St. Thomas Aquinas, is one of the most beautiful in the Roman Breviary.*

*Theophoric procession honouring the Sacrament of Love and the sacramental presence of Jesus in the consecrated Host became an inevitable feature of the Feast of Corpus Christi.*

81. "The Mysteries being triumphantly carried along the streets of the whole world! Rejoice in the homage being paid to the Eucharistic Lord, our Celestial Spouse and pray for the debauched who always offend Him in the Sacrament of Love, for those agnostic who refuse to know Him, and for each one of us who love Him so little! I think that the greatest pain suffered by Jesus is caused by the coldness of the chosen souls... Join the procession, praising Jesus together with the angels who throng the streets by which the Divine Lamb passes. Whoever can see the angels, will learn to follow Jesus. May your love be a barricade against all sacrileges! As the bell rings out the feast, let the pure flame of your love leap forth: a flame that will never be extinguished!"<sup>80</sup>

82. "The feast of the Corpus Domini, the most beautiful and greatest day! The mere thought of it moves you. The Mysteries! I can say no more. I adore... I sigh... I love! This letter of mine will find you in recollection during which you will experience

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<sup>78</sup> 18.05.1896: Let. to Catherine, Let. 197, Fasc. V

<sup>79</sup> 25.1898: Let. to Cecilia, Let. 281, Fasc. VI – VII

<sup>80</sup> 08.06.1898: Cir. Let. 4, Fasc. VI – VII

through the veil of faith the triumph of the Eucharistic Jesus, and you will increase it with your praises and love. The feast speaks for itself. I adore... I sigh... I love!”<sup>81</sup>

83. “Corpus Domini, the feast of feasts, *the feast par excellence*, is to be celebrated with splendid display in every convent: Exposition, festoons, illuminations, procession etc. There is no novena for this feast, but the sisters should prepare themselves during the preceding days with meditation on the love of Jesus in the Divine Sacrament.”<sup>82</sup>
84. “It is the octave of Pentecost. In the company of the Apostles, the Virgin and Magdalene, let us prepare ourselves for the feast of Corpus Christi with a novena beginning tomorrow, Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> June:
1. Reciting the *Veni Creator* with arms uplifted / palms under the knees.
  2. Denying one’s will / internal acts of mortification / self-denial for the souls in Purgatory.
  3. Being gentle in one’s demeanour.
  4. Smiling at / speaking a word to a disagreeable person.
  5. Doing an act of humility / tidying up whatever is in disorder.
  6. Sitting in an uncomfortable position in the chapel / placing some object of discomfort under the mattress / feet.
  7. Kissing the floor 33 times saying, “Lord, cleanse me from my sin.”
  8. Repeating often, “Jesus, strip me of all that is not yours.”
  9. Thank the Holy Trinity for having gifted us the Divine Son in the Eucharist.
  10. Imploring the Virgin / St. Francis to teach us to love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.
  11. Offering oneself as a victim for the Church morning, noon and at night.
  12. An hour of adoration in atonement for the sins of mankind.
  13. Offering often the Mass being celebrated at the very hour for sinners.
  14. Offering the blood of Jesus / Sacred Heart to the eternal Father for the souls in Purgatory / the sinners.
  15. Visiting a sick person.
  16. Abstaining from useless words / sweets / fruits.
  17. Fasting / Supplementing fast with acts of mortification / denial of one’s will.
  18. Reading the Gospel for a quarter hour.”<sup>83</sup>

## **I. Sacred Heart of Jesus**

*Devotion to the Sacred Heart is naturally directed to the loving heart of Jesus, the heart that has so loved “men and women and yet whose love is often unrequited and rejected by his people. In the Old Testament we see God constantly complaining that His love is despised and ignored by Israel.*

*In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, homage was paid to the wounded Heart of Jesus – the wound in His side symbolizing the wound of love. Devotion to the Five Wounds of Jesus gathered momentum from the 13th century onwards, thanks to the labours of the Franciscans. However, the worship of the wounded heart of Jesus was a private, individual devotion of the mystical order till the mid-sixteenth century.*

<sup>81</sup> 30.05.1899: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 315, Fasc. VIII – IX

<sup>82</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XI,

<sup>83</sup> Culled from the 9 to 33 acts of penance listed for each day from June 11 – 24.

10.06.1889: *Memoirs*: Fasc. XXIX p.41 – 45

*It was in the 17th century that Christ chose Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647 – 90), a Visitation nun to reveal the desires of His Heart. It was His desire, He told her, to make known the wonders of His love and to diffuse the treasures of His goodness. He asked for a devotion of expiatory love, frequent Communion, especially Communion on the first Friday of every month and the observance of the Holy Hour. “Behold the Heart that has so loved men... instead of gratitude I receive from the greater part of mankind only ingratitude.” He asked for a feast of reparation and confided her the task of propagating the new devotion.*

*The devotion became public through the efforts of Jean Eudes (1602-1680) who honoured it with an Office and established a feast for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On August 31, 1670 the first feast was celebrated in Rennes. The feast soon spread to other dioceses in France and the devotion was likewise adopted in various religious communities. In 1856, Pope Pius IX extended the Feast to the universal Church. The Acts of Consecration and of Reparation were also introduced together with the devotion. On June 11, 1899, by the Order of Pope Leo XIII, all humankind was solemnly consecrated to the Sacred Heart.*

85. “The Institution of the Eucharist is the fruit of Love; the Sacred Heart is the seal and symbol of Love, from which is replicated the miracle of Divine Prisoner and the food of souls. All that Jesus has done for the benefit of the wretched, humbled, lost, abject humanity has its origin in the Heart of Jesus. But the Eucharist is the fusion, the compendium of all the wonders.

The Church has placed the Feast of the Sacred Heart as a seal to the Solemnity of Corpus Christi to show that the Eucharist has its culmination in the Sacred Heart. The Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist! Behold the pinnacle of our heart: Our hearts are to be fixed there; if we have to learn how to love.”<sup>77</sup>

86. “Here I am O Jesus, poor as ever at the close of the month consecrated to your Heart! Utterly poor in every single virtue! Fill me with your goodness as I cast everything of mine – both good and bad – into your Heart so that I may be purified and renewed. Amen.”<sup>84</sup>

87. “Here I am at the end of my favourite month – the month consecrated to the adorable Heart of Jesus. How many wonderful feasts have transpired in this month of June: Pentecost, Holy Trinity, Corpus Christi, Sacred Heart, and Peter and Paul! I experienced fresh sweetness everyday – loaded as I was with tenderness that I am unable to express. Each feast brought its respective favours for me. Would that this month extended further, lasted forever!”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch XII

<sup>84</sup> 30.07.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX, p 20

<sup>85</sup> 30.06.1892: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX, p 20

### C. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary

*From the early centuries onwards, the Blessed Virgin Mary was deemed to be a compassionate mediator between suffering humankind and her Son Jesus. This position was supported by the incident of Mary's intercession before Jesus on behalf of the people during the wedding at Cana. (Jn. 2:1-5)*

*The earliest known Marian Prayer is "Mother of God", dating from the second century. (It was discovered in Egypt in 1917, written in the Coptic and Greek languages). The Council of Ephesus in 431 AD, authorized the title Theotokos (=Mother of God), evincing the Virgin's role in the Incarnation of Jesus as the Word of God, and her place in the history of salvation. By the fifth century churches and cathedrals were dedicated to Mary, including that of Ephesus. As early as 540 AD, we find a mosaic in which she sits enthroned as Queen of Heaven in the Centre of the apex of the Cathedral of Parenzo in Austria.*

*The Cistercians exercised an immense influence in the development of the Marian devotion in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, popularizing the salutation Ave Maria and the prayer Salve Regina. In the monasteries the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin began to be recited as a devotional accretion to the Divine Office. The Hymns O Intemerata and Ave Maris Stella, the addition of Marian anthems to Compline, the dedication of the Saturday by special practices to the Blessed Virgin etc., became popular during the period of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. The Litany of Loreto came into common use towards the close of the 16th century.*

*The great stimulus to Marian devotion and shrines in modern times has been afforded by the apparitions of the Virgin in 1858 at Lourdes, in 1917 at Fatima and in 1981 at Medjugorje.*

*In Catholic theology there is a clear distinction drawn between "latria" (=worship / adoration which may be offered only to God), and "dulia" (= veneration / praise). The Church has traditionally accorded Mary the veneration of "hyperdulia", which rests in part upon the angel's salutation, "Hail, full of grace!" (LK. 1: 28)*

*The Protestants do not accept the Catholic dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception (that she was born without original sin) and the Assumption (that her body and soul were taken to heaven). Incidentally, the Quran ranks Mary among the most honoured of women. Mohammad's wife Khadija and daughter Fatima are up in heaven along with Maryam (=Mary).*

The main aim of the devotion to the Immaculate Virgin, according to Mother Seraphina is to:

- Study her virtues, especially those she practised at the house in Nazareth;
  - Place her before one's eyes as the model of the perfect religious; and
  - Obtain the spirit of interior recollection which is the soul of the apostolate.
- [Cfr.1904-05: Second Draft of the Constitution, Art. 15(d), Fasc. 27]

88. "Is it possible to obtain 300 days' indulgence for the ejaculation so widespread among us: 'Immaculate Virgin, grant that my heart and my body may always remain pure!' It has been introduced since long in our Religious Family here in Italy and beyond the seas."<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup>01.12.1904: Let. to Monsignor Bressan, Let. 49,

Fasc. LXVIII

89. “Since the Immaculate Virgin Mary has been the most perfect imitator of her Divine Son, she should be the singular way for the Clarists to go to our Lord Jesus Christ, to imitate Him and to give Him to the people in their venture of abandonment to the Divine Providence, apostolic zeal, love for and practice of holy poverty.”<sup>87</sup>

90. “Whoever loves Jesus cannot but love his Mother. How I wish that every single sister is in love with the most tender-hearted Virgin as St. Bernardine of Siena was! ... Would that every sister loved her and made her loved under the title “Immaculate”, propagating the ejaculation: “Immaculate Virgin, grant that my body and my soul always remain pure”! Let us love her because if Jesus is our salvation, Mary is our hope. Let us get ready for her feasts with a daughter’s heart. Let us enthusiastically celebrate them, above all the feast of the Immaculate Conception, for it is the solemnity of the Patroness of the Franciscan Order: a feast propagated and defended by the Franciscans.”<sup>88</sup>

#### **91. Crown of 15 roses to be offered to Mary in the month of May**

(to be drawn by lot)

1. Fasting in honour of Mary.
2. Visiting Mary’s altar for the conversion of the Indians.
3. 3 *Ave Maris Stella* for the missionaries
4. Abstaining from fruit for the day.
5. Forgoing sweets for the day.
6. Offering a candle with the money kept aside for some superfluous item.
7. Way of the Cross for a person abandoned by all.
8. Bearing with the heat, or other discomforts due to the weather or illness.
9. Refraining from useless speech; repeating often “Hail Mary”
10. Not eating or drinking between meals, however persistent the urge be.
11. 15 minutes’ meditation in addition to the prescribed time.
12. An act of internal and external humility in imitation of the Virgin of Nazareth.
13. Refraining from speaking or reading or listening to some amusing thing.
14. Being affable and benevolent to a disagreeable person.
15. Doing some good acts and mortification after the example of Jesus and Mary who readily observed what the Law prescribed.”<sup>89</sup>

#### **92. Jubilee Year Resolutions**

- “Fast on every Saturday and on the eve of every Marian feast for a year in every community by all those who are healthy.
- Monthly pilgrimage to the shrine of La Madonna del Lago during the year.
- To be fervent in reciting the *Angelus Domini* – the prayer that contains the two profound mysteries of the Incarnation and Mary’s motherhood.

<sup>87</sup> 1904-05: Original Text of the Constitution, Art. 10 Fasc. 27

<sup>88</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XII, Fasc. XXV

<sup>89</sup> 25.04.1901 / 25.11.1892: *Memoirs*, Fasc. LXVIII, p.9/11

- To establish in all the houses the daily recitation of the *Ave Maris Stella* for the missionaries, because Mary is the star of our life.
  - The **Rosary** in common as a specific feature of our institute.”<sup>90</sup>
93. “The Bishop has advised us to say a ‘Hail Mary’ at every chime of the clock as a devotional practice for the month of May. We have decided to fast on every Saturday, and abstinence from fruits for those who can’t observe fast. Besides the above, we do some acts of self-denial picked up at random from the ‘penance-box’. The fioretti (= acts of mortification) for the sisters and novices are different from those of the boarders.”<sup>91</sup>
94. “How delightful it is to be with Jesus, our sweetest Love! How nice it is to lead the little children to Him, the beloved ones of His divine Heart! Together let us continue to praise Mary so that she may send us the life-giving Spirit.”<sup>92</sup>

### **Immaculate Conception**

*The image of the Blessed Virgin as the new Eve was developed by Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyril and other personages of the Patristic era who had strongly advocated her immunity from original sin. The essence of original sin consists in the deprivation of sanctifying grace, and its stain is a corrupt nature. Drawing upon the apostle Paul’s analogy of Christ, the new Adam and the first man Adam (1 Cor. 15: 22, 45-49), whose image we bear, the Father expounded the parallel between the Virgin Mary and Eve. Being the new Eve – the mother of the new Adam, Mary was exempted by the heavenly Father from the universal law of original sin.*

*The Syrian and Greek Fathers based their arguments on the postulate that the conception of the “mother of the Saviour” was beyond all comparisons more noble than that of the prophet Jeremiah or John the Baptist who were sanctified while in their mother’s womb (Jer. 1: 5 / Lk. 1: 41). Hence, it stands to reason that Mary could not have been a “transmitter of the inherited sin” to her Divine Son.*

*Duns Scotus - one of the greatest Franciscan scholars - argued, “God conferred upon her, the state of original sanctity in the first instant of the creation of her soul and its infusion in her body. She was thus exempt from every stain, emotions and passions pertaining to original sin”.*

*In 1263, during the tenure of Bonaventure as Minister General, the Franciscans had chosen Mary under the title of “the Immaculate Conception” as the patron of the Order. Other religious congregations followed suit. In 1476, Pope Sixtus IV had adopted the feast for the entire Latin Church. The Council of Trent held the view that Mary was exempted from the decree which concerns original sin. Besides, the invocation “Queen conceived without original sin” was already added to the Litany of Loreto in the 1840’s.*

*Finally on December 8, 1854 Pius IX defined the dogma: “The most Blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception, by her unique grace and privilege of the omnipotent God, and in consideration of the merits of Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the*

<sup>90</sup> 19.03.1900: Memoirs, Fasc. XXXI, p.45

<sup>91</sup> 02.05.1903: Let. to Sr. Agatha, Let. 611, Fasc. XII

<sup>92</sup> 30.05.1906: Let. to the Sisters at Pianetto, Let. 837, Fasc. XIV

*human race, was preserved from all stain of original sin” (Ineffabilis Deus). And in 1858, the Blessed Virgin herself sealed the proclamation of the dogma with her apparition at Lourdes under the title of “Immaculate Conception”. The solemn dedication of the CFMSS to the Immaculate Virgin was held on December 8, 1897*

95. “Next to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and his Eucharistic Heart – our salvation, the focus of our hope is the Immaculate Mary our most loving Mother whom I have set up as the mother of this Institute. Love her with filial tenderness, celebrate her feasts with love and all possible pomp..., especially the feast of Immaculate Conception – the patroness of the Seraphic Order. Honour her under this title; see that her picture is in every room with the catchphrase: ‘Immaculate Virgin, grant that my body and my soul always remain pure’... Honour her above all with the recitation of the holy Rosary. Propagate this fruitful devotion wherever you go, introduce it in the families, first of all with your own example, reciting it with your pupils, and then with words.”<sup>78</sup>

96. “All united in one heart, let us celebrate with true joy, the sweetest feast of Mary’s Immaculate Conception. Let us draw close to her altar, hug her feet and beg her to bless us in the name of the Father, the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Let us rejoice with Mary for the unique privilege of her Conception. Let us pay our homage of praise and thanks to the august Trinity who chose her as daughter, mother and spouse... and as such preserved her from original sin. O Mary, enfold us in your virginal mantle and give us your faith and ardent love for Jesus!

Let us celebrate this feast with holy joy and uncommon gladness. Let harmonious notes of filial affection and sincere devotion rise from our hearts!”<sup>93</sup>

97. “The Virgin conceived without sin is a great mystery of our holy religion... Let the novena days be a preparation for the Holy Year, which would bring about our sanctification. I want you to do only one thing, to be executed perfectly, that is, whenever the bell rings for the common acts in the chapel, to imagine Mary ringing it, as if we could really see her with our own eyes. How prompt would then our response be? How silent would we be? With what modesty and affection would we stand before her?

Let us celebrate the jubilant feast of the Immaculate Conception in suffrages for our companion whom death has snatched away from us and for the conversion of a particular person.”<sup>94</sup>

98. “During this Year of the Immaculate (1854 – 1904), under her maternal, watchful eye let us strive for our sanctification. Common acts, reading, Holy Hour at least on Thursdays, silence, courtesy, table manners – not calling out to each other loudly, apostolate among the youth, updating our knowledge of catechism and imparting it, recreation in common etc.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> 21.04.1896: Rule for the Novitiate, Ch. V, Fasc. XXIV

<sup>93</sup> 06.12.1897: Cir. Let. 1

<sup>94</sup> 27.11.1899: Cir. Let. 6

<sup>95</sup> 15.02.1904: Cir. Let. 16

99. “To live the life of the Immaculate Mary is to bathe the past in the blood of Christ, to adorn the soul with the choicest virtues and to correspond faithfully to the Divine call.”<sup>96</sup>

100. “What will you be doing during this **Novena** days?

- 1) Take care of the sick as if you saw the Immaculate Mary in each one.
- 2) Be very kind in words and deeds with everyone at all time.”<sup>97</sup>

### **The Rosary**

*The word “rosarius” means a garland or bouquet of roses. Prayer beads were universally familiar to the Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims before the Catholics discovered the rosary. The early monks and hermits used a cord with knots at intervals to count their short prayer, genuflection, or other acts of penance. Those engaged in various forms of work, or were illiterate and therefore unable to join the daily Divine Office used the knotted cords to recite Our Father or the antiphon Ave Maria. Since the educated monks recited the 150 Psalms divided into fifties, those unable to read repeated Ave Maria 150 times.*

*However, only the first part of the Hail Mary was known to them till the eleventh century. Among the Coptic this prayer dated back to AD 600, the second part of the Hail Mary was added towards the close of the sixteenth century. The Hail Mary generally came into use as a formula of devotion only in the middle of the twelfth century, through the efforts of the Cistercians, especially St. Bernard of Clairveaux, as a weapon against the Albigensians*

*The Dominicans propagated the devotion of the rosary. Originally the people commemorated Our Lady’s “Five Joys”. Late in the fourteenth century the Seven Sorrows began to be spoken of. In the course of the centuries, the Rosary took on the modern form. The practice of reciting the rosary everyday during the month of October probably began in early twentieth century. In 2002, Pope John Paul II added the Luminous Mysteries to the Rosary.*

*On September 1, 1883 Pope Leo XIII in his Encyclical proposed the rosary as an effective spiritual missile against the evils afflicting the society. Besides the encyclical, another event that diffused the devotion in Italy was the construction and dedication of the church of Our Lady of Rosary at Pompei, in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, close to the ancient city buried during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. Bishop Polloni, the then Vicar General of Bertinoro diocese, recommended the recitation of the Rosary in common at the Badia. Thus in 1897, the CFMSS introduced the common act of Rosary at the Badia, during the Novena for Annunciation. The filial houses gradually followed suit.*

*“The rosary, though clearly Marian in character, is at heart a Christocentric prayer centered on the principal events of the life of Jesus.” Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae, dated 16<sup>th</sup> October 2002 entrusted to the Rosary, “the cause of peace in the world and the cause of the family”. A prayer for peace for the “family increasingly menaced by forces of disintegration of both the ideological*

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<sup>96</sup> 08.12.1907: Cir. Let. 30

<sup>97</sup> 29.11.1897: Let. to Veronica, Let. 266, Fasc. VI – VII

and practical planes”, and for the world which “witnesses everyday in countless regions of the nations fresh scenes of bloodshed and violence. (RVM. 6)

101. “Honour the Virgin Mary with the recitation of the holy Rosary. Propagate this potent devotion wherever you go. Introduce it to the families, first of all with your own example, reciting it with the pupils and then with words.”<sup>98</sup>
102. “As a souvenir of the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1897, I would like you to initiate the practice of reciting the rosary in the chapel along with the day-scholars. Rosary is a devotion quite pleasing to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Last March Mgr. Polloni introduced this custom here and I have received a lot of consolation ever since. We would like to adopt this practice in all the houses to sanctify our past and to obtain the grace to be holy. To love Mary is to be loved by her in return. Undoubtedly it is a sign of the elect.”<sup>99</sup>
103. “Remember that the Rosary is the Church’s weapon against heretics and unbelievers, and for the Clarists the shield and defense against any want.”<sup>100</sup>

**La Vergine del Lago** (Patroness of Bertinoro city and Diocese)

104. “Tomorrow is the feast of Our Lady of Lake whom I love with all the rapture of my heart. Would that this sanctuary become more famous than Lourdes or Pompeii! Oh that all of us could be around her altar in order to serenade her with songs of praise and love! O that I could see her, the Lady so beautiful, and love her as the great saints did! Yet I do nothing for her and my longing is in vain. Praise her and love her for me and make her loved by everyone with whom you come into contact. On this fortunate day and all through the octave, offer her flowers and fruits of sound virtues and penance so that she may obtain for us the gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>101</sup>
105. “...as you offered yourself to God in the Temple, so in the same way I want to offer to Jesus Christ, through you, this seraphic nest that was born, lives and will expand solely for the glory of God and for the good of our brethren... Countless times I have made this offering and this prayer to you, especially when You stay with us... However this morning I want to do it in a whole new way and enclose this writing within your miraculous image of Our Lady of the Lake! Stay always with us and in us o, Virgin so tender. o, Virgin Blessed, o, Virgin Immaculate! Grant that we may always live in Your sanctuary, and that each one of us becomes a sanctuary of your charity through the purity and love of our hearts, so that it may be said of this place: *Elegi et santificavi locum istum... ut sit cor meum ibi cunctis diebus.* Amen!”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> 21.04.1896: Rules for the Novitiate, Ch. V, Fasc. XXIV

<sup>99</sup> 06.12.1897: Cir. Let. 1

<sup>100</sup> 1904-05: Second Draft of the Constitution, Art. 15(d), Fasc. 27

<sup>101</sup> 18.05.1901: Cir. Let. 10

<sup>79</sup> 21.11.1896: Prayer to Our Lady of the Lake

## CHAPTER III

### Our Fraternal Life

*Religious community – a gift of Holy Spirit, is rooted in the very heart of the Holy Trinity. For the communion of love that binds the three Persons of the Triune God is the model and source of the fraternal communion that must unite the members of a community with one another. The twofold communion with God and with one another is inseparable. Wherever communion with God is destroyed, the root and source of our communion with one another is destroyed. And wherever we do not live in communion among ourselves, communion with the Trinitarian God is not alive and true either...*

*Our community is to be seen as a Sacrament of the Divine Community of Love: the sisters living together in mutual charity manifesting the profound relationships that exist in the inner-life of God. Fraternal love is to be a response to the love of God who not only loves His people but also seeks the strayed ones, bandages the wounded, carries the lame on His shoulders and gently leads the ewes (Ez. 34:16 / Is. 40:11).*

*The love that knits together people of various characters and temperaments, is to spring from God's out-flowing love: the compassionate, merciful love shown even to those who are unresponsive, unlovely, antagonistic: a love that takes the initiative in pursuing those who constantly rebel against Him (Hosea 11:1-9). In such a love – loving "one's neighbour as oneself", even one's enemy (Mt. 5: 43-48) – there is no room for the pursuit of self-promotion, self-actualization, personal security or social recognition – all of which chill relationships and harden hearts. True sisterly love produces a willingness even to sacrifice one's life for another (Jn 15:13).*

*"Loving one another with the charity of Christ, let the love you have in your hearts be shown outwardly in your deeds so that, compelled by such example, the sisters may always grow in love of God and in charity for one another." (Test. Clare: 59)*

*Mother Seraphina's paradigm for community living: **one heart and one soul**, is possible only if our fraternal love is rooted in God's universal, unconditional love. Our way of participating in each other's lives, manifests itself in very concrete ways: in forgiveness, reconciliation, mutual support, solidarity with all who suffer and an ever-increasing concern for people in need. The endless labour of making communion is forged in the daily crucibles of renewed asceticism which draws us to listen to stories of immense loneliness, fear, rejection, abandonment, sadness, brokenness and grief, though only seldom will it be possible to heal a wounded heart.*

*The members of a community drawn together by the same Spirit and brought forth by the same Father (2 Cel. 191), must "be always eager to preserve among themselves the unity of mutual love which is the bond of perfection." (Rule X: 6) Forming one heart and one soul requires a patient learning experience and struggle in order to overcome every attitude contrary to communion: the need to be at the center of everything, the attractions and compulsions that drive us, the hostilities and divisions caused by jealousy, envy,*

*pride, avarice, anxiety and other works of flesh as listed by Clare in the tenth chapter of her Rule (X: 6). It requires us to love our brothers and sisters even to the point of taking on their weaknesses, their problems and their difficulties.*

1. "Community life by itself is a continual martyrdom. It calls for round-the-clock sacrifice, but a sweet one to the Franciscan Clarisses who yearn to make constant reparation in union with the Eucharistic Jesus."<sup>1</sup>
2. "Our sisters are animated by the spirit of prayer, sacrifice and abnegation. There has always been, and still there is, the zealous quest with eagerness to grow in holiness, for observing the Rule and Constitutions in all the details. Simplicity of life, harmony of mind and union of hearts reign in our midst as among blood sisters. I have full confidence in each one of my sisters; and they in their filial affection, keep no secret from me. Closely knit together as one heart they vie with each other to contribute their mite to the Common Pool and the general well-being of the Institute, or a specific community.

The sisters know how to adapt themselves to the harsh conditions in some convents, which in certain localities are just hovels. But Bethlehem and Nazareth were worse. Sisters prefer and look for a cell, but hardly one is found; then they make cubicles of curtains. In the initial stages at the Mission centres and in some foundations here, the sisters used to sleep on the floor, making room for their bedding every night in some corner. Aren't we missionaries?

There is no nurse in any convent, but the sick are given all possible care, sparing no expense. The best room is allotted for the sick under medical advice. In short, we live as in a family where peace and harmony reigns. Mons. Polloni once wrote to us: 'the harmony of mind among you is amazing, rare, and quite unique. Therefore, be assured, your house will endure and become ever more flourishing and fertile. The Lord cannot but bless such a house that mirrors His abode where he lives with the Blessed'

By the special grace of the Virgin there is no factions among us, neither covert fights, envy, nor jealousy, that spoil the beauty of the religious life."<sup>2</sup>

3. "Would that it were said of us as of the early Christians, that we are of one heart and one soul! Oh that our desire to dominate others or to vindicate the violation of our rights might never be the cause to break the bond of Christian peace among our brethren! Meek and gentle, may we ever safeguard the treasure of fraternal charity in all humility and quietude!"<sup>3</sup>
4. "Life in common generates my sweet and pleasant martyrdom which I voluntarily embrace with all the force of my will, because Jesus wants me to do so. Hence, I will

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<sup>1</sup> Nov-Dec 1987: The First Draft of the Constitution, Chapter II

<sup>2</sup> 06.10.1914: Report sent to the Sacred Congregation, Roma, ASCVR – Bricinorien – B. 70 – Terziarie Francescane

<sup>3</sup> 17.11.1892: Mother Seraphina's Prayer to St. Clement, Fasc. LIII

look for every means to foster harmony between the school and the convent, whatever it may cost me. It hurts me to break off my work... to join some common acts... It is really a nuisance... Well, it is through this type of ordeal that I must follow Jesus. He wouldn't give Himself to me if I do not try **to promote one heart and one soul** in the Sacred Heart of Jesus."<sup>4</sup>

5. "Fraternal life is the foundation of a religious community. It is a kind of martyrdom, but precisely an inner one. This ordeal of abnegation should bring about our sanctification. Oh, the beauty of the community life! No one has described you so well, nor has anyone tried how to make me fall in love with you as I am today! You will be my delight, the focus of my study, my treasure."<sup>5</sup>
6. "Life in common ought to be our glory and generous martyrdom that leads us to God."<sup>6</sup>
7. "Heroic charity is acquired in learning to bear with people of all temperament."<sup>7</sup>
8. "I'm very well acquainted with your generosity, rather the extent of your large heartedness. I appeal to your generosity because you know how **to accept persons as they are**, and not as one would like them to be."<sup>8</sup>
9. "God will not abandon whoever trusts in Him. I can assure you that the Good Lord is particularly fond of our community and would sustain it even in difficulties.  
I am happy to note the increasing number of my sisters for the very reason that there will be a corresponding growth in the good that they can accomplish. Greater will our satisfaction be for the good done, if our **apostolate is spiced with some sacrifices**. What is life without sacrifice? It will merely be a garden without flowers, a sky without stars."<sup>9</sup>
10. "There is no class divisions or distinctions among us: neither choir members nor lay sisters, but everyone is a sister in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. Each one is assigned a task according to her aptitude. In our Congregation a person engaged in lowly household chores is no less indispensable than the most learned lecturer."<sup>10</sup>
11. "Let us love like sisters, like friends without any nuance of favouritism which is the bane of community life... Let us restrain our sympathy and overcome our antipathy. Let us see in our superiors Jesus Christ, or the Virgin, or St. Clare and personify some saints in our co-sisters, overlooking their defects, focussing on their virtues and

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<sup>4</sup> 1888: *Memoirs*, Fasc. 29

<sup>5</sup> 20.09.1888: *Memoirs*, Fasc. 55

<sup>6</sup> 23.06.1890: *Exhortations to the Religious Teachers*

<sup>7</sup> 25.08.1916: Let. to a priest at Concecao, Fasc. LV, p.30

<sup>8</sup> 08.05.1897: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 237, Fasc. VI – VII

<sup>9</sup> 06.01.1914: Let. to Sr. Fulgentia

<sup>10</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXI,

covering everything with the mantle of charity, remembering not to speak in their absence what we wouldn't say in their presence. Let there be spiritual love among us, which is a powerful means for amending our ways.”<sup>11</sup>

12. “Let us remember that it is so natural a thing to love those who are good, who love us and help us, who are friendly and nice. But to love the enemies, those who disagree with us, to tolerate, sympathize and bear with the defects of others, to keep their failings a secret, to toil leaving the credit to others, is the real charity that generates a delicious peace. Let us invoke the Virgin at the blessed grotto, especially on Christmas Eve, for that charity by which we learn to hide whatever is not praiseworthy in others, to always see the good in others, and the defects in ourselves.”<sup>12</sup>
13. “Provide the sisters with their necessities. The teaching sisters should be supplied with paper, envelopes, notebooks, pen etc. Be true mothers to them. Every night examine yourselves, because Jesus will ask you a strict account of His Spouses entrusted to you as a sacred deposit.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Silence**

14. “In the Lord's house time is allotted for prayer, silence, recreation, work, meals etc., but everything is oriented towards our sanctification and God's glory... During the hours of strict silence one should not speak except in case of absolute necessity; her voice should be so low as to be heard only by the person spoken to. Silence is the safeguard of internal recollection, provided that it is linked with the stillness of mind and heart. The soul hears the voice of the Spouse in quietness, which inebriates, corrects and teaches her. That is the reason why so many holy persons withdrew into solitude...  
... Except during recreation the sisters shall always observe moderate silence, speaking in subdued tones but without disturbing those who are studying or praying, and never in front of the chapel for due respect to our Celestial Spouse.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Punctuality**

*Punctuality is the quality or habit of adhering to an appointed time. While occasional lateness due to unforeseen circumstances is overlooked, the habitual practice of being late due to lack of concern for being on time can never be condoned.*

*Mother Seraphina insisted on promptitude in the teachers and students alike. She exhorted the sisters not only to make it a point to be on time, but also to edify each other through strict observance.*

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<sup>11</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXVI,

<sup>12</sup> 16.12.1915: Cir. Let. 32

<sup>13</sup> 11.03.1904: Cir. Let. 17

<sup>14</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XVII

*“At the stroke of the bell the sisters should reach the school before the pupils... When the gong is sounded for the Common Acts, the sister on duty should see that there is perfect discipline, silence and order... Example is far more effective than any eloquent precept. For, examples work miracles.”*  
(Exhortations to the Teachers. N.4)

*It is unlikely that one would be late for an appointment with someone whom the person wants to honour. But when we are habitually late for the Common Acts, it may be indicative that we do not give priority to God, but to other things like our personal work, rest, healthcare etc. One who is usually late for prayer is probably experiencing severe backsliding. For no one who genuinely loves Jesus can be late for an appointment with Him without feeling shame and embarrassment. And Mother Seraphina’s key to punctual arrival at Common Acts is prompt obedience to the bell as if it were rung by Our Lady.*

15. “Let us be quite eager to fulfil our duties... At the sound of the bell for the school, or the chapel, or dormitory, let us quickly run as if Jesus is awaiting us there. He really waits for us. Our swiftness is never adequate.”<sup>15</sup>
16. “The natural basis of a timetable is one’s prompt presence and service in the boarding school at the scheduled hour. O my daughter, if you can follow the horarium in the spirit of Jesus Christ, you will work out your sanctification, without which there is no salvation. May the Virgin Mary be always your guide!”<sup>16</sup>
17. “When the bell rings for the common acts, let us imagine Our Lady ringing it. Let us obey it as if we saw the Virgin with our own eyes. How swift then will our response be? How speedy our arrival? How fervent our ardour? To see and to talk to our Mother? O, there should be happiness galore!”<sup>17</sup>
18. “A Hail Mary in common is worth more than a rosary in private.”<sup>18</sup>

## **Recreation**

*Recreation is the employment of time in a particular activity that refreshes one’s body or mind. Relaxation of the tensed body and mind contributes to the quality of life, wellness and satisfaction. Recreation in common with one’s co-sisters drives out the demons of gloom and loneliness, boredom and worries, anxieties and preoccupations. Moreover, research has shown that the use of recreation as a diversion may have clinical applications to individuals with chronic pain and other health impairments. It acts as antidote to stress which is a major factor in many of the leading causes of death including heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, suicide etc.*

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<sup>15</sup> 05.06.1890: Prayers and Acts of Mortification, Fasc. XX

<sup>16</sup> 22.05.1895: Let. to Sr. Cecilia, Let. 10 b, Fasc. LVI

<sup>17</sup> 29.11.1899: Let. to the Sisters of Cesenatico, Let. 346, Fasc. VIII– IX

<sup>18</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XIX, Fasc. XXV

*All the Monastic Rules had prescribed specific hour or days for recreation in common. These leisure times were for conversation, sharing the events and news of the day/week, co-operating in various projects, enjoying one-another's company in fraternal love and thus strengthening family unity. In the monasteries of women, the nuns usually plied their needles knitting or sewing, or crocheting as they listened to each other, or entertained one another with their particular talent. Seraphina wanted everyone to be together during the recreation period, none was to keep aloof. All were expected to enjoy each other's company and togetherness, and build up better interpersonal relationships through shared joys and leisurely pursuits in common. For she knew that with a cluttered, stressed mind nobody can relate affably to persons in situations of pressure and weariness.*

19. "One loves and praises Jesus even in recreation. Jesus is delighted to see us so enamoured of Him during the time when we are not constrained to deny our body its necessary relaxation. Jesus will be the driving force of my enjoyment. I will relax and divert myself in Him, with Him and through Him. And after the pastime, I'll be fresher than ever."<sup>19</sup>
20. "We should participate in the recreation as the saints do; join it as if Jesus were present in our midst. The one who withdraws from it will be entertaining sheer illusion. 'There is a time for everything', says the Scriptures. Therefore, praying and studying during recreation are forbidden. Quite fitting is the aphorism, "A permanently taut bow easily snaps." You can experience it for yourself how you feel refreshed and energised after some diversion...

Nevertheless, recreation is to be done in common. Just as it is forbidden to absent or withdraw oneself from the common pastime, it is not permitted to carry on private talks either."<sup>20</sup>

### **The Enclosure**

*Canon 667 states that while monasteries of cloistered nuns who are wholly devoted to the contemplative life observe papal enclosure, there is to be in all the religious houses some part reserved to the members alone. Each Institute is to develop proper law concerning the cloister in accordance with its specific character and mission. The enclosure is to ensure the sisters' personal privacy and the quiet for their life of prayer, study and leisure. Lay persons must not have free access to the interior part of the convent.*

21. The outsiders should have no access to the part of the convent reserved for the sisters: the dormitory, cells, common room, refectory etc., and as such it should be maintained as a sort of local enclosure. Therefore, at the entrance to the convent, there should be one or more reception rooms for the visitors."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> March 1892, Memoirs: 'My duty as a Principal', Fasc. XXIX

<sup>20</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XVII,

<sup>21</sup>: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXVII,

## The Chapel

22. “The duty of the Sacristan is the noblest for she offers her service directly to Jesus Christ. She should do her utmost to deck the altar. The temple, even if it is of all gold, would be nothing before God. O that all the wealth is poured into the house of the Lord! Utmost decorum, cleanliness, order and aesthetics even in the smallest object used for the worship of the Celestial Spouse. The Sacristan should keep an inventory of all the articles of the Chapel... Would that we Franciscans worked like St. Clare, not only for our own chapel but for all the Churches in the world, and provide them with purificators and corporals that come into contact with the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ!”<sup>22</sup>
23. “Inspired by the largeness of your heart which draws everyone to be fascinated by you, My Lady, I dare to write to you this letter expressing a wonderful idea that struck me the other day. While reflecting on the month of Mary, a dark cloud frosted my mind; a desolate pain overwhelmed my heart and forlornness overpowered my spirit. And why was it so, My Lady? Because I found the chapel of Our Lady devoid of any embellishment. As for the necessary means to secure it, I found none at all. It flashed across my mind to inform you and to implore you to do something about it, consoled by the thought that there are so many innocent children praying in the chapel during this month dedicated to the Virgin Mother. Further, in return for the gift you whole-heartedly will be making, I’m ready to embroider some fancywork that you so desire or need. I do not add anything more, except a heart-felt thanks in anticipation, springing spontaneously from a grateful bosom.”<sup>23</sup>
24. “Tell me frankly for the love of the Virgin Mary, what you would like to have for your church or for yourself, because I do not want to sew superfluous or unwelcome things. It is quite pleasant for us Franciscans of the Blessed Sacrament to work like St. Clare for the Church.”<sup>24</sup>

## Varia

25. “I know that some sisters keep telling even to the laity, that we are staying here at Bertinoro to follow our whims. I’m only sorry for the scandal they give. Whatever people may say, my conscience can attest that I have never spoken ill of my community or superiors even to myself.”<sup>25</sup>
26. “With tear-filled eyes and prayers for the dead, I knock at Your Holiness’ heart to obtain healing for one of our sisters. It is Sr. Veronica – Superior at Ravenna, who got her left eye pricked by the spine of an artichoke on May 26, and suffers terribly despite medications and operations. First the wound, then the infection of the pupil and iris, followed by the protrusion of the cornea. Since October 22, she is in a

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<sup>22</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXVIII,

<sup>23</sup> 19.05.1883: Let. to Lady, Let. 13, Fasc. XXXV (b)

<sup>24</sup> 29.03.1914: Let. to Abbot Lolli, Let. 49, Fasc. XXXIX

<sup>25</sup> 02.09.1894: Let. to the Mother Superior (Forli), Let.10, Fasc. LVI

nursing home in Bologna, where the retina has detached again. We fear the infection might reach her brain.

O Holy Father, speak to Jesus and the Virgin, and our ailing sister will be healed. I do not ask for her earlier eyesight, but that she may be spared the tension of repeated surgical ordeal. Weeping I prostrate at your feet, begging for that benediction that would answer our supplication.”<sup>26</sup>

27. “The 28-year old Sr. Maria Clara of the Blessed Sacrament, seriously ill since 1906, is already given the Last Sacrament. Despite high fever she struggles to observe the Eucharistic fast<sup>27</sup> in order to communicate every morning. I humbly beg you, Holy Father, to dispense her from the fast during these final days so that she can receive Jesus daily. Sr. Maria Clara will be offering her Communion for Your Holiness’ intentions. I beseech, too, a special blessing to sanctify the dying, besides the apostolic benediction on each member of this Franciscan shoot.”<sup>28</sup>

28. “Your Holiness’ unexpected autograph reached here like manna from heaven by express delivery on Wednesday, the 13<sup>th</sup> instant. Needless to describe the joy that radiated from the ailing to every corner of the Badia. Her heart leapt with happiness and excitement at the very sight of the autograph.

I wanted to write immediately, but thought better of it and waited for the doctor to verify the cure. The physician came in the afternoon, and to his surprise, the fever had already left the patient. Yesterday he found her well on the road to recovery. He kept repeating that Sr. Catherine (Farolfi) would have died (of diphtheria) pretty soon.

Well, the benediction has really effected the cure! Mary’s Pontiff obtains what he wishes! Everyone here at the Badia is so excited about it. My younger sister is so overjoyed that she sends St. Michael to speak to Your Holiness what the pen cannot portray.”<sup>29</sup>

29. “When I know that some of my sisters are troubled or distressed, I feel their agony deep within my soul. I wish that each sister tried her best to be at perfect peace with herself, with our Celestial Spouse, within and outside the community and with all those she comes in contact. Let us pray to our departed sisters that they obtain for us from the Virgin the gift of peace – the fruit of charity.”<sup>30</sup>

30. “I’ve had the consolation of having the Lord’s peace reigning in every convent and the great satisfaction of those whom the sisters serve. I recommend my sisters and their hospitals to Your Holiness’ powerful prayers, because I’m so anxious for their safety. We can hear the cannonade even from here.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> 05.11.1911: Let. to Pope Pius X, Let. 14, Fasc. XLIV

<sup>27</sup> See Ch. I, Eucharistic Fast,

<sup>28</sup> 02.11.1907: Let. to Pope Pius X, Let. 6, Fasc. LXXXV, part 1

<sup>29</sup> 15.01.1914: Let. to Pope Pius X, Let. 23, Fasc. XLIV

<sup>30</sup> 19.02.1916: Let. to the missionaries at Agra, Let. 1104, Fasc. XVIII

<sup>31</sup> 19.07.1916: Let. to Pope Benedict XV, Let. 59, Fasc. LXIII

31. “What I have done for you is very little. Be assured that whatever I’ve failed to do is not because of ill will but of incompetence. I would do much more for you, my darling sister. You know well I have a loving nature and help even the strangers...Oh, how pleasant it is to love everyone! I can truly say that I love every sister tenderly. Perhaps I have a weakness for those endowed with a gentle disposition. True, at times I have spoken ill of others, but I tell you, my remarks were in passing. They did not come from the heart. My heart beat for them though my lips were on a different wavelength.”<sup>32</sup>
32. “Whatever be the number of sisters in a house, a pious woman of irreproachable character should be employed as **domestic help**. She should not sit with the sisters at the table. In case of extreme necessity, she can serve the sick sisters. She should be paid every month.”<sup>33</sup>

### **The Nurse**

33. “The sister nurse should have all possible concern for the boarders, the sick sisters and the suffering who should never be made to feel the want of anything for their body or soul. She should see in them Jesus and the Virgin, and in their beds the altars on which they offer their holocaust every moment. Ever gentle and patient, she must pour into the soul of the afflicted persons the secret to earn hidden merit, and to find fulfilment in assisting and serving them.

If a nurse doesn’t possess these qualities, she should humbly renounce her job, because the patients will suffer terribly at her hands. The nurse is responsible for the food, linen and other articles used by the sick. She has to faithfully carry out the doctor’s instructions. Above all else, she should provide them with all moral comforts, keep them serene and surrendered to Jesus and strengthen them to suffer for Him and to thank Him constantly. In order to have the strength to do so, see that they receive Holy Communion everyday.

What a beautiful job is that of a nurse! It is a service of authentic love of Jesus Christ. The sisters are exhorted to visit the sick often during the day and to have the common recreation in their room, if the nature of their malady permits it.”<sup>34</sup>

### **In-charge of the Pantry & Kitchen**

34. “The sister-in-charge of the Storeroom distribute the provisions without any partiality or exception, unless otherwise instructed by the superior. She cannot use anything for herself; neither appropriate nor gift away anything as it violates her vow. She should be economical and keep an accurate account of money received and spent, never holding back the balance with her. Let her stay always with Mary at Nazareth and then she shall sanctify herself, knowing that any little thing done for the Lord is not insignificant in His house.

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<sup>32</sup> Undated: Let. to Sr. Catherine, Let. 1187, Fasc. XIX

<sup>33</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXIII, Fasc. XXV

<sup>34</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXIX, Fasc. XXV

Let the **Sister in charge of the kitchen** devoutly carry out her work, imagining that she, along with Mary, is cooking the meal for Jesus and Joseph. What solicitude will she have if she were to really play host to the Divine Master, as did the blessed Martha! Well then, let her do her utmost to imitate Martha and the Virgin Mother, certain that she is trying to please Jesus. Try to prepare varied and appetising meals. Keep the utensils, dishes and the whole kitchen absolutely clean. O, if you keep the company of the Virgin, you will learn to cook with a sense of cleanliness, economy and good taste.

Those in charge of the refectory, the laundry and other chores should discharge their duties for the love of God, as if they could see Him. He will teach us to perform all our tasks from the noblest to the lowliest and humblest action.

Who doesn't know that the **person in charge of the laundry** is bound to wash properly: to wash on time... without wasting wood and soap, or any other thing? **How will one launder for Jesus?**

That the **one in charge of ironing** shouldn't burn the clothes? That she should not waste coke beyond what is necessary?... That the **person in charge of cleaning** should carry out her work with precision, with love as if Jesus is watching her.

Always remember that nothing done for the Lord is of little worth; it is love that adds value to work."<sup>35</sup>

### **Contribution to the Common Fund**

35. "The share of your contribution has to come from the community's cash box. You are expected to maintain the sisters being prepared for the Agra Mission. What are they going to eat if you don't send any offering? The small change that you set aside each day from your daily expenses will eventually become a neat pile. That is how you pool your resources without any fanfare, even without your own knowledge."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XL, Fasc. XXV

<sup>36</sup> 08.08.1914: Let. to Sr. Fulgentia

## CHAPTER IV

### Our Formation

*Formation is a path of gradual identification with the attitude of Christ towards the Father. Its primary objective is to prepare people for the total consecration of themselves to God in the following of Christ. Formation is a dynamic process, a process that lasts all of one's life: a process of constant growth, of being formed everyday of one's life. It aims at the transformation of the whole person. For it involves the whole person, every aspect of the personality, behaviour and intentions, every aspect of Christian life.*

*God is the educator par excellence of those who consecrate themselves to Him. He is the Potter who patiently models the clay according to the image of His Son. (Is. 64: 7; Jer. 18: 4-6); the Farmer who digs and takes away the stones from the hearts of those in formation (Is 5:2); the Sower who sows seeds in their heart so that they may give fruit in due season. (Mt. 13:23 / Mk. 4: 26-29)*

*The individual religious is the chief protagonist of her formation and holds the key responsibility for her growth, for accepting and making her own all the values of the Franciscan-Clarian life. She is not a mere spectator or passive receiver in the formative process. It is she who has to responsibly assume the dynamism of vocational growth by opening up her life to the action of the Holy Spirit in a continuous conversion in order to follow Jesus with ever greater fidelity. She must allow herself to be shaped by the expert hands of the Potter, and give fruit in abundance (Is. 5:4) through a profound experience of faith and affective adhesion to Jesus – the reason for and the goal of consecrated Franciscan life. She must meet with Christ in such a way that, enchanted by His person and his project, her own values, interests, thoughts, mentality, sentiments, affections, actions and entire life become similar to His.*

**13)** *“You have not chosen Me; but I have chosen you. (Jn 15:16) Jesus has called us; He chose us from among a thousand to serve Him in His holy Church; and we have whole-heartedly followed His ineffable voice, desirous of nothing but His Divine Love. However, the specific aim of this Institute is our own sanctification in the perfect imitation of Jesus Christ, especially Jesus in the most holy Eucharist. What does Jesus teach us from behind the mysterious veil of the tabernacle? **He teaches us immolation, reparation and apostolate...***

*A complete immolation of ourselves to Jesus and with Jesus in the Eucharist, a continuous reparation and an untiring apostolate: this is our objective, the way of embodying the Eucharistic Jesus in us. To live always with Him, in Him, through Him in the ciborium and to make Him live in the hearts of all men as one heart and one soul in the heart of Jesus. Therefore, the life force of the Clarist Franciscans is the spirit of Jesus in the most Holy Eucharist. A life of prayer and contemplation which is not incompatible with the apostolate, an apostolate that does not stand in the way of contemplation.*

*In contemplation one learns the secrets of Divine Love as well as the ways and means to conquer souls for Christ. One can never motivate others to cherish the Eucharistic Lord unless one is truly in love with Him. I am convinced that the*

apostolate of a contemplative person bears copious fruits, while that of a purely active person is sterile. Jesus Himself has set us an example. He dedicated more time to prayer than to activities during his earthly existence. Even during the brief period of His active ministry, He withdrew into solitude for longer time in order to commune with the Father. To live like Magdalene who would not withdraw from the Master's presence even for a second, and to work like Martha to gain souls for Christ. In short, our life and activities should spring from intimate union with our Divine Spouse in the Eucharist. The role of Magdalene is the essence of our vocation while that of Martha its exemplification."<sup>80</sup>

- 14) "A well trained youth is affable and charitable to her companions, sympathises with their short-comings, bears with their bad temper, knows how to return good for evil, and wins the love of all with her pleasant and gentle manners as she goes about giving a helping hand to all. For everyone is charmed and fascinated by genuine goodness."<sup>81</sup>
- 15) "An educated girl retains her gracefulness even at play, and gives up her own preference. The training one has had is revealed more at recreation than anywhere else."<sup>82</sup>

### **Discernment of Vocation**

*The invitation of Jesus, "come and see", is the golden rule for promoting vocation. It obliges the consecrated persons to present by the testimony of words and example, the attraction of the person of Jesus, as was done by Francis, Clare and Seraphina. The youth ministry is the favoured course not only to accompany the young on the path of vocational discernment, but also to guide them to turn their lives into a tale of growing friendship with the Lord.*

*Nevertheless, we shouldn't be too eager for numbers or efficiency and receive all those who knock at our door. A suitable vocational discernment must be carried out in order to verify the authenticity of their vocation and the purity of motivation. We must never lose sight of the fact that the life of the CFMSS is not for all and all are not for the CFMSS life. Numbers will not save the CFMSS, but the quality and specific nature of our life will. Vocational discernment is fundamental throughout the formative process. The religious must on her part, constantly ask, "Lord, what do you want me to do?"*

*Our chief task in promoting and sustaining vocations is prayer and testimony of our life in community, living peaceably with sisters of various temperaments, traits, differences and limitations – persons whom the Lord has put at our side, and cheerfully accepting the hardships and joys of fraternal life. It is in the community that the young discover more and more the person of Jesus and the charism and spirituality of our Seraphic Founders, and are helped to grow in fidelity to the Lord in accordance with the Franciscan–Clarian ideals.*

- 16) "Be decisive and give yourself whole-heartedly to God. To do so, you will have to remove all the hurdles in your way...If you expose yourself to occasions of sin, if you draw near to the fire, how can you not be aroused? Don't be so ungrateful to the

1. Nov – Dec. 1897: First Draft of the Constitution, Ch. I Roma, AGCFM: Institute Documents

<sup>81</sup> *Guidelines for Day Scholars: 1875 - 90*

<sup>82</sup> *Rule for Day-Scholars, p.45*

Lord, love Him with all your heart... He awaits you with open arms ready to press you to His heart saying: "Come my daughter, hide in my heart. I've forgotten all the wrongs you've done to me. Love me and I'll be content." Oh, how great is God's goodness! Who will not be gripped by such love? Love Him, my most beloved daughter, and you'll find true peace and happiness."<sup>83</sup>

17) "Sorry to hear that you are not keeping well. Offer your pain to Him and He will sweeten it. But your illness should not be something that is caused by your shallow reciprocity to God's graces. My dear daughter, you know well that whoever receives should give. You say that you have received the call to religious life. Then you should offer yourself completely to Jesus and love Him totally. O, dear Lucia, begin for once to love that God who alone deserves to be loved. Hope to hear of your speedy recovery."<sup>84</sup>

18) "There are certain times in our lives when our very existence becomes a burden, if not for the comfort of our religion which points out to us a life devoid of all worries – the goal of our most fervent desires. There are moments when charity makes us forget ourselves in order to console the afflicted and we feel happy that we are able to soothe the hearts torn by grief. So is my heart, Monsignor...

The human heart is wonderful, indeed quite amazing! ... I fear, I suffer, I pray. I fear the end result of your niece's vocation. I suffer seeing Anita Bernardi fall a prey to the darkest sorrow. She weeps; asserts that she is called to religious life, declares she wouldn't leave, and if sent out, she would go straight to some other convent without passing even for a moment through the miry waters of Babylon!

I pray that Jesus may reveal to her God's will and strengthen her, lessen your own pain and point out the way – the only unfailing path traced by God in His sublimest plan, by which she may attain heavenly favour."<sup>85</sup>

19) "May the Sacred Heart be the beacon that illumines your mind and inflames your heart! *"It is I who have chosen you"*. These words come from the mouth of the Incarnate Wisdom, the Word-made-flesh. It was spoken to his disciples who represent all those persons called to follow Christ. No, no one chooses Christ; it is He who calls them according to the divine will, to one or the other congregation. He calls some early, some later. Hence, how could I ever call you ungrateful, just because you have opted for a particular Institute, following God's voice which is obeyed by all the elements!

Religious vocation is not in our hands; it lies exclusively with God, and we have to follow everywhere the gentle lure of that grace which pulls us wherever it wishes, whenever and however it wishes. It isn't you, dear daughter, who chose the Congregation of the Pastorene, but Jesus who led you to them... And should I be surprised at it? O my dearest little daughter, would I ever refuse you my affection, my care and concern? ... My thought and warm wishes will follow you wherever you are; and I may even pay you a visit, if your superiors permit it... Don't you wish

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<sup>83</sup> 23.02.1877: Let. to Rosina, Fasc XXXVI

<sup>84</sup> 17.03.1881: Let. to the pupil Lucia, Let.3, Fasc. I

<sup>85</sup> 16.06.1884: Let. to Fr. Giovanni Camaggi, Let. 24, Fasc. XXXV, II (d)

to spend a day here with me before you leave for the convent? I would love it, but it is all right with me if you feel uncomfortable about it.”<sup>86</sup>

20) “The love of Jesus draws you to Him completely, transforming you into His image... I would only be too happy if I could lead you to Jesus. Undoubtedly He will supplement my inadequacy, speaking to your heart and giving you a taste of the sublimity of His love, letting your whole being go into raptures. I fully understand what you mention as “indescribable”. It is Jesus who calls you. Since His voice is quite unlike that of our blood relations, you find it something so very inexplicable. Listen to that blessed voice and when its charm grows stronger repeat like the young Samuel: “*Speak, O Lord, for your servant is listening*”. Invoke the Holy Spirit often during the day reciting fervently, “*Guide our minds with Thy light*” and so on.”<sup>87</sup>

21) “Happy to know you’ve enrolled for the “come-and-see” experience. It could be your first step on the way that Jesus has chalked out for you. Jesus wants you for His own forever. You, fair lily, have to be transplanted in the mystical Seraphic Garden. Cheer up! Be quick and do not hesitate for long, because quite often Jesus passes by calling persons and does not return.

Make a novena of spiritual bouquet to discern God’s will. Besides the acts of mortification suggested by Sisters Nazzarena and Veronica, here is my list: Visit to the Blessed Sacrament thrice a day, Holy Hour thrice a week, prayer to the Virgin Mother, Holy Communion received in a spirit of faith, humility and love, recalling that it is heaven to have Jesus in your heart. Tell Jesus, ‘Here I am, Lord! Tell me what you wish and give me the strength to do it’...”<sup>88</sup>

22) “Well then, you’ll not be here even by the spring? Abraham had only a single child; yet he was ready to sacrifice his son to the Lord. And you? If you become a nun, your family will have what now you can’t even dream of. If we offer ourselves to Jesus, He will take care of us; on the other hand, everything will turn topsy-turvy, if we think only about ourselves...

Remember that the Latin American mission depends on you. There will come postulants who speak only English. If you are not there, how will they communicate?

Do please come, I’m waiting for you, calling you and wishing you to be here.”<sup>89</sup>

### **Doubts/Temptation/crisis**

*Personalized accompaniment demands of the vocation promoters as well as those in charge of initial formation to accompany the candidates / sisters in order to help them respond to that which the Lord is asking of them: to the unconditional giving over of self. They must be able to discern the presence of conflicts and immaturity in the formee, to discover their roots and consequences, to pass from conscious conflicts to the unconscious ones. Accompaniment requires knowing how to help the candidate / sisters resolve their difficulties.*

<sup>86</sup> Eve of Corpus Christi, 1884: Let. to Franceschina Malta, Let. 19, Fasc. 35 (d)

<sup>87</sup> 13. 08.1885: Let. to Emma Baldassari, Let. 30, Fasc. I

<sup>88</sup> 16.12.1896: Let. to Maria Casetti (Sr. Giovannina), Let. 225, Fasc. V

<sup>89</sup> 29.12.1904: Let. to Maria Marin, Let. 42, Fasc. XXXVII

*The sister-companion / formator has to propose the precise model with whom the formee has to identify. This model is Christ and Christ alone, not even Francis, or Clare, or Seraphina – much less the formator. She has to challenge the young to meet the high ideals of a radical following of Christ and the profound demands of holiness.*

- 11) “My little Norina, you shouldn’t let yourself be overpowered by despair, because it highly displeases the Lord. Turn to Jesus in your doubts and darkness and beseech Him for the gift of knowledge and enlightenment which no one else can give you.”<sup>90</sup>
- 12) “Drive away that horrid temptation from your heart. It comes directly from the devil. Do you think that Jesus draws a person to His house, His temple, in order to drive her away? The greatest outrage against God’s infinite goodness that one can commit is to have diffidence in Him. Even if your fault or ingratitude is greater than all the iniquities which inundate the world, a sigh of earnest love is enough to cancel out everything and to call down God’s loving glance on you, the eye of that God who chose you for His spouse, His beloved.”<sup>91</sup>
- 13) “Alleluia! I cry aloud alleluia with all my heart! Would that this alleluia were always in your heart and mind, so that dejection and depression may never again reign in your heart and mind which should constantly be rejoicing in the Lord.

Sweet and mysterious is the joy of the Holy Spirit and solemn the voice of Jesus when He speaks to us words of eternal life. Listen to them, dearest Norina and let your soul rejoice. First and foremost open wide your heart and soul to Jesus, and then to those persons who have to guide you on the path of virtues.”<sup>92</sup>

- 14) “I feel that you are undergoing anguish of body and soul. Therefore, I would like you to reveal to me the state of your soul just as God sees it, without hiding anything – neither the good nor the bad, without any fear of causing me grief... Everything...without delay...I am all yours, yours my dear daughter. Do please open your heart to me, assured that you have a mother who loves you with a strong and tender love, much more than you could ever know. Often during the day I hold you close to my heart, and present you to Jesus in whom I love you. Oh that I could console you! How happy would then your mother be!”<sup>93</sup>
- 15) “Jesus has revealed to me - unless it isn’t a temptation of mine that He wants you to be in absolute solitude this afternoon and tomorrow in a terrifying desert in order to lead you into interior life. Gather these tiny crumbs, my daughter, and place the memory of your vocation in the innermost cave of your heart. May the Virgin Mary be your teacher; and the Guardian Angel your invisible companion!”<sup>94</sup>

#### **Acceptance of Candidates**

- 16) “There is no demand for dowry among the Franciscans. Whoever can afford brings a certain amount of money; those who cannot, lives on alms. There are families that meet the expenses of the Clothing Ceremony and profession; those without means hold out their hands for charity. And Divine Providence lavishes gifts on those who

<sup>90</sup> 12.06.1886: Let. to Nora (the future Sr. Germana), Let. 37, Fasc. I

<sup>91</sup> Undated: Let. to Sr. Germana, Let. 47, Fasc. II

<sup>92</sup> Easter 1887: Let. to Nora, Let. 41, Fasc. II

<sup>93</sup> 1892: Let. to Sr. Bernardina, Let. 62, Fasc. IIb

<sup>94</sup> 09.10.1905: Let. to Sr. Agatha, Let. 790, Fasc: XIV

consecrate themselves to Jesus. As you know, dear Lady, the Franciscans are not afraid of begging for bread, while they offer themselves as holocaust for the good of the youth and burn their lives out either in school or at the bedside of the ailing.”<sup>95</sup>

17) “When a dove seeks to enter the Holy Ark, I eagerly throw open the window and tenderly introduce it into the Cenacle of the Celestial Spouse. Their poverty does not deter me; in fact, I am naturally inclined to give preference to the poor and the destitute. It is precisely to broaden the sphere of my charity and to receive a larger number of disadvantaged adolescents who are solely captivated by Jesus that I welcomed the new entrants. I thank the Lord whole-heartedly for this predilection of mine and implore Him to reward you for having sent the candidate to us.”<sup>96</sup>

18) “You have a good command of the language. I feel you can teach even without a diploma in education. Do you know what crossed my mind? To make you a language teacher of French and English, and even Drawing. Are you interested? We have a gentleman who knows both the languages. He has been teaching the missionaries for quite some time. You can infer from this that I have already counted you among my dearest daughters. Hope you will soon be with us.

In your internal struggles cling to Mary our sweetest Mother on Calvary; recall the example of our Seraphic Founders St. Francis and St. Clare, and be at peace leaving the victory to your Guardian Angel. Be content with £ 2000, if your uncle will not give you more. You can figure out the total expense from the attached list of articles to be brought along with you. Suffice it to say that payment is to be made for the whole period from the day of entry to the first profession. The family has to foot the bill for medicine and treatment for serious illness till the final profession. But there are exemptions to all these, provided that the candidate is really good... Besides the furniture for the bedroom, you may also bring the drawing materials. Cheer up! I love you and pray to Jesus to bring your holy disposition to fruition.”<sup>97</sup>

19) “The Article 12 which states that the lack of money should not be a deterrent to the admittance of a candidate to the Institute of the Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Most Blessed Sacrament, was written under a special inspiration, dare I say it, an inner “dictation” that has never left me. Whenever I receive a poor orphan girl, I am flooded by sweet joy, and Providence steps in from every corner. If I am not mistaken, I can assure you that Jesus wants this mission from us, His least ones. At the time of St. Clare, weren’t the candidates asked to sell all they possessed before entering the cloister?”<sup>98</sup>

20) “Since many a teenager – good and intelligent, but poor in wealth, asks to be admitted to religious life, it hurts me to give them a negative response. I’ve accepted them in the hope that divine Providence will expand the sphere of our activities, inviting us to reach out to the suffering humanity and to bring up the young in the fear of God. It is for this that I dare to offer you the poor apostolate of my poor

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<sup>95</sup> 03.01.1896: Let. to a lady, Let. 13, Fasc. LXXIII (b)

<sup>96</sup> 12.03.1897: Let. to the Parish Priest of Castrocaro, Let. 2, Fasc. LXXII

<sup>97</sup> 16.10.1902: Let. to Leonilda De Lucia, Let. 18, Fasc. LXXIII(b)

<sup>98</sup> 26.04.1915: Let. to Abbot Lolli, Fasc. LII

Institute. In general, one should follow the plan of God, not prevent it; and wont my amiable Spouse find fault with me, he who makes use of me to lead souls to his heart?... To sanctify oneself, to immolate oneself for one's neighbor, this is the aim of the Franciscans of the Badia."<sup>99</sup>

### **Novitiate**

*The novitiate is a very special and intense time during which the novice is called to a deeper commitment and love relationship with Jesus. The novitiate provides an atmosphere and lifestyle and identity based on the CFMSS ideals. During this period the novice is called to a deeper understanding of her divine call, and a change of heart and mind according to the spirituality and charism of Francis, Clare and Seraphina. She also gets to clarify her own motivations and to assess if she is fit as a CFMSS.*

*In the second year the novice gains experiential knowledge of living in community. During these months she learns how sisters live, some of which is "caught" more than "taught". The novice and the community get to know each other and discover if they are a good "match". The novice gives full time and energy to discover the answer to the question, "Is this my call and is it worth my whole life?" At the same time, the community considers, "Will this new member help take us into the future, while knowing, understanding and living our Eucharistic-Missionary charism and history?"*

20) **"The Novitiate year**, as St. Leonard says, is a holy year, a year of grace and divine favours. A year destined to prepare, layout and tend the heart's mystical garden so that the Bridegroom may find a worthy dwelling therein. All the glory of the King's daughter lies in the interior. The soul whom Jesus has chosen from among a thousand, puts all the efforts into making herself fit for the Celestial Spouse... In the measure of her fidelity in trials, she will receive grace, help and sublime divine love as prelude to that ineffable sweetness which will fill her heart when she will be espoused to her Beloved.

Time is short, just one year. Therefore, she needs to treasure every precious moment. Consider it as if the Holy Spirit were directly addressing each one of the Novices: "See that you do not lose even a tiny particle of the gift", that is, the opportunity that the Lord in His infinite mercy has granted you for your sanctification. The Novice should remember that she is betrothed to Jesus and therefore, she should glory in dwelling interiorly, listening to His voice and keeping Him company. With Jesus and for Jesus, it is easy to follow the rules, observe silence, do one's duty, continuously cleanse our hearts of evil tendencies and thereby grow in virtues. It is rather too little for a faithful lover who lives exclusively for the One who has elected her and who wants her totally for Himself without any restraining forces.

She enters the novitiate with a generous heart and open mind, saying with all her heart: "Here I am, O Jesus! Do with me whatever you wish. I only ask you for the grace to make me worthy of your love."... If at times human weakness or the evil one tries with all his means to wreck her peace, or stop her midway along the path, or make her feel the journey to be so arduous, she will recall the words of the Divine

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15) <sup>99</sup> 01.07.1896: Let. 32, Fasc. XXXVII

Master: “The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent are taking it by force” (Mt. 11:12). She will keep before her eyes her Celestial Beloved climbing up Calvary laden with the cross, the intense moments of His excruciating Passion, and however human nature may kick against, she will be glad to keep company with her Crucified Love, fully aware that the lover makes her own the joys and pains of the Beloved. A look at the Seraphic Father Francis and she hears the living image of the Crucified exclaim: “So much happiness awaits me that every pain is delightful to me.” Similar considerations will set her alight with the yearning to suffer, and she will entreat God for it, knowing well that true love springs from suffering. In the school of affliction she will acquire strong generous love – the love that generates martyrs, confessors and virgins”.<sup>100</sup>

- 21) “The unique purpose of the novitiate is to form the interior of the novice; and the sole aim of the novice is her own sanctification. Since the novitiate year is set aside for the training of the spirit, she should be busy with matters pertaining to God, eternity, her perfection etc. Therefore the novice, for whatever reason, cannot pursue any academic studies, undergo any training, teach in the school, or be employed in any capacity that will distance her from her solitude even for a moment. However, she has to attend to all the household chores like cleaning, washing, ironing, cooking etc... She should take care to be neat and systematic in doing her tasks. External neatness is the index of interior orderliness...

According to the timetable, the novices shall daily study Catechism, the Gospel, Bible history, Church history etc. They can devote time to calligraphy or drawing, or improving their reading and writing through the perusal of spiritual books... For God’s sake, be on guard against laziness – the breeder of every vice or temptation. Be always occupied like the Virgin of Nazareth. In every work, she should apply herself to following the science of the Saints, and knowing herself: her character in order to be remodeled, her heart so that it may be probed, her spirit so as to be refashioned during the visit of the Spouse that she experiences in the soul’s intimate interaction with God.”<sup>101</sup>

- 22) “The novice shall always find in her Major Superior the tender heart of a mother, the affection of a sister and the loyalty of a friend. Therefore, she can always run to her in her spiritual and material needs, open her heart to her, reveal her aches and temptations, sure that the Mother will weep with her in her grief, rejoice with her in her joy and call the moment blessed in which she can help the daughters by her tender love. Indeed, blessed the moment when the souls of her daughters melt into one with that of the Mother so as to form one heart and one mind in the heart of Jesus! It is to be understood that the novice has the full freedom either to reveal her conscience to the Major Superior or not, while the Mistress of Novices and the Superior General are to account only for her external actions. Hence, revealing one’s state of soul is an invitation - not an obligation, to whoever feels the need to seek her counsel and find assurance.”<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulations for the Novitiate*, Fasc. XXIV

<sup>101</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulations for the Novitiate*, Ch. XIV, Fasc. XXIV

<sup>102</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulations for the Novitiate*, Ch. IX, Fasc. XXIV

- 23) “The novices isolated from everyone and everything, live as one heart and one soul, though different in character and hail from diverse families, towns and nations. The strength of one complements the weakness of the other and Christ’s love supplements everything. Therefore, the novices should specifically strive to be together in the dormitory, at recreation, in the classroom, always and everywhere. When urgent necessity compels one to be alone, she should feel the sacrifice of being away from others, while her heart-felt need is to stay together. Then they will taste the sweetness of living together after the example set by Jesus: “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”<sup>103</sup>
- 24) “As the novice wakes up in the morning, she raises her mind to God, saying with the Prophet David, “Lord, my God, I watch for you at daybreak.” She expresses her love for Him and unites herself to all the priests offering the Sacred Host to God in that very moment. Her heart flies to the tabernacle and whispers words of love to the Eucharistic Lord... She then repeats, “*Today is the first day I serve God; it could as well be my last. What would I not do to please Him!*”<sup>104</sup>
- 25) “The day I must leave the novitiate is close at hand. I cannot leave it behind, my dearest sister, without giving you a keepsake: -
1. Perfect observance of the Rule
  2. Blind obedience: prompt and joyous
  3. Due respect to the superiors, seeing in them Jesus Christ. Therefore, never criticise them but love them always.
  4. Charity towards all: a charity that is sincere, prudent and able to bear with everyone.
  5. Pray to the Lord for the spirit of self-denial. Hence, ever remain in the presence of God and do acts of love.
  6. To consider the day lost in which you do not give time to mental prayer”.<sup>105</sup>
- 26) **New Name:** “Having been given the new name of Caterina, resolve to walk in the footsteps of that great Saint, and you too will earn the kiss of the Bridegroom. Who knows if Jesus hasn’t purposely inspired you to choose this name? Happy you will be if you strive to become the beloved of your Spouse as was St. Catherine, and I’ll never stop praying to this end. Follow the inspirations that come from God.”<sup>106</sup>
- 27) Taking the Veil:** “By the very fact that you’ll be laying aside your dress and putting on the sacred habit, resolve to divest yourself of your self-will and offer it to your future Bridegroom. Girding your loins with the cord, heartily embrace obedience; and covering your head with the white veil, treasure purity and modesty and make them your faithful companions till death... Oh the Sacred Mysteries that draw us to the Most High! Oh the joys that the worldly ones can never experience or understand! Fortunate are we to be made partakers of such a happy lot!”<sup>107</sup>

<sup>103</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulations for the Novitiate*, Ch.XV, Fasc. XXIV

<sup>104</sup> 21.04.1896/ 16.03.1901: *Rules and Regulations for the Novitiate*, Ch. I, Fasc. XXIV

<sup>105</sup> Undated: *Memoirs*, Let. to Sr. Catherine, Fasc. LXVIII, p.6

<sup>106</sup> 15.10.1876, Let. to Gianina, Let. 1180, Fasc. XIX

<sup>107</sup> 17.10.1876: Let. to Jannina, Let. 1179, Fasc. XIX

- 28) “Detach your heart of all creatures if you want to build therein a temple for the living God. He is a jealous God and wouldn’t like to be denied even an iota of what is His due! ... On the other hand, does this pretext, this question of yours come from the inestimable love that He has for us? Hence, watch over the movement of your heart so that everything may be of God, that nothing frightens you, and that your heart may be always united to our gentle Spouse. Enter often into your inmost being and carry on your conversations there...”<sup>108</sup>
- 29) “Your letter indicates that you are having an attack of the blues. Drive out the gnawing melancholy. Whenever you feel sad and forlorn, run to the Eucharistic Lord and pour out all your troubles to Him and you will find happiness galore. Trust me when I say from experience (since I have been and am still loved by many; and even in my quarantine periods I have had a lot of visitors), that ‘our hearts cannot find rest unless they rest in God’. How foolish are we then to run to creatures for help! Let us fix our minds on more noble and worthwhile things.”<sup>109</sup>
- 30) “Remember always that you are a bride of Jesus. You should make use of every means to please your Divine Spouse. May modesty and dignified demeanour safeguard your heart, which should be a permanent dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. ... See the Guardian Angels standing by your young pupils. Pray to them to supplement your shortcomings and help you engrave the sweet name of Jesus in their tender innocent hearts”.<sup>110</sup>
- 31) **Perseverance:** “Think of walking on the path that leads to heaven. How do you go about your spiritual exercises: Holy Mass, Holy Communion, meditation, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, interior silence etc.? Come on, begin in earnest, feeling ashamed that a bride of Jesus Christ has to be goaded on to love her divine Spouse. Suppose Jesus takes away your vocation and gives it to someone more faithful? Meditate on it and tremble...”<sup>111</sup>
- 32) “You shouldn’t brood over the past, dear daughter, except to pray to Jesus to reveal your failings and to make you abhor them so as to refine your soul instead of burdening it ... I must say your conduct leaves much to be desired. You seem to be feeding your ego, thinking only about yourself and looking down upon others. I hope your inner disposition is different, but your external behaviour affirms that you like to be above all the others, without any concern for building up union, which alone can accomplish things great and sublime... I want you to become what I wish you to be. I wish that everyone be happy with your behaviour, and that Jesus alone reigns in your heart – Jesus who wants to see all of us gathered into one with Him”.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Undated: Let. to Sr. Catherine, Let. 20, Fasc. I

<sup>109</sup> Rimini: 10.10.1876, Let. to Gianina, Let.1178, Fasc. XIX

<sup>110</sup> 13.06.1893: Let. to Sr. Cecilia, Fasc. III

<sup>111</sup> 23.02.1898: Let. to Sr. Cecilia, Fasc. VI - VII

<sup>112</sup> Undated: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 91, Fasc. II b

## Preparation for Profession

- 33) “I’m terribly sorry to hear that you have been feeling sad and forlorn during the past three days. Why? ... During these days of your novitiate – just before your grand Nuptial, prepare yourself to welcome Jesus with intense love. Believe me, beloved sister, as St. Francis de Sales says, perfection does not consist in fasting or penance but in the love of God and one’s neighbour.”<sup>113</sup>
- 34) “The happiest date on which you’ll be espoused to the Celestial Love, to the divine Bridegroom, is fast approaching. Blessed day! Propitious moment! I beg you, prepare yourself with the utmost fervour for such a solemn act. Make the best of these priceless days to grow in perfection. Day and night think of your consecration, of your future Spouse. You’re lucky that there is nothing to distract you during these days. But me! I have never had so many grounds for distractions as in the days prior to my betrothal. I approached the holy altar without ever reflecting on what I was about to commit myself. Would that I could cancel that day and cause it to be dawned again! You shouldn’t be worried that our dear ones will not be present at your profession. I repeat you’re indeed fortunate because their absence will bring you a lot of grace. I assure you, if I were to profess at this moment, I would look for all the ways not to have anyone present on this heavenly day.”<sup>114</sup>
- 35) “Why should you think we have forgotten you, instead of recalling all that we’ve done for you and the unchanging nature of my heart? God alone knows how often we have spoken about you with persons near and far! Everyone is concerned about your health. But whoever is at the helm of affairs will have to rise above her personal feelings and work for the general wellbeing.

It is at the most sacred dictate of conscience that I have sent you home, and still keep insisting that you remain there till you’re completely cured. I’m being quite frank with you and you’ll think over what I say before you mope around. I’ll be happy if you stay at home till the spring because only by then can we be sure that your chest is clear. But if you don’t feel like remaining at home, if you’re convinced that your bronchial tube isn’t affected, that there is no lesion, and if you’re sure that the severe winter will not be harmful to you, I’ll only be too glad to have you back soon among my daughters. But if you have a relapse and the doctor certifies that you have chest infection, I’ll have to send you back home again. If not, the Education Department will close down the Boarding and Day School. You see, my plight is much worse than yours.

If you wish, I can send you to Bagno...The doctor here doubts that you are suffering from tuberculosis, and even if you are not, he will refer the matter to the health officer and then you’ll have to be sent home. On the other hand, the doctor at Bagno isn’t so prejudiced. He will give you all possible medical help.

Besides, the air there is salubrious. When I was at Bagno during a winter, I could get up early without any coughing fit. I never needed a heater. If you are keen on going to Bagno, let me know the date and time of your arrival at Cesena. Sr. Giuseppina will be there to escort you to the stagecoach that plies directly to Bagno.”<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> 09.09.1877: Let. to Giannina, Let. 1184, Fasc. XIX

<sup>114</sup> 10.10.1877: Let. to Giannina, Let. 1185, Fasc. XIX

<sup>115</sup> 23.11.1902: Let. to Sr. Modesta Mazzatti, Let. 1258, Fasc. LIV

## The Evangelical Counsels

*By the vows of consecrated celibacy, evangelical poverty and prophetic obedience, the religious create an alternate world which, on the basis of the Gospel, prophetically challenge the power of the Prince of this world. Each vow gives a specific response to the great temptation of our time: the lust of flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. The three vows touch the human person at the level of the three essential spheres of her existence and relationships: affectivity, possession and power. Through the profession of the evangelical counsels made in the Church, the religious wishes to be set free from hindrances that could hold her back from loving God ardently.*

*Chastity as a manifestation of dedication to God with an undivided heart, is a reflection of the infinite love which links the three Divine persons. The single-minded love helps the religious to control and to master her sexual impulses, and to be open to others without any thought of domination or exclusiveness. Poverty proclaims that God is her only real treasure, while obedience shows the liberating beauty of imitating Christ whose food was to do the Father's will.*

*The faithful exercise of these counsels – on a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week basis – fosters the development of the person, spiritual freedom, purification of the heart, fervour of charity, and helps the religious to co-operate in the construction of a just human society. “The vowed life truly constitutes a living memorial of Jesus’ way of living and acting as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren.” (VC. 22)*

36) “I espoused myself to Jesus with the three vows: Jesus whom the angels serve. Should I then content myself with being inferior to those who serve Him? I would renew my vows every morning after Holy Communion. I wish to repeat it at every breath, at every respiration. I would kiss the Crucifix every now and then because the three bonds of Love are my glory and true joy... A religious has nothing of her own; she should disown the relatives and friends who induce her to break the vow of holy poverty, and be absolutely wary of indulging in vanity of gifts.”<sup>116</sup>

37) “As Jesus Christ continuously immolates Himself and lives in the tabernacle as the Sacrificial Victim, so too the CFMSS should offer herself as a victim to her Celestial Spouse and make an irrevocable solemn sacrifice of her whole being to him with the triple vows of poverty, obedience and chastity. By the vow of **poverty** she renounces all that she possesses and may possess in future, and as a poor mendicant receives in charity the necessities of life from the Congregation. By the vow of **obedience** she sacrifices her self-will – the inestimable God-given gift of freedom. Henceforth nothing exists for her but the will of her heavenly Spouse, in doing which she finds all her delight. By the vow of **chastity** she consecrates her soul, heart and body to Jesus Christ. With such consecration, her whole being becomes solely and totally of God, which she has to respect and preserve not as her own, but as God’s own property.

In a word, with the vows one sacrifices what one has, what one is and what one can. Whoever really grasps the essence of this consecration can see that she certainly

<sup>116</sup> 06-08 March 1881: *Method of Life*, Fasc. XXIX

offers herself as a sacrifice along with the Eucharistic Jesus. For, as St. Cyprian says, a virgin consecrated to God leads a hidden life, while with the sweet fragrance of her virtue, she draws people to follow and love Jesus Christ.

O my Jesus, make these handmaids of yours to grasp the preciousness of this triple sacrifice!"<sup>117</sup>

## Poverty

38: "Poverty is the hallmark of the Seraphic Order and we should strive to uphold the ideals of our Seraphic Father. Let the Institute have no possessions except the plot of land required for seclusion and privacy and a garden for vegetables. Let the sisters live on Providence making use of those means supplied by the charity of the faithful, the school, their works etc. We shall lack nothing if we have perfect faith in the unfailing bank of Providence.

Neither the Mother, nor the Local Superiors, nor the sisters shall run into debt – not even of a lira. When there is no coin left in the house to buy food or other necessities, run to Jesus and after praying, appeal to the person whom He inspires and express your needs. And then thank the Lord if He makes you still feel the pinch of poverty. You will knock on all the doors till you find help for the sick because they should never be made to suffer the want of anything...

All the proceeds from whatever source – alms received, fund collection, articles gifted by parents or others, donations etc. – should be handed over to the superior... Materials for study and work should be placed in common and those in charge of various departments should not appropriate anything for themselves, give away, purchase, or sell, or commute without prior permission... The local superior should not spend more than the sanctioned amount of money on food, clothes, gifts etc... It is forbidden to lend any sum to any person...

Nevertheless, exterior poverty is of no use without true poverty of spirit. We acquire interior poverty through expropriation - acts of holocaust along with Jesus."<sup>118</sup>

## Chastity

39: "I beg you on my bended knees not to entertain personal relationships – either internal or external; let your heart always be exclusively for Jesus. Let the Rule be your sure norm, the superiors - your true and faithful friends – the trustee of your spirit, and your avowed aim the eager fulfilment of the mission entrusted to you."<sup>119</sup>

40: "We should go to bed with the kiss of God and not with that of the creatures... Seek the advice of Our Lady of Good Counsel in acquiring modesty – the means and safeguard for preserving purity of body and mind. O Chastity that makes us similar to the angels!"<sup>120</sup>

41. "Do not touch, or allow anyone to touch you, be it the children, the sisters, lay persons, or priests. Do not confide anything in them, or be swayed by sympathy. Do

<sup>117</sup> Nov- Dec. 1897: The First Draft of the Constitution, Rome, AGCFM – The Institute Documents / Cf.

*Practical Guide*, Ch. XVIII,

<sup>118</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXIV,

<sup>119</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXVII,

<sup>120</sup> 19.04 / 26.04.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX, p.11

not stay alone with men or priests, nor write secret letters. I blush to write about such things. Do you believe me? But then, can a person who has left the world behind and chose Jesus as her Spouse commit perjury? My blood congeals at the very thought of it and I can hardly continue writing. For Jesus' sake let there be no perjurers among us! ... Unfortunately, if someone's heart keeps wavering, then let her run to the Mother. Who else can help her steady it? Bare your soul to her; it is the only means for not falling into the abyss. If one's heart is not given totally to Jesus, the **religious becomes a viper** in the consecrated life and it is better for her to leave it.”<sup>121</sup>

### Obedience

42: “My religious spirit urges me to abandon myself to the sweet will of Jesus without choosing one or the other thing, indifferent to places and conditions but with the sole desire to strive for holiness through the means acceptable to JESUS. Since the essence of sanctity consists in the fulfilment of divine will which I can know only through you, who directly represent Jesus for me, I beg you to tell me without reserve what God wants of me...”<sup>122</sup>

42: “Does it please God to test our faith? Well then, let us give Him proof of true generosity in abandoning ourselves to Him totally and completely. His will always! Let us hide ourselves in His heart and repeat: “Here is our dwelling place. We wish to live in you, with you, for you, desirous of nothing but doing your will and to love you always, joyfully and gladly testifying our faithfulness to you in every adversity.”<sup>123</sup>

43: “I wouldn't grant you the permission to wear cilice (=iron chain). Instead of this penance, seek permission (which will be more difficult for you, but more meritorious) from Sr. Nazzarena every time you give / receive anything – even a holy picture – to/from an outsider, be it a day-scholar, priest, lay person et al.. Do not jump to the conclusion that Sr. Nazzarena has informed me about it. I tell you, the idea flashed across my mind when I prayed for you.

Again, ask for her blessing every morning and evening, however repulsive you might feel. On your bended knees ask for permission to change your clothes. Such acts will give you victory over your temptations.”<sup>124</sup>

44: “I feel that you should have come here leaving me to face the consequences. Your quick departure even at the risk of losing the school would have been a more heroic act, and Jesus would have rewarded it in His own way. Besides, your obedience would have taught the young a lesson on the value of the Vows... You say that you couldn't leave because of your responsibility, but the one and only duty is to dash off to where obedience calls you”.<sup>125</sup>

45: “My daughter, to obey when everything goes well is no obedience; but when we see no reason, when we are assailed by sudden doubts and oppositions, yes then it is true

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<sup>121</sup> 21.02.1905: Cir. Let. 23(first part)

<sup>122</sup> 05.11.1889: Let. to Fr. Canali, Scritti LVIII

<sup>123</sup> 15.07.1887: Let. to Emma Baldassary (future Sr. Bernardine), Let.43, Fasc. II

<sup>124</sup> Bagno: 12.12.1892, Let. to Sr. Bernardina, Let. 6, Fasc. LVI

<sup>125</sup> 09.01.1915: Let. to Germana, Let. 1052, Fasc. XVII

obedience. You have misgivings because you've been raising questions about obedience. You should have obeyed blindly and promptly. Remember that you can never please the creatures; for whatever you do, they will continue to remain dissatisfied. Obey without worrying about other people. What does the whole world matter to you, when you strive to please God? Don't you work solely for Him?"<sup>126</sup>

46. "You have all the reasons to **be grateful to Jesus** for all the countless graces He has bestowed on you and continues to shower upon you. You should repay His gifts with pure faith, chastity, ardent love and an unblemished life. Your faith will be deep if you gaze upon Jesus with an unquestioning mind. Your life will be spotless if you consecrate your innocent heart to Jesus now and forever. Your love will be fervent if you have Jesus in your mind and heart, spirit and soul, thought and affection, desires and aspirations, longing and yearning for nothing but Jesus Crucified.

Be quick, do not delay... Love Jesus... Love Him often... Love Him a lot. Offer yourself frequently to Jesus as a victim and close yourself in His adorable heart, beseeching Him to wound your heart with His Love. Pay attention to His whisperings and for Heaven's sake, do not let a single inspiration slip by; in it rests your greater and smaller progress."<sup>127</sup>

#### **Faithfulness**

47. "O Jesus, you alone are my portion, my joy, my everything, now and for ever more! By your name so powerful and holy, grant me perseverance in your service, fervour in your love and total transformation into you. The sole longing of my heart is that every human heart be possessed by you and wholly consecrated to you in order to thus atone for its numerous faults and failures."<sup>128</sup>
48. "Whoever is negligent in small things show lack of spirit and can do hardly any lasting good."<sup>129</sup>
49. "Once again I exhort you to keep custody of heart, i.e., fidelity to your most loving Celestial Spouse. Let it never happen that I would be forced to drive out of the house one of my beloved daughters! I would die of grief. Remember that I do not abuse your affection, and you should not betray my trust in you. Such betrayal will be more diabolic than human. The Sacred Congregation alludes to the faults of the religious for which the Major Superiors are bound to dismiss the guilty ones, even those Perpetually Professed. Remember that I have the heart of a mother, not that of a Superior."<sup>130</sup>
50. "I would never have done what I did, had I ever dreamt that there could be sisters who would not be living solely for Jesus. I believe that sisters ought to live as is expected of them: of Jesus, with Jesus and for Jesus. Do pray and strive to be saints and you will find lots of opportunities for growing in holiness."<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> 22.11.1900: Let. to Veronica, Let. 432, Fasc. VIII – IX

<sup>127</sup> 05.03.1885: Let. to Emma Baldassari, Let.29, Fasc. I

<sup>128</sup> 14.01.1884: Seraphina's Prayer to the Most Holy Name of Jesus, Scr. LIII

<sup>129</sup> 25.03.1903: Cir. Let 14

<sup>130</sup> 23.03.1905: Cir. Let. 23 (second part)

<sup>131</sup> 05.04.1907: Let. to Sisters at Meerut, Let. 872, Fasc. XV

51. “It hurts me that I always have to remind, beg and entreat you to celebrate the feasts of Corpus Christi, the Immaculate Conception, our Patriarch St. Francis and our Seraphic Mother Clare! Shouldn’t it be a heart-felt need? ... I must tell you that I still hold on to the principle that the **sisters should strive for their sanctification by choice; not by force but out of love.**

I feel that we have become utterly tepid; we pray very little and pray badly too. We neglect the Divine Office on the pretext that there is no time, whereas in the early years there was great enthusiasm in praying the Office though there was a lot of work to be done. We adopted the **recitation of the office** with full votes; and not being satisfied with an hour of meditation, the **Holy Hour** was also introduced. Where has gone that competitive fervour in the service of the Spouse? Without prayer, our work does not become apostolate, but a mechanical activity and more often than not, mere affectation.

I fear that among us there is no more that old love for the Institute, which forges all the hearts into a single one. Perhaps one is not gripped by the obligation to work, by that inner flame which feeds one’s activity: work that is extended and incorporated into the service of the Universal Church with the help of every single member. It seems that whatever ought to have been sprung spontaneously from the core of one’s heart is done out of compulsion, or just to please the Superior.”<sup>132</sup>

### Exclaustation

52. “After praying the whole night, I got an inspiration to turn to Your Eminence for a matter quite unusual in our Institute. The 24-year-old Sr. Teresa of the Mysteries (Zarattani), a finally professed religious since August 12, 1902 lost her mother on June 9, 1905. In the month of March her youngest brother fell seriously ill and she was sent home to nurse him back to health. The child is almost dying and the father has suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed. The Zarattanis has become a house of sorrow. Sr. Teresa, the only daughter and woman in the family, is torn by anguish with her heart divided between the convent and her folks. She requests me if she could be allowed to continue tending her ailing father and brother.

The eldest son was in the third year of theology, but had to break off his studies as his young brother was on and off at death’s door. On 4<sup>th</sup> instant, he left for the seminary since he has to sit for an examination, but any time he may be called back, as the boy is sinking fast. He would have celebrated his First Mass next year.

Now my question is what should I do? Has there been a similar case elsewhere, and permission granted? Should I ask her to return? It would be inhuman, as it has been already pointed out by some. My heart recoils at the thought of leaving that grieving family to fend for itself, while we go out to assist the sick in the families that ask for our help. But at the same time I am at a loss, not knowing the will of God. Since you are the Pope’s Vicar, your word can really convey God’s will.”<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> 21.02.1905: Cir. Let. 23(first part)

<sup>133</sup> 09.10.1906: Let. to Cardinal Vicar, Let. 39, Fasc. LVIII

## Departure from the Institute

53. "I do not hide from you the fact – rather I repeat what I've already told you earlier – that no grief can equal mine for having granted you the permission to go on an alms-seeking errand. You assert so strongly, "If I hadn't found the place, I would never have thought of it." You found the place because I granted you so much freedom. Had you joined the Institute before December 15, 1904 and had you not gone for seeking alms, things would have been quite different.

Pray and make others pray for you so that Jesus may soften the pain springing from the notion that it isn't God's will but the result of the advice given by those who were not in authority: the conviction that you could have walked the path of holiness on which Jesus had tenderly led you by hand, and certainly not becoming a Capuchin Franciscan through stealth and deceit. One day you'll remember these words of mine. Goodbye! Forgive me for whatever imperfections you found in me and in the community. Cast every secret into the Divine Heart, everything I've confided in you as to my own sister who would never have left me. Remember that I have cancelled out all that has passed between us. I forgive you wholeheartedly all the subterfuge, bitter disillusionment, betrayed confidentiality etc., and wish you all the best. I love you as I've loved you till now, even more if possible. You can count on me in your need; you'll always find in me a mother's heart. Adieu, till we meet again in heaven."<sup>134</sup>

54. "I am not displeased that the postulant has been sent away, but I do not approve of the way you dismissed her. Remember this when I am no more with you: Be very tardy in expelling God's children from His house!"<sup>135</sup>

55. "See that Lea is not sent away for the time being. For we shall be cutting a sorry figure with Mr. Filipponi, if we pack her off before the examination. I was shocked at the proposal. I'm not against her father coming to Pianetto, but I'm dead against dismissing Lea on the eve of her examination. Doesn't she intend to take her exam in October? We shall find some ways to accommodate your acts of mercy to your grief-stricken brother and Lea's exam. Do me this favour please. Act in such a way that she stays back and sits for the examination."<sup>136</sup>

## Correction

56. "The true sign of a person who aspires to holiness is the desire to be corrected and to receive corrections humbly and gratefully... But acceptance of admonition will not produce the desired effect unless it is accompanied by the conviction that one really deserves the reproof - even a harsher one. Only thus can we subdue our pride and acquire true humility that is the basis of our sanctification. The higher we climb up, the lower shall we be brought down. Uncalled for rebukes were humbly borne by people in the first centuries of the Church as well as in the early Religious Orders. Elderly, white-haired, venerable religious used to be reprimanded and punished for no fault of theirs. Humble and meek and burning with love for God, they rejoiced to suffer and be despised for the sake of Jesus... Let us imitate the saints!"<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> 29.07.1910: Let to Sr. Paolina, Let. 23, Fasc LVII

<sup>135</sup> 12.05.1916: Let. to the Sisters, let.1117. Fasc.XVIII

<sup>136</sup> 01.08.1916: Let. to Sr. Guistina Farneti, Let. 1261, Fasc. LIV

<sup>137</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XIV,

## Formator

*God the educator par excellence uses human mediation in His work. The formator is the elder sister whom the Lord places at the side of those He calls. She is the delegate of God the Formator, the direct cultivator of the vineyard of the Lord. She must, therefore, be very familiar with the path of seeking God so as to be able to accompany others on this journey, to select the seed and the land. She must be very clear that she is simply a "mediator", that she herself is in formation, on her way to identification with Christ. This awareness will help her to live in an attitude of constant discernment and to continuously ask: "Lord, what do you want me to do?"*

The formator must educate, take care of and guard the persons entrusted to her care. The time of "forming" is the moment of "pro-vocation", provoking through her own life and giving enthusiastic testimony to the beauty of her vocational option, so that she can transmit the form of Franciscan-Clarian life and "infect" the sisters entrusted to her with the happiness of belonging to the Lord and the CFMSS.

Personalised accompaniment calls for the formator's effective presence. She must find enough time to be with the sisters entrusted to her, the 24 hours of the day and 365 days of the year, Time to pray with them and for them; time to rest and share recreation with them; time to instruct, and for fraternal corrections, time to animate them in moments of despair. To be able to respond to this requirement, the formators are required to have strong and tender love of a mother, time and patience of a farmer who patiently awaits the sprouting of the seed, the growth of the plant and for the fruit to mature (Mk. 4: 36-29).

## Prayer of a Formator

57. "O Adorable Saviour of my soul, I enclose these my daughters in your loving heart. Make them grow in you, with you and for you so that they become worthy of your love. Supplement my littleness, O Jesus, and wash away all my faults and shortcomings in your precious blood, for which I humbly beg your pardon and the kind forbearance of those whom I instruct. Enlighten my mind, guide my heart and make me less unworthy of the mission entrusted to me, so that I may infuse your love, your burning charity into these virginal hearts! O Immaculate Virgin, shelter us under the wings of your protection, hide us in your mantle and safeguard us from all the perils and snares that beset our life's journey... Rule over our hearts, direct our hands, our feet and above all, keep us far away from sin – the only evil on this earth." <sup>138</sup>
58. "All praise to you, O Mary, for the consolation you gave me during certain personal interviews. I entrust these youngsters into your maternal bosom so that they may grow in innocence and purity. Obtain for me from Jesus forgiveness, light and strength. To you I consecrate myself together with all the persons I cherish in my heart..." <sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> *Prayer composed by Mother Seraphina: 1888, Fasc. LIII, p.6 - 7*

<sup>139</sup> 31.03.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX p.8

59. "O My Jesus! I have to know and understand the youth entrusted to me, because you will ask me an account of each one of them. Teach me in Holy Communion the right ways to examine myself, to know them, probe them, correct and perfect them, and to make them do everything according to your adorable heart."<sup>140</sup>
60. "My thoughts are always centred on my daughters, acknowledging the good in some, noticing the defects in others, and wondering what means should be chosen to bring everyone to the fountain of Divine Love."<sup>141</sup>
61. "For what purpose have we embraced religious life? To sanctify ourselves and the others. Unless we mould ourselves perfectly, unless we daily aspire to be holy, we can never lead others to perfection. We have to confess ourselves that we have not understood at all our task, that we do never, or nearly at all comprehend the persons entrusted to our care. Whoever knows how to train them will see many a fragrant flower"<sup>142</sup>
62. "A lot of discipline, immense love, constant exercise of virtues, formation of ourselves, striving to correct daily at least one unkind act, or rude behaviour, fervent prayer... and then we shall be able to say, "Though my body ages, my spirit flourishes." May we always live in the wounded heart of Eternal Love! Let us live and work in and for this Love, and we shall have light, strength and love for sanctifying ourselves and the others. Oh how pleasant it is to dwell in the open bruised Heart of Jesus and to have the Divine Blood sprinkled on us, on the girls in our care, on all the sinners and on all people so that all could be led to the Sweetest Heart!"<sup>143</sup>
63. "Underscoring the need for a full-fledged staff and the impossibility of having one for want of suitable premises, I explained to the neo-professed the necessity for taking initiatives for one's own formation and to have a clear idea of how and when to supplement the lack of formators. What is essential lies in the spirit, not in the pattern... Truly I long to fashion these young sisters' spirit, but how can I do it if my own is warped? If I do not precede them by example wherever possible? If I am constrained by ill health? ... During the carnival of 1880, I was determined to test them in all the aspects of Religious Life and to gradually improve, deepen and perfect them... And then nothing could be done because of my poor health..."<sup>144</sup>
64. "However much I may feel repugnant, I would not turn away those who wish to seek my advice, and would urge myself to devote my body and soul to them: the boarders, the day-pupils, all without exemption. Each time a sister or a student asks me for guidance, or any time I feel a girl is in need of counselling, I wouldn't go to bed without having sent for her and talked to her. For I've seen only too well the sad consequences of my aversion and reluctance. On the contrary, I've constantly experienced God's will that rendered my poor words effective even in those dire moments of my weakness".<sup>145</sup>
65. "Jesus is calling you to serve Him. To love Him in His humble, hidden interior life. However, I want you to have great concern for the virgin souls committed to your

<sup>140</sup> March 1892, *Memoirs: 'My Duty as a Principal'*, Fasc. XXIX

<sup>141</sup> 02.02.1876: Let. to Rosina Maggiori, Let. 7, Fasc. XXXVI

<sup>142</sup> 23.06.1890: *Exhortation to the Sisters*, Fasc. XX

<sup>143</sup> 23.06.1890: *Exhortations to the Religious Teachers*

<sup>144</sup> 03.01.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX, p.5

<sup>145</sup> March 1892: *Memoirs, 'My Duty as a Principal'* Fasc. XXIX p.16

care. Watching over them will please your Spouse and you will make progress in perfection. You should devote all your free time to them. Be in the Novitiate after school hours and tend the garden the Lord has entrusted to you. He will work in and through you with His graces. Be a bit more active. See what the Lord asks of you. Will you refuse Him?"<sup>146</sup>

### **Mistress of Novices**

66. "The Mistress of Novices has a very important duty, because it is in the novitiate that the spirit of the individuals – the future mainstay of the Institute, is to be shaped. Besides, she has to discern who should be admitted and who have to be sent back, always having in mind the good of the Congregation and not merely that of the individuals. The Mistress should empty herself of all sympathy and antipathy, be wary of loving one more than the other, and strive to guide the novices along the path of spiritual growth, confront her and mould her in virtues...

A powerful means to train persons is one-on-one talks. The Mistress should hold personal meeting with each novice once a month. However, the novice is not duty-bound to reveal her conscience to her. If a novice is assailed by temptation or sad, or she asks to speak with her, the Mistress should immediately help her out. She should be zealous about strict observance of the horarium, the Rules and Regulations even in the smallest things...

If she feels inadequate in teaching catechism, imparting religious instructions etc, let her request the Mother General or the Asst. General, or the Bishop or some priests to substitute her...

Two registers should be maintained in the novitiate: one with entries right from the date of opening and the other - the annual Admission Register, with the details of the novices and the novitiate diary...

The Mistress of Novices should be at-least 35 years of age and have eight years of profession. She should have adequate health to observe perfectly the Constitution and to be a role model for the novices to follow the Rule...

The Assistant Mistress acts in unison with the Mistress and substitutes her when the latter is absent, or ill, or busy with other engagements. She helps the Mistress in everything and although she cannot contravene an order or have any jurisdiction over the novitiate, she should officiate, animated by the same spirit and with that same zeal as if she were entrusted with all the responsibility...

At least one of the Mistresses – rather both of them, should not be burdened with other important assignments, so that they can devote all their time to the persons entrusted to their care. A year of novitiate – a holy year, make one a good religious, a holy religious. Let the Mistress keep this in mind because it depends to a great extent on her vigilance and guidance. Fortunate is the Mistress who understands her mission and tries to carry it out under the watchful eye of the Virgin Mother."<sup>147</sup>

67. "If I wish to call back Sr. Germana from Ales, it is because she is needed here at the Badia, while over there Sr. Brigida and Sr. Matilda can manage very well along with

<sup>146</sup> 12.06.1896: Let. to Germana, Let. 202, Fasc V

<sup>147</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXX, Fasc. XXV

the others. We have a large community here and a novice aged 40. Hence the need for a superior over the age of 50. The Church in its wisdom has decreed that the Mistress of Novices should be at least 40 years old. Sr. Germana writes to me that she would be able to come only by the end of October. Repeatedly she has written that Your Grace do not permit anyone to move out. Hope she will be able to come away this time.”<sup>148</sup>

68. “It is quite fitting that you go to Diamantina to inaugurate the novitiate there...I’m so very happy about your stay at Conceicao, for I know your presence there is equivalent to more than that of three professed sisters. But the need for opening the novitiate is more urgent, for which you require the gift of bilocation, which St. Anthony had. In case your presence is imperative at Conceicao, send for Sr. Christina to substitute you during your absence. Nevertheless, the formation of the novices is to be given priority over the education of the pupils in the Boarding school. Therefore, once the novitiate is initiated, you will normally reside with the novices. But if necessity calls for, and you have to be away at Conceicao for some months, Jesus will substitute you. In a word I have full faith in you.”<sup>149</sup>
69. **Inventory** “I made a full inventory of the novitiate identifying, checking, marking and labelling the requisites for 22 cubicles: bedstead or cot with board, mattress / straw mattress /spring mattress, pillow, curtains, blankets, quilt, bedspread, chair, desk, stool, washstand, basin and jug, bench, luggage rack, iron, lace-cushion, hand / knitting loom, lamps, cutlery, etc. We had to buy or make new articles to fulfil the requirements. My office is still cluttered with chairs, looms, cutlery and other things. Why haven’t we done it last year? To furnish the novitiate I had to write to each convent every now and then enquiring whether they had a specified item. The Inventory is yet to be completed. Now that the things are all sorted out, Sr. Germana and Sr. Margherita who have been a tremendous help to me, can carry on with the work”.<sup>150</sup>

### **Mistress of Juniors / Postulants**

70. “Both the Local Superiors and the Mistress of Juniors should see to it that the neo-professed punctiliously follow the Regulations and horarium. They should pay particular attention to their faith formation, give them talks and hold personal interviews. They should consider in prayer whether a postulant is to be admitted to the novitiate or a junior to the final profession.

**Postulancy** is the vestibule to the Novitiate, and the Juniorate the perfecting of the novitiate. During this phase the individuals are trained for an apostolate. As during postulancy, stress is laid on the development of the personal qualities of each candidate, that is to say, the dispositions of each one, their scale of skills, the possibility of success in academic pursuit or occupation etc., so too in the **juniorate**, attention is to be paid on sharpening and developing the qualities of mind, and in perfecting and enriching the gifts and talents as much as possible. Hence the need for personnel to teach science and arts.

When the juniors enter the **six months’ intensive preparation** for profession, the Mistress should never leave them alone. If need be, there should be two Mistresses.

<sup>148</sup> 31.08.1914: Let. to the Bishop of Sardegna, Let. 14, Fasc. LXX

<sup>149</sup> 03.05.1915: Let. to Sr. Lorenzina, Let.1226, Fasc.XLI

<sup>150</sup> 14.03.1913: Let. to Catherine & Svanona, Let. 996, Fasc. XVII

All academic studies are suspended during this period according to the Regulations... This 'second novitiate' after the lived-in-experience of religious life - segregated from boarders, postulants, novices and sisters - is one of the powerful means for the renewal of spirit. "This is one of the masterstrokes of St. Ignatius." Hence the need for a Mistress who should always be with these fortunate trainees who are preparing to espouse themselves to the Divine Bridegroom. These are the most precious months of Religious Life; these are to serve them all through their lives igniting fervour and thrusting them more speedily towards union with God."<sup>151</sup>

71. "It is my duty to inform you that some of you ought to be staying here at Badia. A few have been repeatedly complaining about the formation of the juniors and novices. But tell me, who has been giving them training? Who among us have done her duty towards them? ... If two or three of you were continuously residing here, so much anguish would have been spared, and perhaps the sisters might have all been faithful to their vocation.

I am greatly sore not by the criticism but by the fact that not one of us has done our duty towards the young members. Had we thoroughly stressed the basis of neatness right from the beginning, the young would have followed our example and I wouldn't have been so exhausted putting in order the chaos that is occasionally found everywhere.

I would like to spend the rest of my days together with you in making amends and giving a solid grounding to this slender Franciscan shoot that has been blessed by the Pope and Fr. Dionysius Schuler, the Superior General."<sup>152</sup>

72. "Carry out your office gladly and devoutly, like a loving mother to those dear daughters who are still very young. Be consoled that the Virgin does it through you."<sup>153</sup>

### Ongoing Formation

*The radical following of Christ demands profound holiness: it means that one is always on the road of progressive identification with the inner attitude of Christ. Such a path must endure for a lifetime and involve the whole person, heart, mind and strength, reshaping the religious in the likeness of Christ. At no stage of life can people feel so secure and committed that they do not need careful attention to ensure perseverance in faithfulness. Due to human limitations the religious can never claim to have completely been formed into the image of Christ, that it is no longer she, but Christ living in her (Gal. 2: 19-20).*

*Ongoing formation is a continuous process of personal and communitarian conversion. It demands a continual examination regarding one's fidelity to the Lord, constancy in the giving of self, humility in bearing with adversities and close attention to the signs of the Spirit in our times. The religious is being formed everyday of her life, touched each day by the presence of God and the power of the Cross. She is provoked each day by the Master to "remember the past with gratitude, to live the present with enthusiasm and to look forward to the future in confidence." Ongoing formation infact*

<sup>151</sup> Practical Guide, Ch. XXXI,

<sup>152</sup> 16.03.1910: Let. to the Sisters, Let. 926, Fasc. XVI

<sup>153</sup> 13.03.1914: Let. to Sr. Fulgentia (Agra)

means to “start afresh from Christ” everyday, rediscovering one’s first love, the inspiring spark which first gave rise to the following of Jesus.

*The process of growth and fidelity in living the human, fraternal, professional, cultural and apostolic dimension of one’s vocation has to be rooted in the love of God and life in the Spirit. Only then can one grow more attentive to the daily challenges of the Word of God, allow herself to be guided by the original inspiration, history and mission of the Institute and deepen her own consecration in all its ascetical, mystical and apostolic aspects. One must always bear in mind that the vitality of the Institute depends on the faithful commitment with which each religious respond to her vocation.*

73. “The Constitution is zealously observed. The sisters have no other desire or aim than that of becoming perfect religious for the sanctification of others. Though they devote themselves to the apostolate, they love silence and contemplation. They hold the Holy Hour from 11 p.m. to midnight as their special badge.”<sup>154</sup>
74. “My sweetest Jesus, I have promised you a whole lot of things. But they are absolutely nothing compared to my ardent longing never more to offend you and to love you always. To love you intensely, to love you at all times, in every place, to love you more than all the saints together have loved you; to love you as the Immaculate Virgin loved you.”<sup>155</sup>
75. “... Oh! God! May You alone be the only object worthy of my pure, earnest and constant love! Oh, in my ardent love, allow me to repeat with beloved St. Augustine, ‘I love You for Yourself, I love You for Your love and I love You in such a way that if one day Seraphina were God, and God Seraphina, I would want to come back to be what I am to make You return to what you are, because You alone are worthy to be what You are.’ Yes, I love You, O Lord, and if you know that I should live without loving You even for a moment, cut off the thread of my life this very moment itself.”<sup>156</sup>
76. “As you know well I had unfortunately strayed away from the path that I had traced few days after January 1881. Now I’m back on the track, cleansed of all stains and brought to a new life. Such a fresh life that it is impossible for me to appreciate the splendour of Rome, even from the Catholic angle. Deep within me, in that inmost niche, where Jesus dwells, I find what Rome as a whole cannot offer me. To the extent of the vibrancy of your faith, you can understand the essence of what I explain. Forgive, therefore my sister and boarders, the colossal ingratitude shown to Jesus who never stopped showering me with the riches of His boundless love.”<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> 17.12.1906: Seraphina’s Let. to Can. Lolli, Let. 229, Fasc. 52

<sup>155</sup> 21.01.1881: Memoirs, Fasc. XXIX

<sup>156</sup> 21.1.1881: Memoirs, fasc. XXIX

<sup>157</sup> Rome: 08.03.1885: Let. to Sr. Catherine, Let. 5, Fasc. LVI

77. "In all my life I cannot find even a single moment wholly dedicated to Jesus alone. All that is not of God, or what does not belong to God, is mere trash, utter foolishness... It is really true that humans have eyes, but do not see, unless Jesus sheds His rays of light on them." <sup>158</sup>
78. "I'm gripped by the desire to obtain true contrition for my sins, which leads to love of God. But aspiration without works will produce no effect." <sup>159</sup>
79. "O Glorious Sun, worthy of loving contemplation, shed your light on my understanding so that my heart may burn with love. Cleanse me from all my sins and offences! This is the longing of my humble contrite heart, which you will not spurn, O Lord. To be purified of my countless failings, to know you and be understood by you, to love you and be loved in return is the sole happiness that I crave, for which I shall make continuous sacrifice.  
O Jesus, I renounce everything in order to obtain your love. I'm ready to walk the rugged path that leads to you so that I can live in your heart, which is the Life of my heart and the Heart of my life... Knowing my utmost frailty and entrusting myself to your divine mercy I promise to: -
- Immolate myself every morning in Holy Communion for the conversion of sinners, for my own sanctification, for all the persons committed to my care, especially--- and for all the other intentions you would inspire me.
  - Be serene in all the ups and downs of life – always tranquil, joyful and even tempered, and to hide my pain from everyone but you.
  - Keep an hourly check on my inner disposition to verify if Jesus really is honey in my mouth, music to my ears and joy to my heart." <sup>160</sup>
80. "You have a very high opinion of me, my dearest sister. You see gold where there is rust. I'm just a blend of every passion. I've always been unfaithful and ungrateful to God who gently drew me to Him since my infancy. I did nothing but offend him steadily. My dearest sister, make progress on the path of sanctity and strive to be a saint, and obtain mercy and pardon for me so as to redeem the 42 years of my life. O Jesus, how do you still tolerate me? Ask your Divine Spouse to give me a lot of suffering that will wipe away my past, cleanse me of all my sins and lead me back again to His heart. Let His consolations be for the faithful persons; as for me only stark suffering." <sup>161</sup>
81. "Since Good Friday when Jesus made me aware of certain things I had not realised till now, I've become impervious to trivialities – at least on head level... Believe me, dearest Sister, I'm ashamed of having entertained banalities which bear witness to the shallowness of my love for Jesus. The soul that truly seeks Jesus doesn't lose herself in such petty things. In future, your sister wants to seek only Jesus and not creatures, not self gratification as I've been doing till now." <sup>162</sup>

<sup>158</sup> September 19-22, 1888: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXIX

<sup>159</sup> 20.04.1892, Let. 86, Fasc. 2b

<sup>160</sup> 01.02.1896: *Memoirs*: Fasc. XXIX p.32 – 33

<sup>161</sup> 10.03.1896: Let. to Catherine, Let. 184, Fasc. V

<sup>162</sup> 07.04.1896: Let. to Catherine, Let. 190, Fasc. V

82. “I wish that your works were spiritualized. Would that your **activities** were **rooted in the ciborium!** O how balmy is the breeze from the Tabernacle! How fragrant its perfume! The name of Jesus is so casually taken, but the soul who has tasted His sweetness repeats it uninterruptedly and still more lovingly receives Him into her heart.”<sup>163</sup>
83. “I’m eager to know about your progress in virtues. How do you go about your silent adoration? Your preferred way of meditation? Do you follow the rules and regulations? Do you strive to be the angel at the crib? To have concern for the community.?”<sup>164</sup>

### **Pursuit of Perfection**

*The religious state is called a school of perfection and it imposes an obligation of striving after perfection. The three states of perfection on the road to heaven are the Purgative Way, the Illuminative Way and the Unitive Way. The characteristic work of the Purgative Way is the purification of the soul from its stains and vices. Each religious is called to subjugate her passions and uproot her evil inclinations through corporal austerities, mortification of the senses, practice of charity, abnegation of one’s own will and above all, doing God’s will.*

*In the Illuminative Way the mind becomes more and more enlightened to spiritual things and the practice of both moral and theological virtues. The Unitive Way is called the state of “Perfect Charity” because it is by love that the soul is united to God. As St. Ignatius says, “the soul burns with the love of its Creator, and can no longer love any creature except for His sake”. As the purification of the spirit – the interior faculties, the intellect and the will – takes place, our thoughts and sentiments, the attention of the mind and the affections of the heart, become focused on God amidst our daily routine tasks.*

*However, the purification of the soul is not without sufferings, trials, aridity and darkness. God permits spiritual desolation (the feeling of abandonment by God and of the absence of His grace, dissipation of mind, weariness and disgust in the exercise of piety etc), so that we may try to live for Him and in Him with the help of the supernatural light that He so generously imparts to us. The darkening of the mind and the feeling of abandonment can be so great, that the soul is tormented by terrible thoughts against faith, against purity and even distrust concerning salvation.*

*In no state or conditions of life is such degree of perfection attainable that further progress is not possible. So long as this mortal life lasts, there will always be the labour and activity of purgation, illumination and of union in the work of supernatural perfection.*

84. “The Virgin has made me understand that **perfection** does not consist in shedding tears or in barren aspirations, but in the practice of virtues from which springs true love of God. Hence, I have decided to methodically remove all the obstacles that prevent me from reaching that point where one lives the life of Jesus Christ. One of the main blocks I find is money matters.”<sup>165</sup>

<sup>163</sup> 27.07.1897: Let. to Sr. Cecilia, Let. 247, Fasc. VI-VII

<sup>164</sup> 18.01.1902: Let. to Sr. Angela, Let. 513, Fasc. X – XI

<sup>165</sup> 19.03.1901: Cir. Let. 9

85. "The greater your sacrifice, the higher it rises as a fragrant holocaust to God... To be slandered by those to whom you have opened your soul, to keep silent, to be magnanimous enough to welcome the calumny... are things that bring great consolation to Jesus and make the angels in heaven sing in exultation.

Jesus calls you, my dearest sister and daughter of my heart, to a life of perfection devoid of all human consideration, but rich in His grace. Do not be deaf to the whisperings of the Holy Spirit. Read, meditate and absorb the image that He presents to you, and above all, the words of prophet Isaiah... O how profound they are! Be quick, let us rush to the spring of living waters to quench our thirst and to foster that joy which will enable us to live worthily in the heart of the Mysteries for all eternity..., Arise my dearest sister, from your spiritual torpor, and in order to wake up repeat continuously, 'Lord that I may see'." <sup>166</sup>

86. "I want you to get back on the pursuit of holiness and be at peace. Jesus allows evil to exist in order to draw good out of it, but you shouldn't be so downcast or dejected. He is not pleased with dispirited persons." <sup>167</sup>

87. "How many means do you have for becoming a saint! Make use of them without any delay, for time flies. Do a lot of good and try to grow in the Spirit. Open wide your heart and be generous with the Lord, just as He is tender hearted towards you" <sup>168</sup>

88. "Let us **not leave any means** untried that will bring us to that intimate union with Jesus for which our hearts are pining incessantly. Attentive listening is the first step; devotion to Mary the sure sign of reaching the goal. Mary was constantly engaged in household chores, yet her works never interfered with even an iota of her contemplation." <sup>169</sup>

89. "Religious perfection consists in the exact observance of the three vows and of the Rule as modified by the Constitution. It will suffice as we take pains to do the most loving will of our Spouse who wants us to be holy with a holiness much higher than that of the ordinary persons." <sup>170</sup>

90. "I do not wish to have many sisters or houses but, I want all the sisters to be holy. True holiness does not consist in doing a lot of things, but in doing well what one does and doing solely what Jesus wants." <sup>171</sup>

91. "You have done wonders. Do you think others would have done better? But don't you see what we who employ every means can achieve? You have done much and your unheard of suffering has earned you eternal reward. Courage, Jesus wants you to be saints. I wish you a truly joyous Christmas, which makes you exclaim, 'to suffer and

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<sup>166</sup> 06.02.1897: Let. to Catherine, Let.227, Fasc. VI – VII

<sup>167</sup> 01.04.1897: Let. to Sr. Bernardina, Let. 232, Fasc.VI - VII

<sup>168</sup> 14.06.1893: Let to Sr. Germana, Let. 109,Fasc. III

<sup>169</sup> 01.08.1897: Memoirs – "Pious Acts for the Novena for St. Clare and Assumption." Fasc. XXIX, p.36

<sup>170</sup> 25.12.1900: Cir. Let. 8

<sup>171</sup> 10.03.1901: Cir. Let.9

to be despised for your sake, O Lord!' May the Virgin place the infant Jesus in your arms and may you say, 'He is mine!'"<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> 06.12.1907: Let. to the Sisters at Meerut, Let. 888,

## CHAPTER V

### Our Apostolate

*“I consider you a co-worker of God Himself and a support of the weak members of His ineffable Body”, wrote St. Clare in her third letter to Agnes of Prague in 1238. The religious are called to continue the mission of Christ: contemplating the Father’s tender love, proclaiming God’s Kingdom, healing the sick and doing good to all. However, the “apostolate of all religious consists primarily in the witness of their consecrated life, which they are bound to foster through prayer and penance”, so states Canon 673. “The more consecrated persons allow themselves to be conformed to Christ, the more He is made present and active in the world for the salvation of all”. (VC: 72)*

*For centuries Christians, especially consecrated men and women have been consumed by the zeal for the establishment of the Kingdom of God and the salvation of their brothers and sisters. The monks in the Middle Ages not only set up schools and universities, but also introduced higher forms of handicrafts and architecture, and advanced form of agriculture, fruit growing, cattle breeding etc. Many popular languages of people and tribes missionized by the Orthodox Church were raised to the rank of literary languages through translation of the Bible and Liturgical writings. They furthered technical progress through construction of canals, fishponds, wind/ water mills in the mission lands, and remodelled the cultural, spiritual, economic and industrial life of the “missionized” people according to the European pattern.*

*Many consecrated men and women were and still are in the forefront of bringing relief to those in want of food and drink, clothing, housing, medicine etc. Many religious are known for their solidarity with, and for humanitarian works among those suffering from discrimination, injustice, oppression or abandonment. Success followed them wherever their apostolic actions proceeded from intimate union with God.*

*Nevertheless, we shouldn’t be complacent about our existing apostolate. It should be evaluated and new ones ventured out on the basis of the answer to the questions: “Are we moving towards people of our times? Or are we withdrawing from the life of the people?” Our apostolate will continue to have meaning only if it is relevant to the time, and if it is re-ignited with a passion for the Eucharistic Lord and His Kingdom. We must remember, too, that there is no retiring age for a religious in her apostolate. We continue to build God’s Kingdom till our last breath by our life of prayer, penance or service.*

- 1) “I wish to dedicate and consecrate all that I have to Jesus alone ... To him I offer myself as fragrant incense, as a victim of earnest atonement, generous sacrifice and ardent love, operating wholly for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls. I am glad to immolate myself so that everyone could be led to the adorable Heart of Jesus.”<sup>173</sup>
- 2) “Oh, what a terrible ache to be on fire with a passion to do a lot of things and yet unable to accomplish it. My spirit yearns to race off, but it is held a prisoner in my

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<sup>173</sup> Christmas 1888: Memoirs, Fasc. 29

frail body. O God, give me health, give me a lot of souls because my heart is burning with a raging thirst for them... O Immaculate Virgin, for the love of your Son grant me the grace to purify my past and to consecrate the rest of my life as an act of reparation in order to sanctify me and lead myriad of souls to the heart of Jesus, without ever being daunted by hardships or difficulties. **Love, Work, Souls** is the catchphrase on my banner.”<sup>1</sup>

- 3) “Please pray to Jesus during the Holy Mass that He may infuse in us His ineffable love, and that our hearts’ sole aspiration is to become holy and to lead every human person to Jesus. Would that the sweet name of Jesus be praised and loved by the whole world!”<sup>2</sup>
- 4) “The CFMSS should continue the mission of the Mother of God among the people after the example of St. Clare, the Saint of the Eucharist.”<sup>3</sup>
- 5) “I am convinced that the apostolate of a contemplative person bears copious fruits, while that of a purely active person is sterile”<sup>4</sup>
- 6) “Go, enkindle and carry the love of the Eucharistic Jesus to all. Sanctify yourself and then the others; have great love for Him.”<sup>5</sup>
- 7) “Remember that one cannot give to others what one does not have... If we do not mould our spirit in the tabernacle, our mission becomes rather harmful than fruitful.”<sup>6</sup>
- 8) “Fulfil your spiritual needs first and then be available for the mission that Jesus has entrusted to you.”<sup>7</sup>
- 9) “Since the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a powerful means for the efficacy of the apostolate in foreign nations, let the sisters practice this devotion at the mission centres.”<sup>8</sup>
- 10) “Have faith and you’ll work miracles... We should be happy to occupy ourselves for the good of our neighbour.”<sup>9</sup>
- 11) “Be on the lookout for every opportunity to attract the teenagers and to shield them from all evil. Strive to be a committed apostle and you’ll be happy.”<sup>10</sup>
- 12) “The specific aim of the Institute is missionary activities and the education of the girl child. In Europe let the sisters dedicate themselves to the education of the girls, especially those belonging to the working class, preferably the most destitute.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nov 1890: *Memoirs*: Fasc. XXX, p.3

<sup>2</sup> 19.01.1904: Let. to the Bishop of Trieste, Let. 40, Fasc. LVIII

<sup>3</sup> 07.07.1907: Let.2, Fasc.45

<sup>4</sup> Nov-Dec 1897, *First draft of the Constitutions*, Ch II

<sup>5</sup> Testimony of Sr. Imelde Pedrini, Roma, AGCM – S Doc. 4

<sup>6</sup> 25.03.1903: Cir. Let. 14, Fasc. 28

<sup>7</sup> 15.10.1895: Let. to Bernardina, Let. 178 Fasc. IV

<sup>8</sup> 1904 - 05: *The Second Draft of the Constitution*, Art. 12

<sup>9</sup> 14.07.1893: Let. to Veronica, Let. 128, Fasc. III

<sup>10</sup> 21.12.1894: Let. to Veronica, Let.148, Fasc. IV

- 13) "I have devoted everything for the good of the youth, the orphans, the daughters of the common people, for the mission in foreign lands. I wish to wipe away every tear, alleviate every pain. Would that I could comfort all the widows and the broken-hearted! ... I tell you in all simplicity that it seems as if all the misery in the world were gathered into my heart, and I am at a loss how to help them without any discrimination of race and status."<sup>12</sup>
- 14) "Jesus hasn't told that I should work solely at Forli. It is where He wants me to work and in the manner He wants it done... Just a single school is too restricted a space for my taste... Nothing is mine; yet all that belongs to Jesus is mine... Our real educational institution is where there are individuals to be saved."<sup>13</sup>
- 15) "My heart burns with the desire to help the society weighed down by the Masonic tyranny... Would that I could snatch all the souls and lead them to Jesus, our Salvation, our Health and Resurrection!"<sup>14</sup>
- 16) "I beg you to keep an eye on young Francesco. He is the only son of Engineer Giovanni Fornari, the officer on special duty for the orphans of Messina and Avezzano. Fornari is open-minded about his son who is suffering from bronchitis and some other illness, being called to military service. The strain of active life in the armed forces might be precarious to the teenager's health, whereas any desk job might suit him fine. I am appealing to your generous heart, Dear Sir. You may never have had such a request from a poor nun. Forgive me, Sir, bearing in mind that I wish to console everyone and wipe away their tears."<sup>15</sup>
- 17) "There is no greater happiness than in one's internal colloquy with God. One cannot find comfort and peace except in the practice of the most heroic virtues, in bringing relief to the poor, in converting individuals to God and in praying for our departed souls in Purgatory."<sup>16</sup>
- 18) "Our grief is redoubled hearing the disaster at Venice. So many families plunged into mourning! What a bitter wound gnaws at Your Holiness' heart! What a tragedy! I grumbled a bit with St. Joseph and entrusted him with the task of carrying the dead to heaven and consoling the survivors. We are already praying for the unfortunate victims."<sup>17</sup>
- 19) "Now that you are leaving for your communities, I exhort you in the words of St. Ignatius to his sons: 'Go, ignite, set on fire'. You too have a mission to accomplish, and that is to educate the young in the Christian faith by your words and example. Go then, enkindle the love of Jesus in every heart and make them burn fervently. But you cannot ignite others' hearts, unless the flame leaps out of your own heart... My dearest daughters, I've already told you this, I say it again, and I wouldn't get tired of repeating it: love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament should be the badge and hallmark of your Institute. Your Institute is to be known by vibrant and brightly burning love for the Eucharist."<sup>174</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 1904-1905: The Second Draft of the Constitution, Ch. I, Art. 4, Fasc. XXVII

<sup>12</sup> 21.03.1897: Let. 153, Fasc. XXXVII

<sup>13</sup> 11.03.1892: Let. to the Superior of Forli Convent, Fasc. II b

<sup>14</sup> 12.03.1897: Let. to the Parish Priest of Castrocaro, Let. 2, Fasc. LXXII

<sup>15</sup> 08.06.1909: Let. to an Officer, Fasc. LXXIV

<sup>16</sup> 02.12.1907: Let. to Baroness Emma De Seppi, Fasc. XXXVIII

<sup>17</sup> 25.03.1914: Let to Pope Pius X, Let. 25, Fasc. XLIV

<sup>174</sup> 06.05.1898: Bp. Polloni

## A: Missionary Life

*Following the extensive missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul, the early medieval monks travelled across the continental Europe and even to Central Asia, evangelizing the people and founding religious, medical, agricultural and educational institutions. The Franciscan Missionaries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, enduring incredible hardships, went by land and sea to India, China and Mongolia to preach the Gospel. St. Francis of Assisi was the first among the founders of religious Orders to include in the Rule a chapter devoted to the missionaries. In the sixteenth chapter of the Non-confirmed Rule, he underscored the efficacy of the eloquent witness of an authentic Christian life prior to one's preaching. He admonished the preachers to "first draw from secret prayers what they would later pour out in holy sermons"; and to first "grow warm within before they spoke frozen words outside" (2 Cel. 163).*

*The last decade of the fifteenth century and the early half of the sixteenth century were the era of discovering the Americas and new sea routes to the East by the Europeans. Portugal was the first to find a sea route to India when Vasco de Gama landed on the Malabar coast in 1498. In the explorers' wake the Franciscan and Jesuit missionaries sailed to christianize the colonies. Success followed those missionaries who became familiar with the local language, culture, customs, history, social structures etc., and could dialogue with the people on common socio-religious issues and above all, who had left to the non-Christians the impression of a man of God.*

*Mother Seraphina's catch phrase, "Go, enkindle and carry the love of the Eucharistic Jesus to all", has its origin in Bishop Polloni's exhortation to our founding members on May 6, 1898. Quoting St. Ignatius' clarion call, "Go, ignite and inflame", Polloni appealed to the sisters, "Go, set every heart burning with Christ's love." Therefore, Mother Seraphina wants every one of us to be aflame with love for the Eucharistic Lord so that we can set every heart alight with His love.*

*According to our Venerable Foundress, close intimacy with the Eucharistic Jesus, holiness of life, zeal for the Kingdom of God and the salvation of the people, are the basic requirements of a missionary. Like the pioneer missionaries we should strive to be holy persons, bearing eloquent witness to the primacy of God in our everyday lives, and imbued with Christ's love for every person.*

18. "To be a missionary and a saint are one and the same thing."<sup>18</sup>
19. "Missionary activity is a sublime yet arduous undertaking. Only through prayer can one obtain the requisites for being a true missionary. Hence let us pray, and pray with faith and humility."<sup>19</sup>
20. "With the consent of the Holy See, the Clarist Franciscan Missionaries of the Most Blessed Sacrament shall establish themselves in foreign missions, preferably among the most neglected, the remotest and the perilous. There they shall carry out all the activities befitting their religious state and according to the specific needs of the

<sup>18</sup> 24.09.1902: Let. to Archbishop G. Conforti, Fasc. XXXIV

<sup>19</sup> 16.11.1902: Cir. Let. 12

mission. . In Europe, let the sisters devote themselves to the education of girls, especially of the working class and preferably the most destitute... However, the specific objective of the Institute is Mission in foreign lands and the education of the youth.”<sup>20</sup>

21. “I, who have had the missionary vocation since the age of reason, would leave for India tomorrow morning, glad to offer my last days to Jesus...If my Father allows me, I would be the very first to go to found the mission and then I could happily die. The very thought fills me with ineffable joy. And when I have missionary sisters, I would be living another life..”<sup>175</sup>
22. “Isn’t it a glory to go to the mission? Aren’t we especially chosen for it? ... So my dearest daughters, Jesus is awaiting you where He has called you. May your steps be turned towards Him alone!”<sup>21</sup>
23. “To go to the mission one has to receive a special call from God. She should have the spirit of sacrifice and be ready and willing to give her life to the point of shedding her blood for Christ. She should be aglow with apostolic zeal and the flame of charity, eager for nothing but the expansion of God’s kingdom and of having the sweetest name of Jesus honoured in every corner of the world.”<sup>22</sup>
24. “The missionaries boarded the steamer at midnight on Monday (January 19<sup>th</sup>). Pray for them for the love of God. O the heart-rending scene of their departure! Shooting pain slices through my whole being. The agony of not seeing them off is renewed every moment”.<sup>23</sup>
25. “He has chosen you among a thousand, not only to dwell in His house, but also to be His collaborators in His apostolate. Respond to Him for God’s sake, and strive to become saints”.<sup>24</sup>
26. “Why should you feel so lonely and forlorn about not being able to do much? You’ll do just fine provided that you are always considerate, calm and gentle in critical moments, bearing with everything for the sake of your heavenly Spouse.”<sup>25</sup>
27. “What, if not love, made you think of certain gift items that can be sent to the African Mission, to the poor Churches in Africa? Value does not consist in the cost of the article but in the very thought that generates laboriousness. However great the penury in some convents may be, it has not prevented you from gifting an artefact – the fruit of your toil and personal deprivation – which may cost only a few pennies but whose worth is priceless”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 1904-1905: The Second Draft of the Constitution, Ch. I, Art. 6, Fasc. XXVII

<sup>175</sup> 12.08.1900: Let. 25, Fasc. IX

<sup>21</sup> 10.01.1903: *Memoirs*, Scr.LV, p.26

<sup>22</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXIX, Fasc. XXV

<sup>23</sup> 21.01.1903: Let. to Srs. Nazzarena, Agata, Magdalene, Let. 568, Fasc. XII

<sup>24</sup> 20.03.1903: Let. to the Missionaries in India, Let. 597, Fasc. XII

<sup>25</sup> 27.03.1903, Let. to Sr. Angela, Let. 600 Fasc. XII

<sup>26</sup> 20.08.1904: Cir. Let. 20

28. “One cannot be a **missionary** without making sacrifices. Nothing can be achieved without sacrifice, nor can one have mastery over oneself without the practice of virtues. And virtue is acquired through facing hardships and struggles. The saints attained saintliness enduring what you are now undergoing”.<sup>27</sup>
29. “Pray to the Immaculate Virgin to mould the missionaries in the spirit of the martyrs; and to let them endure the martyrdom of love everywhere, if unable to undergo the martyrdom of blood.”<sup>28</sup>
30. “One can say that the present moment is the most crucial and decisive for us – the last Franciscan shoot. Only with a life filled with love can we know and realize the loving will of Jesus. The loving Lord in his goodness has given us two tabernacles which would be of every advantage to us. The first will be opened at Fiumalbo in Modena on the feast of St. Joseph and the other by May in Itambacury in Brazil. I’ve declined many others, but I could not in conscience refuse these two because, though rejecting them would benefit my age and health, I’m not sure it would do good to my soul. Moreover, I would be doing you harm – new olive shoots who will be reaping a lot of moral and material benefits out of them after my death. I’m ready to make any sacrifice to ensure you a bright future.”<sup>176</sup>
31. “Itambacury is purely a tribal belt. In Rio de Janerio, it was told that our pioneer missionaries are the first women religious to venture out to work among the indigenous people of South America.”<sup>29</sup>
32. “The mission in Brazil goes on well: virgin forests, savages who have never heard of religion; hardships; but the sisters are venerated as heavenly visions. The Cardinal of Rio was generous with gratitude and admiration, we being the first Italian and the first Franciscan sisters to devote themselves to the natives and to the offspring of the African race, despite the fear of a brutal raid... The Bishop of Diamantina has offered me a foundation in a place called “Conception” and wish to have the sisters in 1908... I dream of having a Mission along with the Friars Minor...”<sup>177</sup> “It seems that the Diamantina mission will do an immense good, because, we are facing a lot of trouble, a mounting series of obstacles in our path since last December.”<sup>30</sup>
33. “You should have the faith, the courage of the martyrs... The martyrs have promoted our religion and you should foster the Indian mission with your sufferings.”<sup>31</sup>
34. “As the angels in heaven encircle the Virgin, Sr. Cecilia of Paradise should cling to Mary with all your love and affection. Every day you should make frequent visits to her and listen to her soft voice instructing you on how to prepare yourself for the mission”.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> 17.02.1905: Let. to Sr. Angela, Let. 769, Fasc. XIV

<sup>28</sup> 11.11.1906: Let. to Bp. Joaquim Silverio de Souza (Diamantina), Fasc. XXXVIII

<sup>176</sup> 25.03.1907: Cir. Let. 28

<sup>29</sup> 08/11.07.1907: Let. to the Secretary General (OFM), Let. 2, Fasc. XLV

<sup>177</sup> 02.12.1907: Let. To Fr. Schuler, Fasc. LXIX

<sup>30</sup> 03.05.1909: Let. to Archbishop of Diamantina, Let. 9, Fasc. XLI

<sup>31</sup> 11.06.1909: Let. to Sr. Cecilia, Let. 916, Fasc. XV

<sup>32</sup> 30.04.1910: Let. to Sr. Cecilia, Let. 1192, Fasc. XLIII

35. "I'm ready to send to India all the available sisters and even the brightest ones, but not before the autumn. Had I known earlier, I would have reserved for India the two sisters sent to Brazil, where they are doing marvels. For the sake of the mission I am ready to deprive every convent in Italy of the brightest and the best sisters, provided that they have missionary vocation."<sup>33</sup>

36. "Prostrate at Your Holiness' feet, I implore in the name of the powerful Arcangel Michael, apostolic blessing for Sr. Lorenzina of Transfiguration (Piranda) and Sr. Prisca of the Catacomb (Gazzaro), so that the holocaust of their missionary life be strengthened and sanctified by it. They would be embarking for the torrid zone of India in November or December, with a burning zeal for spreading God's Kingdom among non-believers, and to lay down their lives for Jesus' sake.

Fortified by the papal benediction, every sacrifice will become sweet and light. Their unflagging zeal will be for preparing the seven-year-olds for the reception of Holy Communion and to form an angelic host of baptized and confirmed children from among the neo-converts, who will keep vigil in defence of the Vatican. Only the Immaculate Virgin could have inspired her favourite Pope to save the flower of innocence, offering it to Jesus and to renew the whole society in purity of heart!"<sup>34</sup>

37. "During Holy Communion why don't you ask your Spouse to grant you whatever you lack in your dowry and bring you to perfect union with Him? Why don't you beseech the Virgin for the virtues of a true missionary?

The missionaries are my glory and consolation. I prefer a single mission to a hundred houses in Italy. But I would like all the missionaries to be holy and martyrs. Otherwise, what is the use of your heroism so much admired by all? Strive to be a saint. Are you regular at your exercises of piety? Are you faithful to meditation, examination of conscience, spiritual reading and other acts? Do you offer yourselves as a victim for the conversion of sinners? Do you have heart-to-heart talks with Jesus?"<sup>35</sup>

38. "Carry on your mission under the watchful eye of Mary and St. Clare, whose seventh Centenary we are celebrating this year. Offer your sacrifice to the Lord so that He may spring forth lilies to be transplanted in the Brazilian garden. Grant me lambs to enrich the flock there. What a wonderful coincidence to open the novitiate in the Septcentenary of our Seraphic Foundress!"<sup>36</sup>

39. "In the name of the Lord welcome to the new mission the Virgin has entrusted to you! I am with you in spirit at every moment that passes by. Together with you I renew our sacrifice so that we may receive the grace to propagate the name of Jesus and the devotion to the Immaculate. The whole Badia supports you with prayers."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> 16.09.1912, Let. to the Mission Superior, Fasc. LXXII

<sup>34</sup> 29.09.1910: Let. to Pope Pius X, Let 29, Fasc. XLIV

<sup>35</sup> 06.03.1911: Let. to Sr. Angela, Let. 939, Fasc. XVI

<sup>36</sup> 08.08.1912: Let. to Sr. Virginia, Let. 981, Fasc. XVI

<sup>37</sup> 15.10.1913: Let. to Germana & Brigida, Let. 1016, Fasc XVII

40. “Your primary task is to attend to your specific mission. You should not busy yourself with other works when you have neither the personnel, nor the time.”<sup>38</sup>

41. “Along with you, my dearest missionaries, I would like to see the passing of the year 1915 and greet the dawn of 1916, in the company of the Virgin Mother at the grotto of Bethlehem, while clinging to the cross. I am so very close to you, my beloved sisters. I admire your heroism; I follow your fruitful apostolate. And I pray to the Immaculate to safeguard your lily, to always watch over you, to bless you every morning and evening and to present you to Jesus like new olive shoots around the tabernacle as well as at the stable of Bethlehem, especially during these holy days.

When we meet together in Paradise, we will only be too happy to see our crowns adorned with the jewels of our sacrifices. Then we will bless every act of sacrifice and the bitter sorrow of having to live far away from our dear ones. Courage... life is short; but the reward is eternal. In our struggle – internal and external, let us often repeat, “Jesus! Mary!” The recitation of their most holy and sweet names – even a fleeting remembrance of them, sweetens our lips like honey and enraptures our hearts.

My warmest and grateful greetings to the little daughters in the boarding, the ailing and to all those who live with you or help you in anyway. May the Year 1916 be for all of us, a year anointed with the sweetest name of Jesus and enriched with His precious blood!”<sup>39</sup>

42. “It is practically impossible to send missionaries during the war when the ships are relentlessly torpedoed. The sisters too are diffident. Fr. Eugenio who knows the urgent need of the mission has requested me not to send anyone till the war is over so that their lives are not at risk.

Do whatever you can, my dear daughters, but don’t kill yourself with work. Employ lay persons to help you with the missionary service. Lessen your activities if you cannot carry on. Above all, take care of your health.”<sup>40</sup>

## **B: Faith Formation**

*Catholic Schools precisely finds its identity in the Gospel of Christ taking roots in the minds and lives of the people. Its specific mission is a “critical systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith, integrating culture with faith, and faith with living.” It orients the whole of human culture to the message of salvation that the knowledge which the pupils acquire of the world, of life and of people is illumined by faith.*

*Needless to say that the essential element of the formation imparted by religious communities is the deepening of the pupil’s Christian faith through the study of Gospel and a growing knowledge of Christ. Reference to Jesus teaches the pupils to differentiate between the values which ennoble them and those that degrade them. The power of Christ combats the evil that flows from the ever-present attraction of sin and renews the life and*

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<sup>38</sup> 08.08.1914: Let. to Sr. Fulgentia (Agra)

<sup>39</sup> 31.12.1915: Let. to the Missionaries in India and Brazil, Let. 1096, Fasc XVII / Cir. No. 33

<sup>40</sup> 15.02.1916: Let. to the Sisters at Itabacury, Let. 1103, Fasc. XVIII

culture of humanity. Faith in Christ thus helps them to bring values into synthesis, when people experience in their lives a flood of contradictions.

*The harmonious development of the physical, moral and intellectual qualities of the students is thus aimed at inculcating in them a well-formed conscience capable of making sound moral judgements and putting them into practice with a sense of personal commitment. The young are helped to see life as a free response to the plan of God, lived out in their daily life.*

*For centuries consecrated persons have devoted their lives – often in oppressive financial, political or religious conditions to guiding children and adolescents in their formation, and to imparting to them an integral education based on a concept of the person and of life inspired by the evangelical values. In the growing secularization of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Catholic Schools in Europe continued to lay equal emphasis on the ethical, spiritual and religious dimensions of human reality.*

43. “Let **oratories** be introduced in the convents where there is not any; strengthen it where it is in full swing... Love the youth, snatch as many souls as possible from the bondage to Satan. Work untiringly and be assured of the smile and blessing of Jesus.

I wish that the youth of the oratory spend the whole day with us participating in the Holy Mass, the commentary of the Gospel, Catechism, Benediction etc. Lunch should be provided to those who come from far; it will be an efficacious means to draw the youth from the countryside. Organise the programme according to the convenience of the members, if they cannot come in the morning hours. In order to sustain the interest of the teenagers, the pious activities should be interspersed with recreation, walks, snacks etc...

Every month on the eve of the feast there should be a pertinent conference by a capable priest. If no priest is available, the superior or a sister should give a relevant talk. A **three-day retreat** should be held every year for the members, in which even the ex-students can participate. Annual retreat is a fruitful mission, but you have to look for a good retreat preacher.”<sup>41</sup>

44. “The lack of Religious Instruction is a pitiable lapse in our Institute. There should be daily catechism classes for the students – both the boarders and the day-scholars. On the feast days the children should be explained the Gospel of the day and the meaning of the festival. Once a week a competent priest should be invited to teach Catechism and the teachers should make a summary of it and drill it into the pupils...

Sermons or talks should not be mixed up with the teaching of Catechism. Every religious should daily devote some time to the study of the *Detailed Catechism*, so that she becomes proficient in imparting the correct teaching of the Church and clarifying the pupil’s doubts...

**Salvation History** and **Church History** should also be taught along with the catechism. One shouldn’t fear that it is a wastage of the pupil’s time, because correct knowledge of historical events enriches the mind, and for the sisters it gives spiritual nourishment. What kind of people are those who ignore their religion, the story of their ancestors, their religious roots, their traditions etc.?...

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<sup>41</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXIII,

The Franciscan Missionaries should teach catechism not only in their schools but also in the parish churches if they are permitted to do so. Competitions should be held every two years, if not annually and prizes awarded.”<sup>42</sup>

45. “Be zealous about teaching Catechism; rather you be mistresses of catechesis.”<sup>43</sup>
46. “Not only do I approve and bless your Apostolate of faith formation, but also support you in all your good work. I am so happy and pleased with it. Jesus is with you; no doubt about it. He will supplement your inadequacy.”<sup>44</sup>
47. “Well done! The retreat organised for the boys and girls in preparation for Holy Communion is, indeed, an authentic apostolate. May each energetic effort of yours be an incense of fervent prayer!”<sup>45</sup>

### *C: Educational Apostolate*

*Since the Middle Ages, formal education of adolescent girls was provided by convents to whom the families, especially the nobility, entrusted their daughters at an early age for their human and Christian formation. Religious communities also established schools for the children of the poor who could not receive a systematic education. In such non-formal schools the syllabus consisted of reading and writing classes, religious and recreational activities and job training aimed at the formation of productive citizens and good Christians.*

*The avowed aim of education was character formation, fashioned on the Gospel especially the values of service and love, peace rooted in justice and fellowship based on equality. The pupils' intellectual, creative and aesthetic faculties were cultivated with a view to develop their knowledge, skills, moral and social attitudes and personality so that they could grow into mature responsible Christians, capable of building a better society.*

*In the quest for excellence, focus was on overcoming individualistic self-promotion, solidarity instead of competition, responsible participation instead of indifference, assisting the weak instead of marginalization etc.*

48. “Our main aim is our own sanctification through contemplation, imparting free education to the underprivileged girls through the teaching of catechism, arts, crafts and basic literacy skills, as well as integral formation to the well-to-do girls up to the Junior Teacher’s Training Diploma, thus rescuing them from the lax ambience of the State Schools. However, our activities are tempered with the soul’s repose in God.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> 1901 - 1903: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXII, Fasc. XXV

<sup>43</sup> 16.11.1902: Cir. Let. 12

<sup>44</sup> 26.03.1902: Let. to Agatha, Let. 524, Fasc. X - XI

<sup>45</sup> 18.06.1903: Let. to Sr. Agatha, Let. 617, Fasc. XII

<sup>46</sup> 25.03.1907: Let. to Pope Pius X, Rome, ASCVR. Bricinorien – B.70, Terziarie Francescane

## **Educator**

*In privately-run schools in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italy decision-making was the exclusive domain of the Principals, whereas in schools run by endowment, the primary decision-makers were the financiers. Mother Seraphina laid down her own conditions when she was requested to administer schools managed by either the Parish or District Office. However, she effectively spread the workload of managing the school through participatory activity, which was shared among teachers, community members and benefactors.*

*Mother Seraphina had a clear vision for each type of school - residential, day school or alternative – which she developed with the help of staunch Catholic educationists of her day. She not only defined the mission and the goals for the school, but also continuously reminded the sisters of the vision and communicated them to the staff and parents. Inspiring enthusiasm, sharing ideas, knowledge and techniques in problem solving around classroom issues, and building on the intrinsic motivation of teachers were the effective mechanism she applied to encouraging them to use their capabilities to achieve the school goals.*

*Seraphina regularly contacted resource personnel, including the famous educationist Dr. Maria Montessori, for new ideas on curriculum, innovative teaching-learning process, staff development etc. Networking with the educators of her time she helped the educational community to attain better personal, professional and social growth of both the teachers and the taught. She solicited for funds and materials from far and wide, not only for equipping school with adequate furniture and library books, but also for sponsorships for children rendered destitute by earthquakes or the First World War.*

49. “The Educator must always remember that her life should be a living example for her students, for children are imitative by nature. Hence, she must obtain from the Mysteries all the graces for her apostolate. She must pray for her pupils, never rebuke a child on the spur of the moment, nor undermine her authority. Pray earnestly before reprimanding any one. It is indeed hard to rise above personal feelings. Entrust all the students under the mantle of the Virgin, within the Sacred Heart... and then to the Patron Saint of each child. Respect each one’s guardian angel; walk in God’s presence and at night invoke the blessing of Jesus and Mary upon each pupil, requesting their angel to cover them with his wings.”<sup>47</sup>

50. “The job of an educator is noble yet arduous. In the first place you should undertake it not for profit or any other lucrative considerations, but exclusively for the glory of God and the good of the pupils. If you do not have this end in view, all your work will be in vain. Your first and foremost concern should be to mould those children the Lord has entrusted to your care, in sound virtues... If you do not precede your pupils on the path of virtues, empty will ring your words... The Lord has given you a vineyard; you’ll be blessed if you make it yield fruits. A good teacher is the soul, the treasure, and the jewel of her students, of the family, of her town. On the contrary, it is a disgrace to have a depraved teacher.”<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXVI,

<sup>48</sup> 28.02.1879: Let. to Rosina, Fasc. XXXVI

51. “One of the main tasks of an educator is to study the character and potential of each pupil, guide them with firm yet maternal tenderness on the path of truth and goodness, and guard them against the lure of evil. The children should be her first and foremost priority as she is entrusted with these tender young shoots”.<sup>49</sup>
52. “We can never give to others what we have not instilled in ourselves in the first place.”<sup>50</sup>
53. “Woe to us if a child is lost through our neglect! Instead, fortunate are we, if we are able to lead some souls to the adorable heart of Jesus.”<sup>51</sup>
54. “The one who does not know how to educate by teaching and to instruct by educating, usurps the name of the teacher.”<sup>52</sup>
55. “To form one heart and one mind in order to have **unity of education** among us... Let each one look upon the integral formation of the girls as her own responsibility, vying with each other in zeal, enthusiasm, joy and love for the children entrusted to our care. It is not just enough to supervise the pupils, or be with them; one’s whole heart must be there for the children. A wise teacher turns out wise pupils.”<sup>53</sup>
56. “Aren’t you pleased that Jesus is making use of me, a humble instrument, to open a new Tabernacle? To found a pre-primary school for the innocent tiny tots and have them educated for Jesus? Don’t you feel happy that with your suffering and hardships there, you are collaborating with me to give glory to God? Don’t your hearts burn with the desire to do a lot for Jesus?”<sup>54</sup>
57. “Remember that the students expect to be taught what they do not grasp, the omission of which is detrimental to their growth.”<sup>55</sup>
58. “... I would like to be with you to express my whole affection for you. Even though I do not know you personally, I love you as if I knew you, because to gather and instruct the daughters is a powerful need of my soul. So I am grateful to you for coming to my beloved Sisters, and thus you become our consolation.”<sup>56</sup>
59. “...Let the little ones come to me. Whoever educates a child for love of Me shall be rewarded on earth and in heaven. Let us often meditate on these words of the Divine Master, and with His help we shall find it easy to educate many a child for Heaven.”<sup>57</sup>  
(Exhortation to the Teachers, fasc. XXIII)

<sup>49</sup> 1883: *Profile of a Principal*, n.8, Fasc. XXII

<sup>50</sup> 1878 – 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.1, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>51</sup> 1878 – 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.8, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>52</sup> 1878 – 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.6, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>53</sup> 07.06.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX, p.16

<sup>54</sup> April 1892: Let. to Srs. Catherine, Benjamina & Nazzarena, Let. 83, Fasc. 2b

<sup>55</sup> 16.11.1899: Let. to Veronica, Let. 342, Fasc. VIII – IX

<sup>56</sup> 4.4.1904: Let. to the Girls, Fasc. LXXV

## Principal

60. “The Principal should take care that her behaviour is irreproachable, because the children being by nature inclined to imitate the elders, will model themselves on their principal or class teacher – emulating either their virtues or their vices.”<sup>56</sup>
61. “The Principal should be patient in tolerating the shortcomings of the adolescent and accept them as they are for God’s sake, bearing with them for the love of God. She should, however, be careful not to annoy them or rouse their anger by denying them their just demands, treating them harshly, punishing the undeserving or withholding forgiveness; because it is utterly unfair to always expect excellence.  
She should be sparing in dispensing rewards and meting out punishments, the need for which arises from the incompetence of the educator. Penalty should be proportional to the offence committed, and reward should never be the means for breeding ambition and vanity.”<sup>57</sup>
62. “The Principal should not consider the teachers as employees but as colleagues; she must deal with them with great respect, love them with tenderest of affection, and treat them with utmost consideration. Their negligence and omissions are to be corrected gently, encouraging them to perfect fulfilment of their duties. They should never be corrected before the pupils; nor their failures reported to the higher authorities, unless with a view to seek their guidance and assurance.”<sup>58</sup>
63. “Our boarders would like to give a recital on the feast day of Fr. Bonaventure, but I do not have any suitable composition. Dear Rev. Father, please be kind enough to compose a sonnet so that the children can give a performance, and at the close of which he can be presented with a bouquet of flowers.”<sup>59</sup>
64. “My students would like to perform the drama “*St. Agnes*”. I think you are the best person who can get me a copy of the play. I’ll be highly obliged to you if you could kindly do me this favour. Please forgive me my audacity to approach you, while I hope for a positive reply at the earliest...”<sup>60</sup>
65. “I wonder if Your Honour could be kind enough to come and give me some lessons in pedagogy, especially in intuitive methods. A few lessons in methods of teaching literature to the primary classes, i.e., to read and study the classics; besides some talks on making annotations and comparative study of the authors in the higher classes. I shall, indeed, be grateful to Your Honour, if you could also kindly suggest some books for the Readers and the History of Literature for the pupil-teachers...”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> 1883: *Profile of a Principal*, n. 7, Fasc. XXII

<sup>57</sup> 1883: *Profile of a Principal*, Fasc. XXII, n.13 & 14

<sup>58</sup> 1883: *Profile of a Principal*, n.8, Fasc. XXII

<sup>59</sup> 24.06.1879: Let. to a Priest, Let. 1, Fasc. LXXI

<sup>60</sup> 12.06.1880: Let. to a Monsignor, Let. 4, Fasc. LVIII

<sup>61</sup> 30.10.1881: Let. to Prof. Q. Maddalozzo, Fasc. XXXV

66. “The St. Francis School, Forli, has been revamped and upgraded to the tune of two lakhs Lire. I have not yet found a way to pay off this outstanding debt. One fine morning when my heart was heavy with sorrow thinking how to chip away at this large debt, the thought of Your Majesty’s generosity flashed through my mind. I pushed the idea to the back of my mind, reproaching myself for daring to appeal to you. Months passed by and I continued to be debt-ridden. The creditors were clamouring for the settlement of the debt and my dire necessity was driving me to your feet, giving me the hope that my plea would be heard. Alternating between such sweet and wistful thought until this afternoon, I have plucked up courage to humbly present my desperate and fervent entreaty to you.

I implore Your Majesty as best as I know and can, not to spurn my supplication which springs from the depth of my heart and is initiated by a mysterious impetus...”<sup>62</sup>

67. “Enclosed please find the prospectus of the Boarding School and that of the Day School, the diary, syllabus for the examination and the curriculum for the Diploma Course... I’m indeed grateful to you, dear Sir, for having honoured me with your visit. You are cordially welcome to visit this institution again sometime later so that I can gain by your wise counsel in my strenuous task. Besides, my students will gain confidence and courage to express themselves... Any suggestions for further improvement are always welcome. I shall be deeply indebted to you, honoured Sir, if you could kindly intimate to me whatever has to be brought to my attention – even a sweeping reform, if necessary”<sup>63</sup>

68. “Ever since my entry into the religion, I’ve been giving **regular talks** to the pupils and formees. The girls – some among them candidates – would listen to me with rapt attention, many even moved to tears. Over the years the talks became less frequent either due to my illness, or seeing the fruitlessness of the discourse, or feeling my own incompetence. However, there were sporadic spurts of public speeches or private chat. On days I couldn’t address the whole school, I made up for it commenting on the Gospel passage for daily meditation in the chapel, except for those long period of illness and isolation... Forgive my negligence, O Jesus, and substitute my inadequacy!”<sup>64</sup>

69. “Sr. Agata has been praying to the Blessed Virgin and to your dear departed that you may be willing to leave for Partina for a week to train a sister in arts and crafts. Please do not raise any objection. I would not take a no for an answer, for I think of you almost as a member of our Religious Family. Go immediately; sooner the better; and you’ll find joy in doing this good turn... Drop me a note that will gladden my heart.”<sup>65</sup>

70. “I would like to have two of our sisters trained in the new system of teaching pre-schoolers which has brought you a glorious name in the education circles. For this purpose I had contacted your residence a few times, but was told that you were away in the States. I’m worried that once the course begins there wouldn’t be any time left.

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<sup>62</sup> 1881: Let. to Queen Margherita of Savoy, Fasc. XXXV

<sup>63</sup> 29.06.1886: Let. to the Director of Education, Fasc. XXXV

<sup>64</sup> 1890: *Memoirs*: Fasc. XXX, p.1

<sup>65</sup> 03.12.1910: Let. to Isa Bassetti, Let. 168, Fasc. XLVII

I hope somehow you won't disappoint me, for if you wish you can find a way. Please Madam, do me this favour for the Virgin's sake and your reward will be great." <sup>66</sup>

### **The Headmistress**

71. "The Headmistress has the prime duty of watching over the students. She is responsible for every member of the staff, and next to the Superior, for the moral and material wellbeing of each employee. She should never reprove a pupil in the presence of a teacher, unless it is essential. She must not admonish the sisters, for it is the duty of the Superior. She shall bring to the notice of the teachers their omissions, as it is done among us as loving sisters. If someone doesn't improve, she shall inform the superior about it in all simplicity and openness.

She should meet the pupils in private at least once a month and as often as need arises. Talking one-on-one with students is one of the most effective means to know and direct them towards good... She should be wary of approaching parental authority for any fault of the children, as it undermines her own authority.

The boarding school should have a library suitable for the youth both for their spiritual and intellectual nourishment. Academic and religious magazines must be abreast of times, so as to show that the religious who wholly belongs to God is as well fond of progress, culture and true and sound education." <sup>67</sup>

72. "The Headmistress should not overlook anything that can improve her personality, the school and the pupils." <sup>68</sup>

### **The Prefect of Studies**

73. "The Prefect should compile the Annual Admission Register and the Mark Register. She has to see to the bi-monthly tests, the final examination, Report Cards, the Prize distribution et al. She organizes the concerts, catalogues the plays and poems, the list of the actors, the date of performance, the Guest of Honour, the occasion for which a specific program was staged etc., and files them away in the cabinet where relevant books and registers of acting are stored". <sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> 04.04.1914: Let. to Prof. Maria Montessori, Fasc. XXXIX

<sup>67</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXV, Fasc. XXV

<sup>68</sup> 1878 – 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.8, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>69</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXVI, Fasc. XXV

## **Day School / Municipal School**

*Special concern for girls from the weaker section of society finds a particular place in Mother Seraphina's educational programme. Adolescents and young women who have had no access to formal schooling were admitted either to the day school or to the alternative school, where they were imparted non-formal education in basic reading and writing skills, tailoring, embroidery, knitting, housekeeping and other domestic skills that would enable them to be efficient housewives. Besides the three R's, opportunities were also provided for their religious, moral and spiritual formation.*

74. "Besides the registers and reports called for by the Education Department, one should maintain in the Municipal School the Admission Register right from the inception, copies of the documents and minutes sent to the authorities, result sheets, annual registration book, mark register etc. The same applies to the Coaching Centre, Vocational School and the Pre-primary School. All the important events, excursions, examinations, inspection, visits by the authorities etc., should be noted down in the Diary and filed away in the community archive.

The Headmistress of the Day School / Municipal School would be doing a great favour if they set up a small library of religious and classic literature so as to safeguard the students from unhealthy reading material. If a good library is indispensable for the boarders, how much more for the day scholars who invariably have easy access to romances that corrupt their minds! ... They have to be alert to the family and societal milieu of the girls so that they can warn them against evil influences... In every Day School there should be a booklet of rules and regulations approved by the authority."<sup>71</sup>

## **The Subject Teacher**

*The main role of a teacher is to teach the students the core knowledge accumulated over centuries of human experience. The first requirement of a teacher is the acquisition of solid professional formation: competence in a wide range of cultural, psychological, pedagogical and technological areas. Moreover, they have a constant need for updating: in the contents of the subject that are taught, current knowledge about the pedagogical methods, learning and curriculum, besides organizational innovations, skills in teamwork, leadership, group decision-making etc. The teachers also should try to understand the special characteristics of the school they are working in and the reasons that have inspired them.*

*The teachers, therefore, should have a firm grasp of a given knowledge area so that they can pass it on to a new generation of students. The goal is to establish a foundation of knowledge base that allows the students to build on as they are exposed to different life experiences.*

*Effective teaching draws on a range of skills, insights and techniques which afford access to knowledge as well as the development of appropriate skills. The teacher is more than a repository of knowledge: the most important factors in any teacher's effectiveness are the interaction with students, the personality of the teacher and the*

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<sup>71</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXVII.

ability to understand well enough to convey its essence to the students. Above all he/she must be convinced that an effective educational relationship between the teacher and the pupil passes through personal attention to each child.

The mission of direct and personal contact between teachers and students must never be lost sight of: the students need a guide during their period of growth; they need help in order to overcome doubts and disorientation. The teacher should strive to awaken in their pupils a spirit of personal initiative.

The witness and behaviour of teachers, especially consecrated persons are of primary importance in imparting a distinctive character to Catholic schools, especially in being a source of inspiration for their colleagues, parents and for other personnel related to the educational community.

75. “The Teachers are bound to have an in-depth knowledge of the subject they have to teach, be ready with the accurate proximal preparation, complete the syllabus before the deadline so as to do a thorough revision, be in class ahead of pupils, and above all else, to know how to educate by teaching and to instruct by educating... This is the secret of a good teacher for being a role-model for studies, love for the school, order and discipline, she shall attain the esteem of the students who will hang on her every word as affectionate daughters on the tender voice of their mother. She shall be punctual in completing her Mark Register, exacting in neatness of persons, books, copies, school etc., aware that aesthetics form an interesting part of education in its true sense. Far-sighted in true education, she foresees that nothing hinders the progress even by one hundred grams. In short, she has the bounden duty for the intellectual growth of her class.”<sup>72</sup>

76. “An intelligent teacher makes her pupils studious. Above all, she will work out a good method without which all her teaching will be of no use. The **spontaneous-intuitive-motherly approach** is the true method.”<sup>73</sup>

77. “The **subject teacher** has the sacred duty of acquiring a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of what she has to teach, and to educate the hearts of her students towards a virtuous life while teaching, so that she may tend well the young plants entrusted to her by God, the family and the society. For this purpose, it is essential for her to have an absolutely irreproachable character, and for the students to see in her an embodiment of the lessons she teaches them... She should update herself with true and relevant knowledge, keeping abreast of the scientific progress, new findings and whatever can contribute to sharpen her intellect... With the wisdom and skill she should learn to draw out of every lesson moral norms applicable to life.”<sup>74</sup>

78. “Utmost care should be taken for the perfect fulfilment of one’s duties – not leaving out even an iota of her task, so that the children are not deprived of the required instruction and training. The teachers should, at the same time, see that moral

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<sup>72</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXVI,

<sup>73</sup> 1878 – 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.6, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>74</sup> 1878 – 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.6, Fasc. XXIII

formation and academic knowledge go hand in hand and that love for virtues are inculcated in the students.”<sup>75</sup>

79. “Every morning let us learn to plan out our lessons, devise and provide essential work materials, fully aware that each moment spent in idleness by the students weighs upon our conscience, and arrests the promotion of their development and excellence.”<sup>76</sup>
80. “Pupils are to be occupied with just not any work but something progressive, useful and suited to the age and need of each child.”<sup>77</sup>
81. “Since the children cannot concentrate on doing the same work for long they should be kept alert with some physical exercise at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the class.”<sup>78</sup>
82. “Tasks should be set well in advance, for the sight of unoccupied students is an index of irresponsible teachers.... The earnestness of the students is directly proportionate to the solicitude of the teachers and her earnestness to be in class on time.”<sup>79</sup>
83. “Let our fervent prayer be for the fulfilment of our tasks; let us supplement our prayer with earnest sacrifices. We are in the school of Jesus and He will teach us what we should accomplish and what we should avoid. Then shall we learn when and how to plan our lessons, organize the syllabus and records and to complete them meticulously, besides acquiring the techniques for teaching, correcting assignments, chalking out co-curricular activities and mastering skills in one or the other technique, till we excel in all. But Jesus can teach us only if we pray to Him and obey Him.”<sup>80</sup>

## Discipline

*Discipline is the business of enforcing a code of behaviour. The term is also applied to the punishment that is the consequence of transgression of the rules: the expected standards of clothing, timekeeping, social behaviour and work ethic. Hence the word refers to both prevention and remediation.*

*The aim of school discipline is to create a safe and happy learning environment and to minimize disruption. Classroom discipline aims at maintaining appropriate student behaviour as an essential pre-condition of learning. In well-disciplined schools there is a school-wide emphasis on the importance of learning and intolerance of conditions which inhibit learning. Widespread dissemination of clearly stated Rules, sanctions and procedures assures that all students and staff understand what is / is not acceptable.*

*Up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the traditional boarding schools in Europe enforced a rigorous system of discipline: unquestioning respect for and adherence to rules, and*

<sup>75</sup> 1887 – 88: *Notice to the Teachers*, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>76</sup> 03.12.1882: *A Word to the Teachers*, j, Fasc. XXI

<sup>77</sup> 1878 – 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.2, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>78</sup> 31.07.1881: *Rule for Day-School, Palagano*, n.12

<sup>79</sup> 1878 – 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.7, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>80</sup> 23.06.1890: *Exhortations to the Religious Teachers*, n.10, Fasc. XX

complete obedience to the teachers who acted as substitute parents. While the teachers were held responsible for handling routine classroom discipline, the Principal took the responsibility for dealing with serious infractions.

Mother Seraphina was not a person who was in the school only for “official duties”, or for enforcing discipline. She had learnt from Don Bosco to be actively involved in the everyday life of the school: very visible in hallways, classrooms and playgrounds, interacting with students, speaking to them by name, expressing interest in their activities etc. She insisted upon the staff members, especially the sisters to take active interest in the personal goals, achievements and problems of the pupils, and to support them in their curricular or extra-curricular activities. Taking her cue from Don Bosco’s “preventive system” of education, she warned them to be wary of meting out arbitrary punishment, which would only create resentment and hostility among pupils. Instead they were to understand the reasons for the student’s inappropriate behaviour and help misbehaving children to alter their behavioural pattern.

**84.** “Be firm but not angry; rebuke gently but never excuse indiscipline; pray a lot and punish the guilty only if nothing works to bring forth the acceptable behaviour. Take constructive, corrective measures with due reflection and prayer. To tell you frankly, I’m against dismissing the two unruly girls. Would that they showed some signs of improvement! The blood of Christ has ransomed those two recalcitrant teenagers. Hence pray and hope.”<sup>81</sup>

**85.** “Always let us take an inward look before correcting others and invoke Jesus; then our words will be effective. The child turns out to be what the mother fashions him / her. When a child does some mistake we punish her as if it were a personal affront to us, thereby vindicating our self-esteem... and thus losing our moral authority causing great harm to ourselves and to others.”<sup>82</sup>

**86.** “If a teacher is not punctual how can she demand punctuality from her pupils?”<sup>83</sup>

**87.** “If the **sisters** show very little respect towards each other, if they are reluctant to obey the request of the Principal or Superior, how can their students learn to be submissive, mutually cordial, gracious, affable, etc? ... One can easily maintain perfect discipline and order, if at the first sound of the gong she stops her work or lesson, breaking off not only her conversation but also even the word in mid-sentence. Example is far more effective than any eloquent precept because examples work miracles. On the contrary, if the teacher continues to work, or teach, or talk as if the bell has not rung at all, what will the children do? How can she reprimand them?”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> 10.03.1881: Let. to Catherine, Let. 13, Fasc. I

<sup>82</sup> 23.06.1890: *Exhortations to the Religious Teachers*, n.11, Fasc. XX

<sup>83</sup> *General Rules*

<sup>84</sup> 23.06.1890: *Exhortations to the Religious Teachers*, n.3&4, Fasc. XX

88. “Do all possible good to the fragile youth; be patient, gentle and magnanimous with them”.<sup>85</sup>
89. “For God’s sake never leave the children alone. The day-pupils, far less the boarders, should be found in twos.”<sup>86</sup>

### *Residential School*

90. “Expelling a teenager who joined the school as a child indicates often the sheer inadequacy of the teachers. Nevertheless, don’t be so heartbroken about their dismissal. Of course, it is natural and praiseworthy to take their departure to heart. I also feel the same, but to worry excessively is harmful. Never think that things would have been different had I been there. There is only one Teacher; the others are His instruments and their actions depend exclusively on Him. You can hence conclude that whatever befalls us – whatever God wants or permits to happen – is always for our own greater good and benefit. Therefore let us pray and revere God’s plan while carrying on our duty”.<sup>87</sup>
91. “The boarders should observe strict silence during the prescribed hours so as not to disturb others and to accustom themselves to quietness at times – a medium so essential for the youth to come to grip with themselves and to stand before God in silent wonder. We learn a lot in silence, while noise tends to dissipate the spirit.”<sup>88</sup>
92. “Allow the boarders to talk at meal time during the initial period. For the girls not being accustomed to observe silence during meals at home will resent it, if we insist on table manners from the very first day.”<sup>89</sup>
93. “Continue paying homage to Jesus; continue serving Him. What wonderful apostolate can be done among the boarders and day-scholars! We shall be able to see the number of lilies being transplanted into the religious garden. Dwell always in the presence of Jesus. Carry on sweet colloquy with Christ in the depth of your being and you’ll see how the soul can communicate even without words.”<sup>90</sup>
94. **Fees:** “This is to bring to your kind notice that the boarding school is not an inn and therefore, the boarders are bound to pay in advance the fee for the whole month including the holidays. Whoever does not wish to abide by the rules, is free to seek accommodation elsewhere.”<sup>91</sup>
95. “The **Bursar** should see that the accounts are kept accurately well. It is the specific duty of the bursar to collect the fees on time, to make payments and never incur any debt. She should not give away even 5 cents without accounting for it.”<sup>92</sup>

<sup>85</sup> 22.06.1893: Let. to Catherine, Let. 115, Fasc. III

<sup>86</sup> 22.10.1903: Let. to Sr. Giovannina, Let. 645, Fasc. XII

<sup>87</sup> 10.06.1881: Let. to Sr. Catherine, Let. II, Fasc. LVI

<sup>88</sup> 1875–90: *Rules for the Boarders*

<sup>89</sup> 27.01.1903: Let. to the sisters at Bagno, Let. 1, Fasc. LVII

<sup>90</sup> 09.03.1904: Let. to Sr. Giovanna, Let. 667, Fasc. XIII

<sup>91</sup> 27.01.1902: *Notice to the Parents*, Let. 516, Fasc. X - XI

<sup>92</sup> 1878 – 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forlì*, n.4, Fasc. XXIII

96. “You haven’t made any mention of the clauses on 1) illness, 2) excursions, 3) secondary education. During the vacation Ernestina could be left behind in the boarding (when the boarders are taken to the health resorts). Or she could be sent back to you for the winter holidays. Those who pay nominal fee are expected to help with the domestic chores, once they complete their elementary education. The same rule applies to your ward... When we took her in, it was never agreed that she would be provided free education throughout her stay here. We could as well ask you to withdraw her within a year...

It is, indeed, a crime to do charity to those who are not entitled to it, or to those who boast that they can afford to pay, as does Ernestina. For she says she has 50 Lire per month at her disposal. To welcome a destitute girl, clothe, feed and educate her without taking a penny, is true charity. I’ve already admitted three underprivileged girls and I appreciate them. Providence opens its doors to them in strange ways. They are much worse off than Ernestina; yet they have given 30 Lire toward the stay at the holiday resort, as they considered it a better way to stave off medicine and doctors. But she has been laughing it off when I told her that the penniless do not complain as she has been doing.

Ernestina is scrofulous and has to take cod liver oil. Moreover during summer she needs to bathe in spa waters. Her heels are always cracked and require a kind of curettage, besides medication. Perhaps she may be cured with medical treatment. No fee has been paid to the doctor yet. I have told him that her guardian would pick up the bill. Neither would I buy cod liver oil without orders.”<sup>93</sup>

#### Alternative School

97. “As soon as I received the copy of the letter addressed to the Mayor of Galeata, I wrote to the Inspector explaining the matter and asking for further advice. While opening the Tailoring Centre and the Children’s Shelter at Pianetto, I hadn’t applied for sanction, nor forwarded any diplomas, since I was under the impression that there is no need for any official authorization to open a Centre for **Non-Formal education**. Aren’t there ladies taking care of homeless boys or girls in their houses?

Now, as directed by the Inspector, I am forwarding the application for approval, along with the certificates of the sisters who have charge of the Children’s Home or the Tailoring Centre. The main aim of the institution at Pianetto is to provide a safe haven for destitute girls, equip them with practical skills in Home Economics and instruct them in faith formation.

I hope Your Honour would be kind enough to approve the Children’s Home, and wouldn’t close it down for not having followed the prescribed rule earlier”.<sup>94</sup>

[N.B. Refer to, ‘*To Educate While Teaching*’, for further material on education.]

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<sup>93</sup> 01.02.1891: Let to Can. Pilade Agnoletti, Fasc. LXXI

<sup>94</sup> 06.07.1899: Let. to the Chairman, Let. 15, Fasc.LXXIII(b)

### **D: Orphanage**

*Both the Jewish and the Athenian laws from time immemorial had prescribed care for the orphan, especially children of those killed in military service. Since the first century AD the Church set aside a portion of the people's offerings for the care of the destitute widows and orphan children. In the early Middle Ages, orphanages were instituted by religious Congregations for the care of children abandoned by their destitute birth parents, or born out of wedlock, or those born with disabilities, or unwanted girls born into patriarchal societies.*

*Natural calamities, the Crusades and the scourge of barbaric invasion, too, necessitated the continual existence of Children's Home in the various cities of the civilized world. Orphanages remained essential in most parts of Europe and U.S.A., as internecine wars were a common feature of civil life.*

*In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Europe and the United States foster homes and rehabilitation centers were instituted as alternatives to the orphanage. However, there are still many Religious Congregations and lay volunteers offering counselling, support, therapy, hope and healing to many boys and girls with serious emotional problems, to the abused, the neglected or the abandoned who are sheltered and cared for in orphanages.*

**98.** "Forsaken by her father after the death of her mother, Zenobia Baratti was entrusted to my care by her uncles. I received her as a tender mother and not merely as an educator, assuming my responsibility before God and men. The community accepted her on a monthly fee of 10 Lire, which I managed to get from CARITAS. Neither the Superior, nor the sisters were much interested in Zenobia. Still I tried to meet her moral, intellectual and material needs, exactly as I would for any other boarder. I turned to my acquaintances and not to the community to foot her bill.

As she grew up, Zenobia keenly felt the obduracy of her father and the abandonment by her close relatives, and I seized every opportunity, every means to alleviate her pain. The uncles washed their hands of her, but she never came to know about it. In fact, she was under the impression that it was they who sent her all the gift parcels. When she fell seriously ill the community wanted to send her home, but I prevailed upon the sisters to keep her and take care of her in the isolation ward. Zenobia continued to think that her medical expenses were met partly by the community and partly by her uncles.

I sent her to my own home during her convalescence and two of my cousins saw to her emotional and social needs, treating her like a lady and getting her invited by their friends to various functions. During her illness she expressed her desire to go to her father in order to move his heart and convert his attitude towards her. And I looked for benefactors to sponsor her travel fare and that of her chaperone. On the day she left, she told me: "I'm glad to go, but on the condition that you will take me back on my return. Mother, will you promise me that? She kept repeating it even as I kissed her goodbye." <sup>95</sup>

**99.** "See always the face of Jesus Christ in the poor, and to Him give alms." <sup>96</sup>

<sup>95</sup> 09.05.1894: Let. to a Priest, Let.13,

Fasc. LXXI

<sup>96</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXIV,

100. “Whenever I see our table sumptuously laid out, I think of the poor and yearn to assuage their hunger.”<sup>97</sup>

101. **Charity:** “An impoverished ex-student of our school is in dire straits. Her plight is worse than penury itself. In her harrowing illness she has only one wish, namely to die at the young age of 19. O that the Good Lord healed her!

If you, Rev. Mother would be so kind as to extend a generous hand, Jesus will reward you abundantly. Please send through the bearer of this letter whatever contribution you can make.”<sup>98</sup>

100. “Here we have a sixteen-year-old girl in rags, who has to earn her daily bread, as she is alone with her mother, but her wages are not enough to feed and clothe her. She told me she might be forced to take the begging bowl. I cried listening to her story. I felt like taking off my habit and wrap it around her, if it could serve the purpose... I was wondering how to help her, when an idea struck me. Can you please ask the postulant Albè who is soon to be clothed in the religious habit, if she could spare one of her dresses for her? If she is not willing, please ask Caterina Lolli to gift one of hers... please try somehow to clothe this ragged girl and Jesus will cover you with His graces. I need not add anything more since I know your heart.”<sup>178</sup>

102. “I’m not daunted by their penury; rather I’m spontaneously drawn to give priority to the poverty-stricken and the forsaken. To accept a good number of abandoned children is just to widen the circle of charity.”<sup>99</sup>

103. “The orphans have the right to a double share of my love. Let us not worry about tomorrow. The bank of Providence will never fail”<sup>100</sup>

104. “... I feel so sorry about not having any convent in Rome, for I could have made room for the refugees, the wounded and the orphans. I have a holy envy for all those engaged in helping out those unfortunate ones. From the moment I heard about the terrible disaster, I lost all my peace. I wrote to Mons. Bressan, to Messina and to Mileto, offering ourselves and our possessions ... All of a sudden, an idea strikes me, why not take in twelve orphans here at the Badia!...”<sup>179</sup>

105. “The very moment the awful news reached me, my heart flew down there eager to open the doors of Paradise to the dead and to offer a refuge to the survivors. Thus could I have soothed the anguish of Your Holiness who, as the loving father, gather

<sup>97</sup> December 1900 – May 1901: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XV, Fasc. XXIV

<sup>98</sup> Bologna: 24.09.1884, Let. to the Mother Superior of Forli, Let.4, Fasc. LVI

<sup>178</sup> 30.4.1881: Letter to the Mother Superior of Forli, Let. 6, Fasc. I

<sup>99</sup> 12.03.1897: Let. to Don Agostino Bandini, Let. 33, Fasc. XXXVII

<sup>100</sup> 12.10.1904: Let. to Baroness Emma De Seppi, Let. 36, Fasc. XXXV

<sup>179</sup> 27.1.1909: Let. to a Priest, Fasc. LXXII

into your soul the grief and sorrows of all your sons and daughters. But alas! News reached us late, cut off as we are by snow and ice in this hermitage of Badia. Nor do we have those comforts that the cities can offer to wipe the tears of our brethren. How much do I wish to have a house in Rome! I have left it to Jesus to do what is impossible for man to accomplish. I have already written to the Bishops of Messina and Mileto, as well as to the Curia of the Friars Minor, informing them that we are ready to accept 12 girls. The Prefect of Forli has asked us if we could accommodate some refugees. We are preparing some shelter for them in accordance with the directives of our Bishop. But I do not know if the distance and the harsh weather will give us this consolation!”<sup>101</sup>

**106.** “As soon as I came to know about the unheard of disaster, I longed to be of help to the living and the dead. Hearing that a signature campaign for sheltering the unfortunate orphans has already begun, I hasten to beg Your Eminence to enlist also the Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament among the volunteers. Right now I am ready to take 15 children gratis, but not more, in honour of the 15 mysteries of the Holy Rosary and in the name of Pope Benedict XV. Once they are well placed, perhaps I might be able to take more.”<sup>102</sup>

**107.** “Last week I wrote to the Cardinal Secretary of State, requesting His Eminence to send us 15 orphans in honour of the 15 Mysteries of the Rosary and Pope Benedict XV. Once they are well placed, we can take in more parentless girls. My heart always goes out to those regions devastated by the earthquake and I can hear the cries of the injured. Since there are only a few survivors, the orphaned might be fewer still.

One feels the bitter wound that rends the soul of the Supreme Pontiff on account of the war and the earthquake, and I do not know how to pour a drop of balsam oil into it. We shall certainly be keeping the Holy Hour on March 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. As a matter of fact, we have been vying with each other since long to adore the Blessed Sacrament from 11 p.m. to midnight almost everyday. Even the boarders and the orphans from Messina and Pompeii join us for the vigil, because, we feel the Holy Father’s anguish”.<sup>103</sup>

**108.** “How do you like the idea of having the premises of *Queen Elena’s Charitable Foundation* filled with orphans? ... They wrote to me from Rome that the government does not know where to shelter the orphaned. If we take in the infants, trained sisters will not be required right now; Jesus will provide for the future. You know very well our state of affairs. We are employing lay teachers at Ghivizzano, Moliterno and Mesagne. I wouldn’t hide from you my happy dream of seeing a number of orphans at Cesenatico, even at San Damaso where there is enough room besides the adjacent Municipal School.”<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> 13.01.1909: Let. to Pope Pius X, Let. 11, Fasc. XLIV

<sup>102</sup> 21.01.1915: Let. to Cardinal Pietro Gasparri, Let. 8, Fasc. XXXVI

<sup>103</sup> 25.01.1915: Let. to Mons. Migone, Let. 119, Fasc. XLVI

<sup>104</sup> 15.02.1915: Let. to Orsolina, Let. 1057, Fasc XVII

109. “At 9 pm today, Sr. M. Eugenia will be leaving for Bertinoro taking three more orphans with her, who will bring us God’s blessing and Providence.”<sup>105</sup>

#### **E: Medical Care**

*Down through the centuries many consecrated persons have devoted their lives to the care of the sick and suffering. In an age when preventive medicine was practically unknown, members of Religious Congregation exclusively committed to medical care, have shown heroic charity in assisting the victims of contagious diseases like small pox, plague, tuberculosis, leprosy et al. Healing and caring for the sick gained new impetus as hospices and hospitals were set up for the infirm by military/chivalric Orders of the Knights of the Hospitallers of St. John along the Crusade routes. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century women religious dominated the field of nursing, mainly as a result of widespread wars either in Europe or in their colonies. In the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Henry Durant established the Red Cross Society to nurse the wounded and the sick.*

*Nursing Schools in England were pioneered by the charismatic Florence Nightingale who had received nursing training under the Sisters of Mercy in France. The assistance rendered to the wounded in the Crimean War (1853 - 1855) by her band of dedicated nurses, was a shot in the arm for young ladies of Middle and Upper Classes to pursue the nursing career.*

*Currently medical services in the Third World take a holistic approach. Besides preventive-curative medicine, new initiatives are launched to improve the lives and health of mothers and their unborn children, post-natal care, childcare especially of the malnourished and the physically challenged, the terminally ill etc.*

*The First World War launched the CFMSS into the nursing field; the Second World War saw them running “soup kitchens”, “half-way houses”, “shelters” and other humanitarian aid for the displaced, the maimed, the refugees and other victims of invasion. Their nursing apostolate had a fresh impetus when the dissolution of the erstwhile Soviet Union let loose ethnic wars in Eastern Europe.*

110. “I’m ready to render all the services befitting our religious state, even to do the domestic chores in order to help the hospital in whatever way we can. I wish to be of service to the clinic and to the girl child in that town. My sole desire is to be able to do the impossible for the benefit of the poor.”<sup>106</sup>
111. ... “In case of necessity and whenever their help is sought after, let the sisters tend the sick in private houses or in the hospital; but no one is obliged to do so.”<sup>107</sup>
112. “Dreadful news came from Ravenna that a badly wounded soldier brought to the army hospital there, could be the brother of our Sr. Vittorina. Your Holiness can imagine the meeting between the two! The sad tales of the injured that the superior

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<sup>105</sup> 14.05.1915: Let. to Monsignor Bressan, Let. 21, Fasc. LXX

<sup>106</sup> 26.09.1899, Let. to the Sec. Of Cesenatico Hospital, Let. 16, Fasc. LXIII (b)

<sup>107</sup> Constitution 1913, Art. 2

narrates would wring out tears from the stones! The sisters tend not only the maimed but also the children of the troops deployed along the frontline.”<sup>108</sup>

### Care for the Wounded Soldiers

**113.** “We are certainly not nurses and personally I’m not for the medical profession. The sisters make a lot of sacrifice to serve in the hospitals. Since it is a temporary affair who can refuse to do the compassionate duty of Tobias before this global sepulchre?”<sup>109</sup>

**114.** “Sanctify yourself and then the others. Have great love for the wounded. As you enter the ward, greet their Guardian Angels beseeching them to speak for you to the maimed and the dying.”<sup>110</sup>

**115.** “I do understand about your commitment to the Red Cross Society, but how to back out of it now? It is absolutely necessary that you strictly forbid all private nursing. Find out how to go about with the night duties. I do not want any sister to keep lonely vigil over the infirm without proper supervision.”<sup>111</sup>

**116.** “I do not know where to look for personnel for the hospitals. On the other hand, we cannot refuse such an act of mercy. Therefore, everyone should try to shoulder the work of two persons, thus sparing a sister each for tending the injured. The hardships are only for a while but the charity we show to the wounded will produce lasting fruits to the Institute.”<sup>112</sup>

**117.** “Well done, well done! I’m only sorry that due to the opening of the hospital in Rome our troubles have increased, and that you have to be content with half the members. Be patient for some more days for the sake of the Infant Jesus and I shall send you as many sisters as I can possibly spare from the Badia. I was deluding myself that the hospital in Rome would not be opened any soon; but the sudden call, despite the perfect calm, worries me much because of the shortage of personnel. If I have taken upon myself this new kind of martyrdom in opening medical care centres, it is exclusively for the good of the Institute and of the young sisters who will be there, when we older ones are no more alive. Of course, to obtain a lasting benefit it is necessary that every member has to undergo some privations and hardships. The suffering is only for the moment; but the gain is forever.”<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> 17.07.1915: Let. to Pope Benedict XV, Let. 43, Fasc. XLIV

<sup>109</sup> 21.12.1916: Seraphina’s Let. to Abbot Arcangelo Lolli, Fasc.42

<sup>110</sup> Testimony of M. Agatha, AGCFM – Doc. I, p. 25 – 28

<sup>111</sup> 30.06.1916: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 1129, Fasc. XVIII

<sup>112</sup> 30.12.1916: Let. to Sisters at Cesenatico, Let. 1139, Fasc. XVIII

<sup>180</sup> 30.12.1916: Let. To Sr. Orsolina, Let. 1143, Fasc. XVIII

## CHAPTER VI Our Governance

*“ I am among you as the one who serves” (Lk. 22: 27), is the root paradigm for exercising authority in a Franciscan religious Institute. For governance is the call to service in the Gospel sense: “Whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mt. 20: 26-27).*

*In a Franciscan fraternity there is no room for power or glory, no opening for popularity or prestige, no scope for seeking privileges or doing one’s sweet will. The office of the superior is not something to take pride in, or boast of: it is rather an invitation to carry out the Master’s mandate to “wash one another’s feet” (Jn. 13: 14). Hence, Francis admonishes: “Let those who are placed over others boast about that position as much as they would, if they were assigned the duty of washing the feet of their brothers” (Adm IV: 2).*

*The invitation to imitate Christ in humble service rules out the wish to domineer, to enforce one’s sweet will, or one’s point of view and ways on others. Nor are they corporators, sitting on a pedestal above the members, working in isolation from corporate strategies in matters that affect the whole community or Institute. The members are partners in creating the life they share. The Superiors, therefore, must foster the active participation on the part of all members towards a relationship of collaboration, co-operation and mutual concern for the life of the Institute (Can. 618). Besides, consultation with the sisters and shared decision-making in Chapters are necessary for preserving the spirit of our Venerable Foundress and for revitalizing and adapting the original charism and the spiritual patrimony of the Institute.*

*The mother-sister-servant leadership that Clare chose for herself, was a form of governance that inspired growth in others and enabled them to grow to their full stature. It encouraged the members to assume co-responsibility, initiative and collaboration for the good of the whole monastery. Fraternal dialogue and joint deliberation by all the members – even the least ones, were the effective tools to arrive at general consensus (Rule IV: 17). The goal of such collegial responsibility is to build up perfect concord and peace, union of hearts, empowerment of members and a common objective.*

*According to Clare, those in authority are called to preside over the members by virtue of their example than by their office (Rule IV: 9). Canon 619 states that “Superiors are to be an example to the members in cultivating virtues and in the observance of the laws and traditions of the Institute.” They must listen to the will of God both personally and with all the members so that their actions will always flow from God’s plan.*

*In the decentralized form of governance of the CFMSS, the Superior General holds power over all the provinces and provides a base of unity for the entire Institute. While she periodically exercises power in a province – usually at the time of visitation and Chapter, she has very little power over individual houses and members. To be elected to the office of the Superior General it is required that a sister has sufficient experience in the life of the Institute and commitment to it.*

*One of the privileged concerns of the pastoral role of the Superior General is the visitation of members and houses. In the International setup of our Institute visitation is a source of unity, inspiration, mutual exchange of ideas and experience and an invaluable source of information and understanding of our diverse cultures and circumstances.*

1. "The Institute is governed by the Mother General in dependence of the Holy See, and assisted by her Council and all the professed sisters..."

The specific aim of the Institute next to our own sanctification, is the salvation of souls in places where we are called, preferably in the forsaken, the most difficult and the poorest region, where no other women religious exist.

Among us CFMSS, there is no distinction of rank; all are sisters in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ... The Governance is characterized by mutual love and union as exist among blood sisters, each member yearning to be holy.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Superior General**

2. “The Moderator of the Institute should be a true mother making herself all thing to all after the example of St. Paul – even to the least one of her daughters. Only thus can she fulfil what is stated in Chapter IV & X of the Rule. She is responsible for the whole Institute, she has authority over every house, the superiors and individual members. By virtue of the vow of obedience, each sister should respect and love her and obey her orders in simplicity and humility, seeing in her the person of Jesus Christ...

Let the religious find in the Moderator the heart of a tender Mother who embraces everyone in charity, who is ready to advise those in doubts, to comfort the sorrow-stricken, ever willing to share the pain of others, and to cherish both those who pour out their hearts to her as well as those who do not...

The Moderator should have an Asst. General, Admonisher, Secretary and eight Councillors four of whom must reside in the Generalate and the other four may stay elsewhere. The Moderator must be at least 40 years of age...

The Mother shall visit all the houses either personally or through her delegate: those in Italy once a year and those abroad every six years, even more often if she deems it beneficial. During the visitation the Mother, or her delegate, shall hold personal meeting with every member of the community including the novices, postulants and boarders, give a talk to the day-scholars, conduct a local chapter, check the accounts, the House Diary, the registers etc. She shall examine the neo-professed, novices, postulants and pupils in catechism, watch the school concert and attend to whatever holds her interest.

The visitation is to be begun at the Mother House, preceded by a novena to the Holy Spirit, the Prayer to the Blessed Virgin, St. Francis and St. Clare, the Mass of the Holy Spirit, *Ave Maris Stella* and the *Litany of the Saints*. The same prayers shall be recited in every House.”<sup>2</sup>

3. “A sister as soon as she is elected Mother General, adds the name Clare to her own name. For it is good that the Superior of the Institute bears the appellation of the Holy Foundress and that her name day be celebrated on the lovely feast of the transitus of St. Clare from this world to the embrace of Jesus. Hence, the feast of the Mother will always be on August 12<sup>th</sup>...

The feast of St. Clare is a holiday for the schools. On this occasion each pupil of every school shall send greetings and offerings. Certain Institutes hold charity-bazaar to instil in the young compassion for the less privileged. Preference should be given

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<sup>1</sup> 17.12.1906: Let. to Abbot Lolli, Let. 229, Fasc. LII

<sup>2</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXII,

to articles for the Church and clothes for the poor. Dress or socks made by the students in their free time (as a means to sensitise them to the plight of the unfortunate), personal objects, useful and convenient household goods for those whose need you are aware of, are also welcome.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Councillors**

*Superiors at all levels are to have their own council. This provision of Canon 627 establishes both a form of participation in government by the members of the Institute and a way of guarding against an overly autonomous exercise of authority. It is precisely to emphasize the help a council can provide superiors in fulfilling their role. They are not mere consultors, but have a decisive vote in the Congregation / Province along with the Superior General / Provincial Superior. Nor may the Major Superiors act in momentous matters without taking the vote of the Councillors.*

*The universal law requires the Superiors to seek the consent of their Council in certain instances and to seek consultation, hear the opinion, or act with the Council in other instances. If no opportunity is given to the Council members to manifest consent or opinion, the action of the superior is invalid. Again, the superior should not act contrary to the consultative vote, unless there is every reason to do so, especially when the vote is unanimous (Can. 127). The primary role of a councillor is to offer honest and sincere advice, even if one knows her opinion is contrary to that of the other councillors. Yet when the vote is taken, she is bound to go by the declaration agreed upon by the majority.*

*In the Franciscan Order Councillors are elected by the General or Provincial Chapters to assist the Superior General or Provincial Superior in the government of the order. According to our Constitution, Superiors / Councillors do not remain too long in offices of governance. This norm provides for a healthy turn over of personnel so that one does not continue too long in office with the potential negative effects to the person and to the Institute.*

4. “The General Councillors must be professed at least for eight years. They assist the Mother in the important matters of the Institute, vying with each other in offering her their help in the governance and building one heart with her. They make known to her the abuses and drawbacks that might escape her notice, but without any direct authority.

One of the four Councillors who reside in the Generalate, shall be chosen by the Mother as her personal Admonisher, who will humbly point out to her, her shortcomings in all simplicity.

There shall be two Councillors in each community, nominated by the Mother. One shall be the Vice Superior, who substitutes for the Superior in her absence or illness. There shall also be a local admonisher who is duty bound to bring to the notice of the Superior the disorders in the community as well as her own faults / defects. If the Superior doesn’t listen to her or put things in order, the Admonisher has the sacred duty to inform the Mother, after having cleansed herself of all self-interest in prolonged prayer.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXVIII,

<sup>4</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXIV,

### **Secretary**

5. “The Superior General may have one or more secretaries according to the need of the Institute. The secretaries are appointed by the Mother. They should have a certain level of intelligence, uncommon prudence and discretion. While accompanying the Mother on her journeys, she should set a good example of humility and gentleness, never priding herself on her position, or showing of her importance. Although they are entrusted with the correspondence, the letters marked “reserved” – whether from the sisters or the others – should never be opened by them.”<sup>5</sup>

### **The Archivist**

*The primary task of the archivist is to ensure the long-term preservation of records important enough to be retained for an extended period. The archives are a repository of collections of enduring value to the Institute or a Province: unpublished letters, diaries and other manuscripts, documents of historical value, photographs, films, video and optical disks etc. The archivist selects records, identifies and arranges them systematically, preserves and makes them accessible for use. She keeps an inventory of these documents in the form of a catalogue or index, with a brief synopsis of the contents of each one. The cataloguing system permits information - retrieval and accountability for deposited documents.*

*Selecting records is a process that requires an understanding of the historical context in which the records were created and the uses for which they were intended. The archivist, hence, need to understand the principles of sound management.*

6. “The Secretary could be the archivist, since she has to file all the certificates, documents, assets, deeds, minutes of admission, chronicles, accounts, balance sheets and whatever is to be maintained according to the custom of the Institute, besides the Mass Register, daily diary and other items that can be of interest or use.

Every house has to have an archive and hence, a local archivist who files and maintains the documents including the School Diary, report of the apostolate, functions etc. Whichever community has no archive, should set up one immediately, gathering all the documents and details right from the inception of the Convent, the Chronicle of important events, etc.

The Archivist and the Secretary who stay in the Mother House furnish and preserve whatever pertains to the whole Institute.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Administration of Goods**

*It is the role of the finance officer to administer the goods of the Institute under the authority of the Major Superior. She must have financial expertise and seek the advice of qualified accountants and attorneys. The duty of the financial administrator include land purchase, construction of new buildings, maintenance of old buildings, support of personnel, long-term investment of any kind of capital et al.*

*She is to work in close association with a Finance Council composed of persons skilled in financial affairs as well as in civil law. The members of the council must*

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<sup>5</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXV,

<sup>6</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXV,

possess outstanding integrity. The finance council is to prepare each year according to the directions of the Major Superior a budget of the income and expenditures foreseen for the governance of the Institute / Province in the succeeding year. At the close of the year the council is to examine the report of receipts and expenditures. (Cf. Can. 493)

Financial Administration must be marked by scrupulous honesty. The administrator must take care that the ownership of the Institute's property is safeguarded through civilly valid methods. The documents and deeds upon which are based the rights of the Institution to its goods must be kept in a safe archive. Besides, she should update periodically an accurate and detailed inventory of movable / immovable goods and copy of the inventory kept in the archives of the Institute / Province. She must moreover, keep the books of receipts and expenditures in good order and draw up a report on her administration at the end of the year (Can. 1283 – 84).

7. “The Local Superior, after having met the needs of the house within the authorised limit of money, should send the balance amount either in cash or kind to the Mother House that feeds and educates postulants and novices for the filial houses, which should vie with each other to support it. The interest on the dowry, pension and other income are to be forwarded to the Mother House...

Along with greetings for Christmas and Easter an offering in cash or kind or both should be contributed to the Mother House, besides candles or altar linen or some piece of embroidery for the feast of Corpus Christi.

During the Visitation or whenever the Constitution requires it, the superior should submit a detailed **statement of income and expenditure** with all the entries, stating the quality, quantity and source of each item, as well as the contribution made to the Mother House and cash-in-hand...

Every year an **inventory** of all the articles in the house should be forwarded to the Mother House. Once the inventory is approved, it should be updated during the successive years, entering the variation as footnotes. Every six years a fresh inventory has to be made.

The Bursar should collect the fund on time, be wise and foreseeing in supplying the needs with trust in Providence and without running into debt.”<sup>7</sup>

- 8) “Since you are so concerned about me, I would like you to send me some length of brown material – the kind you sent me earlier – to make summer mantle for Sisters Bernardina and Veronica. I am not happy with what is available in Rome (Can you please send me the address so that we can order for it straight away?) And then some yards of grey flannel too, as well as the painting for our dear Bishop.”<sup>8</sup>
- 9) “I’ve occasionally received a few hundred lire from the sisters at Itambacury. I have also sent them periodicals, library books, specimen books on various arts and crafts, length of fabric and other objects without asking them for reimbursement for the expenses. It is customary among us to exchange things so that we are knit together by the bond of love in Jesus Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXV,

<sup>8</sup> 04.02.1904: Let. to Sisters at Meerut, Let. 661, Fasc. XIII

<sup>9</sup> 01.03.1914: Let. to the Archbishop of Diamantina, Let. 4, Fasc. LXX

## Local Superior

*A religious community is to live in a legitimately established house, under the authority of a superior. The superior has a specific role of leadership in building up the community. The task of building a communion in Christ is not the sole responsibility of the superior but that of each member who is responsible for the common good. For the sisters remain permanently co-responsible for their community. The Superior's function is to help the community discern how each one's gifts can be best used in the light of our charism. Moreover, she has to help the sisters to realize the fulfilment of their own particular vocation within the common ideal. She remains functionally at the centre of the community for the benefit of all.*

*The Superior is not exempted from common life, rather she is to be a "model and mirror" to others in "serving God more perfectly" (Test. Clare: 19, 51). The authority of service practised by St. Clare was an example of "servant leadership" found in the person of Jesus. The title of "sister" was more important to Clare than "mother", and she made use of it to put herself on the same level as the rest of the community.*

*According to Canon 619, the pastoral role of superiors towards the members include meeting their personal needs, looking after them solicitously, visiting the sick, admonishing the restless, consoling the faint-hearted and being patient towards all.*

*In a Clarian community decisions are made in a chapter composed of all the members. Clare's aim of the **weekly chapter** was to foster and promote responsible participation of each individual, and to verify her fidelity to the ideals of the life professed: the following of Christ in growing intimacy with Him, in fraternal union, charity and better interpersonal relationships etc. No one is to impose her view on the others, but each one has to offer and receive enlightening insights from experience. The local chapter moreover, is the occasion for the sisters to become aware of those constructive and destructive elements that each one contributes to the building up or tearing down of the community.*

*In our Institute local Superiors are appointed by the Provincial Superior preceded by a suitable consultation with the members of the community (Can 625 §3). They can be removed from the office during their term for reasons of ill health, incompetence or other serious causes. They can also be transferred, if their service is needed in another office.*

10) "The Local Superior is responsible for the moral, physical and economic state of not only the sisters but also of the school and boarding... To carry out this duty, let the superior be the most educated or at least capable of governing, managing and dealing with educational authorities..."

Besides the superior, there should be a Vice Superior and two Councillors. The elected superior represents the Mother; therefore, as a loving daughter she should be of one heart with her, and be a tender mother to the sisters and children entrusted to her care, especially the orphans in whom she should pour out all her charity. Her dependence on and respect for the Major Superiors will be an eloquent example for the others to have the same bestowed on her. She must be present at all the Community acts except for grave reasons...

If the superior is incapable of giving talks let her seek the help of a priest to preach to and enlighten the sisters, and a competent sister to instruct the children. In the absence of a priest she should at least brief them on the current feast...

The sisters should obey, respect and depend on the superior as if she were the Mother. **Each single convent in its union should be a mirror of the Badia...**

Every first Sunday of the month the superior – either personally or taking the help of a capable sister – should send to the Mother an exact report of the moral and religious state of the sisters, the material and economic condition of the convent, the apostolate carried out, number of students, notable events, various activities etc...

The superior cannot send the sisters to their relatives, the Mother House or elsewhere without the prior permission of the Mother, except in urgent cases... The tenure of a Superior's office is three years; she may be re-appointed for another term after which she should spend a year or more at the Mother House."<sup>10</sup>

- 11) "In every house the superior shall maintain a well-furnished **library** stocked with books on asceticism, religious life, literature, magazines and periodicals pertaining to various subjects and indispensable to the sisters in carrying out their respective task... It is essential to provide the sisters with all the accessories for drawing, painting, music, embroidery, craft work and other pastime that help ward off ennui..."

A diary should be maintained in every convent with daily entries of important events, celebrations, visits of Major Superiors, Circular Letters etc. Besides, the **House Diary** should contain a synopsis of the opening ceremony of the Convent, the school, the chapel et al.

On the **completion of the tenure of office**, the sister should hand over everything to the next person who takes over the charge."<sup>11</sup>

### **Participatory Governance**

*In April 1912, an anonymous letter was sent to the Sacred Congregation, accusing Mother Seraphina of irregularities in governance, non-celebration of General Chapter, disciplinary and administrative disorders, opening new convents without sufficient or capable members etc. Bishop Polloni was asked to look into the matter and send a report on the state of affairs of the CFMSS. Polloni's letter to the Cardinal speaks volumes about the participatory governance of our Foundress.*

*"Instead of governing the Institute single-handedly as alleged, there are Asst. General, Mother Catherine of the Sacred Heart and Sr. Veronica of the Most Blessed Sacrament – a woman of wisdom and maturity, to carry on the work when the Mother General is away on visitation or opening new convents. The Council consists of six Discreets, all senior members except one who substituted an older sister who had to be transferred as she was in the habit of undermining the authority by grumbling about them to the younger sisters and novices.*

*As a matter of fact no chapter is held in the technical sense; nor any minutes maintained. However, everyone expresses her opinion; in the final analysis the Mother General's decision prevails, which is almost looked upon as oracle...*

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<sup>10</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXIII,

<sup>11</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXI,

*Finances are generally a concern to these sisters. They do not go out begging for alms; but they are never in debt. Yet they took in 12 girls orphaned by the earthquake at Messina. They reached here semi-naked and without a lira given by any Association. They are fed, clothed and provided for. This act of charity has brought them a lot of donations. Charity comes to their aid, since they beg for favours in the name of the orphans.*

*The filial convents are not a financial burden to the community, as they are opened only after ensuring the sisters' lodging and maintenance. In fact, they help the Mother House, especially those in Brazil and India, and at Trieste and Ravenna. That's how this community of sixty-odd persons consisting of sisters, novices, postulants and boarders live on. Of course they cannot draw up an estimate of their budget, but the economy is well balanced.*

*I too am against their mania for expansion; but seeing that the sisters – even the young ones, are doing quite well, as I hear from the Bishops whom I meet occasionally, I let it go, lest I should repent of having obstructed some good works. In short, God's blessings seem to be upon them.” (08.07.1912: Rome, ASCVR - Bricinorien. – B. 70, Terziarie Francescane)*

12) “The *Norms of our Religious Life* that I’m sending you are on trial basis. Therefore, dear daughters, you should vie with each other to fulfil them. At the same time you should be frank in informing me every two or three months your observations and difficulties. Pray always, especially when you receive the Mysteries, so that Jesus may enlighten you about what we must do to please Him even in the smallest things. Thus the *Code of our Rule*, cleansed and refined by the tenor of observance with the help of the Spirit of God, can be called solely of Jesus.”<sup>12</sup>

13) “I entreat you to send me your frank comments on any point of the *Constitution*, for I’ll be happy to know how each one feels about it. I hope to give the final touches to the **Constitution** within the year and to send it to Rome for approval. Send me your corrected version. The revised chapters may be entitled the “*Duties of the Religious*” instead of “*Spiritual Directory*”. I do not like the expression “Secret of the Religious”. Since I’m not sure of the apt title, I’ve mentioned terms like “President”, “Visitor”, “Asst. General”. What do you think of them? Pray a lot so that everything leads to the glory of God.

I have to revise the *Rule for the Novitiate* and that of the Neo-Professed. It’s providential that these are drafted anew after long years of experience, because quite often practice differs from theory. Experiential knowledge and correction by our beloved Bishop and the Consultant at the Sacred Congregation will make our Constitution free from all errors.”<sup>13</sup>

14) **Gift for the Pope:** “You must be in the know that Cardinal Respighi will be presenting a gold tiara to Pope Leo XIII on behalf of the pilgrims on 20<sup>th</sup> instant. I would be happy if the two of you could join the pilgrimage as representatives of the Institute. Meet the Cardinal and ask His Eminence how you should go about it and what we can offer to have a share in the gift being presented by the whole world. Ask him too, if I should send His Holiness a telegram and whether it is all right to have adoration, clothing ceremony, profession etc., in honour of the Pope. In short, what we should do to show that we are loyal daughters. I heard that the students and

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<sup>12</sup> 25.02.1900: Cir. Let. 8,

<sup>13</sup> 25.03.1902: Cir. Let. 11

associates of Don Bosco have collected £ 12,000. Let me know at the earliest the Cardinal's reply so that if we are on time, I can write to our communities. Hence, hurry up please."<sup>14</sup>

- 15) "Let us devotedly observe our three vows, the holy Rule and the Constitution, keeping a close watch on ourselves in order to grow in holiness day after day. Before the visitation, see that everything is put in order and I shall have the joy of finding you to be true olive shoots that surround the table of the Lord. God is orderliness; He never lags behind, neglects nothing, forgets nothing. On my arrival I would like to find everything in order: the administration, the diary, the registers etc. If there is backlog of work, bring it to date with your goodwill and hard work... Whoever is negligent in small things shows lack of enthusiasm and can do hardly any lasting good."<sup>15</sup>

- 16) "Every morning from the first day of Lent onwards, I intend to work on the **Constitution** to be sent to Rome. If any of you have any suggestions to make, please do not hesitate to do so. Tell me frankly. Recite the '*Veni Creator*', the 'Prayer to the Immaculate' composed by Pope Pius X, the '*Ave Maris Stella*' and some sacrifices wherever possible, so that Jesus may write it for me.

The Superiors are to send me by next week the Timetable and the distribution of duties, for to do everything by everyone is to create confusion. By March 20, the **Inventory** and the list of what everyone brings to the community should be sent as they have to be filed in the archives... Besides, the superiors are strongly recommended to find out the personal needs of the sisters, just as individual sisters are to express their needs in all simplicity."<sup>16</sup>

- 17) "As soon as you receive this letter, begin the personal interview (with the sisters/ neo-professed and the novices) and send me your observations. Provide the sisters with all the necessities. The teaching sisters should be supplied with paper, envelopes, notebooks, pen etc. Be true mothers to them. Every night examine yourselves, because Jesus will ask you a strict account of His spouses entrusted to you as a sacred deposit.

I'll be sending at the earliest the list of all the office-bearers of our communities. File it in the archives after having read it out to all the sisters. You must also be pleased to have a roster of all the members of other convents for an exchange of the bond of affection, hearts and minds. **One heart and one soul in the heart of Jesus...**

Let us cut down on useless travels and love the solitude of our sweet Cenacle. You already know that you need permission even to come to the Mother House. So too the case with going to other convents or to any other place outside the parish...

Take care that whatever the Major Superiors have written, suggested, or ordered, do not end up as dead letter. You should promptly adhere to it, using every means to make the sisters obedient and devoted to the Institute... Be on guard against grumbling in front of the young sisters, because you will lose much of your authority. It's too bad to hear a local Superior blame the Major Superiors. You would do better to write to me your impression...

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<sup>14</sup> 08.02.1903, Let to Sr. Catherine, Let. 575, Fasc. XII

<sup>15</sup> 25.03.1903: Cir.Let.14

<sup>16</sup> 15.02.1904: Cir. Let. 16

I would like to have your opinion regarding the title for the one who substitutes me. Which is better, Vicar, Vice, Assistant, or Visitor General? Again, is it better to use one veil, or one over the other during Holy Communion, or have one reserved specially for the purpose?"<sup>17</sup>

- 18) "Have you ever thought that not replying to the queries point by point is a great offence? Hence keep this letter before you and let every Superior either directly or through the Headmistress, send me the reply after having heard the opinion of each sister regarding the nine points raised in it. All the sisters should sign it. Besides, each one is free to send me her confidential observation separately. The neo-professed may intimate their views to the Asst. General...

Sisters can wear white veil in our chapel but black in the church, using a special one for the solemn ceremonies... The majority of sisters prefer to use white veil without the starched strip of cloth. According to the norms of the Holy Church and that of our Seraphic Order, I leave the option to those who made their profession before August 12, 1902. But the rest are to wear veil without the strip. However, if the use of veil with or without the stiff strip causes disturbance in any community, the superior can inform me about it and I am open to any suggestion. These are secondary matters. What matters is the perfect immolation of ourselves to Jesus and with Jesus, to love Him and be with Him."<sup>18</sup>

- 19) "I can assure you that it was owing to the Blessed Virgin's timely guidance that the Constitution was not yet forwarded to Rome, because recommendations from more Bishops would be of valid support for it. One does not endorse what is yet to be practised, but what has already been put into practice – what has been proved by experience. Going through the *Canonical Directives* of 1898 and the Sacred Congregations' *Instruction* of 1901, which gives sure norms for every little thing, I feel greatly comforted. For I have noticed that the essential part is already in force among us right from the outset of our stay at the Badia and in other places. If the implementation of certain injunctions was delayed for want of personnel, it was, however, the aim of our earnest endeavour to execute them.

I am now in a position to send you the Constitution that you are already living and whose contents are summed up in the *Rule for the Novitiate* and in the *Practical Guide for our Sanctification*. If certain points are found to be at variance with the ideas of any one of you, I am awfully sorry to disagree with you. Yet I'm sure that you will come round to my viewpoint, knowing that it is in line with the dictates of the Sacred Congregation. I won't budge an inch from what the Canon Law prescribes...

While praying to the Immaculate Mother, a thought flashed across my mind namely, that the Neo-Professed should never wear the mantle, and that the white woollen veil is to be worn only for Holy Communion, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Procession. Going through the *Instruction* of the Sacred Congregation, I found such injunction. Therefore, the local Superiors are requested to introduce these instructions, but slowly, gradually, according to the time and place.

Beloved daughters of my heart, what I've written is not mine, but of the Immaculate Virgin. I didn't spell it out earlier for I wanted to be certain of it and today I have no more doubts. Besides the constant confirmation I receive in prayer, I find absolute sanction in the voice of Rome, which is that of Jesus Christ..."<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> 11.03.1904: Cir. Let. 17

<sup>18</sup> 25.03.1904: Cir. Let. 18

<sup>19</sup> 23.03.1905: Cir. Let. 23 (Second Part)

- 20) "...Some of you have been questioning about the new foundations... You know better than me how each house came into being – almost against our will. The sisters over here can testify as to how many offers I have declined and how much I insisted on the founding of the house at Trieste. Besides being a port of embarkation for the missionaries, this convent is a source of moral and material support to the Institute. Many a sister knows about its advantages, which I am not going to enumerate for the sake of brevity... Who suffers the greater anxiety in opening a new convent? For whom – if not for Jesus and the Institute – do I offer the continual sacrifice of being away from those dear to my heart and from my own loving sister with whom I've spent 47 years of my life? When people live together, bonds of affection bind them and their souls are fused together... and yet she is nowhere near me in my most happy or sorrowful moments! Of how much comfort would it be – for me personally and for those here, to have some older sisters to arrange and settle everything! At least let me have the consolation that everything is put in order right from the very inception of an institution..."<sup>20</sup>
- 21) "You want to send away the Franciscans from Trieste? How come you have changed your mind, after having shown so much enthusiasm about our arrival there, and despite your oft-repeated promises and assurances? It is better to clarify things once and for all, since the in-fighting among the religious scandalizes the people. Please await my arrival; we shall then sort out everything in evangelical simplicity and the sweet charity of Jesus Christ. Kindly excuse my delay for right now I'm busy with the preparation for the profession and the Brazilian Mission.

Nevertheless, I would like you to know that Your Honour have hurled a volley of accusations and calumnies that are not found in our Civil Code. Just imagine, calling us thieves! I can proudly say and prove with facts and figures that the Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament have not taken from but given to the *Sacred Heart Institute*. I can substantiate it in person once I reach there; and you will soon agree with me.

However, I look upon your accusations as precious gems. Thank you for the same and I love you all the more for it. I enclose you in the tabernacle - right in the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so that you may pray for me. Pray that soon there will be a better understanding between us!"<sup>21</sup>

- 22) "Humbly kissing Your Holiness' feet and taking courage in both hands, I, the least one of your daughters, beg for an extraordinary grace in the name of the Immaculate Virgin. We are Franciscans dating from the late medieval period. We followed the customary autonomy in each convent as traditionally practised ever since the time of the Seraphic Father. But in 1893, Providence brought about a change in the mode of governance. Thus all the convents which were opened since then are closely held together by a central administration.

On June 25, 1904 with Your Holiness' benediction, a tabernacle was opened in Trieste. Though the Austrian Emperor upholds the Religious Orders, yet his Ambassador, while issuing the order of approval, certified that we are not canonically approved by the Holy See. The Secretary of State wrote to me twice, urging me to get the required approbation. Since the Sacred Congregation's

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<sup>20</sup> 02/09.11.1905: Cir. Let. 24

<sup>21</sup> 16.09.1906: Let. to Ms De Vimmer, Let. 19, Fasc. LXXIII (b)

procedure is rather lengthy, I heard an inner voice during prayer, commanding me to knock at Your Holiness' paternal heart, begging for the decree that would carry weight with the Imperial Court.

Our Constitution was drafted by a Franciscan bishop for just a single convent. It was later modified in accordance with the norms given by the ex-Minister General, Archbishop Bernardino of Vago. More than 12 years later, it was revised by Rt. Rev. Frederick Polloni, Bishop of Bertinoro, as advised by the same prelate and V. Rev. Fr. Luigi Mazza – a close acquaintance of Monsignor Bressan. The amended text was sent to Abbot A. Lolli through Monsignor Sanfermo for the final touch. Since the matter is urgent, there is no other way but to invoke Your Holiness for the said decree. We have convents in Bertinoro, Trieste, Ravenna, Bagno, Pianetto (in Florence Province), Cesenatico, Monteleone (in Rimini Diocese), Predappio (in Bertinoro Diocese), Sardhana and Meerut in India. Four more convents are to be opened shortly.

Our main objective is to sanctify ourselves through contemplation, the formation of the girls hailing from working class families through catechetical, non-formal education and vocational training, and girl's education till Teachers' Training Diploma so as to spare the teenagers from the corrupt milieu of the State schools. Our activities, however, are rooted in the soul's repose in God.

O Holy Father, lend your ears to my plea. It is the Virgin Mary, my Mother, who sends me to Your feet, assuring me of being heard. You are the second Pontiff of the Immaculate, and that is enough for me.”<sup>22</sup>

- 23) “The loving Lord in His goodness, has given us two tabernacles which would be of every advantage to us. The first will be opened at Fiumalbo in Modena, on the feast of St. Joseph and the other by May at Itambacury in Brazil.

I've declined many offers, but I could not in conscience refuse these two because, though rejecting them would benefit my age and health, I'm not sure it would do good to my soul. Moreover, I would be doing you a harm – new olive shoots who will be reaping a lot of moral and material benefits out of them after my death. I am ready to make any sacrifice in order to ensure you a bright future. Help me with your prayers and collaboration, producing fruits of authentic apostolate wherever Jesus leads you. But pray, return to prayer again. Rather let us pray together fused into one single heart.”<sup>23</sup>

- 24) “The water shortage is not due to the spurt in the number of persons or use, but due to the crack in the cistern caused by the lightning strike. It's two years that we are without water. The tank is practically empty once it stops raining. You can judge for yourself if the problem is caused by the rise in the number of inmates or the leaky cistern.

Since I've been imprudent enough to advertise my weakness for the Badia, often I am reminded that we are being victimized here without any comforts of life, despite paying rent to the city. I'm hurt that you, dear sir, have never tried to understand me, nor the seriousness of the problems. Knowing the troubles faced by those who live in

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<sup>22</sup> 25.03.1907: Let. to Pope Pius X, Let. 8, Fasc. XLIV

<sup>23</sup> 25.03.1907: Cir. Let. 28

such a place, and since I'm old, often ill and may soon die, and loathe to annoy anyone, I intend to authorize Sr. Veronica and Sr. Germana to amicably discuss the matter with you and draw up a new agreement, or reject the whole proposal.

I've done my duty to the community and to the Congregation and am at peace. I wonder if there are as many stars in heaven as the number of times I've repeated: "Why do we pay so much and stay here without water? Why don't we ask for this and that? What a tumbledown building! How as the Mother can I protect it?" and a thousand similar questions. I'm writing to you, dear sir, after a gap of few years, hoping..."<sup>24</sup>

- 25) "Close to the window through which I contemplate the Blessed Sacrament Exposed, I announce the good news that Jesus our Beloved, has obtained for us the beautiful *Decree of Approbation* from Rome on May 9<sup>th</sup>, the feast of Ascension.

Competent persons say that it is a special favour denied to many Congregations much better than ours in every respect. In fact, the sisters who had offered us hospitality at Genoa and who have two hundred members and twenty convents, have been trying in vain for the last three years to obtain what we have been granted in a few days.

The good Fr. Mazza kept on insisting that I go to Rome or at least send my sister. She patiently waited for Mgr. Sanfermo (whose respect we had won at Trieste) and he introduced her to a certain Abbot who is a heavyweight at the Sacred Congregation. It was he who speeded up the matter.

I am writing about all these events so that you may pray for these kind persons so full of benevolence for us... First of all let us pay our tribute of praise to Jesus, keeping August 12<sup>th</sup> as the Feast of Thanksgiving. Just as we participate in the public feast of Corpus Christi, you may, if it is convenient for all, fix the feast of the Saint of the Eucharist to pay homage to the great Mystery of Love. If you cannot do so on August 12, you can choose any day within the octave or on September 23<sup>rd</sup> - the Feast of the Translation of Clare's body."<sup>25</sup>

- 26) "They tell me that you are a true mother to the sisters and the friars. But you gentle soul, perhaps you suffer because of your lack of education. If you wish that I appoint another superior for a period of three years or for even a year, I can do so. You will have to get each sister vote for the one she prefers to have as superior, and send me their ballots.

On the whole Sr. Clara is suitable. What do you say? Will the other sisters be happy to have her as Superior? Write to me, or make someone else write on your behalf."<sup>26</sup>

### **Dependence on the Friars Minor**

- 27) "I would like the sisters to write a letter to Bishop Svampa more or less in the following vein:

'As the history of our Institute states, we are born of, reared and nurtured by the Franciscan tree, so naturally we owe all possible affection and respect to the Friars. Hence we would like Your Lordship to grant us for the sake of Mary's Assumption

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<sup>24</sup> 20.07.1907: Let. to Sign. Manzoni, Let. 23, Fasc. LXXIII (b)

<sup>25</sup> 07.06.1907: Cir. Let. 29

<sup>26</sup> 18.05.1915: Let. to Sr. Francesca, Let. 1228, Fasc. XLI

the permission to have the Provincial or the General of the OFM preside over our Chapter.

We earnestly wish to have the honour of having your gracious presence on the election day but on condition that the scrutiny is done by a Friar Minor. During your visitation, Your Lordship had assured us that we wouldn't be deprived of the spiritual direction of the Friars; instead you would hand over to them your responsibility if you could do so. Please keep your promise now. With all our heart we beg Your Lordship for this favour.

However, we do not want to hold the Chapter now, but when it is convenient to Your Lordship, provided that a Franciscan Major Superior presides over it.'

And you, Maria Teresa, please copy it out in your artistic hand, rounding it off with a fine conclusion, as you are quite good at it. Every sister has to sign it. I'm sending you a blank paper with my signature and that of Sr. Catherine. I beg you to persuade the Mother Superior to send a similar letter to the Bishop."<sup>27</sup>

- 28) "By virtue of its nature, the Institute of the Clarist Franciscans of the Blessed Sacrament, born and bred by the order of Friars Minor, will continue to enjoy dependence on and the spiritual direction of the Minister General of the Friars Minor or his delegate to maintain and foster the Seraphic spirit. As sanctioned by Pope Pius X of holy memory and re-confirmed by His Holiness Pope Benedict XV, the CFMSS enjoy all the privileges, indulgence and general absolution granted to the Order."<sup>181</sup>
- 29) "We enjoy the spiritual assistance of the Order of Friars Minor. I hope our new community at Ghivizzano will be assigned a Friar as the ordinary confessor. If it is not possible due to the long distance, please be kind enough to appoint one as extraordinary confessor at least once a month."<sup>28</sup>
- 30) "I would like to share with you some of my inner thoughts. For all the experiences I've had and the moral and material damage inflicted by Bishops and priests, I would prefer that this new Franciscan shoot perishes, rather than be under their immediate administration! Because it will wilt away even before it begins to bloom. I've seen the pitiable conditions of the sisters serving under the diocesan priests or the Bishops who do nothing for them, or give them anything but close the door on whomsoever willing to help them. Since long, the Dominican Sisters in Bertinoro have been living in a hovel, and lost their money at the hand of the Bishop. They quietly managed to affiliate themselves to the Dominican Order and soon the Father General donated them a house in Nocera where they got a new lease on life.

There are no friars in Bertinoro and so the Bishop has stood in the way of buying the Badia, leaving us in uncertainty. The friars at Forli had been buying premises for the sisters more than once, though the latter had not a penny with them. In Brazil, the friars bought a building and gifted it to our sisters for the novitiate on the feast of St. Clare in 1914... Hence, please leave Art. 103 (regarding the jurisdiction of the

<sup>27</sup> 10.08. ---: Let. to Maria Teresa & Nazerena, Let. 37, Fasc. LVII

8) <sup>181</sup> 01.07.1915, Fasc. LVII

<sup>28</sup> 18.05.1912: Let. to the Bishop of Lucca, Let. 214, Fasc. LIII

Bishop) as it is, without adding any clause on the control of the Bishops. Add one more word and the whole thing will turn topsy-turvy. However, the Consultors should not think that what I want is the type of jurisdiction the Friars have over the enclosed nuns. Indeed, the Local Ordinary has the jurisdiction as stated in Art. 84, "The Institute is governed by the Superior General subject to the authority of the Holy See." For all the dependence on and direction by the Friars, we know well that if the Bishops wish they can still hinder them from presiding over the religious ceremonies. But the good ones are happy to be helped out and acknowledge and respect others' prerogative...If the Consultors do not recognize God's will in the words of the Holy Father, how can I acknowledge it in their decision?"<sup>29</sup>

**[For Further matter, please see "A Visionary with a Mission", p. 109-111, 117-120]**

### **Seventh Centenary of the Order of St. Clare**

31) "Kindly let me know the following: -

1. On what date do you intend celebrating the solemn feast?
2. It won't be possible to collect all the forms from our far-off convents, since I came to know of the plan much late. Hence, I thought of sending a single greeting card stating: 'The CFMSS of --- convents offer to the Holy Father, a spiritual bouquet of all our acts of Adoration, --- etc., which will be done from March 15, 1912 to March 1913, as well as all the good deeds that will be performed by the children, the sick and the others in the course of our apostolate among them.

If you think that homage can be paid in the name of all the convents, I'll do it quickly and send the card to you so that it can be dispatched to Rome along with the bouquet of the others. Should I get it written on a sheet of paper or a card? You represent St. Clare for us and you have the final word.

3. As you already know we do not observe "enclosure", nor can we belong to the Second Order in the strict sense. But professing the Rule of St. Clare, reciting the Divine Office and being approved by Rome as Clarist Franciscans, can we enjoy all the privileges granted to the Second Order?
4. When does the 700<sup>th</sup> year end? On March 15<sup>th</sup> or September 23<sup>rd</sup>?

Enclosed please find the list of all our convents along with £10 for the 'Silver Heart'. I wish I had known about it earlier! I have just forwarded £ 230 to Bagno for the centenary celebrations of the Holy Corporal. However, if further contribution is necessary, we will collect some more so that we can be united with you."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> 12.07.1915: Let. to Abbot Lolli, Let. 26, Fasc. LXX

<sup>30</sup> 26.02.1912 Let. to the Abbess (protomonastery), Let. 1259, Fasc. LIV

## Discernment in Opening Convents

*The main criterion for accepting a mission is its usefulness to the Church and the Institute. Prior to establishing new houses, the Major Superiors have to weigh the needs of the Local Church, the apostolate proper to the Institute, the living situation, provision for sufficient income for the support of the members et al.*

*Secondly, a house should not be erected unless it can suitably provide not only for the temporal needs (food, lodging, medical care etc.), but also the spiritual needs of the members, which include provision for daily participation in the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours, adequate time for the spiritual exercises (mental prayer, reflection on the Sacred Scriptures, devotion to Mary, recollection, annual retreat etc.).*

*Thirdly, the members should be able to lead a life according to the particular nature and purpose, charism and spirit of our Institute. Hence the prior necessity to have an oratory in every house, in which the Eucharist is reserved and to focus the centrality of the Eucharistic Jesus for the nourishment and life of the community and its worship.*

*Fourthly, the competent Superior should obtain the previous written consent of the Local Ordinary to erect a house. The consent of the Bishop brings with it a right to lead a life according to the charism and spirit of the Institute and to exercise its own particular apostolate, with due regard for the conditions attached to the agreement (Cfr. Can. 609 – 611).*

*Mother Seraphina bore the lion's share in setting up the new convent and drafting the terms of conditions with the local authorities. Monetary gains were never her motive, her sole interest being the betterment of people. However, she saw to it that the sisters had the possibility to lead their consecrated life without being hampered by any external constraints. No convent was opened without a lot of prayer – both her own and that of the communities, personal discernment and consultation with a few Bishops and even the reigning Pope.*

*During the journey to the venue Mother Seraphina would pray that her intention be ever more just and right for the glory of God. However exhausted she was after the tiring journey, her first task on reaching the place was to pay a visit to the parish church to adore the Eucharistic Lord, or to join the Vesper, or to consult the Lord how to go about with a new mission.*

32) “Whatever be the material advantage in founding a house, preference should be given to those in the mission lands, because the good of souls and propagation of faith take precedence over all. It is the sacred duty of the Mother General not to accept any establishment where there is no provision available for the required number of sisters to lead their life – sufficient to carry on religious discipline and interior life.”<sup>31</sup>

33) “The aim of the Franciscans of the Bertinoro Badia is to sanctify oneself and to sacrifice oneself for one's brethren. On what terms? The Franciscans have everything without owning anything. The only condition I ask is to have a vast field to till for Jesus, leaving our maintenance to Providence. I never worry about our

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<sup>31</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXII,

sustenance for I believe I would be committing a crime, reducing religious life to a business venture. The Franciscan is not ashamed to beg from door to door after school hours for a piece of bread, if necessity so demands. While she is content with the day's frugal meal, she doesn't think about the next day's food. Aren't we the brides of Jesus Christ? Don't we immolate ourselves for His ineffable love? We live for Him alone, our God, our only Good, our All. He is everything for us and we are wholly His." <sup>32</sup>

- 34) "I hear that you have preferred us poor Franciscans to serve in your parish. Thanks a lot for your generous gesture. I can assure you that we would do our utmost to rise to your expectations. Truly my heart burns with the desire to help the society weighed down by the Masonic tyranny. Would that I could snatch all the souls and lead them to Jesus, our Salvation, our Health and Resurrection!...

Needless to say that we have no other aim but the glory of Jesus and the good of the souls. We put our trust in the divine Providence to see to our sustenance. Isn't it a great joy for a Franciscan to sit at the table and find nothing to eat, to go to take rest and have nowhere to lie down? It will then be a classic case of repeating: "My food is to do the will of my Father in heaven." <sup>33</sup>

- 35) "Jesus alone knows with what joy I would have opened a convent at Predappio, had it not been for the unsuitability of the premises. The site that I saw has all the advantages but not for a convent. One has to go across the open grounds to reach the church by day or by night. The Blessed Sacrament is to be reserved in the suffragan church and the Holy Mass celebrated there every morning. The sisters shall use the church as their chapel and keep the key with them.

Since the Dean has relatives, it is imperative that a legal deed be drawn, authorising the sisters' use of the property in the near future. For I do not want the sisters to go there and be driven away by his heirs the next day. Besides, the residence should be equipped with chairs, tables, benches and other classroom furniture, beds with linen and bed-spread etc., kitchen utensils and whatever items are required for a cottage befitting a Franciscan abode. The sisters bring with them only their personal clothes.

And how are the sisters going to be maintained? Do not speak to me about alms-seeking anymore, for I've had enough of troubles begging for alms. If the Lord wants us to do some good there at Predappio, He will surely provide us with the means to sustain us. As for me, I would never open a convent that has to be supported purely by alms.

Regarding the school, I would like to limit our educational ventures to the teaching of arts and crafts and catechism in order to avoid clashes with the civic authorities. Let us wait and watch; some doors will be opened in time." <sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> 01.07.1896: Let. to the Dean of Premilcuore, Let.1 Fasc. LXXII

<sup>33</sup> 12.03.1897: Let. to Don Agostino Bandini of Castrocaro, Let. 2 Fasc. LXXII

<sup>34</sup> 09.07.1901: Let. to the Bishop of Ravenna, Let. 34, Fasc. LXVIII

36) “Sign. Callegari is quite considerate towards us and for the past one year has been requesting us to open a vocational school there: a project close to my heart and which I would like every convent to undertake. We have the personnel for it. But before accepting such a proposal, I want to be certain that the members of the Charitable Society are clear about the need of an independent place – even a hovel, but unattached. However, I do not wish that they back out of the deal, but that they be convinced that it is the responsibility of the citizens to maintain the pupil-teachers and therefore, the Society should provide them with free quarters and guarantee growth in their number. Only a permanent, detached building can ensure the increase of boarders.

The teachers shall give a helping hand at the Tailoring Centre. And whatever benefits may accrue from the boarders will be in favour of the daughters of the locality, namely recreational facilities, assistance according to individual need etc... Unlike the other Congregations, I am not asking for any personal allowance, but just for a separate place. And it isn't for the sisters but for the girls whom we have to educate.”<sup>35</sup>

37) “On January 17, Fr. Joseph Angelo Perotti – originally from Turin, came here with a request to open a house in his St. Lucy Parish, Newark, New Jersey (U.S.A.). He has been corresponding with me for a year. Since I have raised some objections to running a co-educational residential school, he came here in person to discuss the matter. Enclosed please find a brief account of what we discussed at length and agreed upon. He left with the hope to have us by March, though I kept repeating that I would come to know God's will regarding the mission only after hearing from Rome.

Meanwhile, I must tell Your Eminence that I am not too happy about the fact that small boys and girls are sleeping in the same dormitory and the sisters are expected to give bath to the children. I have categorically told Fr. Perotti that we would not be taking up the mission if sisters are to bathe the boys.

To know God's will we have begun intensive prayer, Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament et al and discussed it with our Bishop. Though he has approved and blessed the venture, I am still doubtful. I need assurance from Your Eminence, the head of all the Missions. Then I shall be certain of God's will. Please approve and bless it and kindly go through the enclosed terms of agreement. If any point or the whole thing is unreasonable, please let me know. You will find in me, as always, an obedient daughter.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> 07.02.1903: Let. to the Bishop of Ravenna, Let. 37, Fasc. LXVIII

<sup>36</sup> 08.02.1905: Let. to Card. G.M. Gotti Roma, APF-Prot.n.65061/1905

## Acceptance of an Offer

- 38) “If a property has to be bought within a stipulated time, the consent of the Mother General, her Councillors and all the professed sisters is required. Explicit permission of the Mother is to be sought before carrying out repairs and renewals.”<sup>37</sup>
- 39) “You tell me that the land is fertile with lush vineyard, but I would like to know how the sisters’ well-being is going to be ensured. Because, if we do not own the property, our continuance there will always be precarious.”<sup>38</sup>
- 40) “If the place is suitable, why haven’t you taken a decision? But I would accept it on the following conditions: -  
1) Guarantee of the locality.  
2) Management of the pre-school.  
3) Freedom to do what I think best, and therefore to appoint / guide the staff.”<sup>39</sup>
- 41) “I am ready to make any sacrifice to have an institution free of all patronage. How could you ever doubt that I would be displeased about the prospect of not having any patrons? I would refuse all patronage if we have to operate under their umbrella. Would that we had at least a hovel there with no strings attached!”<sup>40</sup>
- 42) “To have a house of our own! The most low-priced and even the simplest one would do to initiate our humble apostolate there, unseen and silent, under the watchful eyes of the Virgin Mary and the angels. I’ll be quite happy if the next dawn brings an adolescent, heralding in other teenagers. Only in such a way can the apostolate take roots and build a base strong enough to withstand any storm. However cramped the house be, the best room – even though a tiny one, is to be set aside and consecrated as the chapel. If the mission has to be firmly established and bear copious fruits, it is essential that we live a hidden life, working quietly and radiating light outwardly so that the light may shine and attract.”<sup>41</sup>
- 43) “ If I wrote that administration by the sisters as a rule isn’t subject to inspection by the Local Ordinary, I’ve only quoted the statement of the *Instruction* of the Sacred Congregation, 1901. If I didn’t say so, it would be on my conscience. It is well understood that the Bishop’s authority to review the administration of an institution does not extend to private schools exclusively managed by the sisters. I was under the impression that the boarding school at Itambacury is under our administration. At least that is what I gathered from the assurance given by our much-lamented Sr. Bernardina and the conversation I had with His Excellency Mons. Joaquim in Rome in 1908.

<sup>37</sup> 1901 - 1903: *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXIV, Fasc. XXV

<sup>38</sup> 01.12.1909: Let. to Can. Fermiano (Concecao), Let. 11, Fasc. XLI

<sup>39</sup> 25.04.1912: Let. to Germana, Let. 972, Fasc XVI

<sup>40</sup> 14.05.1912: Let. to Catherine, Let. 974 Fasc. XVI

<sup>41</sup> 14.10.1912: Let. to a gentleman, Fasc. LXXIV

I always lay down **two conditions** for accepting an offer:

- 1) Ownership of a house / a house for the permanent use of the sisters.
- 2) Full control of our activities and the freedom to carry them out. A freedom subject to the authority of the Local Ordinary and the Major Superiors: the very same liberty that we enjoy at the Badia, Ravenna, Cesanatico, Bagno etc.

In November 1912, two officials of the Department of the Higher Education of Trieste wanted us to take over a boarding school along with a charitable Institution subject to their periodical review of the administration. I categorically refused the offer saying, “either the management is ours, or nothing at all”. Those two dignitaries and the Bishop placed their complete trust in us and gave us the institution with all the furnishings and income as of right.”<sup>42</sup>

44) “Is Your Lordship certain that the authorities are well disposed to the sisters? What is the use of competing for the post if you are doubtful about they being selected? I can tell from experience that the municipal schools are real fetters. I was forced to accept a few, but given the freedom I would refuse outright any request. Immense good can be done when we are given full freedom... Instead of the two schools, I would rather open the one at Ales with four sisters and take up the other only after having gained the respect of the local people...

Your Lordship need not feel bad if we are not given the municipal school. The sisters can nevertheless come down, and carry on much better opening a small boarding and in the course of time run a school and other centres, if Jesus so wills. Forgive me for daring to express my mind with evangelical simplicity. Now please be kind enough to let me know the following: -

1. Why were the schools at Ales and Simala closed down? Till which class did the school run? Who were the teachers?
2. Are you very sure of the sisters being selected for the posts? If so, Your Lordship will have to see to the documents. If not the expenses will be a waste and it is not a small sum. In some places where they really want the sisters, they do away with the competitive exam, engage them on temporary basis and appoint them a year later.
3. Who owns the building and grounds of both the institutions? I do not demand anything for the maintenance of the sisters, for I trust Providence to feed Christ’s spouses. But I ask for the sisters’ travel fare and that the premises be handed over to them, or permanently leased out to them in such a way that once taken possession, they cannot be driven away.

I hope Your Lordship will find my term just. Thanking you in anticipation, I invoke the Lord’s blessing upon you.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> 23.08.1913: Let. to Sr. Lorenzina (Diamantina), Let. 1217, Fasc. XXXV

<sup>43</sup> 28.07.1913: Let. to the Bishop of Ales, Fasc. XLII

45) "I have already written to Sign. Conceddu to forward the documents to the Mayor of Ales and am waiting for his reply; but nothing so far. On our part we have done all we could. Your Lordship, please allow me to raise the following queries: -

1. Are Ales and Simala near the marshland? Is the air clean there? Drinking water? We live in localities with pure, health-giving air and are accustomed to sweet water. We do not know how to survive in insalubrious climate. As Your Lordship know nothing can be done without health in spite of all the good will.
2. Your Lordship might remember that right from the beginning I said that the question of money is not the issue, for Jesus always sustains His spouses. What I have been demanding for is the fare, a house for the sisters either owned by them or leased out to them in perpetuity so that no one can drive them out, and the full freedom of apostolate. Sign. Conceddu finds these conditions just. I hope you too will find them to be just. Won't you?

For Mary's sake I beg you, not to bring in either the Prefecture or the Committee at the risk to the sisters. For sending the packet for the approval of Prefecture would simply be to bind us and place restrictions on our activities. We shall run the pre-primary school at our own risk whatever salary is paid, but with no strings attached..."<sup>44</sup>

46) "Happy to fulfil Monsignor Bressan's wishes and to give joy to the Bishop of Ales who is eagerly awaiting our arrival, two of our sisters will be leaving for Sardegna within the week. Once the place is ready, others will join them. Our mission there is rather challenging, but it will yield copious fruits if fortified by Your Holiness' apostolic benediction and the merit of obedience. You represent our Celestial Spouse for whose sake everything becomes sweet and refreshing. In that inhospitable and virgin land, we, the humble ones of the Most Blessed Sacrament, shall strive at the cost of any sacrifice, to propagate daily Holy Communion and the devotion to the Immaculate Virgin in order to spread God's Kingdom there and thus give solace to the heart of Mary's Pontiff."<sup>45</sup>

47) "Do you approve of and bless that little convent to be opened at Sala? Will the sisters be safe there on moral and material side? To tell the truth I accepted the request of the Dean of Cesenatico, since I know him as an upright person. Yet if Your Lordship has any observation to make about it, please let me know; it will be kept a closely guarded secret.

I've full faith in providence. I only insist upon the property being in our possession in perpetuity. Moreover, I do not want the sisters to struggle to make both ends meet, or to appeal to the four winds for their food and clothing. It is one thing that the sisters must work, but quite another if they have to importune people for their daily bread. If it is so, I prefer not to establish any convent there."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> 28.09.1913: Let to Bishop of Ales Fasc. XLII

<sup>45</sup> 13.10.1913: Let. to Pope Pius X, Let. 21, Fasc. XLIV

<sup>46</sup> 29.03.1915: Let to Rt. Rev. Giovanni Cazzani, Bishop of Cesena, Fasc. XLII

48) “To open Monghidoro now? Absolutely no! The Dean says that it is not the right moment. Had the property been given to us, then yes. But not with things still quite in the air. Better to wait and begin well than open now and close in a short while.”<sup>47</sup>

49) “I do not know what to think or decide, not having seen the locality. Unlike the French, I do not have any entrepreneurial skills in buying, selling, trading et al. The amount of £30.000 is relatively small. A large property without any orchard, in the heart of Bologna, where there is no fresh air would be of no use to the friars. Remember that the novices cannot go for a walk in the city. How can we manage without enough grounds? If they are transferring everything to us for £30.000 the friars must have some hidden motive. Please understand me, I am not against it, but without seeing the premises and weighing it up, I cannot take a decision... But listen, I want only what Jesus wants.”<sup>48</sup>

50) “On March 31<sup>st</sup> and May 11<sup>th</sup>, when the Holy Father gave a positive nod to the purchase of land at Ravenna, he had not foreseen that Italy would be precipitated into war. His Holiness is surprised about the abrupt turn of events. What would he have advised, had the mobilization orders were given on March 31<sup>st</sup>? We must appeal to the Pope again to know what his advice would be today! However, it isn't possible now as the outbreak of war keeps everyone on tenterhooks. And Christ's Vicar has to think of the whole world. Better to wait and see. When I asked you to postpone the purchase of the property I too did not think of any war. You shouldn't be in a hurry to buy; we should go slow in certain matters.”<sup>49</sup>

51) “I have decided to accept the institution at Pozzomaggiore on the following conditions:-

1. The first condition is that the convent building and the premises are not to be rented out but be handed over to the sisters in perpetuity for their use. A house fitted with furniture, fittings, linen, utensils etc., and all the accessories for the celebration of the Eucharist.
2. Freedom of apostolate and activities. The sisters are to be free, independent, governed and guided by the Mother House, while at the same time gentle, meek and submissive in whatever is good and proper and permitted by our Constitution with regard to their rapport with you who is the founder of the institution.
3. The sisters' travel expenses should be paid in full and they should be able to maintain themselves by the fruit of their specified work.

I hope you are aware that right now there is no possibility of a transit due to the German torpedoes. Till the danger is over I cannot transfer the sisters from the mainland to Sardegna and vice-versa.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> 02.09.1915: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 1079, Fasc. XVII

<sup>48</sup> 01.08.1915: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 1085, Fasc. XVII

<sup>49</sup> 23.05.1915: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 1073, Fasc. XVII

<sup>50</sup> 12.07.1916: Let. to a Priest, Fasc. LV p.29-30

52) “During these days when I’m so much in need of complete rest, the Institute keeps expanding in an unusual manner. Apart from the institution at Bologna which takes up all my energy and personnel, we are suddenly flooded with requests for new foundations, each one more tempting than the other. (San Chirico Raparo, Venafro, Ozieri and Monghidoro)... Everyone wants that we establish there by November end or early December. Should we refuse the offer? Turning down the proposals will do good for my health and the betterment of the Badia. But it will cause great harm to you, young members. For your sake I am taking upon myself all the troubles, ready to deprive myself of the sisters whom I would like to have here with me, even-risking my physical well-being. However, the Badia with all its efforts cannot manage, unless the branch houses too share a chunk of the sacrifices. For a short while it is necessary that each one triplicates herself, taking the help of some young collaborators. Everyone should be convinced of the fact that it is proper and fitting for the convents to employ domestic help, but not a woman of the locality.”<sup>51</sup>

#### **Discernment in Closing down Convents**

53) “May Jesus fill you with that peace which enables you to accomplish heroic sacrifices!”.. “My advice is that those at Meerut should remain there making sacrifices. It is a hard trial, but it is not expedient to abandon the place after so many sacrifices. Just two sisters can save the mission there. Once you leave the place, it will not be possible for us to re-establish there. Men pass away along with their whims and miseries; but Institutions last. I do not think it prudent to seek permission again to send sisters there, since there is no Agreement... Didn’t Jesus stay at Nazareth for thirty years? You think you are idling away, but I tell you, even if your only work is inactivity, you will be doing a lot to save the mission. For you it may be a bitter disillusionment; it is nothing but a passing cloud that makes the sun appear more brilliant and beautiful. Meditate on the Manger and that scene will turn everything into sweet joy.”<sup>52</sup>

54) “For Mary’s sake wait for some more time before taking a decision about closing down Meerut. I feel awful about the closedown. I wrote to Rome and was told to follow the advice of the Superior Regular, but I haven’t heard from him yet. Tell me, you who are on the spot, what would you have done if you were in my place?”<sup>53</sup>

55) “I recommend that you go to Conceicao and try all the means to restore there the earlier peace. See if the problems caused by the priests are genuine and serious as the sisters have written to me. If so, the concerned priest should be removed and not the sisters. Besides, I will never allow a young sister to be Superior there.”<sup>54</sup>

56) “I am in a terrible fix. Bishop Polloni advises me to leave Ravenna instead of throwing money at a heap of ruins. The sisters too are of the same opinion. But I

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<sup>51</sup> 09.11.1916: Let. to Sr. Luisina, Let. 1138, Fasc. XVIII  
<sup>52</sup> 10.12.1909: Let. to Sisters at Meerut, Let. 1212 Fasc. XLI  
<sup>53</sup> 22.03.1912: Let. to Sisters at Meerut, Let. 1213, Fasc. XLI  
<sup>54</sup> 29.04.1914: Let. to Sr. Lorenzina, Let. 1216, Fasc. XXXV

cannot close down Ravenna before I discuss with the one (you know whom) the intimations I've had from so many persons who watch over me from heaven above

On the very first sunny day I'll leave for Rome without fail. I shall reveal all my thoughts and take a quick decision as soon as I hear their opinion... Would that I could penetrate the mind of the Curia and come to know if it is in favour of the mission or not! I often doubt it and fear that going over there might throw the door open to something that may cost not ten but millions of Lire like the other missions."

<sup>55</sup>

- 57) "I should inform Your Grace before anyone else about the Holy Father's advice. When I talked to His Holiness about Bishop Polloni's objections, he wouldn't even let me finish the sentence so to say. The Pope said: 'To leave Ravenna! Not at all! Instead I would like to have more religious communities over there, for there is a great need of them. If yours is a hovel, try to get a better lodging. But to leave Ravenna, never!' With paternal solicitude the Holy Father spoke to me about the good a boarding school can do in that city, besides the indirect opportunities that are available there for serving the people..."<sup>56</sup>

- 58) "I have never come across such a painful moment with regard to the convents at Trieste! I am running up and down to get some advice but in vain. They say that it is unwise to leave Trieste where they are safer than in Rome or Bertinoro. We might lose the convents but what are the other Congregations doing? Going on with their mission in the thick of the battle? What should we do? My heart longs to have everyone here, but what does God want? Should we be the only weaklings fleeing to safer places? The sisters telegraphed me twice asking if they could all come here? Even the Vatican has no answer! Only prayer and the Virgin Mother keep me calm."

<sup>57</sup>

- 59) "Leave Vergiano for the time being and tell the people that we shall return when we find a suitable place with no strings attached. We have been undergoing terrible ordeal for a year now, proclaiming to all and sundry our readiness for self-denial. From all the information I have gathered, I cannot in conscience, leave the sisters there for another hour."<sup>58</sup>

- 60) "This morning I received your telegram which pierced my soul, not knowing what decision to take? Since Tuesday I have been going around seeking counsel from the Cardinal Protector and the Vatican. Their advice is that the Sisters should remain there. The Superior General of the Capuchins says that Trieste is much more a calm and safe place than here. What an irony! But haven't I given you full permission to come to a decision? Whom will you leave in charge of the convents till the sisters' return?

The Curia's reply is as follows: "If the sisters are advised by the Bishop and the Friars to leave Trieste, let them inform and some Austrian sisters can be sent there to carry on the apostolate. Even if they are asked to stay on, those who do not wish to do

<sup>55</sup> 09.03.1915: Let. to a Bishop, Let. 20, Fasc. LXX

<sup>56</sup> 10.04.1915: Let. to Archbishop Morganti of Ravenna, Let. 98, Fasc. XL

<sup>57</sup> 21.05.1915: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 1070, Fasc. XVII

<sup>58</sup> 10.06.1915: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 1080, Fasc. XVII

so can return to Italy. In short, depart whoever wishes to leave, tarry whoever wishes to stick around.” Have I explained well? In case none of you wish to hold on, Guadagnan and Pit will be sent to take care of the activities there. Please do not stay back for fear of displeasing me, because I am ready to face torments of all sorts than bring harm to a single hair of any one of you. It will be the death of me, if anyone is subjected to suffering.”<sup>59</sup>

- 61) “My soul is sorrowful unto death yet calm and glad to suffer. I have borne the most bearable torment for *San Vito dei Normanni* since 1915... If the Archbishop sticks to his stand, shouldn’t we withdraw from there? Then why am I pestered so much to accept the hospital? Remember that we undertook the mission there because of the Archbishop’s offer and De Giorgi’s conviction. If it is to be abandoned, why am I asked to take it over? Why am I forced to provide new personnel? Why hadn’t His grace asked Sr. Agatha - who has won his respect and esteem - to call back the sisters? Had we done so, it would have been so fortunate, sparing us all the expenses, sorrows, unmatched hardships and even the present scandal... And my dear daughters, hasn’t Jesus taken care of you? Did the Princess come to your aid?”<sup>60</sup>
- 62) “If I have exhausted all my attempts to stay on at Olmata, I have done so in response to the inspiration I received in prayer... Your observation regarding the lack of freedom in our apostolate there, is the very same as mine. Just too is the hope that prompts my desire to remain there. But if it is God’s will that we leave Olmata forever, I am not in the least sorry. Our consolation lies in knowing the will of God and fulfilling it.”<sup>61</sup>

#### **Agreement with the Local Authority**

- 63) “Enclosed please find the draft of the agreement for the Hospital drawn as Jesus inspired me. Use your entire forte spiced with a lot of prayer and patience to have it accepted.
- I’m not at all happy with the contract that you sent regarding Conceicao. I’m enclosing a copy of the queries and replies swapped with Sr. Bernardina on our specific apostolate at Conceicao. You can see for yourself how different it is from the one you sent... I shall draw up a deal based on it. Please put out some feelers to the Daughters of Charity. Find out from them the amount of subsidy granted at Conceicao by the State Government. Give me all the details at the earliest and I will draft the agreement for Conceicao and also for Itambacury.”<sup>62</sup>
- 64) “Mrs Callegari has informed me that since we have been chosen to run the Vocational Centre, we should meet their expectations. It isn’t just enough that they select us, they should specify their terms and conditions, which are to be approved by the General Council of our Institute, and an agreement drawn up and signed by both the parties. The lady writes that no holidays are given, that a sister should be

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<sup>59</sup> 21.05.1915: Let. to Sr. Agnes, Let. 1071, Fasc. XVII  
<sup>60</sup> 20.05.1916: Let. to Sr. Giovannina, Let. 1119, Fasc. XVIII  
<sup>61</sup> 14.01.1917: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let. 1143, Fasc. XVIII  
<sup>62</sup> 17.08.1912: Let. to Sr. Lorenzina, Let. 1215, Fasc. XXXV

sent there to substitute Sr. Maria Angela who requires medical care, and that we should not make any alteration to whatever decisions the Charitable Society takes. On no account would I accede to these conditions... The Daughters of Charity spread across the world, give a weekly holiday, besides a month's vacations during summer or autumn. When a teacher in a municipal school falls ill, the Commune employs a substitute teacher for six months, while paying the sick sister her full salary during the leave period. And I have to keep a sister ever ready at the service of the Society to replace someone for a short period! On the other hand, both the parents and the children eagerly look forward to a holiday. Interminable school days will only tire out the families.

I hope Your Grace understand this problem and will be kind enough to instruct the members of the Society that the school should have an autumn break for at least a fortnight beginning from 26<sup>th</sup> onwards. Then Sr. Angela can leave for her treatment on 26<sup>th</sup> morning. If they are particular about not closing down the Oratory, I can send a sister on Saturday and she can return on Monday morning. I certainly cannot do more than this and the Society should be quite clear about it.”<sup>63</sup>

65) “Enclosed please find the Agreement with the Archbishop which I have slightly modified. I believe the modifications are indispensable and I hope His grace will raise no objections to them. You are absolutely free to make any observations. However, you should take note and draw the Archbishop's attention to the fact that we were given full freedom to run both the Boarding Schools, as attested by the conversation between His Grace and Sr. Bernardina, and much more by his own letters to her. Please understand that even if the administration of the schools were in our hands, the sisters should never have done what they did, to my undoing. It so happened because they did things with head in the air. Another proof of the school management being ours is the fact that the promised allowance of 2000 reis has not yet been paid to the sisters.”<sup>64</sup>

66) “On April 24<sup>th</sup>, I received the two Contracts you posted on March 30<sup>th</sup>. I'm so happy about His Excellency's kindness. The only thing I couldn't figure out well is regarding the payment of travel expenses. And the fault is mine! For example, if you have to come to Italy to give me a report of the Mission, who is going to foot the fare, if there is no mention of the Mission Superior's allowance in the Agreement? The Archbishop is so kind and I hope he will help you.”<sup>65</sup>

### **Amalgamation**

67) “Since my early years I have had a tender devotion to St. Clare. Some had even assured me that I have a vocation to enclosed life. Therefore, you can imagine my joy in being united to the holy nuns. You will always be the queens of the house, and can carry on with whatever you wish. None of us will disturb your enclosed life; whereas you are welcome at every one of our convents if you wish to spend some

<sup>63</sup> 22.08.1912: Let. to the Archbishop of Ravenna, Let. 25, Fasc. LXIX

<sup>64</sup> 13/14.12.1913: Let. to Sr. Lorenzina, Let. 1218, Fasc. XLI

<sup>65</sup> 29.04.1914: Let. to Sr. Lorenzina, Let. 1216, Fasc. XLI

days either for medical treatment or for a change of air. Martha and Magdalene living together!

I hope the amalgamation will work out. Aren't you happy about it? I will like to pay a visit to you and see the monastery and its grounds. In the meantime will you please be kind enough to send me a brief statement of your assets and liabilities, i.e., your capital besides your landed property? How much annual tax do you pay? How much is your expense other than on food? I ask it because I heard that you are paying for water. Is it true? Expenditure on food need not be mentioned; tell me rather about your victuals, because I would like to improve upon it than reduce your subsistence."

<sup>66</sup>

68) "When the question of the amalgamation of the Sisters of Purification came up for the first time, Mons. Mingoli was dead against taking up the monastery as he found the locality quite unsuitable for carrying out any apostolate. For there are so many Women Congregations of active life in that locality. Instead, today they are coaxing us to pursue the matter. I do not want to elaborate upon all those matters that sadden me so much. I just repeat what I already told a prelate that the priests and Bishops do nothing but exploit the poor sisters.

It is a rambling dilapidated building in poor surroundings. It can be demolished and built anew, but there will always be the most insurmountable annoyance. All the rooms and the small garden face the hovels of the slum-dwellers. The monastery shares a common wall with the barracks on one side; and on the other side a towering mansion dwarfs the building into a dark tomb.

I want you to discuss it with Father General or his loyal secretary, requesting them to visit the place and give us their advice. You must, however, underscore the nuisance of a hundred windows opening to the glare of the rabble. I believe that if the Father General looks at the building just for half a minute, he would refuse the offer outright, even if it is gifted to him on a platter."

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<sup>66</sup> 20.12.1915: Let. to the Abbess, Let. 1258,

Fasc. XLVIII

<sup>67</sup> 14.01.1917: Let to Sr. Veronica, Let. 1143,

Fasc. XVIII

## Chapter VII

### *Thought for the Day*

Mother Seraphina was a person passionately in love with Jesus from the formative years of her religious life. Her letters to her younger sister Jannina written in the mid-1870s, reveal how eager she was to have her heart centred solely on Christ and to grow in deeper intimacy with Him. From the very first day of her entry into religion she fed her soul with the Word of God, nurturing her spirit with sermons and the counsels of her confessors and spiritual directors. She would ponder over any sentence that struck a chord with her during the homily or her meditation on the Scripture passage or spiritual reading, till it became a catchphrase that pervaded her everyday life. For example the expression, "*Jesus mel in ore, in aure melos, in corde jubilus*", became her sound bite, "*O Jesus, you are honey in my mouth, music to my ears and delight to my heart!*" It was used as the catch line in her letters to the sisters till the famous motto, "*I Carry the Mysteries*" slowly replaced it.

Some of her ideas may not be original; a good many were culled from the homilies of Bishop Frederick Polloni on the Eucharist or on some solemn liturgical theme. Nevertheless, she dressed them in a new garb - all feminine and experiential. The passionate exhortation, "*Go my daughters, carry and enkindle the love of the Eucharistic Jesus*", has been evolved from his letter dated May 6, 1898 addressed to the founding members. Quoting St. Ignatius' admonition to his followers, "*Ite incendite, inflamate*" (Go, enkindle, set on fire), the then Vicar General Polloni said: "*Go then, set every heart on fire with the love of Jesus, and see that they burn ardently.*" Out of this exhortation took shape the powerful image of a true missionary on fire with the love of the Eucharistic Jesus, yearning to kindle every human heart with His love.

Seraphina was never a person to hide God's graces from her sisters whom she loved with a mother's tender love. She often shared with them the flashes of inspiration she had during her prayer or meditation. Each catchword became a motto for her for the time being and she urged the sisters to live up to its ideal either for their own personal growth or for the betterment of the Institute. Some of these sound bites are characteristically pithy and loaded with profound wisdom and inspiring truth.

The ejaculations that sprang spontaneously from her inmost depth, or the ideas that filtered down to the core of her being, not only saw our Venerable Foundress through the long years of her sufferings, trials and tribulations, but also sustained and fortified her all as a chosen vessel of God, who inspired directly or indirectly all those who came into contact with her and drew them on to the right path.

### *Aspirations of a Soul Athirst for God*

1. "How good and kind you are O Jesus! How sweet and gentle your appeal! How powerful our charm! Make me all yours".<sup>182</sup>
2. "Jesus you are my sole delight. .. Draw me and I'll run after you. Oh no! I do not

<sup>182</sup> 05.06.1896: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI

follow you as much as I ought to or long for." <sup>183</sup>

3. "Oh, how sweet and gentle is the inner whispering of grace!?"<sup>184</sup>
4. "I've an unquenchable thirst for becoming holy. Everything else counts for nothing."<sup>185</sup>
5. "The ways of, God are incomprehensible to men. Human language has no apt words to describe the ineffable sweetness of His love. I would, indeed, say that each expression seems to minimize the worth of what is inexpressible."<sup>186</sup>
6. "Jesus who has drawn me to him in such an uncommon way that He alone can do, is so close to me. I feel Him deep within me; I savour Him. I wish to love Him, repeating unceasingly: "Jesus, I Love You."<sup>187</sup>
7. "How sweet it is to contemplate Jesus in the Sacred Host exposed for public adoration!"<sup>188</sup>
8. "My spirit is athirst [or God, but I feel Jesus isn't too happy with me... I need to pray ... "<sup>189</sup>
9. "O Jesus, may you be honey in my mouth, music to my ears and delight to my heart!"<sup>190</sup>
10. "Stream down, O most precious blood of Jesus, on all souls! Cleanse, purify and set them on fire with your purest love!"<sup>191</sup>
11. "O most precious blood of Jesus, wash away all my sins and make me acceptable in your purest eyes."<sup>192</sup>
12. "Immaculate Virgin. Grant that my heart and my body may always remain pure!"<sup>193</sup>
13. "What a wonderful idea to enter the tabernacle, to take the blood of Christ and sprinkle it on the souls in purgatory!"<sup>194</sup>
14. "How poignantly sweet it is to spend some days alone with God: to forget whatever is around us and whatever we have to leave behind!"<sup>195</sup>
15. "Nothing is small in God's eyes because He sees our intentions. The most

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<sup>183</sup> 04.08.1896: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI

<sup>184</sup> 18.11.1901: Let. to the Sisters, Let. 495, Fasc. X - XI

<sup>185</sup> 10.09.1908: Let. to Minister General. (Fr. Dionysius Schuler), Let. 5, Fasc. XLV

<sup>186</sup> 26.03.1890: Let. to Bp. Svampa, Let. 11, Fasc. LXVIII

<sup>187</sup> Epiphany 1892: Let. to Catherine & Benjamina, Let. 61, Fasc.2b

<sup>188</sup> 06.07.1896: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI

<sup>189</sup> 20.02.1897: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI

<sup>190</sup> 29.05.1897: Let. to Veronica, Let. 242, Fasc. VI - VII

<sup>191</sup> 11.07.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX

<sup>192</sup> 31.07.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX

<sup>193</sup> 29.11.1896: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXXI

<sup>194</sup> 01.11.1897: Let. to Bernardina, Let. 262, Fasc. VI - VII

<sup>195</sup> *Practical Guide*: Ch. X

insignificant act done for God's sake becomes noble with God's own nobility." <sup>196</sup>

16. "It is truly a great and wonderful thing to know oneself and to know Jesus: a boon that rains down streams of celestial consolation."<sup>197</sup>
17. "Jesus alone knows the measure of my grief at the lack of physical strength to meet the ardour of my *soul*." <sup>198</sup>
18. "In comparison with the deprivation of God's love, I consider sweet all the torments, the cross and whatever tortures human cruelty can invent." <sup>199</sup>
19. "What is repulsive becomes pleasant when one discerns God's will." <sup>200</sup>
20. "May God's will be done! We are His and may He have His way with us and with all that we have!" <sup>201</sup>
21. "Only through suffering can we gain heaven. Only in bearing with persons of various characters can one acquire charity." <sup>202</sup>
22. "Oh what good could an unheeded inspiration have produced!" <sup>203</sup>
23. "O how sweet it is to be united to the Mother Church, to penetrate its spirit which is the same as that of Christ, to cling to Him in faith and love!" <sup>204</sup>
24. I pour out my heart to Jesus alone. For those who stand by you today, might turn against you tomorrow." <sup>205</sup>
25. "My sole desire is to be able to do the impossible for the benefit of the poor". <sup>206</sup>
26. "I shouldn't be worried about anything but the love and glory of Jesus whether at Bagno, or at Forli, or anywhere else, for He will take care of me." <sup>207</sup>
27. "I am convinced that the apostolate of a contemplative person bears copious fruits, while that of a purely active person is sterile." <sup>208</sup>
- 28.** "Mary was constantly engaged in household chores, yet her works never interfered with even an iota of her contemplation." <sup>209</sup>

### ***Listen My Little Ones!***

<sup>196</sup> 1881 - 1890: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXIX

<sup>197</sup> Undated: Let to Veronica, Let. 207, Fasc. V

<sup>198</sup> 30.12.1916: Let. to the sisters at Cesanatico, Let. 1141, Fasc. XVIII

<sup>199</sup> Undated: Let. to Catherine, Let. 20, Fasc. I I

<sup>200</sup> 26.05.1904: Let. to Sr. Bernardina, Let. 687, Fasc. XIII

<sup>201</sup> 22.05.1906: Let. to Cecilia, Let. 1188, Fasc. XLIII

<sup>202</sup> 24.08.1916: Let. to Sr. Lorenzina, Let. 31, Fasc. LVII

<sup>203</sup> 08.12.1907: Cir. Let. 30

<sup>204</sup> *Rule for the Novitiate*, Ch. V

<sup>205</sup> 23. 01.1891: Let. to Fr. Bonaventura of Castellazzo, Fasc. LX

<sup>206</sup> 26.09.1899: Let. to the Sec. of the Cesanatico Hospital, Fasc. LXIII

<sup>207</sup> Jan. 1892: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XIX

<sup>208</sup> Nov-Dec 1897, *First draft of the Constitutions*, Ch II

<sup>209</sup> 01.08.1897: *Memoirs* - "Pious Acts for the Novena for St. Clare and Assumption." Fasc. XXIX

29. "Be holy. Forget the past and sanctify the present."<sup>210</sup> "Detach your heart of all creatures if you want to build therein a temple for the living God. He is a jealous God and wouldn't like to be denied even an iota of what is his due!"<sup>211</sup>
30. "O that I could make you know and taste the ineffable joy of gifting oneself to God! You wouldn't then pine for anything else."<sup>212</sup>
31. "Abandon yourself into the hands of Jesus and he will do what is best for your soul."<sup>213</sup>
32. "One can never motivate others to cherish the Eucharistic Lord unless one is truly in love with Him."<sup>214</sup>
33. "Heroic charity is acquired in learning to bear with people of all temperament."<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> 15.02.1909: Let. to Isa Bassetti, Let. 168, Fasc. XLVII

<sup>211</sup> Undated: Let. to Sr. Catherine, Let. 20, Fasc. I

<sup>212</sup> 22.06.1881: Let. to Catherine, Let. 10, Fasc. I

<sup>213</sup> 27.07.1876: Let. to Giannina, Let. 1173, Fasc. XIX

<sup>214</sup> Nov-Dec. 1897: First Draft of the Constitution, Ch. I. Roma, AGCFM: Institute Documents

<sup>215</sup> 25.08.1916: Let. to a priest at Concecao, Fasc. LV

34. "This morning, during Holy Communion, Jesus told me to inform you that He doesn't want you anymore to be so cold towards Him."<sup>216</sup>
35. "Peace is a unique treasure in life. I am sorry that you aren't at peace within. Learn to abandon yourself into God's hands; then you will enjoy abiding peace."<sup>217</sup>
36. "Strive for holiness through self-denial, interior silence, the fulfilment of your duties and love of God."<sup>218</sup>
37. "Would that it were said of us, as of the early Christians, that we are of one heart and one soul!"<sup>219</sup>
38. "Offer every setback to Jesus saying, "For your sake, O Jesus" or "to make me holy."<sup>220</sup>
39. "The aim of Franciscans of the Bertinoro Badia is to sanctify oneself and to sacrifice oneself for one's brethren."<sup>221</sup>
40. "As Jesus Christ continuously immolates Himself and lives in the tabernacle as the Sacrificial Victim, so too the CFMSS should offer herself as a-victim to her Celestial Spouse and make an irrevocable solemn sacrifice of her whole being to Him with the triple vows of poverty, obedience and chastity?"<sup>222</sup>
41. "I do not wish to have many sisters or houses but, I want all the sisters to be holy. True holiness does not consist in doing a lot of things, but in doing well what one does and doing solely what Jesus wants."<sup>223</sup>
42. "Carry on trusting in Providence and Jesus will never fail to help you. Difficulties are inevitable in all God's works, which should be overcome with unbounded faith in the loving Divine Providence."<sup>224</sup>
43. "See that the image of Christ is engraved in your virginal heart... Make the children repeat, 'sweetest Mary, may you be always my mother!'"<sup>225</sup>
44. "If your spirit is broken, if you are assailed by temptations, if your body is worn out, everything will be turned into wholeness and love when you receive the Mysteries."<sup>226</sup>
45. "Take care not to weep so much, or be worried about your illness, because it will only harm your health."<sup>227</sup>
46. "It is impossible to crave for what one does not value, or to love a person whom

<sup>216</sup> 05.11.1897: Let. to Cecilia, Let. 263, Fasc. VI - VII

<sup>217</sup> 04.07.1881: Let. to Catherine, Let. 11, Fasc. I

<sup>218</sup> 17.03.1892, Let. to Sr. Germana, Let. 75, Fasc. IIIb

<sup>219</sup> 17.11.1892: Mother Seraphina's Prayer to St. Clement, Fasc. XLIII

<sup>220</sup> 17.12.1895: Let. to Veronica, Let. 182, Fasc. IV

<sup>221</sup> 01.07.1896: Let. to the Dean of Premilcuore, Fasc. LXII

<sup>222</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XIX, Fasc. XXV

<sup>223</sup> 10.03.1901: Cir. Let. 9

<sup>224</sup> 13.03.1897: Let. to Mr. Grilli of Cesenatico, Let. 20, Fasc. LXVIII

<sup>225</sup> 08.05.1897: Let. to Cecilia, Let. 235, Fasc. VI - VII

<sup>226</sup> 01.07.1897: Let. to the Sisters, Let. 245, Fasc. VI - VII

<sup>227</sup> 01.09.1878: Let. to Catherine, Let. 1189, Fasc. XIX

one does not know.”<sup>228</sup>

47. “Be generous, grow in holiness and remember the favours the Lord has bestowed on you in your childhood...”<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> 01.08.1897: Memoirs, ‘Pious Acts for the Novena for St. Clare/Assumption. Fasc. XXIX

<sup>229</sup> 11.10.1897: Let. to Sr. Bernardina, Let. 258, Fasc. VI -VII

48. "I would like you to be full of fervor, a lover of the Mysteries and always staying under the mantle of the Virgin Mother, for whom you should reserve your tenderest heartbeat."<sup>230</sup>
49. "Don't lose heart because of your failures, but humble yourself before Jesus recalling that you cannot do anything without his help."<sup>231</sup>
50. Do you wish to see Jesus? Be very humble. True humility will give you faith and faith will enable you to have the vision of Jesus living and true as in heaven."<sup>232</sup>
51. "Pray always, especially when you receive the Mysteries, so that Jesus may enlighten you about what we must do to please him even in the smallest things."<sup>233</sup>
52. I beg you never to omit meditation so that you may draw light and strength from it."<sup>234</sup>
53. "May your heart be a living tabernacle!"<sup>235</sup>
54. "Remember, my daughters, the tabernacle that encloses our Beloved. Rather, make a tabernacle of your heart, the more pleasing to Jesus, the more the latter excel the former."<sup>236</sup>
55. "Strive to be holy. Pray with the faith of Bernadette and you'll obtain everything. Cheer up! Prayer to the Virgin will renew you."<sup>237</sup>
56. At the break of each day say, 'I wish to make this sacrifice just for today'"<sup>238</sup>
57. Every night let us scrupulously examine ourselves. Let us not flatter ourselves about being good, much less about becoming saints, if we willingly neglect even a single one of our duties."<sup>239</sup>
58. "Don't we wish to be true religious of interior life, pleasing in the eye of Jesus, our Celestial Spouse? Then let us read the *Practical Guide*, which leads us by the hand even in the smallest things. Let each sister follow it as if she were the only one to personify perfection."<sup>240</sup>
59. "Every evening review the day to see if you have committed any sins of omission and commission. Then do some acts of penance for your failings."<sup>241</sup>
60. "If one's heart is not given totally to Jesus, she becomes a viper in the religious life and it is better for her to leave it."<sup>242</sup>

Commented [H1]:

<sup>230</sup> 22.10.1897: Let. to Sr. Cecilia, Let.261, Fasc. VI-VII

<sup>231</sup> 20.05.1898: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let.279, Fasc. VI - VII

<sup>232</sup> 21.06.1898: Let. to Sr. Veronica, Let.283, Fasc. VI - VII

<sup>233</sup> 25.12.1900: Cir. Let. 8

<sup>234</sup> 23.05.1893: Let.to Sr. Bernardina, Let.98, Fasc. III

<sup>235</sup> 04.02.1902: Let. to Sr. Agatha, Let.517, Fasc. X - XI

<sup>236</sup> 02.01.1903: Cir. Let. 13

<sup>237</sup> 11.06.1903: Let. to Sr. Angela, Let.614, Fasc. XII

<sup>238</sup> 26.01.1892: Let. 67, Fasc. IIb

<sup>239</sup> 25.03.1902: Cir. Let. 11

<sup>240</sup> 02/09.11.1905: Cir. Let. 24.

<sup>241</sup> 22.10.1903: Let. to Giovannina, Let. 645, Fasc. XII

<sup>242</sup> 21.02.1905: Cir. Let. 1905

61. "The Institute will be holy when each one of us becomes perfect and holy. To do so, it is necessary to be an inexorable judge over ourselves and to have great charity for the others."<sup>243</sup>
62. "A Hail Mary in common is worth more than a rosary in private."<sup>244</sup>
63. "Remember always that nothing done for the Lord is of little worth; it is love that adds value to work."<sup>245</sup>
64. "What is a missionary without intimate union with God, cultivated through prayer?"<sup>246</sup>
65. "To be a missionary and a saint are one and the same thing."<sup>247</sup>
66. "The CFMSS should continue the mission of the Mother of God among the people after the example of St. Clare, the Saint of the Eucharist."<sup>248</sup>
67. "Go, enkindle and carry the love of the Eucharistic Jesus to all. Sanctify yourself and then the others; have great love for Him."<sup>249</sup>
68. "Remember that one cannot give to others what one does not have ... If we do not form our spirit in the tabernacle, our mission becomes rather harmful than fruitful."<sup>250</sup>
69. "Fulfil your spiritual needs first and then be available for the mission that Jesus has entrusted to *you*."<sup>251</sup>
70. "Since the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is a powerful means for the efficacy of the apostolate in foreign nations, let the sisters practice this devotion at the mission centres."<sup>252</sup>
71. "Have faith and you'll work miracles ... We should be happy to occupy ourselves for the good of our neighbour."<sup>253</sup>
72. "Be on the lookout for every opportunity to attract the teenagers and to shield them from all evil. Strive to be a committed apostle and you'll be happy."<sup>254</sup>
73. "If we wish to be true religious, we should look upon the house of God as our only home."<sup>255</sup>
74. "Hope you will leave no stone unturned this month to pay homage to the Virgin

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<sup>243</sup> 02/09.11.1905: Cir. Let. 24

<sup>244</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XIX, Fasc. XXV

<sup>245</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XL, Fasc. XXV

<sup>246</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXIX, Fasc. XXV

<sup>247</sup> 24.09.1902: Let. to Archbishop G. Conforti, Fasc. XXXIV

<sup>248</sup> 07.07.1907: Let. 2, Fasc. XLV

<sup>249</sup> Testimony of Sr. Imelde Pedrini, Roma, AGCM - S Doc. 4

<sup>250</sup> 25.03.1903: Cir. Let. 14, Fasc. XXVIII

<sup>251</sup> 15.10.1895: Let. to Sr. Bemardina, Let. 178, Fasc. IV

<sup>252</sup> 1904 - 05: *The Second Draft of the Constitution*, Art. 12

<sup>253</sup> 14.07.1893: Let. to Veronica, Let. 128, Fasc. II

<sup>254</sup> 21.12.1894: Let. to Veronica, Let. 148, Fasc. IV

<sup>255</sup> 14.12.1906: Cir. Let. 27

Mary and to have her venerated by others."<sup>256</sup>

75. "The Holy Father appreciates very much your prolonged martyrdom, and considers you as fortunate victims like the martyrs of Morocco and others."<sup>257</sup>
76. "Remember that God's chosen ones are formed exclusively in suffering, that the Lord communicates in the seclusion of one's heart, away from the company of others."<sup>258</sup>
77. "Doing God's will is the real Divine thermometer. Let us pray to the Virgin to show us the ways of Jesus and to help us to take those paths, leaving no stones unturned."<sup>259</sup>
78. "Where there are sick persons, there heaven's blessings are found."<sup>260</sup>
79. "The sickbed is an altar on which one offers continuous sacrifice to God."<sup>261</sup>
80. "Whoever is negligent in small things show lack of fervour and can hardly do any real good."<sup>262</sup>
81. "Take care of yourself, but duty comes before all else. Keep in mind that St. Francis Xavier became a saint in India."<sup>263</sup>
82. "See always the face of Jesus Christ in the poor, and to Him give alms."<sup>264</sup>
83. "If you wish to avoid financial liabilities, be up-to-date in your administration day after day."<sup>265</sup>
84. "For Mary's sake sympathize with Sr. ... , correct her and cover her shortcomings with your virtues."<sup>266</sup>
85. "How flourishing the society would be, if all the women in the families were economical, systematic, farsighted, mothers in the true sense!"<sup>267</sup>
86. "If one is not well-mannered among those one lives with, to whom else will she be polite?"<sup>268</sup>
87. "The schooling one has received is revealed more at recreation than anywhere else."<sup>269</sup>
88. "What will happen to a girl who doesn't know to look after her own things?"<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>256</sup> 05.05.1906: Let. to Cecilia, Let. 1200, Fasc. XLIII

<sup>257</sup> 11.12.1908: Let. to the Sisters at Meerut, Let. 912, Fasc. XV

<sup>258</sup> 07.01.1895: Let. to Zenobia Baratti, Fasc. LXV

<sup>259</sup> 12.02.1915: Let. to Sr. Catherine, Let. 1056, Fasc. XVII

<sup>260</sup> 06.12.1897: Cir. Let. 1

<sup>261</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XVI

<sup>262</sup> 25.03.1903: Cir. LeL14

<sup>263</sup> 12.06.1903: Let. to Sr. Angela, Let. 615, Fasc. XII

<sup>264</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXIV

<sup>265</sup> 05.01.1906: Cir. Let. 25

<sup>266</sup> 22.03.1908: Let. to the Sisters at Meerut, Let. 1213, Fasc. XLI

<sup>267</sup> *Practical Guide*, Ch. XXXIX

<sup>268</sup> 1875- 90: *Rules/or the Boarders*

<sup>269</sup> 1875- 90: *Rules for the Boarders*

<sup>270</sup> 1875- 90: *Rules/or the Boarders*

89. "It is better not to do a thing at all, rather than doing it badly."<sup>271</sup>
90. "How edifying is modesty in a youth while affected manners and speech are absolutely repugnant!"<sup>272</sup>
91. "If a teacher is not punctual how can she demand punctuality from her pupils?"<sup>273</sup>
92. "How much good can an educated, polite, committed, saintly sister do!"<sup>274</sup>
93. "Pray my daughter, for prayer can obtain even the impossible."<sup>275</sup>
94. "We can never give to others what we have not instilled in ourselves in the first place."<sup>276</sup>
95. "The one who does not know how to educate by teaching, and to teach by instructing, usurps the name of the teacher."<sup>277</sup>
96. "The sight of unoccupied students is an index of negligent teachers."<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> 11.03.1892: Let. to the Mother Superior (Forli), Let. 73, Fasc. IIb

<sup>272</sup> 30.04.1900: Cir. Let. 7

<sup>273</sup> 23.06.1890: *Exhortations to the Religious Teachers*, n. 11, Fasc. XX

<sup>274</sup> 20.08.1904: Cir. Let. 20

<sup>275</sup> 26.06.1905: Let. to Sr. Cecilia, Let. 15, Fasc. LVII

<sup>276</sup> 1878 - 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.1, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>277</sup> 1878 - 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.6, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>278</sup> 1878 - 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.6, Fasc. XXIII

97. Woe to us if a child is lost through our neglect! Instead, fortunate are we, if we are able to lead some souls to the adorable heart of Jesus."<sup>279</sup>
98. "Your words will ring hollow, if you do not precede your pupils on the path of virtues."<sup>280</sup>
99. "A good teacher is the soul, the treasure, the jewel of her students, of the family and of her town. On the contrary, it is a disgrace to have a depraved teacher."<sup>281</sup>
100. "It is not just enough to supervise the pupils, or be with them. Our whole heart must be there for the children."<sup>282</sup>
101. "Be patient in tolerating the shortcomings of the adolescent, accept them as they are and bear with them for the love of God."<sup>283</sup>
102. "Here we are threatened by war, by earth quake, disease and death. Everything will come to an end; and blessed is she who sanctifies herself by fulfilling God's plan."<sup>284</sup>
103. "The convent at Trieste is a real blessing. Certainly there are the thorns of the initial stages, but better to hide them in the Sacred Heart so that they may be turned into roses."<sup>285</sup>
104. "Wherever Jesus wants us to open a house, we shall find the location and the means for our maintenance, not for two or three but for nine sisters. Few convents but many exemplary, saintly members. Try to recruit good and nice candidates."<sup>286</sup>
105. "Let us gather together at Mary's altar and renew our vows and the consecration to the Virgin..."<sup>287</sup>
106. "Tribulations make us more pleasing to God; therefore thank Him for having sent us new crosses."<sup>288</sup>
107. "We shall be happy if we are allowed to wipe away a teardrop; and we are ready to lay down our life in order to mitigate the pain and suffering of others".<sup>289</sup>
108. "The martyrs have promoted our religion and you should foster the Indian mission with your sufferings."<sup>290</sup>
109. Unless we mould ourselves perfectly, unless we daily aspire to be holy, we can never lead others to perfection."<sup>291</sup>

<sup>279</sup> 1878 - 88: *Rules and Regulations for St. Francis School, Forli*, n.6, Fasc. XXIII

<sup>280</sup> 28.2.1879: Let. to Rosina, Fasc. XXXVI

<sup>281</sup> 28.2.1879: Let. to Rosina, Fasc. XXXVI

<sup>282</sup> 07.06.1891: *Memoirs*, Fasc. XXX

<sup>283</sup> 1883: *Profile of a Principal*, Fasc. XXII

<sup>284</sup> 28.01.1915: Let. to Sr. Clara, Let. 1255, Fasc. XLVI

<sup>285</sup> 20.08.1904: Cir. Let. 20

<sup>286</sup> 15.02.1904: Cir. Let. 16

<sup>287</sup> Let. to sisters at Meerut, Let. 735, Fasc. XIII

<sup>288</sup> 01.12.1914: Let. to the Sisters, Let. 1048,

<sup>289</sup> 16. 01. 1915, Let to Pope Benedict XV. Fasc.36/44

<sup>290</sup> 11.06.1909: Let. to Sr. Cecilia, Let. 916, Fasc. XV

<sup>291</sup> 23.06.1890: *Exhortation 10 the Sisters*. Fasc. XX