

Crostarosan Texts and Studies

Maria Celeste Crostarosa

Autobiography

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MARIA CELESTE CROSTAROSA

Autobiography

edited by
Sabatino Majorano
and
Alessandra Simeoni

This edition of the *Autobiography* of Maria Celeste Crostarosa has had a long and complex journey. Therefore we feel the need to thank all those people whose contributions have made it possible to bring this work to its conclusion, and most particularly: the Redemptorists - Emilio Lage, for his suggestions and for making himself fraternally available to read the manuscript; - Antonio Marrazzo for the photographic documentation, compiled with love and competence; - the Redemptoristine Sr. Filomena Occini for her patient commitment to the electronic transcription of Mother M. C. Crostarosa's writings; - to Mrs. Maria Rosaria Taurozzi for her diligent correction of the manuscripts and drafts. A special *thank you* goes also to the Neapolitan Province of the Redemptorists, and to their Superior, Antonio di Masi, for his encouragement and financial aid. With the same appreciation, we would like to express our gratitude to the staff of the Valsele Printing House, beginning with their Director, P. Antonio Pasquarelli, for the dedication with which they have made this book possible.

English Translator's Note:

I would certainly like to endorse all the acknowledgements recorded above at the beginning of the Italian critical edition, particularly in the case of Father Emilio Lage, without whose help and support this English translation could not have been achieved. Nevertheless, any remaining errors and lapses of judgement are my own. I would also like to record my thanks to the Redemptoristine Nuns of Australia for their unswerving support in what has been quite a challenge, in particular the Prioress, Mother Mary Teresa.

I recommend all readers to study carefully what Father Sabatino Majorano has to say in the article taken from the *Viva Memoria* magazine, and also his own Introduction to the critical edition of the *Autobiography*.

This translation is intended as an exact replica of the Italian original and is therefore a careful literal translation on a phrase by phrase basis which respects the punctuation, and sentence division, and other features of the critical edition, so that it will bear the weight of scholarly exegesis and can be used in conjunction with the Italian text. For this reason I have translated all the footnotes.

I sincerely hope that someone will follow in Father Oppitz' footsteps and provide the edited edition that is required for ordinary readers, and I pay tribute here to the translation he pioneered more than 20 years ago. This editor cannot be me, as after more than five and a half years of constant work, I am far too close to the text to be able to view it with fresh eyes.

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The Spiritual Language of the Ven. Maria Celeste Crostarosa

In his Introduction to the critical edition of the *Autobiography* of the Ven. Maria Celeste Crostarosa, Father Sabatino Majorano, CSSR, makes reference to the following statement found in Chapter 56: “*perché possi servire per profitto de l’anime religiose de l’Istituto, e perché si veda come i fondamenti del vero spirito de l’Istituto del SS.mo Salvatore sono fondate nelle umiliazioni del Figliuol di Dio, maestro e signor nostro.*” (56:39) - “so that it can be used to the profit of the religious souls of the Institute, and show clearly how the foundations of the true spirit of the Institute of the Most Holy Saviour are built on the humiliations of the Son of God, our Lord and Master.”

If Mother Crostarosa’s intentions are to be carried out in full, it is important that her spiritual language be understood in a form accessible to modern readers. I have been to no little trouble to try and bring this about. The following article summarises what I have been able to discover.

1. Elements:

The terminology that the Ven. Maria Celeste Crostarosa uses was not exceptional for her day, but with the passage of time it has become unfamiliar to us nowadays.

A) The basic formative influence in religious life was the Latin Vulgate, in the form that we nowadays call “the Clementine Vulgate”, particularly the four Gospels, which were a source of formation for the Ven. Crostarosa throughout her life. The Latin Vulgate was also the source of the Divine Office. Although Mother Crostarosa does not specifically write about the Divine Office, the Gospel readings underpin her entire religious life.

B) The great theologian of the Church, widely respected and quoted for many centuries, was St. Thomas Aquinas. It is wise to assume that Mother Crostarosa received a good grounding in his theological language from her confessors, notably Fr. Bartolomeo Cacace and Fr. Tommaso Falcoia. She speaks of both of them being “of good doctrine”, and what she means is that they gave her a good grounding in the works of this Saint.

C) The most important major influence in the early part of her religious life was the writings of the great Spanish mystics, St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, which she no doubt absorbed via Italian translations, particularly when she was a Carmelite nun at the Monastery of Marigliano. All her terminology regarding the “Way of Perfection” and “annihilation” derive from this source. To date, there has been no opportunity to examine the writings of Serafina of Capri, who instituted a Carmelite reform, of which the Monastery of Marigliano was a part. At this stage, we have only the evidence of the Ven. Crostarosa in the early chapters of her *Autobiography*, yet the link with St. Teresa of Avila seems strong and would repay much more study than I have been able to do.

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D) It is a mistake to assume that St. Alphonsus de Liguori was a formative influence on the Ven. Crostarosa. He was her contemporary and born in the same year as her, so although he no doubt had some influence on her as her confessor and spiritual friend at the Monastery of Scala, he only rises to prominence as an author in his own right after her demise in 1755. Consequently, we should not expect to find Alphonsian terminology in the Ven. Maria Celeste's *Autobiography*.

E) Until these studies have been done, it is impossible to assess what contribution the Ven. Crostarosa herself made to the religious language of the times.

2. Specific terms:

1) **Opera** - "Work." The Latin noun *opera* is frequently found in the Clementine Vulgate and is a neuter plural noun, usually translated as "works." St. Thomas Aquinas inherits the Latin term, and on the basis of it erects his teaching. For example, in his "Treatise on the Work of the Six Days", he says: '*Consequenter considerandum est de opere distinctionis secundum se. Et primo, de opere primae diei; secundo, de opere secundae diei; tertio, de opere tertiae* - "We must consider next the work of distinction in itself. First, the work of the first day; secondly, the work of the second day; thirdly, the work of the third day." This quotation from Q. LXVII (Q. 67) gives us some idea of how the term is used.

To summarise his line of thinking, we might say, that a) since God performs *opera* - "works", they are necessarily good, and therefore if man also performs works in strict accordance with God's will, these "works" too will necessarily be good, and will earn merit for man in the eyes of God. These meritorious works are only possible as expressions of a life of virtue.

Consequently, the regular and frequent performance of "good works" may be described by the verbal noun *operatio*. This comes down to us in Mother Crostarosa's Italian as **operazione** and same word descends to us in English as "operation." But notice how the religious significance is totally lost in English, so that neither St. Thomas Aquinas' term, nor Mother Crostarosa's can be translated by "operation" in English. It is this loss of the sacred meaning in English that I call "Anglican distortion", and it causes considerable problems for a translator.

Theologically, a life that is filled with "good works" is one which leads to heaven. So therefore the terms *opera, operatio* in Latin and **opera, operazione** in Mother Crostarosa must be understood as expressions of the virtues that underlie them. The English noun "work" or the verbs "to work, to do" only partially convey the inherent meaning of these terms, and in many cases I have had to rely on the context to convey the rest of the meaning. There is much more spirituality that a continued study of St. Thomas Aquinas would reveal, but there is not the space here to do it.

2. Chiarezza and other terms:

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I now take this opportunity of quoting from my own notes to the Autobiography in order to provide an explanation of some other important terms that Mother Crostarosa uses.

5. a Stando in questo afflizione di spirito - Literally: “Being in this affliction of spirit.”

5. b gli fece il Signore chiarezza ne l'interno e li disse - Literally: “the Lord gave her an internal clarity and said to her.”

1) **chiarezza** - Literally: “clarity.” This noun is one of Mother Crostarosa’s special terms and has been discussed previously. The clearest explanation of it that I have been able to find in her *Autobiography* is in Chapter 14, sentences 30-32: *‘Una mattina, essendomi comunicata e stando con le solite alienazioni, per non essere osservata da alcuno, finite le orationi del coro in commune, mi ritirai in cella, e mi pose in su l’etto, avendo il corpo così indebolito per un distruggimento di amore che mi liquefaceva il cuore: era io penetrata dalli occhi purissimi del mio amato Dio, con una chiarezza inderna molto grande. Inni stando tutta occupata l’anima nel silenzio inderiore, mi disse il Signore così: “Io ti voglio far madre di molte anime, che per mezzo tuo voglio salvare.” Tra le altre, mi mostrò una compagnia di anime religiose, le quali io non conosceva, adittandomi che dovea fondare monisteri; ma nintaltro mi dichiarò’* - “One morning, after I took communion and had my usual alienations, I did not wish to be observed by anyone, so when we finished our prayers in choir in common I retired to my cell and lay down upon my bed, as my body was so weakened by an overwhelming force that melted by heart: I was penetrated by the most pure eyes of my beloved God, with a very great internal clarity. So when my soul was totally occupied with its interior silence, the Lord said to me: “*I want you to be the mother of many souls that I wish to save by means of you.*” Among other things He showed me a company of religious souls whom I did not know, and added that I was to found monasteries; but He revealed nothing else to me.”

In the first place, Mother Crostarosa speaks of **un distruggimento di amore** - Literally: “a destroying of love.” I have translated this here as “an overwhelming force.” What the Italian text seems to refer to here is the “breaking-down process” that occurs when gold ore is smelted in a heated crucible.

The effect of this application of heat is the next expression: **che mi liquefaceva il cuore** - Literally: “that liquefied my heart.” I have translated this here as: “that melted my heart.” The Italian verb **liquefaceva** has an obvious ancestry in the Latin Vulgate text of the Song of Songs (Canticles): *Anima mea liquefacta est, ut locutus est* - “My soul melted when He spoke” (Ct. 5:6).

The next key word to be introduced is **chiarezza** - Literally: “clarity”, i.e., **con una chiarezza inderna molto grande** - Literally: “with a very great internal clarity.” Now if gold is smelted with enough heat, it separates from the dross and floats on the

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top of the crucible, giving off a radiance and light of its own. This seems to be the first meaning of **chiarezza**.

When we consider Mother Crostarosa's "heart" in spiritual terms, what do we find? Like gold, the human heart or soul comes as an ore, i.e., gold intermingled with dross. When God applies his graces to the soul, it causes **un distruggimento** - "a breaking down process." In other words, God smelts the soul by applying the heat of His grace, so that the dross is removed and the pure gold of the soul remains. When this soul is heated in this way by God's grace, it melts, it liquefies (**liquefaceva**) if the process is intense enough, the soul will begin to emit its own radiance (**chiarezza**). This is in accordance with the verse quoted from the Song of Songs. This is the second meaning of **chiarezza**.

Of course, that process of the smelting of the "heart" or "soul" of a person is not a pleasant process, as the application of heat or fire always produces pain and suffering. This is what Mother Teresa has to say about it: "Suffering by itself is nothing; it's useless. But suffering shared with Christ in His Passion is a wonderful gift to human life. It is the most beautiful gift for us to share in the Passion of Christ, yes, and a sign of love, because His Father proved that He loved the world by giving His Son to die for us, and so in Christ's own life it was proved that suffering was the gift, the greatest gift. As Our Lord has said: 'Greater love than this no man has, than he gives his life for his friends.' And so when we suffer for Jesus, this is the greatest love, the undivided love." (I cannot locate this quotation, but it is probably from "The Way of Perfection.")

We should also consider the teaching given to Mother Crostarosa in Chapter 4 of the *Autobiography*, i.e., the vision of the sun and its radiance, which is given as no. 83. *Autobiography*, 11 (60) on pages 99-100 of the *Florilegium*. This teaches the doctrine of the Divine Grace as a source of spiritual heat, and, of course, that heat can be applied to the "heart" or the "soul" of a person and melt it like gold ore. This is why the revelation says that "this will be a continual prayer."

Because this is a constant teaching within the *Autobiography*, it has always seemed to me advisable to preserve Mother Crostarosa's terminology unless there are good reasons to do otherwise. There is no adequate translation for **chiarezza**, so I have always translated it as "clarity" rather than "brightness" or "radiance." With the other terms, "melt" is an adequate translation of **liquefacere** and I felt that a literal translation of **distruggimento**, in the paragraph quoted, would hinder rather than help an understanding of that particular passage.

3. Other terms:

As the previous section indicates, there is also the term **alienationi** - "alienations." I have not been able to find instances elsewhere that define its meaning, so I have basically left it untranslated. The context makes it clear that Mother Crostarosa is referring to some kind of religious ecstasy. Similar comments apply to the term **fuor**

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da sé - “out of herself.” Mother Crostarosa was understandably reluctant to claim religious ecstasies in view of the difficulties that she had already had with Church authorities, and which she describes in detail in her *Autobiography*. This paragraph makes the point that there is still more work to do on deciphering Mother Crostarosa’s religious language.

4. Further Problems of Translation:

Mother Crostarosa’s spiritual terminology is not the only problem that confronts a translator - there is religious terminology of another kind, based on the ecclesiastical Latin widely used in the Church and which has to do with the religious life of the times. Much of this now belongs to a vanished world and is foreign to our modern religious experience. Fortunately, I have had access to the “Catholic Encyclopaedia” of 1913 and I am able to quote an example below, taken from Chapter 47:

15. g al coro de l’epistola - Literally: “on the epistle side, \i.e., “the left side of the altar/.”

1) **coro** - Literally: “choir.” See the footnote. Father Majorano suggests that Mother Crostarosa may have intended to write the Latin word *cornu* - “altar-horns.”

2) See the Catholic Encyclopaedia: “Altar-horns. On the Jewish altar there were four projections, one at each corner, which were called the horns of the altar. These projections are not found on the Christian altar, but the word *cornu* (horn) is still maintained to designate the sides or corners of the altar. Hence *cornu epistolae* and *cornu evangelii* mean the epistle and gospel side of the altar respectively; *cornu anterius* and *cornu posterius evangelii* or *cornu dexterum anterius* and *dexterum posterius* mean respectively the anterior or posterior corner of the altar at the gospel side.”¹

3) See the Catholic Encyclopaedia: “altar-side. That part of the altar which faced the congregation, in contradistinction to the side at which the priest stood when formerly the latter stood at the altar facing the people. In ceremonies we frequently find mention of the right and left side of the altar. Before 1488, the epistle side was called the right side of the altar, and the gospel side the left. In that year, Augustine Patrizi, Bishop of Pienza, published a ceremonial in which the epistle side is called the left of the altar, and the gospel side the right, the denomination being taken from the facing of the cross, the principal ornament of the altar, not of the priest or the laity. This change of expression was accepted by St. Pius V and introduced into the rubrics.”²

4) The Catholic Encyclopaedia states: “So again the passages to be read to the people by the deacons or lectors in the *ambo* (pulpit) - the Epistle and Gospel, with lessons

¹ CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPAEDIA, Vol. I, p. 354.

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from the Old Testament on particular occasions - were collected in the “Epistolarium” or “Apostolus”, the “Evangeliarium”, and other lectionaries.”³

5. The critical edition:

The Italian critical edition of the Autobiography is a milestone in Crostarosan studies as it provides access to the actual text of the manuscript. The present translation is an exact replica of the critical edition.

I have matched the numbering of the Chapters and the sentences, and in addition, I have numbered the paragraphs as well, so that exact references can be given. In the volumes of notes I have also numbered each phrase for translation purposes. I have also translated every footnote and the various textual markings. I have recorded the words spoken by Our Lord in italics. I have also provided cross-references in my own footnotes to the 12 passages quoted in the *Florilegium*.

The translation has been done on a phrase by phrase basis, and the notes justify every decision taken. This provides a direct experience of Mother Crostarosa’s written style, which is not uniform, but varies somewhat. The story she has to tell is amazing and she has considerable ability as a narrator. My experience of her is that she writes in profound prayer, and even what is apparently a passage of simple narrative opens up into a deep religious study of either the teachings of Our Lord in daily life, or of sinful human nature. I find it remarkable that she was able to write her Chapter headings before she began to write the text of the ensuing Chapter, and there is very little crossing-out, clear evidence, I think, that she did not set pen to paper until she knew exactly what she wanted to say.

The purpose of the critical edition is to allow serious study at a post-graduate level to those who have this degree of interest in the text. This is primarily the Redemptoristine Sisters, for whom the *Autobiography* is probably their prime text. I have tried my utmost to remove all levels of uncertainty, so that they may have the benefit of a solid foundation. The next category of readers will probably be those who develop an interest in the Order of the Most Holy Redeemer. I hope that vocations will be the result.

6. Conclusion:

This brief article does no more than indicate a few of the difficulties that occur in the Autobiography. However, it is not my wish to be negative.

I have tried as much as possible to put the *Autobiography* into modern English, and this has meant a high degree of paraphrase, perhaps as much as 50%. This approach requires explanation and justification. In part it has to do with the fact that Italian is a

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very different language from English. The word order is often very different, and the form of expression often is.

Since I have had the benefit of Father Emilio Lage CSSR's excellent Spanish translation, I have made full use of it wherever possible, so that English readers may have the benefit of all the hard work that Father Lage has done.

In contrast to other works that I have translated, I have provided a volume of notes to each of Mother Crostarosa's Chapters, so that there are 64 volumes if we include the Preface, making a total of only 2339 pages. Each of these volumes discusses all the issues involved in translation on a phrase by phrase basis, so that it is clear why I have chosen the translation that appears for each phrase. This means that when an error or lapse of judgement is found, or new knowledge becomes available, these notes, and the translation, can be updated to give a final reading. I hope these notes will also be useful to translators who wish to put the *Autobiography* into other languages, and I refer people to them.

That said, I can only hope that readers will find this translation of the *Autobiography* of interest, and hopefully, it will stimulate further study.

May Our Lord's grace and blessings be upon us all,
for with Him is Mercy and Plenteous Redemption!

Easter, in the Year of Our Lord 2003

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Contractions and Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Title in Italian	Title in English
Analecta	Analecta CSSR, 1 (Roma 1922) - 39 (Roma 1967)	<i>Analects of CSSR, 1 (Rome 1922) - 39 (Rome 1967)</i>
AGHR	Archivium Generale Historicum Redemptoristarum, Roma.	<i>General Historical Archives of the Redemptoristines, Rome.</i>
AMRFg	Archivio Monastero Monache Redentorista, Foggia.	<i>Archives of the Monastery of the Redemptoristine Nuns, Foggia.</i>
APGR	Archivio Postulazione Generale Redentorista, Roma	<i>Archives of the General Postulation of the Redemptorists, Rome.</i>
Battaglia	S. Battaglia (a cura), Grande dizionario della lingua italiana, 1-18, Torino 2 1970-1996	<i>S. Battaglia (editor), Grand dictionary of the Italian language, 1-18, Turin 2 1970-1996</i>
D'Ascoli	F. D'Ascoli, Dizionario etimologico napoletano, Napoli 1990.	<i>F. D'Ascoli: Etymological Dictionary of the Neapolitan Dialect, Naples 1990.</i>
Imitazione	S. Majorano, L'Imitazione per la memoria del Salvatore. Il messaggio spirituale di suor Maria Celeste Crostarosa (1696-1755), Roma 1978.	<i>S. Majorano: Imitation through the Memorial of Our Saviour. The Spiritual Message of Sr. Maria Celeste Crostarosa (1696-1755), Rome 1978.</i>
Incontri	D. Capone, Suor Celeste Crostarosa e Sant'Alfonso. Incontri - Spiritualità (Per la storia della spiritualità nel Settecento), Materdomini 1991.	<i>D. Capone: Sr. Celeste Crostarosa and St. Alphonsus. Meetings and Spirituality. (From the history of 18th. Century spirituality), Materdomini 1991.</i>
Librandi-Valerio	M. C. Crostarosa, Le lettere, a cura di R. Librandi e A. Valerio, Materdomini 1996.	<i>M. C. Crostarosa: The Letters, edited by R. Librandi and A. Valerio, Materdomini 1996.</i>
Radici	D. Capone - S. Majorano, I Redentoristi e le Redentoriste. Le radici, Materdomini 1985.	<i>D. Capone - S. Majorano: The Redemptorists and the Redemptoristines. The Origins. Materdomini 1985.</i>

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Ritzler-Sefrin, V-VI	R. Ritzler - P. Sefrin, <i>Hierarchia catholica medii et recentioris aevi</i> , V-VI, Padova 1952-1958.	<i>R. Ritzler - P. Sefrin: The Catholic Hierarchy in Medieval and Modern Times, V-VI, Padua 1952-1958.</i>
Spic. Hist. Storia CSSR	Spicilegium historicum CSSR, 1 (Roma 1953) - F. Chiovaro (a cura), <i>Storia della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore, I/1 Le origini (1732-1793)</i> . Roma 1993.	<i>Historical Anthology CSSR, 1 (Rome 1953) - F. Chiovaro (editor), The History of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, I/1 The Origins (1732-1793), Rome 1993</i>

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Translator's Note:

Some of these works have now been translated into English:

CAPONE D., *Suor Celeste Crostarosa e Sant'Alfonso. Incontri - Spiritualità (Per la storia della spiritualità nel Settecento)* (Sister Celeste Crostarosa and St. Alphonsus. Meetings - Spirituality (Through the history of 18th. Century Spirituality), Materdomini 1991. - Translated by J. R. Bradbury for the Redemptoristine Nuns of Australia, in 2001.

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This Introduction has been translated in its entirety for the benefit of those who are interested in consulting the Italian critical edition of the *Autobiography*, available from the Italian publishers **Editrice San Gerardo**.

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Introduction

Among all the writings of Maria Celeste Crostarosa (1696-1755), the *Autobiography*¹ is certainly the best known, even though it has still not been critically edited² after 250 years. In actual fact, it is constantly in use, both by those who are interested in the spirituality of Mother Crostarosa, and, more generally, in 18th. Century Italy, as well as by all the Redemptorist historians. The reason is the fact that the manuscript does not limit itself to reconstructing the spiritual journey of the author, highlighting the richness of her mystic gifts, but above all, it concentrates on tracing the broad outlines of the laborious and complex genesis of the Redemptorist community, defending its special character and the charismatic nature of the basic project, which links both the feminine order (OSSR) and the masculine Congregation (CSSR).

1. The Autobiography and the Book of the Work of the Institute.

For Maria Celeste, her personal spiritual life, and the new religious community of *the Most Holy Saviour* (which at the very moment of Pontifical approval in 1749-1750 was to become *the Most Holy Redeemer*), are so closely interwoven that the *Autobiography* could not help but be the *Book of the Work of the Institute*³ at the same time. She was convinced that the *Work* constituted the purpose and destination of her whole life: everything that had been given to her by the Lord was in accordance with this. So it is impossible to separate her personal experiences from the religious project: to give an account of the first is to shed light on the origin and laborious birth of the second; and vice versa - we can understand the fundamental inspiration of the second only if we remember the events of her life from which it sprang.

All this makes Mother Crostarosa's *Autobiography* one of the most precious testimonies of the charism which led to the foundation of the Redemptorists. Besides, it gives the *Autobiography* tones and perspectives which differentiate it sharply from analogous writings by other mystics, who are chiefly preoccupied with explaining their personal experience of the grace which they have received.⁴ The *Autobiography* is all this, but it is not restricted to it: it is primarily the narrative of the emergence of a religious project aimed at creating a community which would be the *memorial* of Our Saviour and which would attempt to realise the Father's plan for communion in the Spirit; a *living* memorial, because it is founded on the transformation of His members into Him, through the work

¹ In actual fact Maria Celeste did not give any title to her manuscript. The *Autobiography* is the term by which it is normally referred to and which we are also using. It was put on p. 1r in different handwriting and with recent ink.

² That edited by B. D'ORAZIO, *La Ven.le Madre Sr. Celeste Crostarosa, Autobiografia* (Casamari 1965). (B. D'ORAZIO, *The Venerable Mother Sr. Celeste Crostarosa, Autobiography*, Casamari 1965), although it is substantially faithful, was mainly preoccupied with rendering the text accessible and readable, which often leads to distortions of the original. In recent years translations have been published in Spanish (ed. E. LAGE, Caracas 1988) and in Polish (ed. K. KUT, Kraków 1997).

³ According to the expression repeated many times by Maria Celeste herself, see for example 6:71 and 13:46. In this and all other references, the first number indicates the progressive chapter headings given in this edition, and the second number is for each sentence within the chapter.

⁴ Cf. G. POZZI-LEONARDI (editor) *Scrittrici mistiche italiane* (Mystical Italian Women Writers) Genoa 1988. The part dealing with Crostarosa (581-592), after a brief biographical summary, quotes several pages directly from the *Autobiography*.

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of the Spirit; an *evangelical* memorial, which expresses itself as a transparent fraternal charity, grounded in the loving assimilation of the “truth” contained in the words of God. The *Autobiography* seeks to corroborate that all this cannot be attributed to human inventiveness or wisdom: it has its roots deep in God’s salvific plan, and it can only be brought about thanks to the intervention of God Himself.

As in the writings of other mystics, in the Crostarosan narrative the grateful witness to the gratuitous works of God is interwoven with a strong desire to teach. The opening page presents it like a conductor wire to the whole work: “*con somma benignità volle egli condurla ed essere egli sua guida nel camino della perfettione e de l’oratione: esser egli suo maestro e guida sin dalla sua fangiullezza, con modo singolare e finenze straordinarie del suo divino amore, acciò si inanimi ogni anima fedele a seguita⁵ questo divino maestro dateci da l’eterno Padre Dio per guida nel camino del cielo, essendo egli quello che tiene le chiavi dei tesori celesti.*” (Nonetheless it was He Himself with the greatest kindness who willed to lead her, and He Himself be her guide on the way of perfection and prayer: He Himself willed to be her master and guide, even from her very childhood, in a singular manner, and with the extraordinary refinements of His divine love, so that every faithful soul would be inspired to follow this divine master, given to us by the Eternal Father God as our guide on the way to heaven, since it is He who holds the keys to the heavenly treasures. 0:2)

The quality and number of the gifts that Maria Celeste received sharpened her awareness of her human inadequacy before the face of God, which is expressed in her inadequacy to find words which would express in a complete manner what she had experienced: *ogni giorno riceveva inzegniamenti divini, che non posso qui registrare per impossibile, essendo innumerabile le misericordie che voi, amor mio, mi avete fatte.*” (12:8) (every day I received His divine teachings, which I cannot record here because it is impossible, for innumerable are the mercies that You, my love, have showed me.); “*gaudio infinito de l’eterna beatitudine di amore in Dio, il quale non si puo spiegare da me misera creatura.*” (39:42) (the infinite joy of the eternal beatitude of love in God, which cannot be explained by a miserable creature like me.) Here, when she breaks off her narrative style and has recourse to metaphor, stretching the language, is hardly able to describe more than approximately either the profundity of the communion or the presence of God in Christ: “*abbisso di amore infinito*” (9:18) (an abyss of infinite love); “*andaressimo impazzia di puro amore per questo divin amante.*” (2:2) (we would go into a madness of pure love for this divine lover.); “*restò ella così ferita da l’amor.*” (3:11) (she was left absorbed in the love.); “*il mio cuore provava del condinuo un amore strugitivo.*” (12:8) (my heart continually experienced His all-consuming love.); “*mi fu data dal Signore una chiarezza d’amore.*” (39:41) (I was given a clarity of love by the Lord.); “*tanto mi accendeva la tua divina presenza nel tuo divino amore, che mi cagionava una dolcissima liquefatione interiore.*” (10:6) (Your divine presence inflamed me so much by Your divine love, that it

⁵ *seguita*: ‘seguire’ - to continue.

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caused me a most sweet interior melting.); “*mi resto quella divina bellezza del mio Signore ne l’inderno, con una liquefazione di amore che mi faceva labicare dalli occhi lagrime molto soavi.*” (13:26) (I kept this divine beauty of my Lord internally, my heart melting with love in a way that made me weep very sweet tears from my eyes.)

But there is a further note which characterises the Crostarosan narrative: her bitter suffering because of the sorrowful events which brought tension and division into the Work, ending with Maria Celeste herself being forced to leave the Monastery in May 1733. Yet we are dealing with a bitterness and suffering which never turned into rancour or a spirit of revenge. The *Autobiography* relates everything in the light of that deep meaning which, not without effort, she succeeded in understanding; by being a living memory of the Saviour in imitation through participation in His life, the Work could not but follow along His own road - that of suffering and the Cross. The perspective therefore turns to being pedagogic: “*perché possi servire per profitto de l’anime religiose de l’Istituto, e perché si veda come i fondamenti del vero spirito de l’Istituto del SS.mo Salvatore sono fondate nelle umiliationi del Figliuol di Dio, maestro e signor nostro.*” (56:39) (so that it can be used to the profit of the religious souls of the Institute, and show clearly how the foundations of the true spirit of the Institute of the Most Holy Saviour are built on the humiliations of the Son of God, our Lord and Master.)

This approach allows us to grasp the most profound meaning even in those pages where the account seems almost to be transformed into an apology: this is where Maria Celeste confirms her own reading of complex episodes, where they are susceptible to other interpretations; or she talks about extraordinary episodes, seen as confirmation on the part of God of her own behaviour; or she seems to take a firm stand in her evaluation of the attitudes of the other protagonists, yet always preserving her good faith.

In reality, what drives Mother Crostarosa is the charism of the memorial which determines the nature of the Work. Events had so turned out as to make her ever more committed in her person: for her to say “no” meant to risk returning her religious project back to the common perspectives of 18th. Century religious life, and destroying its special nature. For Maria Celeste, defending her role meant defending the special nature of her Work.

Here, we believe is the key to the decisive reading of her *Autobiography*. When she wrote it, Maria Celeste had already committed her spiritual experiences to other writings. We think especially of the *Trattenimenti* (Dialogues), which are almost a diary, but written intermittently, and where we find recorded, with a fine sense of immediacy, the most important moments of her life’s journey. The *Autobiography*, however, stands at the end of such a journey and offers an overall view which attempts to explain the thread which holds it all together, and the profound sense of purpose awakened by the project given to her by God.

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It is a book of memorials. Yet Mother Crostarosa did not entrust herself solely to memory, but made use of notes, other writings, and documents which she had beside her at the time of setting pen to paper. All this underscores the value of the historical testimony of her manuscript. But this value must not be exaggerated unduly; more than just details, or the trivia of individual episodes, the *Autobiography* is mainly concerned with outlining the total vision, in order to bring out the profound purpose of the mission she received from God.

For this reason, the relevant facts have not simply been narrated with an intense sense of participation, but are also interpreted from the point of view of the Work, above all to highlight it and defend the origin of its special charism. This perhaps explains why the substantial reliability of the account is accompanied both by imprecisions due to the remoteness in time of these self-same facts, and to simplifications intended for a better understanding of the fundamental data.

In this regard, there are two most noteworthy lacunae. The first consists of a diverse dating of the first draft of the *Rules*: instead of 1725 we find 1729. From this there also derives a partial superimposition of events relative to the difficulty of the years 1725-1729 compared to the successive years 1731-1732, yet always confirming the vicissitudes of her personal situation: in the first period there was suffering accompanied by an interior clarity, in the second, doubts and darkness right up to the enlightenment of 1737. The explanation lies perhaps in the unitary manner in which Maria Celeste tries to see her personal events, and the relationship between the feminine Institute and the masculine.

The second is the omission of the period spent at Roccapiemonte from November 1735 until she went to Foggia in March 1738. The *Autobiography* speaks of Roccapiemonte as though it were an unrealised project. And in fact, this is true, but it does not succeed in completely explaining the omission. This silence may be perhaps attributed to the desire of Mother Crostarosa to have done with the event that cast such a shadow on the Work: her interrogation in her capacity as a witness in the informative action of the Holy Office with regard to Silvestro Tosquez, who was one of the protagonists in the birth of the new community: nor was this silence simply due to the interrogation itself, but was perhaps brought about by another one of the protagonists, Mons. Tommaso Falcoia.⁶

However, the situation is that, rather than us expecting a chronological detailing of the facts, we must turn to the *Autobiography* to provide the personal experiences of the person who was herself one of the main protagonists. Maria Celeste gives us the history of a vocation and a mission, seen from the view-point of the one who had received this mission and vocation, and to which she tried to remain faithful, in spite of a lack of understanding and other difficulties. In doing so, she was driven by her conviction of the Providential nature of events: their unfolding is reconstructed by way of a parable for all

⁶ Cf. S. MAJORANO, *Atti del Processo Tosquez* in *Radici* 425-477. (Acts of the Tosquez Proceedings) in *Origins*, pp. 425-477.

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the members of the Institute, so that they may perceive more clearly the spirit which should animate them.

Although autobiography became a literary genre in the 18th. Century, the writings of Maria Celeste, because of the context in which she lived, remain in the pre-modern category of the mystical and religious tradition.⁷ From this comes her preoccupation with legitimising the very act of writing, with which the first page opens: *Essendomi stato ordinato per volondà del Signore, da chi può comandarmi, che io scrivessi le misericordie liberalissime fatte dal nostro Signore Giesù Christo per sua sola bonda, verso un'anima religiosa chiamata da lui alla sua seguela.* (Having been ordered through the will of the Lord, by Him who can command me, that I should write about the most liberal mercies bestowed by Our Lord Jesus Christ, out of His goodness alone, upon a religious soul called by Him to be His follower.) The reference to obedience comes as if to reinforce and sanction the other motives of an apologetic and pedagogic character.

The works which would have exerted a major influence on Maria Celeste in the composition of her *Autobiography* can now no longer be stated with certainty. These works would have consisted primarily of hagiographies (lives of the Saints), which after the Council of Trent were widely diffused even at the popular level.⁸ Marie Celeste herself affirms that from her early childhood: *udiva con gusto e piacere le vite di quei Santi che aveano amato assai Dio, e li pigliava per suoi avvocati. (1:7)* (she learnt with joy and pleasure about the lives of those Saints who had so greatly loved God, and she took them for her own advocates.) Among these we find St. Catherine of Siena, cited many times in the *Autobiography* and chosen by Maria Celeste as her spiritual mistress.⁹

In her sojourn at Marigliano she came into contact with the writings of Serafina of Capri, and with those of the Carmelite tradition, in which ambit the said Serafina moved. By analogy with what has already become evident when one regards the *Rules*,¹⁰ we must think of the influence - either in the language or the spiritual perspective - of the various volumes of Sister Serafina (including those on the Trinity, on mysticism and the religious life, and those completed by her on religious foundations).¹¹ The same must be said also in regard to the writings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross, the reading of which, besides giving her a notable spur in the Christocentric choice of her own spiritual orientation, would of course have furnished Crostarosa with a familiarity with the language of mysticism.

⁷ On the concept of pre-modern autobiography cf. F. D'INTINO, *L'autobiografia moderna*, Roma 1989, 17-58; R. SCRIVANO, *Biografia e autobiografia. Il modello alferiano*, Roma 1976. (F. D'INTINO; *Modern Autobiography*, Rome 1989, pp. 17-58; R. SCRIVANO, *Biography and Autobiography. The Standard Model*, Rome 1976).

⁸ Cf. R. DE MAIO, *Società e vita religiosa a Napoli nell'età moderna (1656-1799)*, Napoli 1971, 156-161. (R. DE MAIO, *Society and religious life in Naples in the modern era (1656-1799)*, Naples 1971, pp. 156-171.

⁹ Cf. 4:5; 12:5; 39:40.

¹⁰ Cf. *Imitazione*, 201-231. (*Imitations*, pp. 201-231).

¹¹ Cf. S. POSSANZINI, *La Venerabile Madre Serafina di Dio, carmelitana. Una mistica che si è opposta al quietismo (1621-1699)*, Fisciano 1992. (S. POSSANZINI, *The Venerable Mother Serafina of God, Carmelite. A mystic who was opposed to Quietism (1621-1699)*, Fisciano 1992.

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2. The Manuscript.

A complete reconstruction of the history of the Crostarosan manuscripts is not an easy task today. The tragic events at the Monastery of Foggia, which she founded, have led to the destruction of the early archives. Therefore it is no longer possible to establish what the fate of these texts was during the 18th. Century and throughout almost all of the 19th, even if we can believe that the reputation for sanctity which accompanied our author caused a jealous sense of conservation.

On 18th. April 1891, in the course of the process for the introduction of the cause for her beatification, the Superior of the Monastery of Foggia, Sr. Teresa Spinelli, presented the writings of Maria Celeste for due examination. First and foremost there figured “*La vita di Suor Maria Celeste Crostarosa, Fondatrice del Venerabile Monastero del SS.mo Salvatore di Foggia, scritta da se stessa.*”¹² (The life of Sr. Maria Celeste, Foundress of the Venerable Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour at Foggia, written by herself).

From the time of the introduction in Rome of the cause for her beatification, which occurred in 1901, the autograph codex of the *Autobiography* was conserved in the *Archivio della Postulazione Generale della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore di Roma*. (The Archive of the General Postulation of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer in Rome).

The manuscript is parchment throughout; the binding is in white leather and fastened by two braided buttons; it measures 35 cm by 25 cm. There are no labels affixed to the front cover. We have no reliable dates regarding the first binding of the Crostarosan material. After a recent restoration, which occurred during 1993-1994, commissioned by Fr. Antonio Marrazzo, the Postulator of the cause for beatification, the Crostarosan manuscript was freshly rebound: to the original covering in leather was added a strong white folio of the same size as the original binding when laid flat; at present, therefore, the first and last folios of the 18th. Century are respectively preceded and followed by the two halves of the modern folio.

¹² *Copia publica transumpti Processus Apostolica Auctoritatae constructi in Curia Ecclesiastica Fodiana super non cultu et fama sanctitatis in genere ven. Servae Dei Mariae Caelestis Crostarosa, Fundatricis Monialium a Ssmo Salvatore in Civitate Fodiana, 1941, sess. II, f. 7r.*) Public copy of the transactions of the Process established under Apostolic Authority in the Ecclesiastical Curia of Foggia for non-liturgical worship and reputation for sanctity in the case of the venerable Servant of God Maria Celeste Crostarosa, the Foundress of the Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour in the City of Foggia, 1941, sess. II, folio 7r.) The writings have been regrouped into 6 volumes. (*Vol. 1 is the *Autobiography* - Trans.) The remaining five were presented as: 2: *Le Regole del Monastero del SS.mo Salvatore*. (The Rules of the Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour); 3: *Esercizio di amor di Dio. Meditazioni della predetta Serva di Dio*. (Exercise of the Love of God. Meditations of the Aforesaid Servant of God); 4: *Gesù Cristo vera vita dell'anima, giardinetto interno del Divino amore*. (Jesus Christ True Life of the Soul, the Internal Garden of Divine Love); 5: *Libro dei Soliloqui e Trattenimenti dell'anima col suo sposo Gesù*. (Book of the Soliloquies and Dialogues of the Soul with her Spouse Jesus); 6: *Libro di Canzonette Spirituali, di cui la maggior parte composte dalla stessa Serva di Dio*. (Book of Spiritual Poems, of which the major part were written by the same Servant of God). Sr. Spinelli added at the end: “According to a tradition it is said that the books written by the Servant of God were not well-conserved in the past, and it is suspected that some manuscripts may have been lost.” (*ivi*, 7r)

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The numbering of the pages, in the upper outside corner, is recent. It is in red pencil. The numbers run from 1 to 144 and also include the pages left blank by the authoress.

The pages consist of two different sorts of writing-pad, joined together by a common binding. In total there are 71, plus one for protection. On the *right-hand side* of this first page can be seen written *Life of the Foundress*, in black ink, on the upper part, in a different handwriting from Maria Celeste; *Autobiography*, in blue ink, lower down the page. Pages 1v., 71v. and 72r-v have been left entirely blank. (* See note below: Trans.)

The first pad consists of 32 pages (27 cm by 18.5 cm),¹³ with the following fasciculation: a folio of eight pages, missing the last page (1r - 7v) + 11 pages (8r - 18v), + a folio of 14 pages (19r - 32v). The second pad comprises the remaining 40 pages (34.5 cm by 24 cm), also divided into folios: one of six pages (33r - 38v), + one single page (39r - 40v), + two of 12 pages each (41r - 64v), + one of eight pages (65r - 72v).

The handwriting is regular and it can be read with varying degrees of ease. The pages of the first pad appear to have been written as fair copy; those of the second give the impression of a rough draft, where the authoress perhaps made herself a promise to re-work the material later: time and time again we find reminder signs (* or +)¹⁴ written mainly in the margins; the joining of the second pad with the first appears to be in a certain sense forced (some lines have been crossed out, the numbering of the first chapter is not correct),¹⁵ the layout is less readable.

Examples of corrections made by the authoress are not very numerous. They generally consist of the addition of the last syllable of a word at the end of a page, apparently left interrupted and instead finished on the following page; or in small, almost invisible, corrections made to render a letter or a syllable more comprehensible. The most important are those of pp. 32v - 33r (the title and the beginning of a new chapter have been covered over by gluing a small sheet of paper onto the page) and of p. 47v (using the same method of gluing on a small sheet of paper and crossing out the last line of Chapter 3 of Book II, rewritten later on the same small sheet of paper).

¹³ Page 1 of the first fascicle has the same format as the second pad, with the aim of making it a comprehensive binding. It seems to be a more recent production with respect to the others and its attachment to the manuscript would perhaps go back to the time of the binding. It consists of a sheet of paper specially cut to fit next to the leaves of the succeeding folio; it is to be noted that about 1 cm has been lost from the second page of this folio, because it has had to wrap right round the other folios.

¹⁴ From now on these signs will always be recorded in the notes.

¹⁵ All this is in confirmation of that narrowing of perspective, in contrast to what she wrote initially, that Crostarosa seems to imply on the first pages of the second pad, when she wrote: *Qui non pretendiamo dire tutte le gratie e favori fatti a l'anima di questa religiosa dal Signore, e le misericordie a lei fatte... ma solo qui si dice quello che appartiene a l'Opera del nuovo Istituto dato alla medema dal Signore; e questo solo a gloria di Dio e per adimpere alla santa obbedienza impostaci. (18:12).* (Here we do not pretend to tell of all the graces and favours given to the soul of this religious by the Lord, and the mercies she received... but there is only said here that which appertains to the Work of the new Institute given through the medium of the Lord; and this alone to the glory of the Lord and to fulfil the holy obedience imposed on us).

* A *folio* is a sheet of paper folded and cut to make *pages*. The authors also distinguish between the front side of each page (r.) and the back (v.). (Translator's note.)

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Here we also find the crossing out of the names of protagonists or events, often accompanied by words written between the lines as substitutes containing more general expressions. Sometimes the ink and the handwriting of these corrections are not those of Crostarosa. The most important are those of p. 50v (the twenty-one lines of Chapter 5 of Book II have been crossed out in pen) and those of pp. 61v and 62v (where references to episodes hardly pleasing to the conservatory of Pareti have been crossed out).¹⁶

We do not have dependable information about the date of the drafting of the ms. But it is possible to indicate it with sufficient precision, using the internal evidence of the events described, and the styles of handwriting. The narrative is developed referring many times to posterior facts, so that we may think of it as a draft made not in the form of a chronicle or a diary, but in the form of a segment of time which is an united whole, even though it is discontinuous. It is interrupted brusquely at 1743; as the narrative progresses, however, we find posterior facts anticipated even at this date, such as the mission held by St. Alphonsus at Foggia in December 1745 - January 1746 (56:10-11); the changing of the name of the Congregation and the Orders from “The Most Holy Saviour” to “The Most Holy Redeemer”, which occurred in 1749 and 1750 respectively (49:18). Moreover, the writing styles of the ms. are those which seem associated with the last period at Foggia.¹⁷ Maria Celeste herself speaks of “*questi uldimi giorni della mia vita.*” (6:72) (these last days of my life).

All these elements would seem to indicate the time of composition as the years between 1750 and 1755. Specifying a later period does not seem possible to us.

3. The Structure.

The *Autobiography* was finally written in three books, subdivided in their turn into chapters, which are not always numbered in a coherent sequence.

After a brief Introduction as to why it was written (p. 2r.), the first Book (pp. 26v. - 46r.) narrates the period stretching from her infancy to the inauguration of the Order of the Most Holy Saviour at Scala. Its articulation is complex, mainly because the genre which is truly narrative alternates with that of soliloquy, ie. with the direct dialogue with Christ:¹⁸ The first five chapters (pp. 2v. - 9r.) are dedicated to her infancy and formative years; next follow two books of soliloquies (pp. 9v. - 15v.), which bring the narrative forward to the time of her entry into the Monastery of Marigliano, and then there is a third soliloquy (pp. 15v. - 33v.), divided into ten paragraphs, which describe the years

¹⁶ In spite of the difficulty of reading the text of such crossings-out not due to Crostarosa, we have always tried to give this text in the notes. However, we have not indicated the corrections of later readers, who have had little respect for the ms., like the numbering in red pencil, of which we have already spoken, some underlinings also in pencil, and the question mark in electric blue ink on p. 5r.

¹⁷ Cf. *Imitazione* (Imitations), pp. 129-130.

¹⁸ This is the manner in which Crostarosa proceeds in the *Trattenimenti* (Dialogues) and the *Gradi* (Grades).

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lived at Marigliano; this is followed by twenty one chapters (pp. 33v. - 46r.), numbered by the authoress as 4-24, dealing with the first period of her time at Scala, up to “the beginning of the Work” in 1731.

The second book (pp. 46r. - 65v.) is composed of twenty chapters. Maria Celeste finishes her narrative of the years at Scala, dedicating the greater part of her narrative to it (pp. 33v. - 60v.); she then passes to her time at Pareti di Nocera, and, omitting to report her passage to Roccapiemonte, goes straight on to announce her own departure for Foggia.

The third book (pp. 66r.-71r.) is composed of only six chapters, which speak of the foundation of the Monastery at Foggia and the years when Maria Celeste dwelt in this city up to 1743, when the narrative is suddenly broken off.

In the manuscript, Maria Celeste has transcribed three of her letters to Tommaso Falcoia (pp. 42r., 46r. and 47r.) and one of her own brief notes to him (p. 58v.); she has also included a letter received from Tommaso Falcoia (p. 42v.), pasting it on to the page of the manuscript; in addition, on p. 48r., she speaks of enclosing a letter from Vincenzo Mannarini addressed to her, of which, however, not a trace remains. The *Autobiography* also contains two brief Crostarosan writings: a *Candico* (Canticle) and the *Sette Regole* (Seven Rules) (pp. 17v. - 19r.).¹⁹

In short, we find evidence that the perspective from which the authoress narrates her own life is not always constant; if in the first few chapters we note a constant use of the third person, in the soliloquies and in nine successive chapters the discourse is continued predominantly in the first person and directed to Christ. When she left to enter the Monastery of Scala, we again find the use of the third person which remains in the rest of the work. We are dealing with a rhetorical medium behind which many autobiographers love to hide themselves; either by making use of an artifice through which to convince the reader of the objectivity of the facts narrated, or through being able to dissemble the decision to reveal their own lives.

4. The Language.

Maria Celeste does not disguise the fact that she did not receive a solid literary education. She even confesses it explicitly: “*se bene avea imparato a leggere, no sapeva pero scrivere, né mai ne avea imparato*”; (but although she had learned to read, she still did not know how to write, nor had she ever been taught.); she began to do it “*fidata al Signore... senza maestro alcuno.*” (4:29) (trusting in the Lord... without any teacher.) Nonetheless she seems preoccupied with “fine style”. Her writings are in fact a “

¹⁹ In the course of the account Maria Celeste also mentions other writings of hers: of course, besides the *Regole* (Rules), of which she speaks in the pluperfect, she also refers to the *Gradi* (Grades) (15:8) and to the *Giardinetto* (Little Garden) (16:5). Nor are parallelisms lacking: and so the contents of 15:4-15 are very similar to the opening pages of the *Gradi* (Grades); that of 35:5-33 compare with the letter written to St. Alphonsus in September 1731. (Cf. LIBRANDI-VALERIO, pp. 92-94).

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'registrazione grafica' di un discorso fatto a viva voce." ²⁰ (A registration in writing of a spoken discourse.)

Although the text does not hide the prophetic intentions of the authoress, in accordance with the characteristics of the Post-Tridentine era, this dimension is maintained on the strictly biographical and personal level; because of the rigid attitudes of the day towards mysticism, this was played down in its more exterior aspects, therefore assuming subdued tones, and is thus in sharp contrast to those of the great mystics of the Middle Ages. ²¹ If the female prophesying of the Middle Ages imparted true directives to Church authority in its own day, then that which followed can be explained in the intention to provide reasoned arguments, and thus justify the work of the *donna che scrive* (the woman who writes) through divine sanction.

Devoid of rhetorical solemnity, the language of Mother Crostarosa is characterised by a colloquial and immediate style. Even in the visions, in which Maria Celeste was destined to play an important part, we never find any trace of an attempt to convince readers of the credibility of her account through the use of a solemn style, whereas she insists on her extraordinary signs as proof of the divine origin of her mission and its message: *Fu sollevata dal Signore in spirito e chiarezza. Gli disse il Signore: "Figlia, non sai tu con quanto pochi aiuti umani io ponerò en effeto quest'Opera del mio Istituto? Che ci poni tu del tuo? Solo un poco di fedeltà."* (35:4-5). (she was lifted up by the Lord in spirit and clarity. The Lord said to her: "Daughter, do you not know with what little human help I will put into effect this Work of My Institute? So what is your part in it? Only a little faithfulness.")

On the strictly linguistic level, the text is lacking in a diversity of view-points: it is offered as a record of everyday speech, rich in dialectal expressions and frequent solecisms: compositions of the period were without aesthetic aspirations, paid no respect to the rules of grammar, orthography or style, and were often inclined to useless repetitions. The syntactic disorder, certainly evident in the scant education of the authoress, becomes pronounced when the narration becomes condensed and emotional in rhythm, having frequent recourse to pleonastic conjunctions ("e", "inni", "ma") ("and", "so", "but")

Nonetheless, it is just through the simplicity of her "oral style" that the text reads vibrantly. The value of the *Autobiography*, which is so foreign to the search for sophisticated and abstract terms, has above all a clear simplicity of expression. The frequent use of dialect terms, reproduced moreover according to the sound of the pronunciation, furnishes the text with a great vivacity of style. In the soliloquies, particularly in the first, ie. the one in which the narration of events stops to give way to the interior colloquy with the Son of God, the rhythm becomes that of "spoken

²⁰ *Imitazione* (Imitations), p. 136.

²¹ Cf. C. LEONARDE *La santità delle donne* (The Sanctity of Women), in G. POZZI-C. LEONARDI (editor), *op. Cit.*, pp. 43-57.

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meditation”,²² interrupting the previous account to lose itself in an interior monologue which is totally free of the chains of formal composition: *Eterno amatore infinito, chi può narrare le tue misericordie senza numero, fatte a questa tua miserabile creatura che tante volte ti ave offeso? E tu, amor mio, mai ti sei stancato di amarla, e beneficarla, e starli d'appresso, acciò non si allontanasse da te, fonte di acqua viva. Tu, amor mio, la custodivi con somma gelosia, e tu eri come una lucerna al mio piede acciò non errassi la via.*” (6:2-4) (Eternal infinite lover, who can describe Your mercies without number, shown to this miserable creature of Yours, who has so many times offended You? And You, my love, are never weary of loving her, and of benefiting her, and being at her side, so that she might not wander far from You, O fountain of living water. You, my love, have watched over her with the greatest jealousy and You were as a lamp to my feet, so that I would not wander from the way.)

On many occasions, indeed, certain phrases of great incisiveness, even also poetic, stand out from the background of a phraseology which is somewhat stiff and rather wordy. The immediacy and profundity of her experiences, above all mystic, continually stretch her linguistic apparatus and rhetorical expression. From this there results a narrative of events which tends to capture the reader because it is sustained by a passionate feeling of participation and an immediacy of sentiments.

Having outlined these rather general characteristics, and without pretending to furnish a complete linguistic picture of the *Autobiography* (a project which is indeed valid, but which goes beyond the scope of this Introduction), it is useful for us to now turn to the essential features of the language of Mother Crostarosa.²³

4.1. Phonetic and Lexical Dialectisms.

On reading the text of the *Autobiography*, one is soon struck by the many examples of dialectal forms, at the level firstly of **vocabulary**: ie. *doppo* for *dopo* (afterwards, later) (3:19;4:42;13:10;14:35); *fidarsi* for *sentirsi in grado* (to feel oneself able) (50:8 and 28;55:15); *luoco* and *luochi* for *luogo* and *luoghi* (place and places) (3:24;4:16;5:18); *tenere* with the meaning of *avere* (to have) (3:2;4:25;12:25;31:6); and then of **grammar**, ie. verbal forms such as *ave*, *avemo*, *parlamo*, *stamo*, *sentimo* (has, have, speak, are, feel) which occur continually.

Especially frequent are the consonantal variations, due to the assimilation of the intervocal clusters *-ls-/-ns-* into *-lz-/-nz-*, such as *balzamo* (*balsamo* = balsam) (18:4; 39:43; 52:23), *conzenzo* (*consenso* = consent) (6:20 and 37), *conzolare* (*consolare* = to

²² Cf. G. POZZI, *L'alfabeto delle sante*, ivi, 22-23 (The Alphabet of the Saints, ivi, pp. 22-23).

²³ In presenting this synthetic picture we have adopted the delineation of R. LIBRANDI in her Introduction to Crostarosa's Letters (LIBRANDI-VALERIO, pp. 33-41). The different forms and usages are only exemplified, without giving a complete list of all the forms that are recorded.

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console) (6:26 and 65), *impulzi* (*impulsi* = impulses) (2:7 and 10), *inzenzata* (*insensata* = senseless) (6:21), *manzuetudine* (*mansuetudine* = gentleness) (9:22 and 39; 56:17), *penziero* (*pensiero* - thought) (3:26; 7:10) or, with an indistinct ending, *penziere* (thought or thoughts) (12:24; 16:7; 59:5), *senzibile* (aware) (3:24; 5:7). Just as frequent is the vocalisation of unvoiced consonants, such as *bruggiasse* and *brugiasero* (*bruciasse* and *bruciassero* = she should burn, and, had been burnt) (24:4 and 10), *conzeguenza* (*consequenza* = consequence) (50:19), *esegutione* (*esecuzione* = execution) (29:1; 35:2 and 25; 58:7), *persegutione* (*persecuzione* = persecution) (11:17; 26:6); or in the postnasal position, such as *congetto* (*concetto* = concept) (30:8; 41:32), *immenzità* (*immensità* = immensity) (4:18; 60:14 and 17), *sblendore* (*splendore* = splendour) (4:10 and 13), *volondà* (*volontà* = will) (0:2; 4:41);²⁴ or after *l* or *m*, such as *aldare* (*altare* = altar) (6:34; 7:3), *ambieza* (*ampiezza* = size) (4:18), *ascoldande* (*ascoltante* = listening) (11:3), *cambane* (*campane* bells) (61:11), *sembre* (*sempre* = always) (various places).²⁵

Another dialectal element which is often found in the language of the *Autobiography* is the transformation of the cluster *-nd-* into *-nn-*, ie. such as *alzanno* (*alzando* = lifting up) (7:4), *fonnaenti* (*fondamenti* = foundations) (56:33), *indennere* (*intendere* = to mean) (2:2; 4:19), *inni* (for) (throughout), *pretenniamo* (*pretendiamo* = we intend) (35:34). Less frequent are the cases of reduplication of *b*, *g*, *m* in the intervocalic position, ie. *cibbo* (*cibo* = food) (2:16; 3:3,30,32), *communità* (*comunità* = community) (23:13; 27:4), *raggione* (*ragione* = reason) (6:56; 11:18).

4.2. Morphology and Syntax.

The elements which typify a semi-literate authorship are numerous and of different genres. There are frequent lapses of concordance between substantives, articles, adjectives and participles: *rimasse [...] tenebre ed orrori* (6:18); *l'anima [...] viatore* (9:34); *le medesime alienatione* (10:14); *regola del Visitatione* (25:8); *le anima* (37:15); *la chiesa [...] era attaccato all'ospitio* (53:15); *le arte manuale* (62:21). We find an almost constant use of *li* in place of atonic *gli* (enclitic or not), with even the meaning of *a lei* (to her) and at times *a loro* (to them): *li rispose* (5:16) *davali* (6:37). The sequences *se li* for *gli si/le si* are frequent, and also the usage, typically dialectal, of *ci/ce* in an ambiguous manner: *se ella sapeva cosa ce lo dichiarasse* (22:5); (if she knew anything, to tell it to them); *essendo stata sua maestra ci avea conosciuta molta legeretze giovenili* (45:22) (when she was her Mistress, she had found much youthful frivolity etc., in her).

In the whole field of inconsistencies in the use of grammatical forms, we find the continued presence, although comparatively rare, of the definite article *il* in front of *z* or *s*

²⁴ But in the manuscript there are also a few cases of contrary forms: *vagabonte* (*vagabonde* = vagabond) (55:37), *incannarla* (*ingannarla* = to deceive her) (20:3), etc.

²⁵ But we also find *ampe due* (*ambedue* = both) (3:3), *scampievole* (*scambievole* = mutual) (14:44), *sempiante* (*sembiante* = thinking) (20:9)

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(*il strepitoso colpo: 14:17; il zelo: 37:10*), next to forms like *un straordinario raccoglimento (3:6)*, *l' monache (12:22)*, *l' sante missioni (14:48)*, *l' Isdraeliti (15:20)*, *gli immagine (38:8)*, *i scalini (47:5)*, *gli confessori (50:24)*, *gli 26 di marzo (63:4)*.

The very frequent alternation between the first and third person singular can also be explained by the fact that Maria Celeste chose to speak of herself in the third person: *si sentiva confusa e avrei voluto distrugersi (4:3)* (she felt confused and would have liked to be consumed); *ella poco le conosceva perche, stando tu meco, era [...] assorta (6:8)* (though then she hardly knew it, because, You being with me, she was [...] absorbed); *ella [...] ricevevi (35:34)* (she used to say... I received). The same alternation can in fact be seen between the second singular and the second plural: *voi, o divino e zelante amatore, non volevi (8:21)* (You, my divine and zealous lover, did not want). We also find the following evidence of the phenomenon of deficient correlation between subject and verb: *i sospiri e le lagrime era (13:31)* (was my sighs and tears); *fu ordinato che alcuni di questi padri venisse (14:38)* (It was ordained that some of these fathers came); *la comunità... ordinatorono (19:9)* (the community... ordered); *accorsero le gente (62:45)* (the people rushed).

Worthy of note, although less frequent, is the second person of the imperfect indicative and subjunctive written together with the enclitic pronoun: *aiutavivo (12:3)*; *entravivo (6:12)*; *inzegniassivo (12:2)*; *promettessivo (12:2)*.

An important feature of semi-literate writing is to substitute the parts of *avere* (to have) in the place of *essere* (to be): *si avrebbe voluta distruggere (3:25)* (she would have willingly been consumed); *temendo che la sudetta avesse stato ad ascoldare (45:7)* (worried that the above-mentioned had been eavesdropping); *si come li avesse piaciuto (52:17)* (as He pleased); *li avea parso bene avisarla (55:37)* (he thought it advisable to warn him). On some occasions compare the use of the verbal ending *-essimo* (*persuadessimo: 8:17; stessimo: 16:11*), even in place of the conditional (*se fossimo... andaressimo impazzia: 2:2; se avessimo... non mai ci perderessimo d'animo: 11:25*). Linked to the morphology of the Neapolitan dialect are the variations present in the subjunctive: *dasse (0:2; 4:4)*; *stasse (6:37 and 63)*; *elighi (5:9)*; *eschi (51:25)*; *facci (0:6; 5:8; 47:3; 58:10)*; *muovi (0:4)*; *possì (39:20; 56:39)*; *ricorri (5:8)*; *vogli (4:31)*. Sometimes we also find the subjunctive used in place of the indicative: *dichiari (0:6)*; *dichiarino (4:1)*; *producano (4:12)*; *vogliano (4:10)*.

In the area of verbal concordance, we also find instances of deficiencies in regard to time, such as: *combatteva perché il demonio non lascia di affligerla (20:6)* (she went on struggling because the demon did not cease afflicting her); *volea... che mandassero chiamando i parenti (50:11)* (she ... did not want... but that they should send for her family).

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A phenomenon which is less apparent than others, but which is constant in the Crostarosan texts, is the use of *il quale*, not as the subject: *quel raccoglimento il quale... mi dava il Signore (13:12)* (the recollection which the Lord gave me), side by side with the presence of *che* and *chi* in the place of other relative conjunctions: *le materie di che ella si accusava: 2:8* (the matters of which she accused herself); *canonico di chi era egli buon amico: 63:15* (the Canon, whose good friend he had been), and the ambiguous use of *che*: *appena comingiaua la recitatione di quello che ne restava immobile: 10:12* (that scarcely had I begun the recitation of it, than I just stopped) and ellipses *quello sucresse in quel tempo: 41:1* (what happened at that time).

Finally, we wish to record the phenomenon of redundancy in the use of prepositions: *e per in tutti i travagli: 9:30* (and in all your troubles); of pronominal particles *a cui il Signore le avea autenticata l'Opera: 23:14* (to whom the Lord had given proof of the Work); and in the overuse of conjunctions: (*ma, e, e però, inni...*) (but, and, and so, for...).

4.3. Traces of the Literary Language.

The influence exercised by the reading of literary texts is traceable in verbal forms, especially in poetry, but frequently also in prose, such as *avea, dovea, vedea, volea*, which are constantly present in the manuscript. Examples are: the past perfect *stiede* (3:35; 4:19), formed by analogy with *diede, o volze* for *volle*, with the transformation of *ls>lz* (14:55); the palatal followed by diphthongs in a syllable, such as *figliuola* (3:2; 5:17); consonantal variants, historically attested in the century when Maria Celeste wrote,²⁶ present in *ingreato* (4:18 and in the feminine in 8:5; but also *increata* in 39:42); *lagrime* (3:24; 6:40); *sagro* (6:34; 7:3); *sagramento* (5:11 and 14); *sagrestano* (4:22; in the feminine in 14:1 and 3); *sagrificio* (47:3; 48:16); the adjective *niuno* (10:4; 13:5); the adverbs *dappoi* or *dapoi*, *punto* (throughout); the first person of the present indicative *fo* (4:12 and 13; 35:13); the form *core* for *cuore* (10:15; 39:42), which expresses both the tendency to simplify the diphthong *uo*, which is typical of South Central Italian, and that of the language of poetry; finally, the choice of words which belong to the literary language, such as, eg., the substantives *latore* (53:5) and *propalatione* (49:14), the verb *ridondasse* (49:13), the adjectives *diruta/e* (62:4; 63:23) and *vacui* (60:21).

5. Editorial Criteria.

The transcription of the manuscript that we present here is governed by extremely conservative criteria, and therefore it remains very close and faithful to what is normally defined as a “doctoral transcription.”

²⁶ Cf. B. MIGLIORINI-I. BALDELLI, *Breve storia della lingua italiana*, Firenze 1984 (Brief History of the Italian Language 1984), p. 226.

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5. 1. General Criteria.

We have given the text in a continuous form, without preserving the page format and line divisions of the original. Instead we have given the full wording of the chapter headings, and the division into paragraphs, decided by the authoress; only when it has been demonstrated strictly necessary to maintain readability have we introduced an alternative paragraphing.

The original pages have been numbered and delimited, so that the beginning of the text of each one is preceded by the original page number in bold lettering, followed by another letter which indicates whether it is the front (*r* = *recto*) or back (*v* = *verso*) of the page. This is placed between double oblique slashes (*// //*).²⁷

Since the manuscript does not give a clear articulation into parts and chapters, we have considered it useful to place above the Crostarosan numbering a second system of chapter numbering, which brings into a single unitary whole the various divisions present in the manuscript. In addition, we have subdivided the text into sentences, always making reference to the full stops, and occasionally to exclamation marks and question marks. The numbering of sentences is done by chapter (according to the progressive numbering given by us) and indicated in the margin.

For an even smoother reading, we have not separated the notes of a philological character from those of a linguistic, lexical or historical character.

Regarding the first, besides phenomena such as dittographies (except those which anticipate at the bottom of the page the beginning of the following), we have indicated the crossings-out present in the text, except the corrections of a single letter or of a single syllable made by the authoress herself while writing the draft text. We have always indicated those which cannot be traced back to Maria Celeste. In cases where something has been crossed out and other words substituted into the line, the notes have been structured thus: on the left of the sign “>“ the original wording is reported (where it is legible); on the right, what has taken its place. When it is a matter of just something crossed out, then this has always been indicated in a note using square brackets and a hyphen which precedes the letter/s, or any individual word.

Mother Crostarosa’s language and style have rendered the determination of criteria very difficult in regard to linguistic and lexical notes. Acting every time in regard to words of dialectic, or uncommon, use would have involved an accumulation of explanatory notes, which would amount to cluttering up rather than facilitating the reading of the text. It was therefore decided to limit them solely to strictly necessary cases, without repeating them

²⁷ As has already been stated, Crostarosa, at the end of a page, very often anticipated the syllable or word with which the next page began. Since we are dealing with a widespread 18th. Century usage, we did not feel it necessary to indicate this on each separate occasion.

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again within the same chapter. The nature of the Work and the personality of Mother Crostarosa has moreover suggested to us the adoption of the same criteria in regard to the philological and grammatical aspects.

Also, regarding the historical notes, we have proceeded in an analogous manner. The Crostarosan writings look at the complex events of the Redemptoristine origins, about which an ample biography exists, where an authoritative balance-sheet is represented by the first volume of the *Storia della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore* (History of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer).²⁸ Without entering into the details of the problems and various interpretations of personages and facts, which would overload the text, we thought it right to note only when a lapse of memory caused Crostarosa to make errors or distortions. We leave it to the reader to evaluate what she tells us about the events which brought her into conflict with others.²⁹

Since punctuation is either lacking or used in an unclear way, we have re-punctuated the text according to modern criteria, within the limits of the indications given in the ms. This has led to a certain modernisation of the text³⁰ However, we feel that this is legitimate for the purpose of rendering it accessible to comprehension, which is rendered particularly difficult by the stylistic and linguistic characteristics which we have recorded previously.³¹

5.2. Latin Influence.

The manuscript contains evidence of Latin spellings, which is tangible proof of Maria Celeste Crostarosa's familiarity with texts in a rather elevated language. Apart from the unique case of *et* (4:18) and *istoria* (16:6 and 26:13), the most evident traces of Latin influence are: on the one hand, variations in the spelling of the groups *-ti-* and *-tti-* followed by vowels (*fondatione* and also *fondazione*: 14:49 and 51; *perfettione* and also

²⁸ F. CHIOVARO (editor), *Storia della Congregazione del Santissimo Redentore* (History of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer) I/1 *Le origini 1732-1793* (The Origins: 1732-1793) Rome 1993. For a better understanding of the role of Maria Celeste, cf. D. CAPONE, *Suor Celeste Crostarosa e Sant'Alfonso. - Incontri-Spiritualità (Per la storia della spiritualità nel Settecento)* (Sr. Celeste Crostarosa and St. Alphonsus. Meetings-Spirituality (From the History of 18th. Century Spirituality). Materdomini 1991; id., *Madre Celeste Crostarosa "Città di Dio" della città di Foggia (Storia di un'anima) Foggia 1992.* (Also: Mother Celeste Crostarosa "City of God" in the city of Foggia (History of a Soul) Foggia 1992; E. LAGE, *Suor Maria Celeste Crostarosa e la Congregazione del SS Redentore* (Sr. Maria Celeste Crostarosa and the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer) in D. CAPONE - E. LAGE - S. MAJORANO: *La spiritualità di Maria Celeste Crostarosa* (The Spirituality of Maria Celeste Crostarosa), Materdomini 1997, pp. 99-131.

²⁹ The balance-sheet and the evaluation of archival documentation on Maria Celeste, given by MAJORANO in *Imitazione* (Imitations), pp. 37-104 and by CAPONE in *Incontri* (Meetings), pp. 29-150, have not been enriched in these last years by any particularly significant elements. Therefore it seems easier for readers to refer to these two works, which indicate possible future developments for research.

³⁰ It is particularly worthy of note that when Maria Celeste reported affirmations attributed to third persons (said that... and that... and that...) or facts which followed in immediate sequence, she confined herself to reporting this one after the other in sentences which at times seem never to finish. In such cases, we have felt it opportune to edit the account, clarifying the various elements by introducing full stops or semi-colons.

³¹ It should be noted that round brackets (), which often appear similar to vertical hatches were used by Maria Celeste chiefly to indicate direct speech: in such cases we have substituted inverted commas ("..."). We have respected the underlinings (transcribing the text in italics) where they are by Maria Celeste. (These are: Chs. 2:5; 3:21; 6:7.;39.;53.;57; 7:4; 15:5; 16:13; 32:5, 14, 15; 34:2; 39:17; 58:10 - Tr).

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perfezione: 0:2; 4:12),³² with those having *-zi-* (*invenzione*: 28:7 and 9; *silenzio*: 3:36 and 38; 9:26-28); and on the other hand, the use of *h* in words like *archidiacono* (47:10); *Christo* (*passim* = various places), *christiane* (48:22); *inclinazione* (5:6; 6:71; 16:12); or in the initial position, such as in *habile* (14:4); *habilità* (14:4 and 9); *habitare* (9:34); *horribil* (6:34).

When Maria Celeste uses Latin expressions she does so with a fidelity to the spoken word rather than to the written: *ecelsis* (7:4) (*excelsis*); *scrittis* (41:24; 43:3 and 5) (*scriptis*); *frutibus* (55:44) (*fructibus*). On the other hand, she transcribes the text of John 14:6 correctly: *Ego sum via, veritas et via; nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me* (15:5) (I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me.). In our transcription we have always replaced the Crostarosan forms.

5.3. *j/i* and *u/v*.

The alternation between *j/i* has been standardised. We note that the grapheme *j* has been used in the manuscript chiefly in the final position of words in the plural,³³ as in *desiderij* (1:5; 3:23), *esercitij* (9:34; 14:38), *pij* (1:6; 14:38), *soliloquij* (5:19; 6:1); but also in the first person singular pronoun *jo* (throughout); for the article (*j fiumi*: 1:2; the rivers; *da j suoi genitori*: 1:6; from her parents; *de j mancanenti*: 2:5; of weaknesses), or else as an alternative to *i* without any logical explanation (*lasciaj*: 6:41; leave; *voglij* in place of the subjunctive *voglia*: 22:3; wish; *sappij* as an imperative: 35:29; know).

In order to make the text more readable, we have had to add the final *i* of the past historic tense of the verb between angular parentheses in the following cases: *esegui<i>* (8:22); *sentì<i>* (7:4; 13:42; 39:40); *uscì<i>* (13:18); but where the past historic appears in the form *scoprij* (14:42) or *vestij* (9:2), it has been sufficient to transform *j* into *i* to render the spelling correct and, consequently, the text comprehensible.

We have also made a distinction between vocalic *u* and consonantal *v* (*avea* = *avea*; *nuouo* = *nuovo*) according to modern usage. In principle it should be noted that, in the usage of the archigrapheme */u/* with the double value, both vocalic and consonantal, the constant practice in the Crostarosan manuscript is *V* for capital letters and *u* for small letters. Being more specific, the authoress uses *V* in the initial positions and *u* both in the initial and internal positions in words, independently of the fact that they might have a vocalic or consonantal value.

³² The Crostarosan manuscript, although it is a fruit of the late 18th. Century, because of the isolation brought about by the environment of the cloister, offers a peculiar flavour of the 17th. Century (of which the abundant use of capital letters is one of the more evident examples, cf. B. MIGLIORINI-I. BALDELLI, *Breve storia...*, p. 201). This is offset by more modern adoptions such as the distinction between *u* and *v* and *j* and *i* and the substitution of *ti* by *zi* (cf. *ivi*, p. 227).

³³ In the Neapolitan dialect the widespread use of *j* for *i* has been documented by F. GALIANI, the author of the first Neapolitan word-list: *Del dialetto napoletano. Grammatica della lingua napoletana*. (The Neapolitan Dialect. A Grammar of the Neapolitan Language) edited by E. MALATO, Rome 1970, p. 235.

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5.4. The Verb *avere* and Interjections.

We have not restored the grapheme *h* in the parts of the verb *avere* where it is missing (*anno*: 5:6; 51:25; 59:26), nor have we eliminated it in the cases where its use is incorrect (*habbi*: 9:38; *habbia*: 5:7). We have kept the accent on the words *là* (*l'ha*) and *lò* (*l'ho*) where it is found in the ms. and in the cases where it is not found, we have added it.

Also, in order to avoid the possibility of misunderstandings involving the forms of the verb *avere*, the letter *h* has instead been introduced into the exclamations *oh* (13:24; 37:18), *ahi* (present in the ms. in the form *hai* in 11:24 and 25, which form is extremely rare in the texts of the time.)

5.5. Velars and Palatals.

We have not amended the use of the letter *h* adjacent to a velar, voiced or unvoiced, before the vowels *a* and *o* (the ms. does not contain examples of *u*): *distruggho* (4:13); *fatigha* (7:6); *laicha* (14:19); *lungo* (37:14); *monicha* (37:9 and 52:5); *piagha* (3:17)³⁴

We have preserved the purely orthographic *i* after the clusters *-gn-*, *-sc-*: *agniello* (19:7; 32:29) *bisognio* (4:36; 5:4); *Cerigniola* (63:8); *nascie* (5:7); *sciongiuro* (42:30); *uscendo* (12:20); *vergognia* (5:16; 10:13). In spite of this, in the word *signore* (Lord), we have discarded the various abbreviations, because in the cases in the ms. where we find the term in full, we find *Signor* (7:2), *Signore* (45:29), *monzignor* (61:13) (monsignor).

We have kept the *i* after the palatal letters *c* and *g*: *legieri* (2:8), *minaccie* (1:14; 16:7); it is added between angular parentheses into the word *ascugo* in 4:13 (*asc<i>ugo*).

5.6. Geminates.

We have not attempted to regularise the variant forms of words, and non-standard spellings which are testimonies to the frequent use of dialectisms (*abbisso*: 6:38; 9:18; *abbito*: 8:1 and 24; *cibbo*: 2:16; 3:3 and 30; *colleggio*: 61:2; *comunione*: 3:33 and 37:6:37; *raggione*: 6:56; 11:18; the various forms of the verb *caggionare*: 6:52; 10:11; 24:14), but also chiefly due to the semi-literate intellectual formation of the authoress (*adittare*: 10:7; 14:32; 21:5; *alltra*: 16:4; *attacamento*: 4:35; *contradittione/ contradditione*: 4:39; 6:9; 44:4 and 8; 54:10; *dificoltà*: 6:64; 14:26; *difusamente*: 4:19; *dissmesse*: 58:8; *inquiettasse*: 11:16; *linguagio*: 7:7; *sugestioni*: 6:20 and 38; 10:19; *susurro*: 6:46;49:2).

³⁴ In this context, we have also indicated the forms: *pascua* (6:63; 23:14; 24:2); but also *pascha* in (63:4); *Pascuale* (59:13); *licuore* (53:23); *alcuanto* (53:29), which are obviously due to the transcription.

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5.7. Linking and Separation of Words.

In the ms. there are frequent instances of the wrong linking or division of words: incorrect proclitic and enclitic forms, phonic *continua*, and concretion of the article. From the point where they do not constitute an insuperable obstacle to reading, all these forms have been respected.

However, it has seemed opportune to resolve the incorrect junctures of the prepositional combinations: *al esercizio* > *a l'esercizio* (32:2); *col oratione* > *co l'oratione* (5:8;44:9); *dal amor* > *da l'amor* (3:11, but in one single instance also *dall'anni* in 12:4); *del uomo* > *de l'uomo* (4:2); *nel anima* > *ne l'anima* (2:18); *sul avvertenza* > *su l'avvertenza* (59:13). By analogy we have standardised other forms of articulated prepositions, both in the cases of *a i* (14:10; 16:8 and 9); *da i* (1:6; 60:12); *de i* (2:4 and 5); *de gli* (39:2); *ne i* (5:15; 6:21); and in such cases as *cel avrebbe* or *celaverebe* > *ce l'avrebbe* (2:15 and 62:23 respectively); *mel ordinasse* > *me l'ordinasse* (14:25); *sel effigiorno* > *se l'effigiorno* (42:44); *sel accrebbero* > *se l'accrebbero* (50:7). On the other hand, we did not think it necessary to intervene in the forms *nol vendra* (34:2) and *nol sapeva* (48:36), and the same with *non lo facesse* in 42:27.

5.8. Abbreviations.

As a norm, we have discarded abbreviations without noting the fact, standardising all the various usages in the same word (*monis.*, *monis.o*, *monis.ro* and *monis:ro* into *monistero* - monastery), and by taking account of the way in which Maria Celeste Crostarosa was accustomed to write the same word in full.

Here is an alphabetical list of the abbreviations: *Beatis:ma* > *beatissima* (61:10); *civiliss:mi* > *civilissimi* (41:4); *conz:ta* > *conzaputa* (60:1); *conzap:to* > *conzaputo* (33:1); *d* > *donna* (57:49; 58:15; 61:15; 62:14); *d.o* > *detto* (33:7); *D.ti* > *ducati* (62:24 and 31); *Eminentiss.mo* > *eminentissimo* (50:25); *fll'o/i* or *Fllo/i* (sometimes with a full stop or an o - both the tail strokes of the *ll* are missing) > *fratello/i* (4:7; 41:16, 24-26 and 36; 45:14; 46:4; 49:2 and 14); *Fratell.* (with the two tails of the *ll* missing) > *fratelli* (48:2); *Giusepp:* > *Giuseppe* (62:44); *Ill:mo* or *Ill.mo* > *illustrissimo* (59:24; 61:8); *M.a* > *Maria* (34:12); *Mad.* > *madre* (8:1 and 7); *Maggior:te* > *maggiormente* (40:17; 50:25); *Monas.ro/i* > *monastero/i* (14:34; 16:13-14; 58:8); *Monis.* > *monistero/i* (10:21; 12:24; 52:12); *Monis.o*, *Monis:ro*, *Monis.ro/i* > *monistero/i* (8:1,7,24; 14:32; 23:9; 53:4); *Monsig.re* > *monsignore* (59:24); *Nro* (with the general sign of abbreviation placed above to indicate the contraction of the intermediate letters) > *nostro* (38:7); *Ottb.* and *Ottob.* (with the tail of the *b* missing) > *ottobre* (37:5; 40:2); *p* with the tail missing *p(er)ché* in 39:7; *P.*, *Pad.*, *Pad.* > *padre/i* (2:12; 3:4 and 16; 11:9-10,15; 23:14; 27:9; 49:7); *P.P.* > *padri* (14:49 and 50); *Rev:di* > *reverendi* (61:8); *S.*, *S.to/a* > *santo/a* (13:23; 14:47; 15:5; 18:3; 30:2; 40:6;

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45:16); *Santiss:* > *santissimo* (42:3); *Settb.*, *Setteb.*: (with the tail of the *b* missing) > *settembre* (24:9;27:2;42:16); *Sig.* > *Signore* (62:53); *Sig.r* > *Signor* (6:43,45,54; small letters instead in 62:4 and 13; 63:11 and 15 in the expression *il sig.r canonico*); *Sig.r*, *Sig.ra* > *signora* (12:5; 42:16; 61:10; small letters in 8:8; 60:2); *Sig.re* > *Signore* (*passim* = in various places; small letters in *il sig.re arcipreste* in 47:15 and 16, and in *detto sig.re* in 62:29); *Sig.ri* > *signori* (53:36; 55:11); various abbreviations for *sorella/e*, all with the tails of the *l* missing (*Solla* 20:1; *solla*: 36:13; 50:7; 63:10; *Solla* 16:15; 20:14; *solle* 54:2; *Solle* 48:20 and 30; 50:34; *Solle*. 42:52; *solle*: 38:5; 42:19; *Solle*: 22:11; 27:3-4); *special:te* > *specialmente* (3:33; 11:17); *specialiss.ma* > *specialissima* (39:30); *SS.*, *SS.mo*, *SS.*, *SS:mo* > *santissimo* (9:18; 14:11; 39:2; 42:12,33,37; 49:18 and 20; 52:17); *SS.ma* and *SS:ma* > *santissima* (17:5 and 7; 36:8; 53:11); *sud.*, *sud.o* > *sudetto* (17:2 and 8; 33:6); *umil.te* and *umil:te* > *umilmente* (32:38; 37:12; 39:14); *Xto* > *Christo* (19:2; 32:29,34,38).

We have preserved the truncated abbreviations before proper names, still in use today, of the words *monsignore*, *signore*, *don*, *santo*, *suor* and *padre*; and the various forms of abbreviations of these terms have been standardised into *mons.*, *sig.*, *d.*, *s.*, *sr* and *p.* (*sig. canonico Tortora* in 60:2; 61:2; *sig. d. Giuseppe de Angelis* in 60:20 and 63:1; *p. d. Bartolomeo Cacace* in 14:39; *mons. Santoro* in 41:25 and 43:4; *mons. Cavaliere* in 57:30; *sr Maria Maddalena* in 34:8).

We have not changed *s.* (before the names of male saints and sometimes of female saints as in 4:5: *s. Catarina* and in 62:26: *s. Chiara*, and in *s. Officio* in 49:7); *s.ta* and *SS.mo* (standardising into this last form, because it is predominant, the various abbreviations, such as *Santis.mo* in 41:11; *SS* in 49:18; *SS:* in 54:1; *SS:mo* in 25:8; *SS.mo* in 54:8).

We have preserved the adjectives of respect and the initials of titles of honour, which are all found in the correspondence recorded in the manuscript: *Caris.mo* (*carissimo*) in 51:25; *Stim:mo* (*stimatissimo*) in 32:25; *V. P.tà* (*vostra paternità*) in 32:28; *V. S. Ill:ma* (*vostra signoria illustrissima*) in 39:11.³⁵

5.9. Diacritic Signs.

Diacritic signs have been included or omitted according to modern usage. As for accents, it should be noted that these are present in the major part of the cases where acute accents are used, with a much reduced use in oxytone words and proliferating instead in monosyllables. However, they have been added to the disjunction *né*; in *perché*, *però*,

³⁵ To complete the picture we also give the abbreviations found in the autographed letter by T. Falcoia recorded in 32:40-48, treating it as one unit: *annientam.to* > *annientamento* (47); *benedet.to* > *benedetto* (41); *caritativam.te* > *caritativamente* (42); *co* (with a sign placed above the *o* to indicate that the nasal is missing) > *con* (48); *Cord.* > *cordiale* (48); *Fig.a* > *Figlia* (41); *grai* (with the general sign of abbreviation placed above) > *gratia* (42); *M.a* > *Maria* (40); *Mad.re* > *Madre* (46); *mag.r* > *maggior* (42); *no* (with a sign placed above *o*) > *non* (42 and 43); *nra* (with a sign placed above showing the contraction of the intermediate letters) > *nostra* (40); *onestam.te* > *onestamente* (42); *Pad.e* > *padre* (48); *Sig.re* > *Signore* (41 and 42); *SS.ma* > *Santissima* (46); *Unitam.te* > *Unitamente* (48); *v.ra* (with a sign placed above it) *vostra* (44); *v.ro* (with a sign above it) > *vostro* (42,44,48); *Xto* > *Christo* (40); and *p* with the tail missing, which stands for *per* both in the preposition (42) and in *p(er)ché* (42 and 45).

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così, già; in sì ('così') and in the pronoun *sé*; in verbs in the past historic (eg. *chiamò, comingiò*) or in the future simple (eg. *purificherò, viverò*).

Also in regard to apostrophes, these have been regularised according to modern usage in those cases where they have been written by Mother Crostarosa, who constantly places them, not to the top right, but to the bottom right of words. We have inserted apostrophes between two words which are separated, but which do not demonstrate concretion; ie. *un anima religiosa* (0:2); *quest anima* (1:3;2:3); *quest esercitio* (3:4 and 8; 62:22); *trent anni* (3:35); *conzaput anima* (3:36; 4:24); *diecessett anni* (5:2); *tant oratione* (11:10 and 11); *nell oratione* (13:15); *buon ora* (14:20; 23:10); *tutt il clero* (14:39); *sant obbedienza* (15:2; 16:5); *tutt il capitolo* (31:4); *altr anno* (34:15); *senz altra replica* (50:26); *dett ospitio* (53:14); *altr opera di Dio* (55:13); *mezz ora* (62:21-22).

The same has been done for instances such as *cel avrebbe* (2:15); *mel ordinasse* (14:15); *sel effigiorno* (42:44); *sel accrebbero* (50:7). We have also regularised the apostrophe in apocopated prepositions such as: *travaglio de scrupoli* (4:7) (travaglio de' scrupoli); *de primi padri* (4:42) (de' primi padri); *de sagri voti* (8:19) (de' sagri voti); *alienava da senzi* (13:13) (alienava da' senzi); *avilito da miei piu cari* (35:9) (avilito da' miei piu cari).

5.10. Capitals and Small Letters.

In her use of capitals, Mother Crostarosa is in general far from consistent: only the letter *m* at the beginning of a word presents an almost constant model (in the majority of cases it seems to have been written as a capital letter). Apart from the various letters in dual forms, normally only the height of the grapheme allows us to determine if we are dealing with capital or small letters (we are considering primarily the letters *s, n, c*).

The frequent use of capital letters has been standardised: they have been used for words which indicate a person, a place or a thing determined implicitly or by antonomasia (for example, in reference to the Redemptoristine foundation we have retained the capital letters of the term *Opera* (Work), and in general, when capitals help to resolve an ambiguity. Regarding terms in the religious sphere, capital letters have been used when the word refers to a singular entity (Institute, festivity or anniversary); however they have been omitted in generic religious terms, in pronouns and in adjectives of respect.

5.11. Textual Reconstructions.

In the case where the text has been rendered illegible by stains, abrasions or other harmful matters, wherever possible, the text has been restored by reconstruction, placing it between square brackets []; and the parts deliberately crossed out, as we specified previously, have been reported in the notes.

Introduction

For other absolutely essential reconstructions, we have used angular brackets < >. For instances regarding words or parts of words which have been omitted through oversight, or, exceptionally, through excessive conciseness, we have had recourse to notes.

Interlinear reconstructions have been added to the text by the use of two sloping bars which converge at the base \ /. *

* Note also references to the *Florilegium*: Chs. 4:9-14; 10:12, 18-21; 11:24-25; 15:4-7; 16:3-5; 18:2-11; 19:2-7; 21:5-6; 32:14-16; 39:41-42 - Tr.

The Trinitarian and Christocentric Experience in Contemplation according to Maria Celeste Crostarosa

by Fr. Sabatino Majorano, CSsR

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1. The Spiritual Way of Mother Celeste.

1. 2. The Fundamental Stages of the Path.

The affirmations of the *Dialogues* (Trattenimenti) and the *Autobiography* (understood in conjunction with her other writings) allow us to faithfully sketch Maria Celeste’s spiritual journey, highlighting the more decisive stages:

* She was educated in a familial climate of faith and sincere religiosity, always remembered with true gratitude. “She had,” as is written in the *Autobiography*, “a thirst for listening to what her parents taught her about the Christian faith; they were very devout and pious in this. Thus she listened with attention and great pleasure to the saints that had loved God and she took them as her advocates.” (Ch. 1:7)

With this living experience of popular religiosity²⁰ as a base, soon other deeper experiences began to occur: “Since the beginning, being a little girl of some six or seven years, the Lord began to give her knowledge of His Divinity in such a passively sweet way that she conceived the desire to love and serve Him... The Lord spoke to her heart, telling her many things. Now and again, He called her and urged her to love Him with some brief interior words, without her knowing really what it was about.”²¹

* Around the age of eleven, Maria Celeste began the practice of mental prayer at the urging of a (as of yet unidentified) Dominican priest. But she didn’t succeed in persevering in the method she had been taught. “She read a meditation about the spear thrust that Our Lord received on the Cross; she became totally absorbed in the love of this Divine Saviour. At his invitation to dwell in his divine, wounded heart, she was so wounded by love herself that from that moment forth she didn’t bother with any more books to use for meditation.”²² (Ch. 3: 10)

²⁰ The evidence of this popular religiosity remains constant in the spiritual way of Maria Celeste. It is sufficient to note that the last of the *Degrees of Prayer* has as its purpose *The union and presence of Jesus with the saints whose feats the Church celebrates and also treats of the prayer of petition.*

²¹ *Autobiography*, 34 (Ch. 1:4 and 8)

²² *Ibid.*, 38 (Ch. 3:10) The “short method” of prayer that she would propose later in *The Institute and Rules of the Most Holy Saviour contained in the Holy Gospels* “for those who teach and educate” the young women of the community, should conserve the characteristics of essentiality and freedom, steering clear of any rigid methodology. “They should place themselves in the presence

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* Her spiritual path gradually assumes a more Christocentric tone in its insistence on the imitation: “The Lord thus spoke to her: I want to be your guide, I want to lead you. Don’t look for anyone else but Me alone. I will be your Master. Don’t love anyone else but Me... Thus she went around thinking of how she could reciprocate this love. She had no other thought in her mind but to please God. She wanted to enter into a more mortified life. With all these desires in her heart, the Lord spoke to her inmost self: you should imitate My life and united to the works of My life, you will live out yours.”²³

At the beginning it seemed like an imitation directed to repeat the same gestures of Christ. Afterwards it grew to be an expression of the loving union and of a faithful following. “She was given to understand that Jesus Christ, Our Lord, is the Divine sun in the light of eternal glory in heaven and that He is equally the interior sun of the just soul... Well then, you will admire my Divine perfection as the material sun that always shines and you will see how, with the warmth of My spirit, I make the plants of the virtues grow in souls and how they flower and produce the fruit of eternal life. I light up understanding and inflame the will in my Divine love; and with my Divine warmth, I dry up the bad moods that produce disordinate passions. I undo the imperfections of soul of those that keep their eyes open and look at me and let my Divine splendour enter into them, that keep open wide the windows of their soul, that is, those who do not close them through sin.”²⁴

* After a crisis that lasted about two years, occasioned by a meeting with a “young confessor”, (Ch. 4:23) her spiritual path received a new impetus in accentuating the loving presence of the Saviour: “An interior, loving presence of Our Lord Jesus stayed with her so intimately, her heart just melted into God without created forms. Thus one day, this Divine presence united to the sacred humanity wounded her so deeply when she received Communion that she was filled with the greatest light and love of the Most Holy Sacrament.”²⁵ It was in this spiritual context that, at seventeen years of age by “orders”

of God with an act of living faith,” making an act of contrition “for having offended God in many ways,” asking “help and light from the Lord,” and putting themselves under the protection of “the Blessed Virgin Mary and their Guardian Angel”: all this should be done in “a few moments.” Then they should read the points of meditation (that should be usually on the Gospels) and “with reflective eye, they should consider the more important parts of the meditation, mulling over them with the intellect until the will and affectivity are moved toward God.” Then “they should make those acts that the soul feels moved by God to make: acts of thanksgiving, of contrition, of love, humility, etc. And during these acts, they should lovingly pause, every now and then when possible, during the time of prayer.” At the end, they should sum up their acts in precise resolutions: “they should make resolutions and firm propositions concerning their dominant passions.” (Spic. Hist. 16 [1968], 103-104).

²³ *Autobiography* 39 (Ch. 3: 20, 26-27)

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 43 (Ch. 4: 11-13, 19); *Florilegium no. 83*, p. 99.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 48 (Ch. 5: 13-14)

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of her spiritual director, she made a vow of chastity.²⁶ Two years later she began to receive Communion daily.²⁷

* Her entrance into the Reformed Carmelite monastery of Serafina de Capri, Marigliano in the spring of 1718, (Ch. 8: 15-18) and her profession of vows in November of the following year (Ch. 8: 24; 12: 4) profoundly marked the spiritual experience of Maria Celeste: “By this profession,” she remembers in the *Autobiography*, “You, my beloved Jesus, received me as Your spouse, telling me that from that moment I was to be totally Yours, and You totally mine. And You gave me Your loving Mother, Mary, My Lady as a mother and Saint Catherine of Siena as my spiritual master.”²⁸

To maintain a fixed gaze on the radiant presence of the Saviour was to become the fundamental point of her whole spiritual life: “Among the many communications that you, my love, inspired in my heart, the most important of all the teachings was that you taught me pure love. In that way You helped me understand how the entire importance of the spiritual life consists in being in Your divine presence, thinking only of You, aspiring to reach You alone, not looking for nor desiring anything else but You, the only treasure of the soul, and that by living this way, we are purified of our bad habits and of the suggestions of the devil. With your divine light, the soul sees and knows its own darkness and receives from Your Divine perfection the robe of saintly virtues.”²⁹ (Ch. 10: 18-19)

* These ideas of participation are developed later in the first period of Scala, just before redacting the *Rule* in 1725: “Drawing me to Himself, He showed me that He lives and is the life of the just soul. My Lord Jesus, through an intimate union of love, produced, by His Divine grace, a sweet semblance of eternal life, giving me to understand those words of the Gospel where He says: *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.* [Jn. 14: 6]... The *Way* is the works and virtues of Jesus made reality in the soul by grace; the *Truth* is faith, poured into our understanding by a supernatural gift to the soul, His beloved; and the *Life* is love and union with the Beloved Word. Thus, one can conclude that He is the “Pilgrim” (Traveller) in those who

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 44 (Ch. 6: 7)

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 38-39 (Ch. 6: 10). About the presence or loving accompaniment of Christ during her infancy and childhood, Maria Celeste described it in these words: “In the beginning when I was just a little girl, you communicated yourself to my soul by imaginative visions and so much was I enthused by your divine presence in your divine love that it caused in me the sweetest interior melting; you instructed me about disregarding the world, about poverty and humility; and you indicated to me many words of the Gospel with an understanding of the divine meanings that were meant by them. You compelled me to love you by force as loving as it was tender and you rewarded me by making me wholly yours. This presence was always at my side and I contemplated your divine splendour that drew me to you in marvellous ways. Later, as I grew older, I began to have this divine presence in another spiritual way. It was an intellectual light, a divine clarity that allowed me to see your inexplicable beauty. And this beautiful sight was so efficacious that I was beside myself for the purest delight that it caused me.” (Ch. 10: 6-11).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 81 (Ch. 12:5)

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 76 (Ch. 10: 18-19); *Florilegium no. 84, p. 100.*

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are united to Him by love and true union in God, by faith, by holy works and by the grace of the Holy Spirit. And all those that are united to Him by works, by faith and by supernatural grace in a union of love, go to heaven as one single person in Christ, the Man-God.”³⁰

All this is clearly lived in the tension of fraternal charity: “Her life must be changed into His, so Christ says, in order that He may be born again for the world, in the souls of His beloved, as true testimony of the works of salvation that He had effected for love of mankind.”³¹ Thus we have, by the spring of 1725, the redaction of a new religious project.³²

* All of this demands simplicity and deep humility. The events after the redaction of the new religious project are the bases for debate that permitted Maria Celeste to continue delving deeper into the reality that, as she wrote to St. Alphonsus on the 4th. of October, 1730: “the life of a being is a humble nonbeing and that two motives should live in me to please Him: hunger to glorify Him in every occasion and at all times and the renunciation of everything that is not from the purity of His love.”³³

But humility is to love and to frankly put forth the truth: it is the transparency of conscience. In a dramatic letter dated the 20th. of April, 1733, in which she tried to stop the events that would precipitate her obligatory exit from Scala,³⁴ Maria Celeste declared that for the good of the “project” she was willing to step aside: “From this moment forth, I renounce all those motives, all these reasons, all my works. I renounce my judgment and my will and all things into the hands of my God; I renounce all natural and supernatural lights.”³⁵ But she emphatically affirms: “I have believed that the orders that I have received from the Lord are true; so much so that, impelled by a strong interior clarity, I considered that I was obligated to the manifestation of what I received and to give explications to the one that God had sent to execute the project, and that in its actualisation there was no pride in helping God, as there could have been in the earlier

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 100-101. (Ch. 15:4-7). *Florilegium no. 16.* p. 37.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 70.; (Ch. 21:5-6). *Florilegium no. 3.* p. 14.

³² On the 25th. April, after receiving Communion, “her soul was again transformed from her being into the being of Our Lord Jesus Christ,” delighting in “all the precious goods of the life of Our Lord and having them impressed on her heart. Then she heard that the Lord said to her that this seal was being put not only on her heart but also on the many souls that would have life in Him because of her. Hence she was given to understand about the new institute that the Lord would put in the world through her, that in it, in its life, it would contain all the laws and rules for living; as in an open book, written with infinite, divine perfection. She saw all its contents in the Divine Lamb. And thus it was sealed on her soul and her heart.” (*Autobiography*, 111). (Ch. 19:5-7).

³³ R. LIBRANDI - A. VALERIO, op. cit. 78.

³⁴ As to this letter I refer the reader to the detailed study of it done by D. Capone in *Suor Celeste Crostarosa... 123-135.*

³⁵ She adds: “Even though my path and my illuminations have always been according to the clarity of Holy Faith, now do I not accept them but renounce them with all my spirit, and further, I have never desired them, not the lights, nor the spiritual delights, nor the visions nor the revelations’ I have never searched for them but rather have tried to separate myself from them as soon as it was in my power to do so. My soul is at peace and fears nothing, as it walks according to the Holy Gospel in the footsteps of my Beloved Jesus” (R. LIBRANDI - A. VALERIO, op. cit., 119-120).

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years when it was not necessary to sustain the project but only find out if it were from God or not. At that time I felt I should keep quiet, now it seems necessary to manifest and defend that which is the honour of God and to do so without fear of usurping any rights of God, that were really never mine nor meant for me. It seemed to me that I had the obligation in conscience to resist the things that were happening and what I understood could impede, falsify or distort the free actualisation of the Work of the Lord.”³⁶

* Having to leave Scala, seeing herself accused even by the persons that she sincerely esteemed, having to take up a pilgrimage to look for a place where she could actualise her community project - all this put Maria Celeste in “the confusion of the abyss” from which she would finally emerge in June of 1737. Reflecting on these events, she notes in *The Spirit of the Institute*, written later at Foggia: “As it pleased Our Lord Jesus to establish this Institute and its Rule on the basis of His most Holy Life, He wished, that His work should be realised in those He first chose, as the Order was founded. He determined to found the Order on the fundamental base of His admirable humiliations.

For this He wished that the basis of the Order be the contempt suffered by the ones He chose to begin the project. Beside the many and serious works, difficulties and contradictions that they suffered, the Lord permitted that they also be scorned by every class of people, ridiculed, shamefully defamed and denigrated to the point of totally losing their reputation before the world and by becoming the laughingstock of everyone. In this way, the Lord founded the Order on a state of complete self-contempt.”³⁷

* The participation in the mystery of the Cross made her understand better the need for abandoning herself with all confidence to God and of carefully watching that nothing taint the clarity of love: “for a brief interval I didn’t see You but saw You in me and me changed into You, oh purest Love of mine. In the Divinity of your Being, I enjoyed the fount of all virtue. Fed to overflowing and with the fullest joy, substantial [joy]... I heard only one word spoken to me, and that word: substance of the Father. This was spoken in love, in the centre and the depths of my soul. Then I was carried to see the existence of all the virtue and justice of my God, that is to say, His Holiness in essence, the most perfect of His works. I saw it vibrate in every creature, for in Your just ones and saints, this is called the virtue of humility, charity and mortification, and all the

³⁶ Ibid., 119 and 115-116.

³⁷ Spic. Hist. 16 (1968) 46.

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other names for the virtues. You gave me to understand how that divine act of Yours should regulate all my internal and external actions.”³⁸

* The arrival point of the spiritual way of Maria Celeste is the Eucharistic transformation: “This morning I received Holy Communion and was transformed into You because I entered into the humanity of Your Divine Word, and began to sacrifice myself to the Father in favour of all mankind, something that previously I had never experienced. I began at the Offertory of the Mass to offer myself to the Father in satisfaction for all the sins of the world. (Now it is Christ speaking in and through her.) “I sacrificed my desires in favour of His, in perfect holocaust as in the Garden, and I completed all the actions of my Passion in this sacrifice even to die on the cross, the consummation of the sacrifice. I savoured all these precious and divine acts that my soul, in its perfect state had performed and the inexplicable glorification that now, because of this passion, my soul has merited to enjoy in each sacrifice that is celebrated in my Church. I also enjoy all the merits and graces that by my passion, the souls of the faithful receive, all of them glorified in my humanity, in my simple humanity united to the Word.”³⁹

This Eucharistic transformation becomes reality by living in purity: “clothed” by the Saviour with His virtues, one cooperates with Him in the Redemption. On receiving the heart of Christ as one’s own “the soul rests in pure delight of God, and she loves God with the love of the Man-God, her loving spouse.”⁴⁰

³⁸ *Dialogues IX*, 157.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 171-172.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 175. These are the final words of the *Dialogues*; she only added the date: “Today, the 10th. of September, 1751.”

Marie Celeste Crostarosa

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

**Translated from
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Preface

//2r// 1. ¹

**Jesus, Mary, Josph,²
May Jesus Christ be my life.**

A. 2. Having been ordered through the will of the Lord, by Him who can command me, that I should write about the most liberal mercies bestowed by Our Lord Jesus Christ, out of His goodness alone, upon a religious soul called by Him to be His follower even from her tenderest years, for even though she placed impediments in the way of divine grace, and had great falls from the true path of the right way, and followed her evil inclinations, placing impediments, and many times completely ignoring the impulses which the Lord gave her, nonetheless it was He Himself with the greatest kindness who willed to lead her, and He Himself be her guide on the way of perfection and prayer: He Himself willed to be her master and guide, even from her very childhood, in a singular manner, and with the extraordinary refinements of His divine love, so that every faithful soul would be inspired to follow ³ this divine master, given to us by the Eternal Father God as our guide on the way to heaven, since it is He who holds the keys to the heavenly treasures.

B. 3. So I prayed and kept on praying fervently to the Lord before commencing this account, and I shall continue to do so always while I am writing this report, so that the Lord will deign to give me His divine light, so that I could be sure of His divine will. 4. So for His glory alone, and with the sole aim of obeying His divine will, and for the glory of my Lord Jesus Christ, I have put pen to paper. 5. Let me be guided by the power of the Spirit of the Lord, my Lord Jesus Christ, which has performed this Work. 6. Let what I declare in this book be only what He wants, just as He wants me to write it, without me placing anything of my own personality before you, so let it be only He who performs His Work. So be it. Amen.

¹ As has already been stated in the Introduction, on page //1r// of the manuscript someone has added, in different ink and handwriting, the words: *Life of the Foundress. Autobiography.*

² *Iosph*: 'Joseph.'

³ *seguita*: 'seguitare' - "to continue."

Chapter 1

//2v//

1.

First Chapter

How the Lord called this religious soul to the way of prayer even in her childhood.

A. 2. It is a property of our loving God to pour out the floods of His divine mercies upon His creatures, and even in the most wretched of beings let something of His greatness appear. 3. So with this soul, of which it is written, He wished to use a special grace and mercy, looking at her with the greatest compassion even from the beginning.

B. 4. This little child being but a girl of about five or six years old, ¹ the Lord began to give her a knowledge of His divinity, passively, so sweetly that she conceived the desire to love Him and serve Him. 5. Because He had given her a good intellect and a reasoning capacity much in advance of her age, in such a manner that she sent her sighs of love to God very frequently, she had desires and ardours in her will, which she did not know how to satisfy. 6. She was eager to learn the things she was taught by her parents about the Christian faith, the family in which she was brought up being very pious and devout. ² 7. So she learnt with joy and pleasure about the lives of those saints who had so greatly loved God, and she took them for her own advocates. 8. And the Lord also spoke to her in her heart, telling her various things; from time to time He would call her and urge her to love Him with certain brief interior words, without her knowing what it was.

C. 9. And thus journeying, she arrived at the age of nine years old. 10. But because she was by nature very bright and impressionable, she began to associate herself with certain house-maids, and since these were inclined to the worldly life, they began to make her capable of many of the miseries of the worldly kind. 11. And she, growing cold in the service of God, began to enjoy these novelties of the world, and to be even more pleased with them, and asked these persons leading questions about them: she began to learn profane songs and to desire the things of //3r// this world. 12. But even in this relaxation ³ of life she had certain strong pangs of conscience that lacerated her sorely; and the Lord gave her certain internal reproaches, and certain lights which burned her. 13. She

¹ She was born at Naples on 31st. October 1696, and was baptised the following day in the parish church of S. Giuseppe Maggiore (St. Joseph Major), receiving the names of Giulia (Julia) Marcella Santa, cf. *Lib. XI Bapt. (1693-1706)*, p. 61, published by R. TELLERIA in *Analects 34*, 1962, p. 60. Of interest also are the brief details of her life given by Mother Crostarosa herself in the deposition taken at Roccapiemonte during the Tosquez inquiry, cf. *Radici*, pp. 444-450.

² The doctor *in utroque* (civil and canon law) - Giuseppe Crostarosa, and Paola Battista Caldari; about the family cf. R. TELLERIA, *Super Fratribus et Sororibus Ven. Mariae Caelestis Crostarosa Notitiae ex libris paroecialibus decerptae* (About the Brothers and Sisters of Ven. Maria Celeste Crostarosa - Notes taken from the Parish records), in *Analecta 34* (1962), pp. 58-61; Id., *Commentariolum in notitias de Familia Crostarosa nuper editas* (Commentary on the recently edited notices about the Crostarosa Family), ivi, pp. 222-225.

³ *rilasciamonto* - 'rilasciamento' - "relaxation."

Chapter 1

sought pardon of the Lord, but then went back again to these conversations; for she had not learnt that what she was doing was sinful.

14. At that time, which lasted for many months, the Lord did not cease to illumine her and spur her on, ⁴ sometimes through fear and sometimes by threats; He urged her to withdraw herself from such conversations; so fearing that she had offended God, she resolved to make a general confession. 15. To this effect she thought to go and find a Dominican priest, ⁵ and then not just be confessed, but also ask him to teach her the exercise of mental prayer, and the way by which she could love God with all her heart, because, even though all this time she had been saying the prayer that God had given her with these supernatural lights, she believed that mental prayer was something which she did not know.

⁴ *spirgerla*: - 'spingerla' - "spur her on."

⁵ The Crostarosas resided not far from the parish church of S. Giuseppe Maggiore (St. Joseph Major), which was demolished in 1934 for the extension of the Sanfelice highway. It stood facing the "Sedile della Calata di Porto"; to the left of this was the S. Giuseppe lane which came out near the Dominican convent of S. Tommaso (St. Thomas), cf. *Imitazione* (Imitations), p. 39.

Chapter 2

1.

Second Chapter

How she was confessed, and how she learnt that these doctrines which she had learnt from these maid-servants, were sinful, and how she was taught ¹ the method of mental prayer, and what happened to her.

A. 2. Just how great the mercy of the Lord is, and His infinite goodness towards the souls He has redeemed, who can describe it? If we creatures were capable of knowing and being able to understand even the tiniest part of it, we would go into a madness ² of pure love for this divine lover. 3. Just as He comes after them to draw them to the way of eternal salvation, He did the same to this soul of whom ³ we now speak. 4. Although she tried to distance herself from Him by a thousand ways and means, He came after her more and more with the greatest goodness and mercy, and began giving her doubts and fears, wondering if she was sinning or not, and if God was disgusted with her person; which made the young girl well and truly afraid, but she did not abandon those //3v// harmful conversations and discussions. 5 But this God, who is all kindness and love, even though she was unfaithful to Him, did not fail to give her many graces and mercies, giving her many interior lights; now He would say to her heart: "Leave creatures and love Me alone"; and then He would say to her: "Come to Me, give yourself totally to My love, and I shall give you true consolations"; * and then He would make her great promises of graces, and continually regale her with a thousand caresses and favours; and then He would advise her of the failings that she had committed, and in a thousand ways and manners He would come ⁴ after her. 6. Blessed be His infinite mercy and goodness forever!

B. 7. So because her soul was no longer able to resist so many impulses of divine grace, she resolved to go and make a general confession, just as we have pointed out in the preceding chapter. 8. And although she had confessed these frivolities of hers many times, she herself had never actually been told by the confessor if the matters of which she accused herself were sins or not, or if her failings were grave or light; perhaps because she had not explained herself well to the confessor. 9. She still followed the dogmas of her corrupt companions, nor did she abstain from those worldly conversations, and after her confessions she still continued on with those harmful dialogues. 10. So because of so many internal impulses from the Lord, and through fear of gravely offending God, she

¹ e... *metedo*: 'e come ad ella fu insegnato il metodo - "and how she was taught the method."

² *impazzia*: 'in pazzia'; but also *in pazzia* in 52:27.

³ *di cui*: 'del che' - "of whom."

* Underlined in the ms. See footnote no. 31 to the *Introduction*. The other references are: Chs. 2:5; 3:21; 6:7, 39, 53, 57; 7:4; 15:5; 16:13; 32:5, 14, 15; 34:2; 39:17; 58:10 - Tr.

⁴ *landava*: 'le andava' - "would come."

Chapter 2

now resolved to go and confess herself with complete candour, and leave behind her this tepid and perilous life.

C. 11. So one day, which happened to be the feast of the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph, she told her mother that she wanted to go with her to confession in the church of St. Thomas Aquinas in Naples, where she was living at the time: so her mother took her with her to confession. 12. Then the girl, who was about eleven years of age, told the Father in detail everything which she had done and everything that had happened to her, and asked the confessor if those things which she had committed were a sin or not. 13. The Father replied to her that everything which she had done was not only sinful, but that if she were to persist in that way she would be lost; and giving her detailed teaching on the perilous state on which she had embarked, he **//4r//** insisted ⁵ on her abstaining from such conversations in the future. 14. When the girl heard that she had committed sins, she was horrified, and completely filled by fear, so she resolved to leave that way and that bad company for sure; ⁶ she confessed herself with feeling and decided in her heart to give herself totally to God. 15. Then, plucking up courage, she told the Father that she desired to learn mental prayer; the priest turned to her most graciously and said to her that he would most willingly be her teacher; and he asked her if she knew how to read, and she replied to him “yes.” 16. Then the Father began to instruct her about all the parts of mental prayer, and told her that she should read and make use of the book of meditations by St. Peter of Alcantara, * or the meditations in the book called “The Food of the Soul”⁷; he then gave her many warnings and dismissed her.

D. 17. Thus she departed, greatly consoled, both by being confessed to her own satisfaction, and by having learnt mental prayer *, something which she had desired for a long time; but she also felt greatly saddened and regretful, now that she understood that she had offended God in these vain conversations and activities of hers. 18. This left her greatly humbled and with a sorrow fixed in her soul which consumed her with pain.

⁵ *esagerava*: ‘amplificava la necessità’ - “stressed the necessity”, cf. B. MIGLIORINI - I. B. ALDELLI, *Breve storia...* (Brief History...), p. 204.

⁶ *da dovero*: ‘davvero’ - “for sure”; in the ms it appears in this form in different places (cf. 3:23; 12:16; 42:57).

* English translation available - Tr.

⁷ The second text indicated is in all probability the “Book of the Jesuit.” F. RAINALDI (1600-1679), *Cibbo del anima ovvero pratica dell’orazione mentale secondo la Passione di G. Cristo per tutti i giorni del mese, con altre meditazioni per la settimana*, Roma 1662, ed. XII. (The Food of the Soul, or the Practice of Mental Prayer according to the Passion of Jesus Christ for all the days of the month, with other meditations for the week, Rome 1662, ed. XII) Perhaps she used the reprint of 1688. O. GREGORIO, *La lirica religiosa della Vener. M. Celeste Crostarosa (1696-1755)*, in *Spic. hist.* 14, 1966 (O. GREGORIO: The religious lyric of Ven. M. Celeste Crostarosa (1696-1755) in *Spic. Hist.* 14, 1966, p. 339).

* Mental prayer - oratione mentale: Catechism 2709 - What is contemplative prayer? St. Teresa answers: “Contemplative prayer [*oración mental*] in my opinion is nothing else than a close sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with him who we know loves us.” - Tr.

Chapter 3

1.

Third Chapter

How she began the sure way of mental prayer and the many graces which the Lord gave her.

A. 2. When she arrived home, the aforesaid girl ¹ immediately searched diligently among the spiritual books which her aunts, who were very devout persons, were in the habit of reading, to try and find the books which the Dominican priest had told her to use ² for meditation. 3. So finding both of them there: both the Meditations of St. Peter of Alcantara, and also the “Food for the Soul,” she took them into her own custody, to use them the way the Dominican Father had taught her, thinking that this type of prayer, which he had explained to her, would be the most excellent and profitable. 4. So she decided to do this exercise for half an hour, since the Dominican Father had told her to do it, half an hour a day, either in the evening or in the morning. 5. So first she read the meditation on the Passion of Our Lord, and then she began to do the act ³ of faith of standing in the presence of God.

B. 6. //4v// Immediately an extraordinary recollection came over her: she was drawn internally by a great love, and nothing could keep her mind on the meditation that she had read in the book, and when half an hour had passed by, she had noticed nothing at all. 7. So believing that she had done something wrong, she read the meditation again; and still the same thing happened. 8. In the meantime, she remembered that the Father had told her that if she did not get on with one meditation, to read another; and so she went on reading first one and then another, but the same thing always happened; and so she spent two or three hours in this exercise and still she did not understand the cause of all this. 9. In fact, she remained in continual recollection throughout the day: she went into an empty room which was located up in the attic ⁴ of the house, so as not to be able to converse with people, since the talking and conversations of creatures gave her pain, but she did not understand what it was.

C. 10. One day she read the meditation about the lance wound which Our Lord Jesus Christ had on the cross. 11. So she was left absorbed in the love of this divine Lord, with Him inviting her to dwell in His divine wounded heart, and she was left so wounded by love, that from this hour on, she never again took up other books for meditation. 12. And through this light, her soul was left in such a recollection, that it stayed with her about two months. 13. There are many hours of prayer a day, but, in pouring out acts of affection towards Our Lord Jesus Christ, she had neither enough time

¹ Crostarosa, speaking of herself in the third person, as is common in autobiographies, habitually calls herself *the aforesaid girl, the aforesaid soul, or the aforesaid religious*. The adjective *aforesaid*, which is rarely used today, means *noteworthy, known to many people* (BATTAGLIA, III, p. 583); in the manuscript it means *the person previously referred to*.

² *che ella si servisse*: ‘di cui ella si servisse - “to use.”

³ *latto*: ‘l’atto’ - “the act.”

⁴ *astrico*: ‘solaio’ - “attic” cf. D’ASCOLI, p. 83.

Chapter 3

or hours; and moreover, she was always weeping, praying to Him to pardon her for the way in which she had offended Him in the past.

D. 14. The more the Lord caressed her, the greater grew her sorrow for her past ingratitude towards Him. 15. For she became inconsolable for this reason, nor did she have anyone to whom she could tell all these things which were going on in her soul, as she did not have a spiritual director. 16. She was confessed by the local parish priest,⁵ to whom she did not have the boldness⁶ to manifest the things of her soul, since she had already revealed them to the Dominican Father, just as we have said above; and she was not allowed to go to him in his church, since she was⁷ under obedience to her mother; and so she was almost beside herself with grief in her heart.

E. 17. One morning, on Sunday, she went to communion, and when she received⁸ the //5r// sacred⁹ particle, Our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her with the open wound in His side, and receiving her into His divine heart, He said to her: *“Enter into this wound, and I Myself will wash you, and purify you of all your sins.”* 18. And when He said this, she felt her soul, in an inexplicable sweetness, become as if clean and pure; and the Lord added that He had pardoned her all her sins. 19. So after this, \she/ began a great weeping, with such relief that a very substantial recollection remained with her for many hours. 20. So then the Lord said to her: *“I Myself wish to be your guide, I wish to lead you: seek no other than Me alone. 21. I Myself will be your teacher: love no other creature than Me.”* 22. Such was the internal consolation of this soul that she stood there amazed, as if enraptured, it being the first time that she had received these internal visions.

F. 23. So she returned home, completely filled with good desires, and with a great resolve to give herself totally to God and begin a holy life in earnest. 24. And she had a very great desire, inspired by a secret companionship that she was now experiencing in her heart, and which she never knew before, for Our Lord Jesus Christ; so strong that she could do no other than say certain words of love, and go looking for remote places and solitary corners of the house, so that she would not be observed by anybody, because she could not hold back¹⁰ her tears, for now that the Lord had illuminated her intellect, she felt herself so obligated to her God and Lord because, in spite of her acts of ingratitude towards His supreme goodness, He had nonetheless visited her in His great mercy and favoured her with His graces. 25. So that she would have willingly been consumed by love, the more so now that she was experiencing the effects of His divine presence in her

⁵ *parago*: ‘parroco’ - ‘parish priest.’ The term is not written by Crostarosa in a consistent manner. The parish priest of S. Giuseppe Maggiore (St. Joseph Major) from 1701 to 1722 was Fr. Andrew Starace, assisted by various other priests, cf. R. TELLERÍA, *Super Fratibus...*, (About the brothers...) in *Analecta* 34 (1962), p. 61.

⁶ *il quale... ardire*: ‘al quale ella non aveva ardire’ - ‘to whom she did not have the boldness.’

⁷ *sando*: ‘stando’ - ‘being’, i.e., ‘since she was.’

⁸ *riceuta*: ‘ricevuta’ - ‘received’, i.e., ‘when she had received.’ Not writing the double *uu* is a regular feature of Crostarosa’s writing, cf the different cases of *auto/a* (4:23; 14:16,34; 16:2...) and *doua/e/o* (49:26; 57:47; 58:4...).

⁹ *sargra*: ‘sacra’ - ‘sacred.’

¹⁰ *rattenera*: ‘trattenere’ - ‘to detain’, i.e., ‘to hold back.’

Chapter 3

heart. 26. So she began thinking what she could do to respond to His love; nor could she think of anything else than how she could give pleasure to God.

G. 27. She wished to undertake a more mortified life, and being with these desires, the Lord said to her internally inside her heart: “*You must imitate My life, and when you are united to the works of My life, you will perform your works of virtue.*”¹¹ 28. Meanwhile she wanted to imitate Him, and when she learnt that Our Lord Jesus Christ had gone barefoot while he was a wayfarer in this world, she thought to imitate Him in this mortification; and since it was wintertime, she thought it would be good to go barefoot, that is, without¹² //5v// her stockings, because she could not go without her shoes without it being noticed by the household. 29. So that she secretly went without her stockings and began to use a scourge and some small chains which she had managed to get hold of. 30. And she abstained from the choicer foods, of which she skilfully deprived herself,¹³ and since she had a very weak constitution, not only did she suffer greatly in her stomach, but took little food.

H. 31. And she would pray at mid\night/¹⁴ for an hour more or less, as she was able; so that between day and night she would do six hours of prayer. 32. But all this time seemed to her as nothing compared to what she was experiencing, not being able to sleep, nor take that little bit of food without great pain in her soul, and feeling no joy or satisfaction in anything of the world. 33. But her whole consolation was that internal companionship of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that with the sweetness of His love He was able to make her enjoy, especially during Holy Communion. 34. It was a very spiritual thing, because as a normal event He gave her the peace of His love, for which she yearned, for many hours passed in this recollection without her noticing it, or knowing what she was doing at that time.

I. 35. She was then about fourteen years of age, when the Lord warned her by telling her that He wished she had kept everything He was doing in her a secret, and that for thirty years of His life He had remained¹⁵ hidden and unknown to the world, and that this virtue of hiddenness was extremely dear to Him. 36. So that the aforesaid soul clearly understood the full greatness of this divine virtue, so that she fell greatly in love with it, and sought it from her Lord with ardour; and was confirmed much more in silence, with no desire ever again to disclose to anyone what she was experiencing.

¹¹ *operationi*: This word appears as the following grapheme: *operatio.ni*. The round bracket, which is inserted into the word *operationi* as if to divide it, must have been added during a revision, leaving the last syllable outside in error. We must remember that round brackets were often used in the place of inverted commas. Translator’s note: *operationi* is a difficult term to translate, as it is a term used by St. Thomas Aquinas to indicate works of merit accumulated on the path of perfection leading to heaven. This is why I have translated it as *works of virtue*.

¹² *sen*: ‘senza’ - “without.”

¹³ *destramente si privava*: ‘di cui destramente si privava’ - “of which she skilfully deprived herself.”

¹⁴ *orava [-la -notte] a mezz [-notte]>\notte/ per* - (See the last section of the Introduction. This is a textual reconstruction. - Tr.)

¹⁵ *stiede*: ‘stetti’ - “was”; *stiedi*, by analogy with *diedi* - “gave”, cf LIBRANDI - VALERIO, p. 73.

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J. 37. And through the will of God she still had no spiritual director at this time, and was confessed only by the parish priest of that church where her parents took her to hear the Holy Mass and receive the holy sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion. 38. She was not able to go and see that Dominican Father, because that church was rather distant from her home, and so she kept herself in silence until it pleased God to send her someone to guide her.

Chapter 4

1. //6r//

Fourth Chapter

Where other graces that she had from the Lord are declared, and how she manifested herself to a confessor.

A. 2. The mercy of God, which inspires so much love from His creatures, cannot be adequately explained, nor how much it presses on a person's heart, obliging her to love Him. 3. So the desires of the soul of this young girl grew more and more, so that she felt herself obligated to God to such a manner that she did not know how to thank Him, and moreover, she felt confused and would have liked to be consumed with love for Him. 4. Her prayers were but to pray to Him insistently to give her His divine love, for she always saw herself as imperfect and limited in responding to His love. 5. So she took for her advocates those Saints whom she heard had greatly loved God, like St. Philip Neri, St. Catherine of Siena, and other Saints, begging them to obtain the true love of God for her.

B. 6. She was by nature bright and happy, but now she set herself to moderate this disordered frivolity, which had rendered her cheeky at home, passing her time in useless recreations. 7. Yet this nature changed after the Lord began to instruct her in such a manner that her brothers and sisters, who knew her nature and were amused by her smart remarks, seeing this change, thought that she had been overtaken by the pain of scruples; they made fun of her to her great sorrow. 8. But she had been corrected by the Lord of these frivolities; moreover, she could not in the least go back again ¹ to such dialogues, nor was she able to continue with those frivolities; she avoided having anything to do with them.

C. 9. One day the Lord called her by an interior voice, and said to her: *“Look at the material sun, how it illumines the plants of the earth, warms them and makes them grow, so that they may give back flowers and fruits, and it makes the whole world happy with its brightness. 10. See how it shines everywhere, and only those who shut their windows and do not wish to receive its light, remain deprived of it through their own fault, and because they do not wish to look at its splendour. 11. This sun which you see in the visible world was created as a symbol of the divine sun, which with My divinity gives light to the interior world of the soul, //6v// with the effects ² that My divine presence produces in souls created by Me. 12. Now from this material sun, which always shines, you will be reminded of My divine perfections, and you will see how I will make the plants of the virtues grow in your soul with the warmth of My Spirit, and may these produce the flowers and fruit of eternal life. 13. I make the light illuminating your intellect and lighting up your will in My divine love; and by My divine warmth I dry up those bad humours that*

¹ *attuarsi*: ‘adattarsi’ - “adapt herself to”, i.e., “go back again to.”

² *li effetti*: ‘con gli effetti’ - “with the effects.”

Chapter 4

*produce disordered passions, and I destroy the soul's imperfections*³ *in those who keep their eyes open, and look at Me, and make My divine splendour enter into them, because the windows of their souls are open, that is, in those who do not shut them through sin. 14. So whenever you look at this material sun, you will remember everything I have told you, and this shall be your continual prayer."*^{*}

D. 15. This was a clear mirror in which⁴ her soul could see itself continually; it was so engraved on her soul that she began to live it regularly. 16. In the morning, when she got out of bed, and opened her bodily eyes to look at the physical light of the sun, she was immediately drawn to that invisible divine splendour of the divine presence, and from this communion she derived new lights and an ardour which consumed her soul continually. 17. So she could think of nothing, but felt herself seized up in an extraordinary manner by that divine light, and was preoccupied for many hours, without her noticing the time, nor what her soul was doing: but she experienced a feeling of joy and a continual sense of being consumed by God's love.

E. 18. And sometimes she received certain private messages, like that which was given to her about looking at the sky and its spaciousness: and the Lord internally communicated to her a full knowledge of the immensity of God, without limits in His divine uncreated and eternal being.

F. 19. Another time she was given to understand how Jesus Christ Our Lord is the divine sun in the light of the eternal glory in heaven, and how He is equally the interior sun of the just soul; and all this will be discussed further at more length, in its proper place, because her soul remained in this state of prayer for more than a whole year. 20. Moreover, she kept on receiving new lights and messages, every day new knowledge from God, which it is impossible for her to tell us about.

G. 21. Meanwhile she had reached the age of about fifteen; and so far the Lord had not given this soul a spiritual //7r// Father, nor had she anyone to guide her, nor had she confided to any person what was happening in her soul; but she had only been confessed by the parish priest of that church, without ever disclosing the interior state of her soul. 22. During this time, through the will of God, since it was a custom in that church to devote Wednesday to the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph - this being⁵ the name of this church, and it was the custom before the feast of the holy Patriarch to do the seven Wednesdays - and because in that church there was a great crowd of devout people at that time, the sacristan of the said church brought in the assistance of many confessors invited to help out.

³ *imperfettioni*: 'l'imperfezioni' - "the imperfections."

^{*} *Florilegium*, no. 83, pp. 99-100.

⁴ *fu... che*: 'fu uno specchio lucido in cui' - "was a clear mirror in which."

⁵ *esso*: 'essendo' - "being."

Chapter 4

H. 23. Among the others arrived a secular priest who was a confessor but very learned; ⁶ he also showed himself to be a spiritual person, but very young and without experience, so that he only heard confession for men; he was not yet confessing women, but went with special permission only to those churches where there were feasts, and there he would also confess women, but only with special permission.

I. 24. The aforesaid soul, seeing that this new confessor was very attentive and devout, thought to go to him and confide the things of her soul to him, and so she did. 25. She went to be confessed, and he asked her if she led a spiritual life and who was guiding her; then she told him that she did not have a spiritual Father, but that she was simply confessed by the Parish Priest alone, but then she told him at great length about her spiritual journey. 26. When he heard what God had worked in her soul, well, that Father was greatly amazed by this account; but being young and with little experience, he made many predictions ⁷ to the aforesaid soul, telling her that God wished to lead her to a very high level of sanctity, and other similar things. 27. He kept her there a long time, examining her and discoursing at length on the love of God; he told her that it was not good for her to remain like this without a guide, but that he wished to guide her, and many other things.

J. 28. So the young girl became greatly attached to him and resolved to take him for her spiritual Father: he ordered her to write down for him everything that was happening ⁸ in her soul. 29. But although she had learnt to read, she still did not know how to write, nor had she ever \been/ taught; but trusting in the Lord she began to write, ⁹ and without any teacher; and secretly gave the aforesaid Father an account of what was happening inside her.

K. 30. But unfortunately she began to have a certain spiritual attachment ¹⁰ to the aforesaid Father, and soon he was more a hindrance to her than a help, because the aforesaid Father was not despoiled of certain imperfections which often occur in those who begin to guide //7v// souls without much experience.

L. 31. And so spiritual persons must be very cautious in their choice of a spiritual guide, and not let themselves rush into a decision in such an important matter; but first of all they must offer up a long prayer and beg the Lord to grant them His light and grace to make sure of the right choice in such an important matter, on which depends their profit and advancement on the way, and from which much loss and impediment can come to the soul, if the right choice is not made. 32. And it is better for the soul to trust

⁶ The information which Crostarosa gives us does not permit us to give more precise details as to the identity of this confessor.

⁷ *prognostichi*: 'pronostici' - "prognostications", i.e., "predictions."

⁸ *ogni... passava*: 'ogni cosa di quanto passava' - "everything that was happening."

⁹ *scrive*: 'scrivere' - "to write."

¹⁰ *attacco*: 'attaccamento' - "attachment."

Chapter 4

in God rather than put herself into the hands of a confessor who is both inexpert ¹¹ and little despoiled of self.

M. 33. So for the aforesaid soul, ¹² the said confessor was very soon more of a hindrance than a help to her on her spiritual journey, because there was some attachment: both on the part of the confessor and on the part of the aforesaid soul, even though it was an innocent attachment. 34. But because the Lord is very jealous and He is also the greatest purity, He went on favouring the above-mentioned soul, but not like before. 35. The Lord's divine communications were not as frequent, and many times she received reproaches from God internally for this attachment; but the poor girl did not know how to deal with it. 36. So two years passed like this, with the aforesaid Father promising her that when he finished his four years of training, which he was doing in the Bishop's House at the Cathedral of the City of Naples, where he was then living, he would come to that church especially to confess her, and then there would be no more need of letters or writing, but instead they would confide in words with complete satisfaction.

N. 37. This soul had two other sisters older than her, ¹³ who were also being guided by the same Father by means of letters, but in secret, because their mother was not pleased for them to be guided by this priest, for no other reason than that he was young and a beginner, and the girls were teenagers. 38. She urged them to be guided by the Parish Priest, by whom she herself was confessed, but the above-mentioned girls, because this Parish Priest, although he was a man of mature age and experienced, did not journey by the way of prayer, so they did not feel able to confide the state of their souls. 39. So in this there was some tension //8r// between the mother and her daughters, and for the sake of peace at home they had to write in secret to the aforesaid Father. 40. But all these things were disposed by the Lord, because it was not the divine will for them to be guided by this Father.

O. 41. So the oldest sister, ¹⁴ being illuminated by the Lord, thought to find herself another guide, and at the same time find a new spiritual Father for her other two sisters, knowing that this was the will of God. 42. Therefore after she had prayed long and hard to the Lord, she found herself a holy director and also found a Father to guide her two other sisters: he was a man of singular holiness of life and excellent doctrine, esteemed in Naples as one of the leading Fathers of that time: his name was Don Bartolomeo Cacace. 43. ¹⁵ This Father, after many prayers and meetings, accepted them,

¹¹ [-in]inesperto - "inexpert."

¹² *l'anima conzaputa*: 'per l'anima conzaputa' - "for the aforesaid soul."

¹³ Giulia was the tenth child. Before her, from the baptismal records of the parish church, there resulted from the Crostarosa marriage: Francesco (25th. September 1678), Michele (29th. September 1680), Agata (2nd. August 1682), Ursola (16th. March 1684, died 4th. November 1687), Rosa (4th. June 1686), Ursola (19th. September 1688), Giacomo (28th. November 1690), Giorgio (18th. December 1692), and Biagio (February 1695). After Giulia came Giovanna (6th. October 1698, died 17th. November 1699), and another Giovanna (23rd. August 1701), cf. R. TELLERÍA, *Super Fratibus...* pp. 58-61.

¹⁴ In the rest of the *Autobiography* this means the sister Ursola, born on 19th. September 1688; and therefore we may assume that she is also meant here.

¹⁵ Bartolomeo Cacace was born in Naples in 1664. He did his literary studies with the Jesuits and his theological studies with the Dominicans of S. Tommaso. He was a disciple of De Torres and was formed spiritually in the Congregations of the Pious Workers

Chapter 4

and took the trouble to come every eight days to confess them in the very same church. 44. So the aforesaid nun gave him an account of her soul and how things had gone with her up to this time; he assured her that her way was of God and encouraged her; and he said that she should follow closely in the footsteps of the Lord with simplicity of heart; and that he wished to know, every week when he came to her, what had happened in her soul; he then gave her many wise counsels and dismissed her.

(St. Nicholas of Toledo) and the Jesuits (P. Pavone). He was ordained a priest in 1688 (cf. **Imitazione** p. 43, note 40). About him *G. Sparano* wrote: "Also acquainted with Cardinal Spinelli was the priest and Doctor Bartolomeo Cacace, a very learned man, but who remained unknown due to his humility. As soon as he was discovered, he wished to talk to him, and hear his theological opinions where required, the which he valued very highly, but not for this did Cacace leave his private life, in which he wished to die peacefully. (*Historical Memories illustrating the Acts of the Church of Naples, II*, Naples 1768, pp. 337-338).

Chapter 5

1.

Fifth Chapter

Of many other graces which the Lord gave her, and other things which happened to her at that time.

A. 2. The aforesaid soul had reached the age of seventeen, when she was taken in hand by this good guide. 3. So as soon as the hindrance of this first director was removed, the Lord began to favour the aforesaid soul more than before with a flood of graces without intermission. 4. She felt herself released and free to go on her way, and then she realised that this previous Father, ¹ although he was good, by not being as despoiled as was necessary, had been a kind of hindrance to her spiritual growth; and so she gave thanks to the Lord for seeing fit to remedy her need.

B. 5. And so I must warn spiritual persons not to be so little cautious in such a choice, nor to journey according to their own satisfaction in this particular matter. 6. But *//8v//* first of all they must turn to God with humility and confidence, and with detachment from self and their natural inclinations, because those priests who are beginners, even though they see themselves as much favoured by God, are nonetheless not free, nor purged, nor do they have much experience; and so they normally have an appetite quite unsuited to speak much about the things that these nuns have experienced. 7. And when they find themselves under a director who is still not very experienced, and if he also happens to have the same appetite to talk knowingly of God with long discourses, with a certain emotional fervour which is normally experienced in the beginning, then the purity of the communication with God starts to grow tepid, and then a certain attachment² of the senses is born which impedes the divine communication and cuts the soul off from firm devotion. 8. And so it is vital that in such a choice, the soul should have recourse to God in prayer, with no thought of herself, and should work most diligently, examining and informing herself of the qualities of the person whom she is thinking of choosing, because it is best to choose someone who is holy and experienced and learned. 9. I will say again, do not make any choice unless you know that God has chosen him: for He is most faithful to the soul who loves Him; and takes care of His own to guide her in the right way, even to the point where He gives her the guide that He has designated and preordained for her, to her own profit and spiritual utility.

C. 10. But let us return to the story of the aforesaid soul: the Lord favoured her more than ever before with His graces and mercies. 11. One evening it so happened to her that the Blessed Sacrament passed by on its way to a sick person: she went to the window of her house to adore it, and believed that she was adoring the Lord that the priest was carrying in his hands, but instead³ of the priest she saw Our Lord Jesus

¹ *padre [-gli] di*

² *attocco*: 'attacco', 'attaccamento' - "attachment."

³ *in cambio*: 'in cambio' - "instead of."

Chapter 5

Christ: He was carrying the chalice with so much majesty, and was so handsome and splendid, that He wounded her heart with His love and sweetness. 12. Her spirit was absorbed by this vision, and she was both surprised and astonished; but this sight was not with her bodily eyes, but spiritually. 13. From this hour on, she had the internal companionship of Our Lord Jesus Christ, intimately, so that her whole heart was consumed in God, but not physically.

D. 14. So one day, this divine presence in His holy unified humanity wounded her so deeply that, while she was receiving Communion, she received a great light and love //9r// from this most divine Sacrament. 15. When she realised how great the goodness of this divine Lord was towards her, and her own great ingratitude and inability to respond to that divine love, she remembered that she had been estranged from Him for a while, and that she had offended Him, as mentioned in previous chapters, and was touched by an arrow of internal sorrow and contrition, and began to weep floods of tears with great vehemence, and began to tell her sins publicly to certain people who were next to her in the church. 16. And because these people saw her weeping like this with such extreme sorrow, they asked her what was the matter, thinking that some bodily ill had suddenly befallen her; and she, without minding them staring at her, nor with any shame at all, ⁴ replied to them that she had gravely offended God, and began to tell them that her sins were great and grave. 17. The persons to whom she spoke were astonished, because they knew her for the frequency with which she came to that church, and seeing her as just a very young girl, they looked at her with a smile, and tried to console her; but she continued on weeping with an inconsolable pain. 18. But the Lord kept on wounding her with love and with sorrow, and so the whole morning passed; and when she returned home, she was not capable of taking any food, but passed that whole day in love and with the sweetest words to her Beloved, who kept her company internally; so she withdrew into a corner of the house, where she remained in a solitary retreat.

E. 19. Here is ended this first book, because the same soul, through the order of this very same Lord, writes in soliloquies all the mercies that God has given her, under obedience to her confessor, and speaks to her same Lord: and moved by His divine love, she declares the greatness of His love and His infinite goodness towards her.

⁴ *alcuna [-che -ella -ave] li*

Chapter 6

//9v//

The First Book. Of the Soliloquies.

1.

**How the Lord guided her on the Way of the Spirit,
and of the interior company of Our Lord Jesus Christ,
and of the many internal pains and troubles
she suffered.**

A. 2. Eternal infinite Lover, who can describe Your mercies without number, shown to this miserable creature of Yours, who has so many times offended You? 3. And You, my love, are never tired of loving her, and of benefiting her, and being at her side, so that she might not wander far from You, O fountain of living water. 4. You, my love, have watched over her, with the greatest jealousy and You were as a lamp to my feet, so that I would not wander from the way. 5. You have made Yourself a light unto my intellect, so that always in You did I see ¹ the light of the Truth: there never was a time or a moment when I did not see You, with a pure and spiritual gaze, watching over me. 6. So my will would burn in the much beloved gaze of Your divine and holy presence, because, with the sweetest love, and always with a serene and loving look, You would gaze at me so sweetly, and with a divine sign You would draw me to Yourself, so that never again would I be detained by the visible and material things of the world.

B. 7. My soul would listen to certain brief messages with which You would instruct me and make clear to me the divine meanings that are written in Your Holy Gospels: and at other times You would say the kindest things to me, inciting me unto Your love, as if to say: “Love only Me alone;” “I am Your guide: I am He in whom You must confide, and never in mankind;” “I have chosen you for My spouse: I want you pure and clean, do not attach yourself to any created object;” “Do not stain yourself with earthly things, nor with the affections created //10r// by creatures: I am jealous of your heart, I have chosen you for myself alone.” 8. And many other things like this, with which ² from time to time, it did please You, with Your most sweet love, to draw this soul to Yourself, with such sweetness, with such gentleness, with much goodness and mercy, for You did not care that she was in no way purged nor purified of her evil habits, and was still full of self-love and imperfections, though then she hardly knew it, because, You being with me, she was as if constantly absorbed by Your most pure and delectable divine love. 9. And so she believed herself to be clean, from that radiance of Your divine light, that went round inside her and set her heart ablaze, in such a way that she could not usually feed her body with its earthly food; for so great was Your divine sweetness, both in the spiritual part of her soul, and in her lower and material nature, that You filled her

¹ *mirasse*: ‘mirassi’ - “did I see.” Regarding verbal endings, especially in verbs in the Past Historic (*ebbe, stiede, fece*), the manuscript records the phenomenon of the weakening of the final vowel typical of the Neapolitan dialect, often not easily distinguishable from that of missed concordance.

² *che*: ‘con le quali’ - “with which.”

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right up, and when You breathed Your angelic purity into me, my soul did not feel the least rebellion, nor contradiction of any kind to the spirit.

C. 10. And so, ordered by Your divine goodness, You did dispose, by means of my spiritual Father, for me to take Communion every day according to his order, and I was then about nineteen years of age. 11. Were You not concerned, my love, to come each morning into this heart, so full of selfishness and very imperfect through its evil habits, because it was not yet purified by You. 12. You know how much delight I took in mingling my own self-love together with Your blessings and graces; and in spite of this, my own sweet love, every time You entered ³ into my heart, in this Most Divine Sacrament, did You not manifest Yourself to my heart ⁴ in so many admirable ways? 13. Now You would declare Yourself to be my only Spouse, and say to me: “*I am your All.*”; and now, with loving words of life, You would elevate my spirit, and hold it absorbed for many hours; and at other times, with a thousand and one caresses and lights, You would teach me the truths of faith.

D. 14. O my love, I see myself too unworthy to be able to tell of Your mercies without number, poured out by Your divine goodness upon this ungrateful soul. 15. And among Your many mercies, and Your many excellent //10v// favours, I despised You, for it came into my head to go and gratify my own self, while in the church, where I would go each morning to receive You, that first spiritual Father would come to hear confessions - the one ⁵ You did not wish me to be guided by any more. 16. And I went to him solely to gratify my own self contrary to Your holy will; and this I did just one time only, through the appetite ⁶ I had for speaking to excess; and I did it without the permission of that spiritual Father in whose ⁷ care You had placed me. 17. But as soon as I came out of the confessional of that first Father, then You, my love, corrected me severely, and immediately I was plunged internally into the densest darkness, the darkest fog, and all I was left with was an intimate sorrow in my soul, because through my own fault, You, my love, were quite disgusted with me.

E. 18. And from that hour on my soul lost the spiritual joy and peace that my soul formerly enjoyed with You; no more did I enjoy that sweet company of Yours, nor that divine light that taught me internally the way of the truth of faith; instead of all the powers of my soul, only darkness and horror remained. 19. Then I began to feel ⁸ rebellion in the my lower nature and a terrible disturbance; and instead ⁹ of Your sweet company, the company of demons, who tormented me with brutish and terrible

³ *entravivo*: ‘entravate’ - “You entered.”

⁴ *non per questo... cuore*: ‘non per questo... non ti manifestavi al mio cuore’ - “in spite of this... did You not manifest Yourself to my heart.”

⁵ *il quale*: ‘dal quale’ - “the one... by.”

⁶ *lappetito*: ‘l’appetito’ - “the appetite.”

⁷ *che*: ‘al quale’ - “in whose.”

⁸ *a sentire*: (to feel) ms add.

⁹ *in cambio*: ‘in cambio’ - “instead.”

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temptations both night and day without a break: they performed in my presence so many brutish and ugly spectacles, with so many evil motions in my base and lower nature, that destroyed me like a consuming fire. 20. And what tormented me the most was that I seemed to give all these suggestions and temptations a full consent of will, because I felt so terrible a rebellion in my lower nature that it crucified my soul.

F. 21. And I would remain there as if immobile, without motion, as if totally absorbed in my own evils: I stood there like a half-wit and deprived of reason, like a statue unable to do //11r// anything, with my soul unable to aid itself in any way, but totally in the hands of my enemies. 22. Now like a prisoner and miserably lost, without the least power of movement, like someone bound by fetters, without the power of remembering God, unable to invoke Your most sweet Name, O my love, I was incapable of any good act. 23. As if outside myself, I would lie long hours in this conflict: I thought I had become just like a demon, with no dissimilarity at all. 24. And when this battle finished, then there would begin another yet more cruel, for now there were my fears of having committed, with no doubt whatsoever, grave and mortal sins: and I would see clearly how deprived of grace those souls are when You withdraw Your grace, O my love; and then I would mourn my own miseries as one in complete despair, with an inconsolable pain and sorrow. 25. And though I would go to and from my spiritual Father, and tell him all my troubles, and he assured me that I had not offended God, nothing consoled me, nor did my soul at all believe his words, because ¹⁰ You, my love, did wish it so, and because You did not console me with Your most sweet presence.

G. 26. Creatures could not console my soul at all; since I was in a very terrible conflict, and although my guide gave me great hope and told me not to be afraid, that they were two purgations, both at the same time, which the Lord was working in my soul, that is, a purging of my senses and a purging of my spirit, both at one and the same time, and that such sorts of pain all at the one time, could not last long, but that God would soon liberate me. 27. He was amazed to see so many things happening at the same time and told me that You, my love, wanted to shorten my soul's journey into a brief time; so I heard what he said with pain and inner torment, because I thought he was deceived rather than I, because I felt ¹¹ within myself that I had been abandoned by God through my own fault, through that fault I committed and which I have explained above.

H. 28. So seeing me in a deplorable state, my spiritual Father sent me //11v// to another Father, with me giving an account of everything that had happened to me. 29. But nothing helped me; although he tried to console me and assure me, my soul received not the least comfort nor solace, for You alone, my love, were ¹² my peace and consolation, and You, My Lord, did not wish to console me, because I did not merit it,

¹⁰ *per*: 'perché' - "because."

¹¹ *sentiva [-che] ne* - "I felt... that."

¹² *non... ere*: 'non ricevevo nessun conforto né sollievo, perché tu, amor mio, eri' - "received not the least comfort nor solace, for You alone, my love, were."

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through my past ingratitude and inability to respond to Your divine love. 30. I must admit that the words of Your minister, although they did not console me, they strengthened me but without ¹³ the least consolation.

I. 31. But what afflicted me all the more with the greatest pain was the precept that he gave me, to go to Communion as usual each morning. 32. So bound by obedience, I would go to the church, but as soon as I entered it, I would feel a sort of horror in my spirit; and as if it had come out of that divine tabernacle, a fiery arrow seemed to strike me, for my spirit had an interior vision, that pierced through my darkness to my very core, for it was not there to console me, but to fill me with terror. 33. And so I would clearly see the Eternal Judge incensed in wrath against me, and Your supreme justice would strike me in my profound darkness, and condemn me, and as if sentenced to hell, which I deserved through my own faults, I would see myself in the company of the demons, and opposed to that supreme goodness. 34. And because of that horrible sight, for three months, I did not dare lift up my eyes and look at the sacred altar, nor the tabernacle where You, my love, were reserved for love of me. 35. Then I would go, forced by holy obedience, to take Communion, like that criminal, who, standing before her righteous Judge, would experience her own condemnation in the most pure glory of Your supreme justice and infinite sanctity. 36. Then I would feel the very marrow ¹⁴ of my bones being crushed by a hellish pain that crucified me, and then I knew the pains of the damned; I saw myself, rightfully, as odious in Your sight now that I had become Your enemy.

J. 37. //12r// I remember, my love, how one morning that was made so dreadful by these horrors and pains, I went to my spiritual Father, and told him that I was committing many grave sins, because I detested God and all His sacred law; and that at this time of Holy Communion I would have the company of many demons, who would work shameful and impure things in my presence; and it seemed that they had been given by You, my love, permission over my body and my lower nature, in such a way that I was like a half-wit, with no power to do anything to the contrary; but like someone who was outside her own self, I was in their power for all the time that this fierce battle lasted; and I thought that I had given them ¹⁵ my full consent, so great was the battle of my rebellious senses. 38. And after this had finished, I was like I was dead; and these enemies from the abyss were mocking me like a victim, with a terrible murmuring, and I dreamed up a great many terrible thoughts and suggestions against the mysteries of the faith, in such a way that all the truths of Your sacred law seemed to me like ridiculous nonsense; and so I left myself with no support.

K. 39. And while I was discussing this with my spiritual Father, telling him all about my conflict, without him noticing it, because of Your just judgements, this is how

¹³ *senza*: 'senza' - "without."

¹⁴ *midole*: 'midolla' - "marrow."

¹⁵ *che io davali*: 'che io davolo loro' - "that I had given them."

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he replied to me: *“It is certain, daughter, that you are journeying on a knife-edge.”* 40. Then my soul went silent, and after leaving the confessional, I hid in a far corner of the church; O my love, You gave me the liberty to be able to shed tears, something which had never been permitted to me before; so I began weeping floods of tears for many hours, seeing myself in a state of complete despair, I would pour out my pain in my tears, without saying a word.

L. 41. So that morning, I failed to take Communion, contrary to holy obedience, and retreating home, I spent all that day weeping bitterly, for I was sure that there was no remedy of any sort for my wickedness; nor could I be consoled, for You, my love, would be staring at me with a look of fury, as if I were Your enemy, and I would not know where to hide myself through shame at my iniquities. 42. My body was all dried up in such a manner that I could //12v// number all my bones, nor could I restore it with food, because the little that I could take in I would be forced to pass out again at various times later on.

M. 43. My greatest pain was that I had to get along with the people at home, who, not knowing what the matter was, were both a torment and a pain to me; so I kept on hiding in secluded places, and there I would sigh continually for You, my Lord; but You kept increasing my sorrows with Your look of judgemental fire and purity of justice, by which You opposed all my perfidious operations. 44. My mind was all disordered, impure and filled with every kind of filth in Your divine presence, abominable and odious to Your eyes and I hated myself too. 45. And how truly did You, the God of justice and of infinite perfection, deservedly condemn me as worthy of the eternal fires of Hell, where I could already see myself in the company of many demons, whispering all around me at the times when I would pray, and sometimes placing themselves upon my body, with a weight so terrible that it would prevent me from breathing; nor could I invoke Your most holy name, my Lord, because I was like I was stupid and could not move while that torment lasted. 46. At other times they surrounded me, and with a brutish murmuring, they would pour scorn on Your sacred law with brutish arguments against the mysteries of the faith; at other times I would hear the dreadful blasphemies¹⁶ that they pronounced against God; and these foul whisperings went on almost continually, even when I was with the domestic servants of the house.

N. 47. But these were not visions, nor did I perceive those things with bodily eyes; nor did I perceive them with my ears, //13r// but everything was in my spiritual part; but this made my pains so much more painful. 48. But in Holy Communion my torment was greater, through the brutish foulness¹⁷ and impure representations and suggestions¹⁸ that I was suffering; and in at the same time I experienced such strong movements of my lower nature, that not only did they consume me, but, they left me

¹⁶ *biasteme*: ‘bestemmie’ - “blasphemies.”

¹⁷ *laidure*: ‘cose brutte, deformati nell’aspetto’ - “brutish things, deformed in appearance” (cf BATTAGLIA, VIII, p. 701).

¹⁸ *sogestioni*: ‘suggestionì’ - “suggestions.”

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unable to move and I remained outside myself, as if immersed in that sea of filth, without the power to fight against it, as if I were already dead. 49. But afterwards, when this conflict had finished, the demon would assure me that I was already his, and that I had given my full consent, and was in mortal sin, and a thousand and one despairs and suspicions. 50. And on top of all this, my spiritual Father would tell me, whenever I went to speak to him, that he had exhausted all means and words for consoling me, and he was stuck for words; and it was a terrible effort for him to be able to tell me anything.

O. 51. Just as we have said above, he told me that I was balanced on a knife-edge, and that the state I was in was dangerous. 52. And then, when I told him how much pain these words of his had caused me, and that I had not taken Holy Communion as he had ordered,¹⁹ he swore to me that he did not remember ever having said such a thing to me. 53. But yet he noticed that, whenever I would go to speak to him, he would lose every bit of courage and experience a darkness and coldness of heart, and sometimes he would be silent, and say to me: “*Daughter, I do not know what to say to you: wait for God.*”

P. 54. My Lord, You did everything with the greatest charity and justice, so that I would be corrected and amended of my evil ways. 55. O Lord full of mercy, You put up with this vilest of creatures in Your divine presence, for if I was so disfigured, brutish, and pestilent even in my own eyes, what must I have been in Your divine and most pure sight? 56. O my sweetest love, how abominable I was even to myself, how foul and //13v// disfigured, so that it certainly seemed to me that You hated me with good reason! 57. And I never had the boldness to complain to You about this and say: “*You have abandoned me, O Lord!*” 58. But standing mute before You, I knew myself as guilty, and that You justly condemned me and judged me with the greatest rectitude, and that through my just deserts You had given me into the power of the demons of hell.

Q. 59. And sometimes I thought I was in that dark and sombre place in their company, in the fire of Your anger that was burning me in the very marrow of my bones. 60. My soul was struck dumb, with nothing to say, stupefied by the purity of Your rectitude, and seeing myself so disfigured against Your infinite and divine perfection, with which You opposed all my iniquities in the most just scales of Your justifications, with a right and just verdict. 61. Nor did I have the boldness to complain to You, my love, because in truth my iniquities forced You to this holy justification, and with the greatest reason, You could not help but hate my iniquities within me. 62. And this hatred and fury in Your divine eyes was always present to me, so as to penetrate me in every place and at every time, in order to annihilate me right to the centre of the world of my miserable nothingness.

R. 63. My love, You wanted me to stay like this, in this conflict, from the month of December until the day before Easter Sunday, the Holy Saturday, without the least

¹⁹ *suordine*: ‘suo ordine’ - “as he had ordered.”

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interval of interior consolation. 64. But even more, every time I had to go and confide the state of my soul to my spiritual Father, You ensured that I would feel reluctance and depression greater than usual, and speechlessness and pain, and I would always go there with bitterness and the greatest difficulty. 65. You ensured as well that this //14r// minister of Yours, being a holy man and therefore dear to You, would experience a heart as hard as marble at this time, and so, Lord, You took away from him the words out of his mouth, because he himself confessed that he had neither the way, nor the means to be able to console me: and to his most deep regret, he was always speechless in Your divine presence, and could do nothing else but tell me to wait for God and bear up under His omnipotent hand, that with divine justice and rectitude was weighing down on me.

S. 66. O Lord, God of truth, just and righteous in Your judgements, You are He who opposes a person's heart, and penetrates that heart to its inner core, and knows how to humble its pride, and penetrates and pierces its every least movement. 67. You are the Searcher²⁰ of hearts, and You know the ways of our iniquities, You weigh them up in Your scales, and You are the exactor of judgement and the most righteous justice; Your infinite mercy has cured my wounds, because my own selfish love, and the pride of my malicious heart was always intermingled with Your gifts, but with Your graces it comes to be valued for something.

T. 68. O God of goodness, in wishing to disillusion me, You have despoiled me of Your blessings, leaving me as booty for my enemies and making me taste of my own misery; You have made me know that not only was I not justified, but quite the opposite; I was disfigured and full of impurities and bad habits and love of my own self. 69. And so my love, with the greatest goodness and compassion, You cured me of my infirmities and put up with all my malice with so much long-suffering, without abandoning me in the least into its power. 70. With divine patience You still put up with me and have not abandoned me, O love from goodness and goodness from love: how will I thank You, sweetness of my heart? 71. Even now, while I am writing of Your mercies, I am not fully amended and corrected of my bad habits and evil inclinations, although You have humbled me and corrected me many times, as will be seen in the course of this book, and especially in the book about the Work of Your Institute //14v// and from the Work ordered by You. 72. My Lord, give me Your grace, so that at least in these last days of my life I may follow strictly in the footsteps of Your divine will. Amen.

²⁰ *scutatore*: 'scrutatore' - "Searcher." (*Searcher of hearts*: cf Jer. 17:10; I Chr. 28:9; Rom. 8:27; Rev. 2:23. Also the Breviary hymn *Audi benigne Conditor*, v. 2 - Tr.)

Chapter 7

The Second Soliloquy.

1.

**How on the day before Easter, the Holy Saturday of the Resurrection ¹
I was freed from this state of pain
by the Lord.**

A. 2. O my Lord, my soul was like she was silenced by the greatness of her afflictions in Your divine presence in her lowliness, and I remained like this until the day before Easter, Holy Saturday. 3. That Saturday morning ² I went to the church and stayed there, without being able to look at the sacred altar, and the divine Tabernacle in Your sanctuary. 4. But when the hour of the glorious Holy Mass of Your Resurrection came, and while they were singing *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, ³ I felt my soul become completely re-invigorated and restored by Your holy and divine love; I breathed in deeply and when I lifted up my eyes to the sacred repository, I felt that inner fear being taken away from me; and You, my love, as You looked at me with the sweetest look of Your divine love and gave me a divine sign, every sort of pain was taken from me, without me remembering any longer what I had suffered previously. 5. And I felt a profound sense of peace, like the most wonderful sense of rest in my spiritual faculties: my intellect remembered nothing, \my mind was blank/, and my memory similarly had forgotten everything, and my will became ardent in the sweetness of this profound peace. 6. So I was like somebody who had over-exerted herself and was quite exhausted, and had dropped off to sleep, resting peacefully from her toils; this is how I remained all the time the service lasted.

B. 7. At the end of the holy Mass, I went up to the communion rail, and went to take the communion host; and immediately You entered my heart, my love, and in the purest voice You said to me: “*May peace be in Your heart.*” 8. When I heard this, my soul melted, and now that I was absorbed in You, I felt soothed: ⁴ I have no idea where my soul got to, or what happened to me, but what I do know is that ⁵ I was not aware of my own self; nor were my internal and external powers and senses moved to do any good deed; for I was like someone placidly sleeping. 9. I was like this the whole time I was in church, but finally I was shaken out of it, as if my spirit was now filled, and I retreated home, but in a very different state from when I first came. 10. It was as though I had forgotten everything: I could not think of anything, neither temporal nor spiritual; I did not remember anything, not even my own household jobs; I was no use for anything; I became very simple-minded, and I thought I was like a little girl again, just a few years old; and I could not do anything which required intelligence.

¹ 7th April 1718, cf. *Imitazione* - “Imitations”, pp. 45-46.

² *matita*: ‘mattina’ - “morning.”

³ *Gloria in excelsis Deo*: ‘Gloria in excelsis Deo’ - “Glory to God in the Highest.” It must be remembered that in the 18th. Century, the Mass of the Resurrection was brought forward to the Saturday. (This is the Mass for Easter Sunday. The expression ‘Pasqua di Risurrezione’ - “Easter Sunday” does not appear in the dictionaries. I found it on a calendar for 2003 printed by *La Fiamma* newspaper in Sydney. I thought it best to retain Mother Crostarosa’s wording here. Praise be to God! - Tr.)

⁴ *supita*: ‘sopita’ - “soothed.”

⁵ *quel che so bene che*: ‘quel che so bene è che’ - “what I do know is that.”

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C. 11. Seeing myself so incapable, I kept hiding myself away in the far corners of the house as best I could, because I could not remember anything; whether I moved around or stood working, I always had that most wonderful sense of peace with me; and sometimes, in secluded places in the house, I would be as incapable of the least activity as someone dead to the world; and so, without me noticing the time, I would spend many hours without knowing what had happened to me. 12. My body did not desire the least food, and the little that it took at mealtimes it could in no way digest, because it was left so underweight and ill from the tempest through which it had just passed; it often sent it forth, and was almost continually tormented⁶ with stomach troubles; but I thought little or nothing of it because of the internal state I was experiencing. 13. O my sweetest love, how quickly You forgot about my iniquities! How full of mercy and compassion You are, and so ready to pardon me! How well You know how to convert our evils into good, and out of poison make the medicine of health! O infinite goodness, who is //15v// like You in judgement, justice and truth? 14. You are admirable in all Your works, but in mercy You are incomprehensible indeed: and who can understand Your ways?

⁶ *esercitata*: 'travagliata, tormentata' - "troubled, tormented" (cf. BATTAGLIA, V, p. 337).

Chapter 8

Third Soliloquy

1.

How God wished her to go into the Monastery, and put on the Carmelite habit in the Reform of Mother Serafina of Capri in the district of Marigliano,¹ and of how God worked on her internally in that Monastery.

A. 2. My soul had a single calling, so pure, that emanated from You, my love, that it meant that I could not reflect on any created thing; my body was so weak that it could not stand on its feet, and needed to take a little something to refresh itself, my soul could not ask for it, because, being so occupied with You, she had no thought for the needs of the body. 3. So, my love, You inspired my mother to rescue my body from this need, without me saying anything to her, because my body desired not even the least food, having lost its taste for everything, and my food came back up unpleasantly in my throat, and my stomach digested nothing, except with great pain and sorrow, as might best be said. 4. So the household all thought I was ill, and called the doctor, and tried to cure me with various medicines.

B. 5. Meanwhile, I felt myself being consumed at times by a melting of love, that reached me from You, my love, without my physical mind being aware of anything, either created or uncreated; but only You know, my Lord, what I experienced. 6. My soul being in this state, my love, You wanted me to take on the religious state; and so much did I desire to unite myself closely to You, my one and only love, //16r// that I did not wish to choose any state except that which You had disposed for me, and so I did nothing myself² about such a resolution.

C. 7. And being then about twenty years of age,³ my Lord, You disposed, without my co-operation, for me to be taken to visit a servant of God in the district of Marigliano, nine miles inland from the City of Naples, where there was a Monastery of nuns of the reform of Mother Serafina of Capri, founded by this servant of God. 8. I

¹ The Conservatory (or monastery, as Maria Celeste indicates) of Marigliano was under the patronage of St. Joseph and St. Teresa, as a result of the official acts, but it was also named after St. Mary of the Seven Dolours, to whom the church was dedicated. It was founded on 18th. May 1715, by Sister Verdiana of Jesus, a favoured disciple of Serafina of Capri, cf. R. TELLERÍA, *Ven. Sororis Mariae Celestis Crostarosa experientia prima religiosa apud Conservatorium SS. Ioseph et Teresiae in Oppido Marigliani (Marigliano) 1718-1723*, in *Spic. hist.* 12 (1964), pp. 79-128. (cf. R. TELLERÍA: The first religious experiences of Ven. Sister Maria Celeste Crostarosa at the Conservatorium of St. Joseph and St. Teresa in the City of Marigliano 1718-1723, in *Spic. hist.* 12 (1964) pp. 79-128.

² *di proprietà*: - 'di mia proprietà' - "myself."

³ The expression *twenty years* must be taken in a much broader sense. Her entry into Marigliano took place in the months of April-May 1718, when Crostarosa was already well into her twenty-first year, cf. *Imitations*, pp. 47-48. The same Crostarosa, removing to Roccapiemonte, affirmed thus: "*until I was twenty-one years of age, I remained in the house of my father and mother in the City of Naples where I was born. From then until the said age of twenty-one years of age... I entered the religious state and then I went to the Conservatorium dedicated to St. Mary of the Seven Dolours in the district of Marigliano, where I lived for the space of five years and a half.*" (*Radici*) p. 445.

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was brought along with one of my older sisters, who greatly desired to become a nun; and together with a lady friend and my mother too, we set out on our journey.

D. 9. That morning I happened to have taken a certain purgative medication, and my mother did not want to take me with her, for fear that on the way I might have trouble; but I was so spurred on by You, my Lord, that I begged her to take me with her; and by Your divine will she brought me. 10. And throughout that whole journey, I was like someone without a body, totally transformed into You, my love and my God, because You, Lord, had attracted my soul, and had annihilated her in Yourself, through Your divine work, and in this union, You filled her in Your own way, without human operation, neither interiorly nor exteriorly, except a very simple act of consent by the soul caused by this same work of Yours, when she was moved and drawn by You, my love. 11. So I became like a little girl: without my memory remembering anything; my intellect was in a pure divine clarity; and my will was immersed in Your most pure love; my body and my senses were like an instrument in the hands of this self-same God, with my eyes being unable to fasten their gaze on any created object. 12. I saw like someone who does not see; I heard like someone who does not hear; what was said to me was absolutely meaningless to me; I spoke like someone who is moved by something else, when I replied to the people who were bringing me on the journey. 13. And heaven seemed to rain a flood of love over me, which sweetly melted my soul; my soul smelt a most wonderful fragrance, which delighted me through and through. 14. And //16v// I neither saw nor heard any created thing throughout the whole time of that journey, until You, my love, had brought me to the place You had chosen for me.

E. 15. And when I arrived at this Monastery, I was received by the Superior with much joy and courtesy, since she was a lady who led a holy life; through Your action and moved by You, O my love, she asked me if I would like to remain in their company in this Monastery; and I immediately replied that I would be only too happy to stay and embrace the religious life, as my soul was so moved by Your divine will. 16. And so with great determination I remained in this Monastery, together with my other sister, after a long altercation with my mother, because she had not gained my father's consent for me to remain in this Monastery, but had only brought us here to visit this servant of God who was the Superior here. 17. But in the end we persuaded her so much that she consented, and left us in that Monastery on the understanding that, if our father was not pleased with our decision, she would return again to bring us home. 18. But You, Lord, so disposed my father's heart that he was pleased and confirmed our decision.

F. 19. So seeing myself freed from the state of the age, and fully consoled in my heart, I gave myself completely to Your divine possession; and You continued to cover me with the fullness of Your mercies, and because I was so attracted by Your divine love, I began to have strong desires to be Your spouse, and to bind myself with the ligaments of sacred vows.

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G. 20. But because in this Monastery they were used to a fair amount of liberty, right from the beginning, in their dealings with certain seculars, there was just a bit too much liberty, contrary to the perfect observance of the Rule, even though the souls that were gathered there lived innocent lives, because they were very young, and the Monastery was at its beginning, having being founded only a few years ago, so that everything was done with simplicity; since the Superior herself was a holy soul but simple and pure like an angel, and in her opinion, she thought this pastime of her nuns was permissible and innocent, and so she did not restrict them with her authority.

H. 21. But You, my divine and zealous lover, did not want these spouses of Yours to have that sort of recreation: although it seemed innocent then, it could have become harmful to souls in the future. 22. And that is why You wanted me to go to the Superior and defend You, which is just what I did, declaring to her that, if she would not remedy that liberty, I would never become a nun in that Monastery. 23. And because the said Superior was a very good soul, and a servant of God, she took the advice in good part that You, my Lord, gave her through my mouth; so she promised me that she would not permit any more liberties like that in the Monastery, and she didn't either. 24. This made me feel much better and I decided to become a nun in the said monastery, and at the end of six months after I entered, I took the habit and began my novitiate with a great desire and fervour to please You, my unique treasure.⁴

Father Emilio Lage notes: "For this period of Marigliano (1718 to 1723) see R. TELLERÍA, *Ven. Sororis Mariae Caelestis Crostarosa experientia prima religiosa apud conservatorium SS. Ioseph et Teresiae in oppido Marigliani (Marigliano), 1718-23*, in *Spic. Hist.* 12 (1964) 79-128. (Ven. Sr. Maria Celeste Crostarosa's first religious experience at the conservatorium of Sts. Joseph and Teresa in the town of Marigliano, 1718-23).

"Sr. Serafina of God, commonly called Sr. Serafina of Capri, was born in Naples on 24th. October 1621. At the age of 40, in April 1661, in the church of the Virgin of Carmel in Naples, she felt herself called to found a new religious family with constitutions according to the rules of St. Teresa. Sr. Serafina founded her first conservatorium in Capri on 2nd. October 1661 under the name of the Most Holy Saviour. By the time of her death, on 17th. March 1699, she had founded seven conservatories. At least another ten were founded in the first half of the 18th. Century. This rapid diffusion is explained in part by the fact that these monasteries or conservatories were specifically for the young ladies of the bourgeoisie or middle class. The social discrimination of the times extended to the religious life, with the traditional monasteries being reserved for the nobility; young ladies from the middle class or the common people generally entered as lay sisters, at the service of the community and the nuns in particular, in just the same way as in the families and palaces of the nobility. Canonical legislation and the terminology are imprecise and vague. The terms monastery and conservatory are applied indiscriminately at times to the same religious house. When Sr. Maria Celeste refers to Marigliano in her *Autobiography*, she calls it a monastery; in the Cava trial she calls it a conservatory. Although there were many conservatories where the religious life was lived strictly, including the enclosure, and were called monasteries, juridically this title can only be applied after Pontifical approval and the setting up of Papal enclosure. In reference to Sr. Serafina, see N. SQUILLANTE - T. PAGANO, *Vita della Ven. Madre Suor Serafina di Dio, Napoli 1723* (Life of the Ven. Mother Serafina of God, Naples 1723), and S. POSSANZINI, *La Venerabile Madre Serafina (carmelitana)*, Fisciano 1992 (The Venerable Mother Serafina (Carmelite), Fisciano 1992."

⁴ The duration of the period of the educandate was not fixed in a rigid manner in Sr. Serafina's conservatorium. Her entry into the Novitiate took place on 21st. November 1718. Giulia took the name of Sr. Candida of Heaven, and Ursola that of Sr. Colomba of the Holy Spirit. cf. *Imitazione*, p. 48.

Chapter 9

1.

Of the many graces I received from the Lord at this time of my Novitiate, and how, after doing eight months of the said Novitiate, I was put by the will of God into the office of Touriere, * even though I was still a novice.

A. 2. The morning when I put on the religious habit of a novice, You, my sweetest love, began to give my heart a light of clarity, by which You proved that it was You, divine Word, loving Spouse of my heart, promising me that you would never ever abandon me, inflaming in my heart with Your pure and holy love. 3. And since it was the day of Mary's Presentation in the Temple, * I had the company of this great Mother, who accepted me as her little daughter.

B. 4. Seeing myself so favoured, both by the Mother and her Son, this made me very confused in my own self, because I saw myself so poor and bare of every virtue, and I did not know ¹ //17v// how to repay my Lord for the many graces and mercies that He showed me, in spite of my own lack of merit. 5. But my Jesus promised to teach me the way that I would have to travel. 6. So, encouraged by You, I was surprised by a spiritual joy welling up inside me, and I began to render You thanks because, even though I was so miserable and poor, You had uplifted me, my love, with such mercy, and had chosen me for the sublime dignity of being Your spouse; and I composed the following canticle of love:

7. Came the hour of jubilation,
When my God made me His bride:
I have found full consolation;
In His love shall I abide.

8. Married now I am contented,
Satisfied most certainly
That I shall enjoy my handsome
Spouse for all eternity.

9. Here I'll always live in longing
To enjoy my wondrous Love,
Both to serve Him and to please Him:
He'll be mine in heaven above.

10. I shall come then, my Beloved,
Up to see You, heavenly King,
There forever to possess You,

* The Italian word is *rotara*, from *rota*: a roster. See Chapter 11 - Tr.

* 21st. November. - Tr.

¹ *sa*: 'sapevo' - "know."

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Heavenly Spouse, in everything.

C. 11. O sweetest Jesus of my heart, with Your divine light You clarified my intellect and made me know You; and Your divine love, with which You loved me, generated love in my heart so that I would love You; and You continually taught me lessons about the purity of love; and my spiritual ears heard You, and day and night my heart burned for You, my Jesus.

D. 12. At this time, You began to instruct and train ² me in religious life and in the way of pure love, with the following rules: ³

E. 13.

First Rule

Given by the Spirit of Truth to my soul.

14. In ⁴ the morning hour, My beloved little daughter, gather yourself in spirit, totally in me, your Creator, fleeing every human conversation, every sort of discourse, every idle word. //18r// 15. Keep the room of ⁵ your heart for My repose with great jealousy; be withdrawn and solitary, as much as possible: do not leave Me alone in your heart. 16. And from now onwards let My divine heart be your secret cell; there make your nest, praying continually, with Me in your heart and you in Mine. 17. Hear the voice of the purity of My divine love, and know all your faults and defects in My light; so you will always humble yourself in My divine presence. 18. And if you are to receive Me in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar, plunge yourself into the abyss of such an incomparable gift, annihilating yourself in true humility; and if you have received Me in this great Sacrament, plunge yourself in an abyss of infinite love, having within you an incomparable treasure, infinite, inexpressible, which only I Myself can comprehend. 19. Be consumed in My pure love.

F. 20.

Second Rule

20. Beloved daughter, hear the voice of purity, see how you must conduct yourself in these two actions, where there is more danger of the satisfaction of your natural condition, that is, in your communal refectations and your recreations. 21. Leave your senses as unoccupied as is necessary to do these two things, resting in the spirit and

² *amaestrare*: 'ammaestrare' - "train."

³ The seven rules are also found in the *Giardinetto spirituale* (Spiritual Garden), 9-12, under the title *Regole date dallo Spirito del Signore ad un'anima religiosa* (Rules given by the Spirit of the Lord to a religious soul); about the few variants between the two texts, cf. *Incontri*, pp. 269-270.

⁴ In the margin there is added: I.

⁵ *del [-mi] tuo*

Chapter 9

totally abased in me through love, without leaving your nest empty; but instead feed on My Spirit even more than you feed your body on bodily food.⁶

22. Go to your recreations in a spirit of sweetness and meekness, and receive every action of your neighbour as a blessing; put up with every little word that is said about you, in a spirit of humility, purity and simplicity; and do not stop to judge what others think or do. 23. Do not fall captive to vain gloating, and do not come out from your beloved cell, that is, from My divine heart. 24. Whenever you are able to introduce them into familiar conversations with your neighbour, speak of holy and virtuous things; and if someone starts talking about worldly things, do not say anything in reply, or talk like this yourself. 25. Do not interfere, either at this time or later on, in any business or affair of the monastery, unless you are commanded by holy obedience.

G. 26.

Third Rule

//18v// 26. Be diligent in retiring at the times appointed for silence, and observe them exactly, except when obedience or charity require otherwise from you.⁷ 27. In this time of silence and recollection, be totally concentrated within your own self, and dwell in My divine heart, attentive to everything which I shall show you. 28. And in the hours of silence remember those three painful hours when I was on the cross, totally enclosed in pain, both in My soul and in My body, for love of you; I gave My life for the salvation of the souls dear to Me; and pause to gather My blood under the cross, so as to offer it to My Father for all sinners.

H. 29.

Fourth Rule

29. My little daughter, unite all the breathing of your heart with My Spirit, renouncing all that is not purity of love; do all your actions with rectitude and purity of intention, for My glory alone. 30. And just as the body draws breath from the air that it receives, so you are to breathe in Me and through Me, all the moments of your life, and in all the motions of your heart, taking My will as your own, and as the purpose of all your desires and pleasures, and in all your troubles and crosses. 31. Be satisfied *con júbilo* (with rejoicing) in aridities and internal desolation, as in consolations.

32. And just as fire burns more brightly in dry wood than in green wood, so My divine love is purer and more perfect, and more ready to consume hearts in true charity, in times of aridity and troubles.

⁶ *più... corporale*: 'più di quanto il corpo si pascerà del cibo corporale', oppure 'più di quanto nel corpo ti pascerai del cibo corporale' - "more than what the body is fed of bodily food"; or rather "even more than you feed your body on bodily food."

⁷ *date*: 'da te' - "from you."

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33. Have My glory and honour alone for your purpose, so do not take account of your own self, or of the world, or of creatures; for love of Me, be always ready to jealously defend My honour, even if you must lose your life, just as I did for love of you.

I. 34.

Fifth Rule

34. There are three exercises in which⁸ your soul must be employed while she is a wayfarer on earth: the first is to live and dwell among creatures solely to aid them in their eternal salvation, and for the good of their souls, without interfering with them in other things of this earth and of this world; the second thing is to live with your spirit //19r// always in God, in the same union in which the soul of Jesus was always united to the Word and the Father and the Holy Spirit in God, and this was My continual exercise while I was a wayfarer on earth; thirdly, do not attach yourself to anything, either in your past life, or in your present life, or in what might happen in the future, but attach yourself only to the unique good, the highest eternal good, your first beginning and ultimate end.

J. 35.

Sixth Rule

35. Love your neighbours, and do not complain about anything that they do to you. 36. Be always in your own nothingness; and just as My greatness is infinite, so too is infinite, if that is the right word, your own poverty and misery, and know that you never have light enough to know it as you ought. 37. When you become aware of the graces and blessings that I share with your neighbour, rejoice in them, and thank me, as if you yourself had received them, and there will be a growth in you of charity and the fruit of humility, and it will be to My glory as a result. 38. Receive all the contempt shown to you with humility, because when sins are committed they merit evil and infinite pains for mankind; so take it as of no account: consider it all as nothing. 39. Never say anything to your neighbours that they will resent: regard them with humble reverence, as living temples of your God, so receive every insult meekly, just as I did for love of you.

K. 40.

Seventh Rule

40. Honour your Superior and obey her, seeing her as My person on earth, and in your sisters, My holy apostles and disciples: be in their company as in the Cenacle in this religious house, with your spirit of sweetness and charity among them.

⁸ *che*: 'nei quali' - "in which."

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41. When you are in choir⁹ praising Me, unite your spirit to Mine, with the same praise that I gave My divine Father here on earth, while I was still a human wayfarer: just as if I, and not you, was living your life. 42. And so similarly, with every gift, grace and spiritual consolation, that you receive from My mercy: receive it not for yourself, but for Me, and I shall rejoice with you in My pure love; do the same with your bodily actions, such as in eating, sleeping and working, in all the actions of your life. 43. I am the life of love in your heart: love Me with this pure love, you alone for Me, and I alone for you; nourish no other desire than for My pure love alone. 44. When you are hidden from all creatures, I shall live concealed in your heart.

⁹ *core*: ‘coro’ - “choir” (also elsewhere).

Chapter 10

//19v//

1.

Of a spiritual company, which my soul had at this time, of Our Lord Jesus Christ, internally, and how He was my teacher on the spiritual way, and this company has stayed with me until the time of writing; and how He examined me about the above-mentioned virtues, but in a different way.

A. 2. My dearest love, Jesus of my heart, who can describe the infinite mercies, that in so many ways and manners You have shown to this ungrateful creature? 3. Even from my very childhood, You loved me with a special mercy, and You prepared me with Your grace. 4. O my love, when I think of all the mercies I have received, I am dumbfounded and my sense of shame takes my breath away; the sins that I have committed against You humble me less than the blessings I received from You without any merit of mine. 5. But I will say them here as I know them and as You would wish me to, to my confusion and to Your greater glory; I am unsure if I can, since Your favours to this ungrateful soul are innumerable: I will say only what You make me remember.

B. 6. In the beginning, when I was a little girl, You communicated Yourself to my soul through a vision of Your image, and Your divine presence inflamed me so much by Your divine love, that it caused me a most sweet interior melting. 7. And You taught me about contempt for the world, and poverty and humility; and You showed me many passages in the Gospels, making me realise the divine meanings contained within them. 8. You spurred me on to love You with much ardour, both loving and sweet, and pressed me to be totally Yours. 9. I always saw Your company at my side, and I would contemplate Your divine splendour, which attracted me in a manner that amazed me.

C. 10. Later, when I was almost an adult, * I began to have this divine company in another way, more spiritually: and it was an intellectual light, a divine clarity that made me look at Your indescribable beauty. 11. And this wonderful vision had such an effect on me, that it drew all my soul outside my own self, through the most pure delight that it caused me; and so I began to suffer much bodily weakness, alienations and fainting spells almost continually.

D. 12. My soul was so drawn by You, my love, that in the recitation of the Divine Office my spirit was drawn to the upper part of my own self, both sweetly and powerfully by You, loving Word, my God, that scarcely had I begun the recitation of it, than I just stopped, without the power to continue the recitation; and this was because the divine meanings which are contained in the Psalms were revealed and shown to my soul in a moment, and they wounded my heart with Your divine love. * 13. This left me confused, since I noticed that the recitation of it had finished, and because I felt pain in being observed by the other nuns who were next to me, because I just stopped there right

* See Chapter 8, footnote 2 - Tr.

* *Florilegium*, no. 78, p. 96.

Chapter 10

where I found myself, with no power to do otherwise, like someone deep in a profound sleep; and in this I suffered much shame and pain, caused by my own self-love, of which I was not yet purged.

E. 14. So in Holy Communion and at the hour of prayer I suffered the same alienation of the senses, and for this reason I tried to hide in remote corners, so as not to be observed, and to flee the pain that I experienced. 15. Such things also happened to me during the day, for on hearing the name of God or something else about God, my heart ¹ seemed to feel a sudden stab of love in its centre; and especially when I heard the most sweet name of Jesus, my heart melted continually, and it left me with a deep inner recollection that made me flee every human conversation; so, as much as I could, I withdrew from it into my cell, enjoying the company of my Beloved. 16. And You, my love, //20v// my loving ² Word, with a few brief statements about Your great love You nourished and delighted me with Your divine purity and You became present to me: and in my own heart You made Your home. 17. At the same time, my love, I received divine teachings from You internally, and with this sweet company my soul had pain in its dealings with creatures, although I was living among religious souls of good customs.

F. 18. Among the other communications, my love, that You breathed into my heart, above all other teachings, You explained pure love to me, where You made me understand how the whole importance of the spiritual life consists in being in Your divine presence, of thinking only of You, of aspiring only to You, of loving only You, of seeking and desiring nothing other than You, unique treasure of the soul. 19. And that, in doing this, man purifies himself of his bad habits and the suggestions of the demon; and in Your divine light the soul sees and knows her darkness, and from Your divine perfections she receives the vestment of the holy virtues.

G. 20. And many times, my love, You said these most sweet words to my heart: *“You are Mine alone: and I am totally Yours: do not leave me alone in Your heart.”* and similar things. 21. So I craved the time to be withdrawn like this either in my cell, or in choir, or in some remote and secluded place in the Monastery, to be there to hear Your most sweet teachings. * 22. But yet sometimes I would leave You, and You, my sweet love, would call me back internally to my interior withdrawal, letting me know the defects I committed by my negligence, to my great shame. 23. This You did, my love, with so much love, caressing me with Your infinite goodness and mercy: You put up with me so often when I did not respond to Your love, and You were never angry with me; my love, I would have deserved it if You had abandoned me, but You never left me to fall over //21r// the precipice of my own miseries. 24. May You be blessed and praised in eternity. Amen.

¹ *core*: in this case ‘cuore’ - “heart”, cf. BATTAGLIA, III, p. 1053; cf *supra* p. 24.

² *amate*: ‘amante’ - “loving.”

* *Florilegium no. 84, pp. 100-101*

Chapter 11

1.

How I was made Portress, and what happened to me at this time.

A. 2. My Lord, You disposed for me to be placed in the office of Portress and Tourière, while I was still a novice, and had done only eight months of my novitiate, for You disposed this by means of my Superior. 3. And she did this, for the sole end of restraining all the sisters from the business of the turn, and to ensure that when all the nuns were called about some affair by those on the outside, whether they were their relatives or not, all their errands were done by the Touriere, and so the freedom of each one of them to go to the turn [or the grille without an auditrice] was taken from them, according to what the rules required; and what is more, I was set as auditrice at the grille, whenever the nuns had to go and talk with their relatives, or another person from outside. 4. And because these officials had not yet been appointed in this Monastery, everyone would go to the door with the permission of the Superior, both to the turn and to the grille, without an auditrice, as though the Rules ordered it.

B. 5. This first election caused much displeasure to some of the nuns, but especially the Vicar,¹ who was responsible for naming the Touriere and Portress, as she was the joint foundress together with the Superior. 6. She was a good nun, but not very zealous for regular observance; so that many abuses were introduced. 7. This was made worse by the fact that in the Monastery there were many professed nuns of a more suitable age, so the election that the Superior had made to the office of Portress and Auditrice, by choosing a novice who had scarcely finished eight months of her novitiate, made the nuns even more jealous.

C. 8. And for these reasons I began to have a great battle with the enemy, so that I was continually mocked and menaced by the above-mentioned Vicar, and seen in a bad light by the other nuns, and so they informed the ordinary confessor that I took communion //21v// every day, and that I was deluded, and other things which I leave out, so as not to be too long. 9. The ordinary Father confessor, not being my director, knew nothing of the state of my soul, for I had obtained permission from my Superior to be guided by that Father who was my director before I entered the monastery, and by his order and that of the Mother Superior I took communion every day.

D. 10. Meanwhile that ordinary Father confessor of the Monastery, as he had been very badly informed about me by the nuns, perhaps justly, prohibited me from taking communion, and gave me a good reprimand, telling me: “It would be better for you to go and do some real work, like scrubbing the floor, rather than saying so many prayers, and say the Rosary; and this will be quite enough for you, without wasting so much time

¹ In the Notary Acts of the Conservatorium she is indicated only as Sister Teresa of Jesus, cf. R. TELLERÍA, *Ven. Sororis...*, p. 100

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uselessly and acting holy with so many frequent communions, for the admiration of others. 11. And since you are only a novice, attend to your toil and work; and do not do so much mental prayer, because it is easy for women to be deluded by the demon.” 12. And he said other things like this to me, with much severity and contempt. 13. I said nothing in reply to him, as I thought it best to obey him then and abstain from Holy Communion for a while, and take advice from the Mother Superior afterwards, and write to my spiritual Father about everything that which had happened to me, and take advice about what I must ² do, to be sure of the divine will. 14. And that morning I abstained from taking communion, so as to obey that priest.

E. 15. Later that day I went to talk it all over with my Superior, because she had still permitted me Holy Communion, as was the custom in this Monastery; she ordered me to take Communion according to the order ³ of my spiritual Father, and continue with my prayers just as I was accustomed to do; and then meanwhile write to my spiritual Father in Naples, and then obey everything he directed, without taking notice of other rulings; and this is what I did. 16. But my director did not want me to make use of the said confessor, but ordered me instead to follow what he had ordered me, since I was obliged to obey whoever had care of //22r// my soul, and the Superior to whom I was subject; and that I should not worry about anything that the said confessor might say to me in the future, but that he was to be told that I had another director who was in charge of me; and this was done.

F. 17. But my persecution by the nuns, and especially the Vicar, lasted three months, with her telling the Mother Superior that she was also the foundress; that she would unilaterally relieve me of this office - since I was only a novice, I was not suitable - ; and that she herself wanted to be the Portress and Tourière, as she had been until now; and so she gave me reprimands and insults, together with other nuns also of her opinion. 18. I made no reply to them, because I thought they were partly right, since I was only a novice, and ignorant and inexpert, and they were senior to me in age and in office, so I repeatedly begged my Superior to relieve me of that task, But she refused every time.

G. 19. The Lord so disposed things that at the end of three months the aforesaid Vicar died, the same who had made up her mind to force her Superiors to relieve me of this office with great determination; but her death intervened, the persecutions ceased, and the Monastery returned to the greatest peace.

H. 20. Meanwhile my Lord continued to bless me with His divine grace continually: He trained me in that office, and I had the company of my Lord Jesus Christ in all my actions; He reminded me of all the jobs I was responsible for, and my soul felt the spiritual odour of His divine presence. 21. This odour ⁴ of purity was so very sweet

² *dove*: ‘dovevo’ - “I must.”

³ *ordine*: ‘ordine’ - “order.”

⁴ *questo [-do] odore* - “this odour.”

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that I would not know what to compare it with; and this company was not of the body, but spiritual, in such a manner that my heart melted \with love/. 22. All this happened to me in Holy Communion; and then that odour of purity remained with me until the next day that I took communion, with this adorable companion; and sometimes I could not take ⁵ bodily food, through this fullness that my spirit felt.

I. 23. I thought that He was actually carrying out His promise where He says: “*Lo, I am with you even unto the end of the world.*” ⁶ 24. O blessed companion of a faithful soul! What can she fear having such good fortune in this world? 25. Ah! If only we had this living faith in our times of need, both spiritual and temporal, we would never lose heart when we meet trouble in this miserable life! As for me, I have ⁷ experienced Him not just as a strong shield against//**22v**// all my enemies; but also as my only liberator and defender in every kind of evil: He is the possession of every goodness for the soul that hopes on Him in faith. Ah, He is my father and my mother. His is my only existence. He is my life! *

⁵ *prende*: ‘prendere’ - “take.”

⁶ Mt. 28:20.

⁷ *lò*: ‘l’ho’ - “I have... Him.”

* *Florilegium*, no. 136, p. 153.

Chapter 12

1.

How I made my profession, and many other things that happened to me at that time.

A. 2. Because the time of my holy profession was drawing near, Jesus my love, You taught me how I was to prepare myself, and promised me to vest me in the vestments of Your divine innocence, and so my soul rejoiced in a particular way, waiting for Your divine mercy. 3. And because of these promises I was caught up by an extraordinary recollection, in such a manner that it was not in my own power to do all the good deeds required in my office of Tourière, but You, my love, with Your interior assistance aided me to remember everything I needed to do.

B. 4. When the time came for my profession, to my greatest joy I promised my Lord to observe obedience, chastity and poverty under that Rule;¹ and although I recalled that I had already made my vow of chastity when I was seventeen years old, on the orders of my spiritual Father, when I was still a secular, at my profession I confirmed it and ratified it again. 5. At my profession Jesus my love, You received me as Your spouse, telling me that from now onwards I was to be totally Yours and You totally mine and You gave me Your dear Mother Mary, my Lady, as my own mother, and St. Catherine of Siena as my spiritual mistress. 6. And at the time that I made my holy profession, I enjoyed their presence spiritually, and I had the company of a great multitude of angels, to my inexpressible spiritual joy.

C. 7. For I had a vivid desire internally to begin a new life of the spirit and to live apart from the world and from all created things and from my own self as well. 8. I //23r// felt myself always assisted by my Lord in an extraordinary way; my heart continually experienced His all-consuming love, and every day I received His divine teachings, which I cannot record here because² it is impossible, for innumerable are the mercies that You, my love, have shown me. 9. And because at this time I had not yet received an order from my spiritual Father to write, I cannot describe it all here but, to obey him who commands me, here I will say only what I can remember, from before the time when I was ordered to write,³ both by the Lord and by my spiritual Father.*

D. 10. What⁴ I remember with great clarity, was that at this time I had a divine fragrance, as if it had perfumed all my soul, and my body also participated in its

¹ Sr. Crostarosa does not indicate the precise date of her profession; in all probability it was on 21st November 1719, at the end of her year of Novitiate, cf. *Imitations*, p. 49

² *per*: 'perché' - "because."

³ *scrive*: 'scrivere' - "to write."

* See the *Prologue*, beginning of sentence 2 - Tr.

⁴ *Quelche*: 'Quel che' - "What", with errata rendered graphically in the phonic *continuum*, perhaps derivative of the unmerited comparison with *qualche*, as noted by LIBRANDI (cf. LIBRANDI - VALERIO, p. 108, note 3).

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sweetness, that rendered me mute on the exterior and every human conversation tiresome, so that I stayed inside the room of the Turn, and so as not to be seen or observed by anyone in those derangements, I did manual work to avoid ⁵ being caught up by the overwhelming power of these communications, and I would work with great haste and diligence during these spiritual excesses. 11. And You, my love, declared to me that You had the greatest satisfaction with my soul's continual urge to hide herself away from creatures, and You taught me to do this, declaring to me that You were jealous of my love; and so my soul experienced an increase of grace in being hidden, it being very profitable for me to be in the remote corners of the Monastery. 12. You, my love, made Yourself my loving companion, teaching me that when we hide ourselves and seek for silence we preserve true purity of heart; so I had much pain in dealing with creatures, and in being observed by others in these derangements that my spirit suffered from.

E. 13. It so happened that, at the time I was the Tourière, there was an intake of two young educandes, the daughters of a lawyer in Naples; and there came to accompany them one of their older sisters, ⁶ who came dressed in all her finery because she was soon to be married to a gentleman from Naples. 14. This young lady entered inside the monastery together ⁷ with her two sisters who were to be received, because in this monastery it was the custom //23v// for relatives of the nuns to have permission to enter into the lower cloister, the monastery not having yet been enclosed.

F. 15. Then this young lady spoken of above, leaving the company of her sisters and the other nuns, entered into the room of the Turn, and came and sat with me, and stared right at me; in the end she began to speak to me, and to quote her own words, this is what she asked me: "Servant of God, I would like to stay in this monastery in your company, and become a nun, and renounce the world completely."

G. 16. Because I knew the promise she had made, I rebutted her, to see if she really meant what she said, and I said to her resolutely: "Here you cannot enter, because there is no place for you, since we have grown in numbers and the rooms are few and we are full up."

H. 17. She replied: "And I definitely do want to remain in your company: so much do I feel myself drawn by God."

I. 18. And for the second time I told her: "It can't be done, because whoever wants to come in here must make such a decision not through her own inclination as a miserable creature, but only through God; and then you have an arrangement with men of

⁵ *sciavare*: 'schivare' - "to avoid."

⁶ It is not possible to give the precise identity of these sisters with certainty. From the notary documentation gathered by R. TELLERÍA it turned out that in the years following on from Crostarosa's profession, two pairs of sisters entered the Conservatorium - Elisabetta and Apollonia of Bisogno and Bianca and Agnese of Pietro (*Ven. Sororis...*, p. 100 and pp. 116-118)

⁷ *assime*: 'assieme' - "together."

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the world, and wish ⁸ to marry a mortal man. 19. How can you so soon decide a thing of such importance?

J. 20. And I made her a long speech, and she wept bitterly, telling me that she would never return to her home, never, but that she wished to remain in my company and become a nun; and leaving the room of the Turn, she went to find the Superior and the nuns: she told everyone she wanted to remain in the monastery and with tears she begged the Superior to be good enough to receive her. 21. So tongues began to wag ⁹ among the other family members who had brought the other two sisters who ¹⁰ had already been received into the monastery. 22. And she begged both the Superior and the nuns and her relatives so tearfully, that they were content to leave her in the monastery to the great rejoicing of her heart.

K. 23. So having obtained her dearest wish she called the Mother Superior in private, and said to her: “Mother, now that //24r// you have done me so great a kindness as to accept me into your company, there is another kindness you must do me and I beg you not to deny it to me: and this is none other than to give me leave to be under the guidance and direction of that nun who is now doing the job ¹¹ of Tourière, by whom God has called me to this holy place.”

L. 24. The mother Superior told her to be of good spirit, because in the coming month of May, they had to hold a new election for the officials of the Monastery ¹² and she was thinking of making the aforesaid nun that she asked for Mistress of Novices, and that then she would privately permit her to be guided by her; and so it was done.

M. 25. Then the same day that the Lord called this soul to religion, one of the two sisters who had come to stay in the monastery, hearing that everyone lived life in common, and that nothing could be held privately in that place, wanted to return home with her family. 26. And so the Lord changed ¹³ the vocation of the one into the other, to the amazement of all those nuns.

⁸ *volere*: ‘volete’ - “wish.”

⁹ *rispiglio*: ‘bisbiglio’ - “whispering.” (‘Inni si fece un rispiglio’ - “So was made a whispering”, i.e., “So tongues began to wag” - Tr).

¹⁰ *sorelle [-per] che* - “sisters who.”

¹¹ *offio*: ‘officio’ - “office”, i.e., “job.”

¹² In the Conservatorium of Sister Serafina, the duration of the community positions, except in the case of the Superior, was for one year; moreover the rules of that of “*Purità di Pagani*” also provided that the changeover had to take place on the “eighth of May,” cf. *Imitations*, p. 49, note 80.

¹³ *campiò*: ‘cambiò’ - “changed.”

Chapter 13

1.

How I was made Mistress of Novices, and what happened at that time.

A. 2. When the month of May ¹ arrived, new officials were chosen in the Monastery and I was elected Mistress of Novices by the will of the Lord, and because this office was away from the world, my soul experienced great peace from it. 3. And that good girl, the novice mentioned before, began a wonderful spiritual and supernatural course of life, and I think it is a good idea to say something about her, since we have already mentioned her conversion.

B. 4. She had the gift of tears from God, and her prayer life was supernatural from the beginning. 5. She was a hidden and secret soul: she would go to the choir at night and spend entire nights in vigil and prayer; she would do all the hard jobs of the converse * Sisters in humility and abjection; she suffered many ecstasies and raptures; and so much did she hide herself and despise herself, that no-one even noticed the graces that she received from the Lord. 6. She would play outrageous pranks at the times of recreation; she was so cheerful, modest and approachable, always despising herself and humbling herself; doing what she did so as not to be observed, but with such grace and good humour that she was a marvel. 7. She would go to the kitchen to wash the dishes every day, and do all the cleaning in the Monastery; and used this as a pretext to eat at the second table. 8. So as not ² to be observed in her mortifications, she astutely set aside all the left-overs from the Sisters on the first table, that is, the soups only, and put either ashes or the most bitter powdered herbs in it; and she ate this and nothing else. 9. She took discipline every day and wore many hair shirts. 10. And after a life of much perfection, she died with the signs of true holiness; and her body is in safe-keeping, because of the many signs and wonders that God worked after her death. 11. I have written it all down here for the glory of my Lord, who does such beautiful and wonderful works in the souls dear to Him.

C. 12. But to turn back to our subject, now that the Lord had placed me in this office of Mistress of Novices, my soul had more scope to be in the recollection which the Lord gave me at that time, and which was so extraordinary, because anything requiring action was painful for me; but my soul did its very best to carry out all those tasks that God wanted from me. 13. But with this responsibility, I had more freedom from external

¹ The year is 1720. What Crostarosa narrates in the *Autobiography* coincides with the deposition at Roccapiemonte: "In the Conservatorium of Marigliano, where I wore the habit of the Institute of Mother Serafina of Capri, who wore the Teresian uniform, I performed the offices of Tourière, Mistress of Novices, Sacristan, and Mistress of the Educandes, one after the other, so in fact when I left the said Conservatorium, I was, as I said, Mistress of the Educandes." (*Radici*, p. 449).

* *Conversi*: lay brothers (and sisters) in a religious order. The term was originally applied to those who, in adult life, voluntarily renounced the world and entered a religious order to do penance and lead a life of greater perfection. The renouncing of the world was known as the *conversio a saeculo*, which had as its object a reform or change of life, the *conversio morum*, hence *conversi* or the "converted." The *conversi* were thus distinguished from the *oblato* or those who, as children, were presented or offered (*oblato*) by their parents to the religious life and were placed in a monastery to receive proper religious instruction and to be educated in profane knowledge... (Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol IV, p. 346d. - Tr.)

² *non*: "not" is added in the margin by Crostarosa.

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cares, and so my internal communication with God kept growing: it advanced so far that it included the Divine Office, and I hardly began reciting it, when I felt myself drawn by some of the words, by the divine meanings that are hidden in them; suddenly I was alienated from my senses, and remained as if dead, without being able in any way to follow the recitation of the Divine Office, to my great pain, because it displeased me to be stared at by others and be the odd one out in public. 14. But this displeasure //25r// I experienced later ³ when the Office finished, because in the very act of suffering these alienations, I could in no way reflect on these things, nor did I notice anything. 15. The same thing happened to me in prayers and in anything else I did.

D. 16. But in what concerned the spiritual guidance of my novices, The Lord alerted me in a singular manner and with zeal. 17. My soul was pressed by the Lord to not betray the good of the souls committed to my care; and also, other professed nuns in the Monastery came up to me to confide the things of their soul to me, and with the permission of my Superior I assisted them as best I could, since the Lord gave me a desire for the salvation of my neighbour.

E. 18. One morning I went to choir, since it was a feast-day, to hear Holy Mass, but as soon as I entered choir ⁴ I felt a great atmosphere of love, and through fear of these usual alienations, and in great haste, I left choir and went straight to my cell, and I lay down on my bed, so as not to be observed by anyone. 19. And straight away I was drawn by a most precious vision, but it was spiritual, and not of the body, for I have never experienced bodily things. I saw my Lord Jesus Christ in an incomparable majesty and beauty, emitting a ray of light from His divine ribs, and He wounded my heart with such delight and love, but with such sorrow also, that I lay upon ⁵ my bed as if I were dead. 20. And it was indeed a miracle that I did not die from what I experienced; and it was the first time that I experienced this sort of wound.

F. 21. Then, the time came for everyone to go to Holy Communion, and I was to lead the novices, as was the custom in this Monastery. 22. However, since they could not see me in choir, the novices as usual came to call me in my cell, and finding me like this, as if dead upon my bed, they went in a great fright to find the nuns and the Superior, saying //25v// that the Mistress was dead. 23. So the nuns and the Mother Superior came running straight away, and they began to pull me by the arms to rouse me; and seeing that I did not hear them, the Superior commanded me by virtue of holy obedience to get up and take communion. 24. And just as if I had woken up from a most sweet sleep, I said to her with a sigh: “Oh may God pardon you!” and then fell silent. ⁶ 25. But when I wanted to get up to go to Holy Communion, I found my nerves so badly stretched in my arms and chest, that I thought I would die of pain; but in order to obey I made myself go,

³ *dapoi*: ‘dapò’, ‘dopo’ - “later” (cf. BATTAGLIA, IV, p. 21; D’ASCOLI, p. 203).

⁴ *core*: ‘coro’ - “choir” (and elsewhere).

⁵ *su [-l->-d]el*: ‘sul’ - “upon.”

⁶ *taque*: ‘tacqui’ - “fell silent.”

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supported by the nuns, up to the communion rail; I took communion, and then they brought me back to bed, and I lay there like this, remembering everything that I had seen. 26. I kept this divine beauty of my Lord internally, my heart melting with love in a way that made me weep⁷ very sweet⁸ tears from my eyes, nor could I move any member of my body.

G. 27. It was a miracle that I did not die through the violence the nuns did to me at this time. 28. So I was left with nerve damage and a slow fever for an entire year, in a continual absent-mindedness, in such a manner that I was not capable of any worldly matter: I could not feed myself and my soul was always as if outside itself. 29. Whenever I went to the refectory, I would be overtaken by tears, without me being able to prevent them, and at recreation times, the same, in a most vehement desire to see God and liberate myself from my body; and these desires were so strong that I really thought that my soul wished to leave this miserable life.

H. 30. This was so painful a Purgatory that⁹ I have no way of describing it; but my soul was silent, because I had been taught so by my interior Master. 31. My speech was my sighs and tears; when anyone asked me what the matter was, my eyes would respond; I could neither eat nor sleep; whenever I ate, it was with such nausea that my stomach¹⁰ brought it straight back up again; anything of the world gave me pain. 32. I was overtaken by such a bodily weakness, that I was forced to take //26r// to my bed continually, with a slow fever that dehydrated my body, in such a manner that all were convinced, including the doctors, that I had progressed to contracting consumption;¹¹ so they gave me broths and other things for fear of such an infirmity.

I. 33. I had a divine peace and simplicity in my soul, as if I was in the company of the Saints; sometimes, I felt outside myself so much, without me knowing how to say what the matter was, I thought¹² I was in heaven with my Beloved. 34. But my body was so feeble, that I felt myself gradually failing, and during the day I needed to take a little snack of only a few mouthfuls, because I could not bear to weigh myself down with food through the nausea¹³ that I suffered. 35. My spiritual Father thought the end of my life was near, and told me that I could not last long like this; so he ordered me not to take any kind of medication any more, because nothing helped me in my illness.

J. 36. Here I cannot describe all the graces that my Lord in His goodness gave me at this time, since they are innumerable, and my mind was lost in all the mercies without

⁷ *labicare*: 'lambicare' - "to exude, to weep"; in a figurative sense, "to make ... flow little by little", cf. BATTAGLIA, VIII, p. 705; D'ASCOLI, p. 294.

⁸ *soavi* [..]

⁹ *che*: "that" ms add.

¹⁰ *se... stomaco*: 'se mi cibavo, era con tanta nausea che lo stomaco' - "whenever I ate, it was with such nausea that my stomach."

¹¹ *etticia*: 'etisia', 'tisi' - "phthisis, consumption", cf. BATTAGLIA, V, p. 501.

¹² *tanto... pareva*: 'tanto mi sentivo... che mi pareva' - "I felt... so much... that I thought."

¹³ *nausa*: 'nausea' - "nausea" (analogous cases in 14:18 and 26).

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number that I received from His infinite generosity: they were continuous and my soul was always drawn up and out of my own self. 37. I felt so much shame when I remembered that I had received so much and had then been so ungrateful for His infinite love, that I would have hidden myself in hell, if it were possible, because I deserve to be there for eternity, not just for the sins I have committed, but for all the graces I have received so unworthily and my ingratitude to Him who loved me so much.

K. 38. But let us leave this point, or I shall never finish talking about it, and let us return to our subject, so as to obey him who has commanded me to write these things. 39. I was so infirm of body at this time that I lay in bed with fever and sorrows, and so worn out, as I have said, that they feared for my life, so my Superior, seeing this, was inspired by God, and came one day into the Noviciate where I lay sick, and began to give a good mortifying reprimand to all the novices, telling them that because of their worthlessness the Lord had made me ill like this, and so she did not want any of them to take communion again, until I was healed of this infirmity; and she added many other mortifying words to this. 40. And because these good novices were very virtuous souls and very fervent, living like so many ¹⁴ little angels, they were all afflicted and humbled by pain and remorse, truly believing that because of their imperfections, this was how the Lord was dealing with me; and so, also inspired by God, they resolved to write a letter to my spiritual Father, describing their afflictions to him and begging him to come immediately to their aid. 41. So my spiritual Father sent me an urgent command to get up out of my bed, and become well and attend to the novices. 42. So as soon as this letter arrived, I found I was able to get up out of bed, and I felt these sorrows cease, and I began to feel better and my fever went, but I was not free of my usual continual alienations, most especially ¹⁵ after Holy Communion.

L. 43. I was still unable to eat, and with these vehement desires to see God I thought ¹⁶ I was in a continual Purgatory of consuming fire. 44. And in this state my experiences were very different from what other people say: that the way is easier, when God gives graces to the soul, such as those of aridity and desolation. 45. And I say that the way of love is harder, and more spirit and courage is needed than the way of pains; and we suffer more pain of death and hell on the spiritual way when God leads the soul by the way ¹⁷ of fire, [than on the way through the water of tribulations]. * [The way of fire] * requires more spirit to bear God in the weakness of our miserable condition ¹⁸ and sometimes the soul sees herself on the brink of death. 46. And I can say this, since I have experienced both this way and the other, as may be read in the book called the

¹⁴ *come [-Agioli] tante*

¹⁵ *massima*: 'massimamente' - "most especially."

¹⁶ *stava... sembrava*: 'stavo... che mi sembrava' - "I was... that I thought."

¹⁷ *per [-fu] camino*

* Extra text found in Fr. E. Lage's translation.

* Extra text found in Fr. E. Lage's translation.

¹⁸ *il camino... condicione*: 'nel cammino di fuoco, è necessaria più forza d'animo per sostenere Dio, e questo a causa della debolezza della nostra misera condicione' - "the way of fire requires more force of spirit to bear God, and this is because of the weakness of our miserable condition."

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“Work of the Institute”, which notes the internal and external tribulations that my soul suffered afterwards.

Chapter 14

1

How I went on to the office of Sacristan, and what happened at that time.

A. 2. Now that my year as Mistress of Novices had finished, my Superior thought it well to relieve me of this responsibility, and for the sole aim of giving my body some relief, she //27r// gave me a more suitable task, because both the nuns and the Mother Superior loved me very much, and feared for my health in the state I was in. 3. So they gave me the office of Sacristan, to my very great pleasure, because of the welcome company of the Blessed Sacrament, where I was to serve my beloved Spouse. 4. But then I was so inept and forgetful again that I was not fit for anything, since I had lost not just my memory, but every natural ability; and I was so feeble that I was no good for any domestic task.

B. 5. Meanwhile I began to exert myself as best I could, and I began to decorate the church with flowers, and I lingered all day in the area of the lower choir, working with my hands, and enjoying the sweet company of my beloved Jesus. 6. And there I could keep away from any human contact, so that I would not be observed by anyone when I was in those continual ¹ alienations, which I suffered at that time because I could never forget the divine beauty I saw in that last vision. 7. And I had the interior company of my Lord Jesus Christ ever present before me, who melted my heart with love and did not leave me for even a moment, and there was nowhere for me to either see my imperfections, or reflect on them before I went to confession, but my self-same Lord, whenever I went to confession, would suggest to me what I should accuse myself of to the confessor, and He would also suggest the act of sorrow to me, in the act of my confession.

C. 8. My spirit experienced a divine purity, a fragrance that came out of my sacramental Jesus, that delighted me ² and nourished me in a true simplicity of love; and sometimes I felt that my spouse Jesus, my love, held me close to Himself with certain words so expressive of love which are not allowed here, nor do I dare refer to them, since it is His pleasure for me to place ³ them in the silence of love.

D. 9. Amongst everything else, I suffered a great cross, because, whenever the major feasts came, I had to prepare the church, as was the custom; so, all too well aware that I could not remember anything and had lost all my natural abilities, I would go and open the cupboards ⁴ in the Sacristy in order to set the linen in order, the flowers and

¹ *non... continue*: 'non ero osservata da nessuno in quelle alienazioni continue' - "I would not be observed by anyone when I was in those continual alienations"

² *mi*: ms add.

³ *ponchi*: 'ponga' - "place."

⁴ *stipi*: 'armadi' - "cupboards."

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everything else I had to do, //27v// and I would forget why I had opened it, and what I had come to get; and I would trot to and fro without me ever being able to remember what I had to do. 10. So when I was quite worn out by coming and going so many times, opening and closing everything without me being able to remember ⁵ what I had ⁶ to do, I sat myself down at the communion rail, and I began to weep like a little girl at the feet of my Lord: I would gently complain to Him about my stupidity, and You, my sweet love Jesus, would share that pain of mine and feel it with me.

E. 11. Just then a religious Sister came in to make a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and found me weeping like this; so she came up to me and asked me why I was weeping, and I told her all about what I was suffering through my stupidity and inability to remember anything. 12. So she took the keys, and got out everything I needed, smiling and sympathising with my affliction, and she told me that every time I had to prepare the church, I was to call her, and she would help me; and this she did from then on.

F. 13. I was so inept at every domestic job, that everyone believed it was a natural inability; even my relatives told the nuns: “Her? It’s no good asking her to do anything, because she is capable of nothing.” 14. So great was my stupidity. 15. My Lord alone, because He is a God of goodness, wanted to love a thing so vile and miserable: may He be forever praised in eternity!

G. 16. This loving God had such kindness towards me that He even took a very special care of my body at this time. 17. On one occasion I wanted to use a ladder to go up into the attic of the house and I did not watch how I placed it, so the ladder fell with great force: and although I had gone right to the top of it, I suffered no ill-effects whatsoever, although I could have been expected to have broken both my legs through the resounding blow that I took from such a height.

H. 18. Another time, when I had such a lack of appetite and nausea in my stomach, the thought came into my mind, just momentarily, without me dwelling on it, //28r// for some puff pastry * such as they make in the Monastery. 19. I thought no more of it, nor did I speak to anyone about it, but the following morning a lay sister brought me a hot pastry, sent to me by the Mother Vicar, under express obedience to eat it right away, and of course I was amazed by all this, since I had not told anyone of this passing thought I had. 20. So when I met up with the Mother Vicar, I asked her how she knew about this, and she told me that early that morning while she was in bed, she heard an internal voice tell her to make some pastry, and do it for me to eat, because I had thought of it and needed it. 21. And all this filled me with confusion and embarrassment

⁵ *raccordare*: ‘ricordare’ - “remember.”

⁶ *dove*: ‘dovevo’ - “I had to.”

* *sfogliatella* - a little tart of light pastry - Tr.

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when I considered the kindness of my Lord, who even thought of these trifles out of His love for me.

I. 22. Another time, when I was confined to bed with very a serious illness and quite unable to eat, they bought a quantity of chestnuts ⁷; all those that were opened and brought to me to eat were found to be absolutely perfect and ready for eating; all the others that were left ⁸ were opened to be served up in the refectory, and there was ⁹ a good quantity of them, and they were all found to be empty: not even one of them was found to be any good, to the wonder and amazement of all the nuns.

J. 23. I could write a book about all these things, to my own shame. 24. He made sure that both the nuns and the Superior loved me a great deal; and ensured that they took care of my body in its needs, and when my memory lapsed, they supported me in my weaknesses. 25. My spiritual Father had appointed a nun to take care of me and give me comfort in these swoons that I was then suffering from, and he sent a provision of spirit of cerato, cinnamon water, biscuits ¹⁰ and chocolate, and he ordered me to take them when needed, and when this nun ordered me to; and he gave orders to this nun that when everything was used up, she was to advise him straight away, so that he could provide more.

K. 26. The Mother Superior, seeing me there in the refectory with the food in front of me, and unable to eat through the nausea in my stomach - as soon as I sat down at the table, seeing the food in front of me, I began to weep without noticing it, because of the impossibilities and difficulties that I was suffering - so the Mother Superior took pity on me and made me take a bit of raw egg to restore me; and it all had to be in small quantities, otherwise my stomach would have rejected it.

L. 27. The reason why I had so deteriorated in health was my internal communications with God; and they were so continuous that I despair of narrating here what I experienced in my spirit; I cannot explain them, because I was alienated like this from myself every day, and the Lord's graces followed on from each other. 28. Among other things, there was the purity of my Jesus: His divine beauty melted the marrow of my soul, and the desire to die gave me death without me dying.

M.. 29. O my love, this was far too hard a command for me! How could I ever describe all Your mercies, that You have shown to me without number in spite of my lack of merit? You alone know them, and I, a vile ant, do not wish to appear before Your

⁷ *angine: ancine - ricci del mar*, cf. D'ASCOLI, p. 52. (I think *ancine* refers to the prickly cases of chestnuts, and I have translated it as such - Tr.)

⁸ *remassero: 'rimasero'* - "remained", i.e., "were left."

⁹ *es: ms add.*

¹⁰ *grafioli: 'raffioli'* (from the Spanish *grafioles*) little biscuits like an S made of flour, sugar and lard, cf. D'ASCOLI, p. 492.

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divine presence unless I can cover my face out of my shame and embarrassment at the acts of ingratitude I committed against You, my love.

N. 30. One morning, after I took communion and had my usual alienations, I did not wish to be observed by anyone, so when we finished our prayers in choir in common I retired to my cell and lay down upon my bed,¹¹ as my body was so weakened by an overwhelming force that melted my heart: I was penetrated by the most pure eyes of my beloved God, with a very great internal clarity. 31. So when my soul was totally occupied with its interior silence, the Lord said to me: “*I want you to be the mother of many souls that I wish to save by means of you.*” Amongst other things, He showed me a company of religious souls whom I did not know, and added that I was to found monasteries; but He revealed nothing else¹² to me.

O. 33. I understood nothing of all this so I paid not the slightest attention to it, because it seemed very strange to me, since I was so incapable and useless for anything. 34. But then this monastery was dissolved through the will of God, as we shall soon be saying in its proper place, and my Mother Superior had a rapture of the spirit and before she left this monastery, the Lord revealed all this to her as well, because she turned to me after her rapture, which happened in //29r// front of all the nuns who were still there in the monastery, and she being a great servant of God, she hugged me and kissed me and said: “Pray to God for me, for you will do great things for the glory of God; the dissolution of this monastery has been ordained by God for His greater glory.” 35. But all this was many years after the first time the Lord spoke to me; and I paid no attention to either this or the other, because I thought it was impossible for me; nor did I understand the way, nor how these things were to be brought about.

P. 36. But to return to our discourse, as I have said, I had been given the office of Sacristan, and all the while the graces of the Lord grew in my soul. 37. My spiritual Father lived in Naples, and so I could only tell him about the things happening in my soul by means of letters. 38. The Lord so disposed things that some Fathers from the Pious Workmen* came on a mission¹³ to that district, and it was ordained that some of these Fathers came to give the spiritual exercises at our monastery; and the chief one of them came who led the mission, who was \made/ a bishop¹⁴ later on. 39. I found myself wanting to open up the state of my soul to this Father, but because I still had my guide of so many years, Father Bartolomeo Cacace, a man of exceptional virtue and doctrine, a

¹¹ *in su l'etto*: ‘sul letto’ - “upon my bed.”

¹² *nintaltro*: ‘nient’altro’ - “nothing else.”

* *Padri Pii Operarii* - Fathers of the Congregation of Pious Workmen - See *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1913) Vol. VII, p. 5d, for the name of this Congregation in English.

¹³ We are in the spring of 1722, cf. R. TELLERÍA, *Ven. Sororis...*, p. 102.

¹⁴ This means *Tommaso Falcoia* (Naples, 13th March 1663 - Castellammare di Stabia, 20th April 1743). He entered the Pious Workmen in 1686, and became an eminent member of them, culminating in being nominated their General Commander in 1713-1716. In 1730 he was made Bishop of Castellammare di Stabia. About him see T. FALCOIA, *Letters to St. Alphonsus of Liguori, Ripa, Sportelli, Crostarosa*, edited by O. GREGORIO, Rome 1963; O. GREGORIO, *Mons. Tommaso Falcoia, 1663-1743*, Rome, 1955; B. PELLEGRINO, *Piety and spiritual direction in the correspondence of Tommaso Falcoia. From the religious history of the first half of the 18th Century in Naples*, in “History Review of the Church in Italy” no. 30 (1976), pp. 451-488.

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priest of Naples respected by all the clergy, both for being a great theologian and for the sanctity and innocence of his life, I thought there was no point opening up and revealing the state of my soul to the said Father; so I decided not to go to him, except just for an absolution, so as not to be the odd one out.

Q. 40. But the following night, while I was at prayer, the Lord commanded me to go to that Father, and tell him the whole state of my soul, because this was His will, for soon he would become my spiritual Father; and He showed me the state of this Father's soul; and He told me that during that night, He would show this Father the state of my soul. 41. So in the morning I wrote him a note, advising him that I would come to the grille, as I wanted to discuss the state of my soul with him, because this was the will of the Lord. 42. So after he finished his morning homily, he had me called, and I revealed to him all that had happened to me that night and what the Lord had told me about him; and he told me that he had been given light about me by the Lord that very same night during his prayers; and so he ordered me to continue to write to him in the future, //29v// without me leaving my guide, so as to see what the Lord wanted; and he assured me that my spiritual way was of God.

R. 43. But the Lord put me into the hands of this Father to make me taste the precious fruits of the Cross, which I had not tasted before, even though he was a great servant of God. 44. I spoke with this Father, and our mutual discussion¹⁵ lasted more than two hours, with many excesses of the spirit between us; but when I finally got out from his soliloquy,¹⁶ I felt such a great sense of disturbance that it upset me, because I thought it had been a useless action, and that I had opened myself up to him needlessly, since I had my own guide; and that everything that had happened to me the previous night, had been the demon and not the Lord as I had believed.

S. 45. So all that day I was in doubt and fear that my Spouse was angry with me, because perhaps I had done that act out of vanity, and a thousand and one similar things; so I determined to go and excuse myself from this Father the following morning. 46. And this is what I did, and humbling myself in my pride, I accused myself and confessed those faults, telling him that it had been the demon who had deceived me.

T. 47. The Father spared no effort to persuade me that these concerns were all from the demon, and commanded me, by virtue of holy obedience, to write everything down for him and listen to the enemy no more; and this is how he calmed me down. 48. And he wanted me to come to him a few more times, while he was there giving the exercises in the monastery, and he used the occasion to tell me that on the coast of Amalfi there was a city called¹⁷ Scala, where he, and another of his companions,¹⁸ had gone to

¹⁵ *conferna*: 'conferenza', 'conferire' - "discussion."

¹⁶ *soliloquio*: 'colloquio' - "talk." (I have preserved the original word "soliloquy" here. - Tr).

¹⁷ *nomina*: 'nominata' - "called."

Chapter 14

preach holy missions, and on one such occasion both of them had taken on the task of founding a monastery there for middle-class persons. 49. And with help from the city which had the site and the income for such a foundation, and with the consent of the ordinary Bishop, both of these Fathers took on the task of founding a monastery of virgins there, consecrated to the Lord; and with the help of God they had made a beginning to the foundation, using the Rule of St. Augustine and the Constitutions of St. Francis //30r// de Sales.¹⁹ 50. To this effect they had got hold of the rules and constitutions from the Sisters of the Visitation in their monastery which is in the city of Naples, with all their regulations in writing; at the same time,²⁰ these Fathers gathered nine young ladies together, virgins of an exemplary life, with a religious Tertiary²¹ of the Order of St. Teresa, chosen by them as the foundress and Superior of the monastery.

U. 51. Meanwhile a beginning was made to the new foundation, and with the spirit and fervour of all these good souls, they began to attract enquiries from many young girls, and in a brief space of time they reached the number of thirty-three. 52. But they were somewhat disconsolate because the foundress, not being a nun from a monastery, when it came to matters concerning a perfectly regular life, she did not properly understand the rules and constitutions about them, and so blunders were made in many observances, and she had no idea of how to allay the doubts that were born in her religious daughters. 53. Because of this, the above-named Father, who was later a Bishop, ended up as the spiritual director of the monastery; and with his other companion he assisted as much as he could with the interpretation of these observances, but since he neither understood nor had practised those observances, no wonder the aforesaid nuns ended up discontented, and prayed to the Lord to give them enlightenment about His divine will. 54. And this went on for fourteen years, although with the good guidance of these two Fathers each one of them individually made much progress in the spirit and on the way of prayer; they vied with each other in the holy virtues with much fervour and devotion, awaiting God's disposition regarding the perfection of the regular life they had undertaken. 55. The said Father told me about all these things, and I refer to

¹⁸ *Maurizio Filangieri* (Naples, 1656 - Naples, 1730): like Tommaso Falcoia he was a member of the Congregation of Pious Workmen, of which he was the General Commander from 1722 to 1728; about him cf. O. GREGORIO, *Mons. Tommaso Falcoia...* pp. 133-187.

¹⁹ In reality we are dealing rather with a reform, given that the Conservatorium of the Most Holy Conception had been erected following the testimony of the priest Lorenzo della Mura in 1633. Falcoia and Filangieri began to be interested in it in 1719, on the occasion of a mission held at Scala. In 1720 the Visitandine Rule was introduced. Cf. C. D'AMATO, *Scala un centro amalfitano di civiltà*. (Scala an Amalfic centre for civilians) - Scala 1975, pp. 92-97; O. GREGORIO, *Preistoria del monastero redentorista di Scala* (The prehistory of the Redemptoristine monastery at Scala) in *Spic. hist* 5 (1957) pp. 407-415; G. IMPERATO, *L'Ordine delle Redentoriste nella Storia*, (The Redemptoristine Order in History) in *Vita Religiosa nella Costiera Amalfitana. Monasteri - Conventi - Confraternite*, (Religious Life along the Amalfi Coast. Monasteries - Convents - Confraternities) I, Maiori 1981, pp. 429-453; L. MANSI, *La culla del duplice istituto del SS. Redentore di Scala, Memorie* (The cradle of the double Institute of the Most Holy Redeemer at Scala. Memorials) Rome 1904.

²⁰ *medesimamente*: 'contemporaneamente' - "at the same time."

²¹ *bizzogha*: *bizoca* or *bizzoca*. This means Sister Maria Giuseppa della Croce (Sr. Maria Josefa of the Cross), in lay life Caterina Schisano. Until she was 23 years old she belonged to the Conservatorium of the Teresian reform of Sister Serafina of Capri of Massa Lubrense. Coming out of this community, she remained with her family for about 30 years, ie. until the end of 1720, when she was transferred to Scala, where she passed away in 1750, cf. AMRSc. *Libro di memoria* (Book of Memorials) pp. 13-19; *imitazione*, p. 60, note 147.

Chapter 14

them ²² here because of what I have to say afterwards, so that it may be understood how God wished ²³ to make a beginning to His Work.

²² *lò*: 'l'ho' - "to them."

²³ *volze*: 'volle' - "wished."

Chapter 15

1.

How I was again given the office of Mistress of Novices and Educandes, and of what happened to me at that time.

A. 2. When I finished my year in the office of Sacristan, holy obedience again put me in the office of Mother of Educandes and //30v// Novices,¹ as there was at that time a thriving educandate of twelve little girls and three young novices. 3. So I was given the task of cultivating this little garden of my Lord, to the great consolation of my spirit, as I found I had a very great hunger and desire to help others, and because there were souls who loved my God with fervour.

B. 4. At this time the Lord began to awaken me from my exterior inabilities, and gave me a clarity of intellect, informing me of the truth of my faith through a very efficacious supernatural light, and, by attracting me to Himself, He showed me how He lives and is life in the justified soul. 5. My Jesus, by His intimate union of love, made a sweet likeness of eternal life in my soul by His divine grace, making me understand what was written in the Holy Gospels,² where He says: “I am the Way, the Truth and the Light: no man comes to the Father, but by Me”³ and He showed my soul one of the works that He has done, (and it is so stupendous), of the divine union with human nature, and that the soul reaches it by faith, through the grace of His Holy Spirit and through the marvellous fruit of His good works and⁴ by virtue of His most holy life, while He was a wayfarer on earth. 6. But since it was He who has been made the way to heaven, and truth because of the gift of the virtue of the faith revealed to us by a supernatural gift, it is He who is the way, truth and light of grace in our intellects; and life through the union He made of the divine person with human nature. 7. He lives, in a union of love in God, as a wayfarer in all the souls dear to Him, the life of the life of each one of them.*

C. 8 And He has become a mystic ladder, by which man ascends from earth to heaven, as is explained in the “Grades of Prayer”, in the second book;⁵ and so man ascends from the misery of this earth by means of this mystic ladder of gold that is the

¹ We are in May 1722. It should be noted that at Roccapiemonte, Crostarosa always speaks only of Mistress of Educandes, cf. *Radici*, p. 449.

² *Evangelio*: ‘Evangelo’ - “Gospels.”

³ Jn. 14:6.

⁴ e: ms add.

* *Florilegium no. 16*, p. 37.

⁵ The complete title is: “*Distinzione di molti gradi di oratione concessi dal Signore a l’anima sua sposa, formati in sedici scalini di contemplazione ed unione amorosa.*” (Distinctions of many grades of prayer conceded by the Lord to the soul His spouse, formed into sixteen steps of contemplation and loving union). The indication “in the second book” is perhaps to be understood by the fact that, in the manuscript, these follow the other work “*Trattenimenti del anima col suo Sposo Giesù, di dolce comunicazione di amore nel Verbo di Dio, dove si dichiarano in colloqui molte indigigenze divine e l’inderne ammaestramenti riceuti nello Spirito di purità, nel fondo dello Spirito, nella vita di amore in Dio, nel possesso della divina unione,*” (Dialogues of the soul with her Spouse Jesus, of sweet communications of love in the Word of God, where are declared in colloquies many divine intelligences and the internal masteries received in the Spirit of purity, in the depths of the Spirit, in the life of love in God, in the possession of the divine union.)

Chapter 15

virtues of the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, up to the empyrean heaven where God sits; and therefore He says that no-one shall reach the Father, except by Him.

D. 9. We know that heaven is very far from the earth: so who would be able to rise so high if not Him who has descended from heaven with His stupendous humiliations, and has been made like us simply to make us rise to heaven united with Him, //31r// so that we might enjoy eternal life in Him? 10. Therefore He says that no-one shall ascend to heaven, except Him who has descended from heaven.⁶ 11. This is the explanation for a perfect union of the soul with the Word of God made Man, which gives us the reason for this more than divine work which Our Lord Jesus Christ has done in the souls who are His spouses.

E. 12. The Way is the works and virtues of Jesus Christ, which are made works of the soul too through His grace; the Truth of faith is infused into our intellects⁷ by a supernatural gift to the souls dear to Him; and the Life is love and union⁸ with the beloved Word. 13. And so we may conclude that He is a wayfarer in those who are united to Him through love and a true union in God through faith, through holy works and grace in the Holy Spirit. 14. And from all those who are united to Him through their works, through their faith, and through supernatural grace, in a union of love, one single person in Christ, the God made Man, ascends to heaven. 15. The Lord has mad[e] heaven so high from the earth to make it clear to us that, unless you leave all the visible and tangible things of the earth, you cannot ascend to heaven with Him who descended from heaven.

F. 16. I truthfully confess my ignorance on this point: I believed I had already arrived in heaven, when my Lord showed me all these things in an experience of love; I believed I was already in possession of this great good. 17. This was my very great ignorance, because these things were all tokens, since I had not reached either the state or the possession of these blessings: too much was still lacking! 18. I was still on earth: I had not yet been purified with the w\|a\|ter and fire of suffering, nor by tribulations; I was still full of the earth and believed I was pure, because the purity of my Jesus was what surrounded me and made me smell good. 19. And these divine approaches surrounded me with light; they were given to me so I could see how the Israelites were allowed to see the Promised Land many years before they were given possession of it by the Lord. 20. It is in the nature of our pride for us to believe that we are much more than what we really are: God wanted the land promised to the Israelites to be fought over and conquered by force of arms and much suffering, before they could take possession of it, and in the same way, the Lord wants the spiritual soul, wearing the armour of the Cross, and also fighting and conquering, to first spend a long series of years in taking possession of this divine and intimate union with the loving Word of God.

⁶ Cf. Jn. 3:13.

⁷ *la verità... intelletto*: 'la verità della fede è infusa nel nostro intelletto' - "the Truth of faith is infused into our intellects."

⁸ *lunione*: 'l'unione' - "union."

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G. 21. As soon as the Lord began to instruct my intellect in these truths He took away my continual alienations and exterior inabilities, and my soul was awoken spiritually to receive a continuous communication ⁹ //31v// of intelligence, both of Sacred Scripture and of all the law of the Lord, in a very enjoyable way for my soul. 22. But I received everything from the Word of God, Jesus, my love.

⁹ *communicatio*: 'comunicazione' - "communication."

Chapter 16

1.

How the Lord disposed for that monastery to be suppressed, and all that happened at that time.

A. 2. The Lord had changed the state of my soul, and since I was now somewhat improved in strength and health, although I never remember having had perfect health in my life, because right from my childhood I had poor health, ¹ and I have always suffered from my stomach and pains in my insides and vomiting, the Lord at this time now ordered me to begin to do penance and bodily mortifications, so as to purify my flesh. 3. And once I obtained permission from my spiritual Father, I began to put into practice what the Lord had ordered, and a desire was awakened in me to love and suffer for Him who loved me so much.

B. 4. But I did not really understand what sort of penance the Lord wanted from me: for I understood nothing other than bodily penance and mortification, but what the Lord wanted besides this was another sort of penance and mortification, a spiritual one. 5. And this I understood later on, not then; nor was I capable of it, at least until the Lord taught me about the death of my own self, ^{*} as I have written about at length in the book called “The Little Spiritual Garden”, which I have written as ordered by holy obedience, in this monastery where I am now. ²

C. 6. A year and some months after I began writing to that missionary Father, mentioned above in the previous chapter, a fierce tribulation arose in this monastery: and this was that a very powerful person ³ took such control over the monastery, through the will of the Lord, that she reduced the poor nuns to the ultimate in tribulations, in such a manner that all //32r// the monastery’s assets were seized, and all the spiritual Fathers were taken away from the nuns, with so much plotting by the demon, that it would be too long a story to describe everything that happened in this tribulation; in such a manner that the local ordinary bishop ⁴ advised the nuns to take back their dowries, and each one of them transfer to another monastery, and this monastery be suppressed, so they would be free of such slavery, ⁵ so prejudicial to religious quiet and observance, because he could not protect the monastery, as this person was very strong and powerful.

D. 7. The nuns all considered that the Bishop’s views were very expedient, and it seemed just the right answer to free themselves from the continual vexations that they

¹ *sanità*: ‘sanità’ - “health.”

^{*} *Florilegium no. 97, p. 112.*

² The complete title is “*Gesù Christo vita dell’anima. Giardinetto inderno del divino amore, orto chiuso dell’uomo Dio e un’anima christiana* (Jesus Christ life of the soul. Internal Garden of the divine love, enclosed kitchen-garden of God Made Man and a Christian soul). It is the largest of Crostarosa’s works: about 600 pages of meditations and elevations, cf. *incontri*, pp. 343-455.

³ The very powerful person to whom she refers was Isabella Mastrillo, the local Duchess, cf. R. TELLERÍA, *Ven. Sororis...* pp. 102-107.

⁴ The Theatine Francesco Maria Carafa (1656-1737), cf. RITZLER - SEFRIN, V, p. 291.

⁵ *sciavitù*: ‘schiavitù’ - “slavery.”

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were suffering, and from the future threats that they foresaw. 8. So all the nuns wrote to their families and told them about what the bishop had advised, and it was approved by all the nun's families.

E. 9. I did not just write to my family, but I also wrote to that missionary Father mentioned above, to hear from him what he would do for me and for my two other sisters, one who was professed and who was some years older than me, and another, an educande, who was younger than me,⁶ so as to know the will of the Lord. 10. The said Father replied to me that without a doubt the Lord wanted me in the monastery of Scala, where he had founded the monastery, and was its spiritual Father; and from that moment the Lord placed me under his guidance, as I had lost the guidance of Father Bartolomeo Cacace, who had been my spiritual Father for so many years.

F. 11. So I advised my family straight away, and the three of us left that monastery;⁷ and while our transfer was being dealt with, our family brought us to the villa of Portici, to help us recover a little from all the tribulations that had arisen; and we were a month in that villa, before I explained to my father about us going to Scala, that the spiritual Father had mentioned to me, because I was still undecided in my mind, because my family, especially my father, was being pressured about us by certain governors of a monastery that was to be founded in Tramonti, which was located a few miles out of Naples. 12. And since this foundation //32v// was advantageous for them, as we were to go there as foundresses with no monetary payment, and this foundation was conveniently near to the City of Naples, my family were totally inclined to favour it; and also because of the eagerness that those who had the care of this new foundation had, as they had such an appetite⁸ to bring us to that place, that they did not cease to plead with us and pester us⁹ with such reasons that I did not know how to be rid of them; so I began to doubt what the will of the Lord was.

G. 13. One morning I went to take communion, and the Lord said to me: "This is my will, that you go to the monastery of Scala: and there you will exercise yourself in the virtue of humility, and you will be as the least of all among those sisters." 14. So every doubt and fear was lifted from me, and I began to explain myself to my father, showing my firm resolution to retreat to the monastery of Scala. 15. And after many discussions, my father, so as not to displease me, consented to my decision, although my older sister, who was also a professed nun, was strongly opposed to it, because in that monastery of Scala there was no other spiritual Father than those two missionaries¹⁰ who had founded it, and another guide was not permitted; and she was not happy with the aforesaid

⁶ The younger sister was Giovanna, born on 23rd. August 1701, who rejoined the sisters at Marigliano in all probability in the first months of 1720, cf. *Imitations*, p. 53, note 104.

⁷ The departure took place on 16-17 October 1723, cf. R. TELLERÍA, Ven. Sororis..., pp. 119-122.

⁸ *appletti*: 'desideri' - "desires", i.e., "appetite."

⁹ *presistere*: 'persistere' - "pester us" (another case in 30:15).

¹⁰ It was the practice of the Pious Workmen to place a single director in their monasteries (cf. O. Gregorio, *Mons. Tommaso Falcoia...*, p. 223). In reality, Filangieri devoted himself mainly to practical things, leaving Falcoia as the spiritual guide.

Chapter 16

director, because he was very rigid, and her spirit was by nature very timid. 16. However, she depended on my decision, so I told her that the Lord's will was for us to go to the monastery of Scala and what I said calmed her down right away, and she resolved to go to the monastery of Scala on the Coast.¹¹

¹¹ The *front* of the page (side 32) and the *rear* (side 33) are the first of the corrections most notably present in the manuscript: they consist of two folios glued on the text - the authoress has covered the title and the beginning of a new chapter, so as to rewrite it.

Chapter 17

1. //33r//

Of her entry ¹ into the Monastery of Scala, and what happened on the journey, and what the Lord disposed.

A. 2. Once the Lord had disposed the entry of the aforesaid nun into the new Monastery of Scala, by means of Father Thomas Falcoia, ² the said Father settled the matter of the dowries for all three of the aforesaid sisters, a date for the journey was set, and Father Thomas ³ volunteered himself, together with the two vicars, that is, the Vicar of Scala and Ravello called Father Angelo Criscuolo, who was then the Vicar of Scala, and the other called Fr. Angelo Pantaleo, to accompany the above-mentioned nuns on the journey. 3. Then the date was set, so that the above-mentioned Fathers could be brought to Naples for that purpose, and it was the month of November of the year 1726. ⁴ 4. So the departure of the nuns was ordered with the greatest joy, through the desire that they had to see themselves soon enclosed within these sacred walls.

B. 5. But the demon, who always manages to hinder the things of the glory of God, gave us much trouble on this journey, ⁵ for he caused the horses to bolt and be so much out of control, provoked on by the coachmen themselves, ⁶ that they would have led us over a cliff, if the Lord had not rescued us with His divine assistance, and in such a manner that, when one of these coaches overturned, and the wheels went over the legs of one of those nuns, ⁷ it did her no harm whatsoever, through the protection of Mary Most Holy. 6. Then for the whole journey, these horses continued to run at full speed, as if they had been borne along by the wind; and all the time it seemed that they were about to plunge over a cliff.

C. 7. Finally, by the grace of the Lord and the assistance of Mary Most Holy, they arrived safely at the Monastery of Scala, and they were received by those good nuns to the joy of all. 8. The aforesaid nun desired to be counted among the number of the novices, and her sisters as well; so they made a request to Father Thomas Falcoia, \the local director/, ⁸ who approved their ⁹ wishes. 9. And fifteen days after their entry, ¹⁰

¹ The folio that Maria Celeste has glued over some of the lines of the first draft also covers *Capitolo terzo*, (Chapter Three), which precedes *Dell' ingresso* (Of her entry).

² p. [-d. -Tomaso -Falcoia] > \consaputo della missione/. (Fr. [don Tommaso Falcoia] > \the aforesaid of the mission/.) The handwriting and the interlinear integration are not by Crostarosa; the same holds true of the following by analogy.

³ p. [-d. -Tomaso] > \sudetto/ - Fr. [-don - Tommaso] > \the said/ Father.

⁴ The month and year are not correct. More accurate is the information given by the same Crostarosa in the deposition at Roccapiemonte: "The matter of the dowry having been arranged, in the month of November of either 1723 or 1724, I do not remember exactly, I went to the said Conservatorium under the predicate of *the Most Holy Conception*, which I kept for nine and a half years. (*Radici*, p. 446). The evidence of the documentation suggests January 1724, cf. *Imitazione*, p. 56, note 125.

⁵ Here Crostarosa inserts an *.

⁶ *inzulfati... galessieri*: 'aizzati dai medesimi calessieri' - "provoked on by the coachmen themselves"; cf. D'ASCOLI, p. 408 and BATTAGLIA, viii, p. 152.

⁷ *ed una di quelle religiose*: 'ed a una di quelle religiose' - "of one of those nuns."

⁸ p. [-d. -Tomaso -Falcoia -suo] > \sudetto del luogo direttore/

⁹ *il [-suo] - loro] sentimento* - "their wishes."

¹⁰ In all probability this means the 9th. February 1724, cf. *Imitazione*, p. 57, note 126.

Chapter 17

they put on the habit of St. Frances de Sales of the Order of the Visitation, and they began the course //33v// of their noviciate with much joy and fervour.¹¹ 10. And they thought they were in a Paradise on earth; and inspired¹² by this, other nuns of this monastery wished to re-do their noviciate in their company, and there were twelve novices in all; and they competed with each other in the fervour of a true religious life. 11. And the Lord poured out the floods of His mercies over those souls continually.

D. 12. The Mistress of Novices¹³ there was a nun of much spirit and fervour, who contributed much to their perfection and profit; so the aforesaid nun was very happy indeed to live in such good company, and it seemed that the Lord wished to recompense her for all the troubles she had suffered in the past tribulation when the previous monastery was suppressed, by letting her enjoy the solitude and peace that the Lord gave her in that holy retreat.

¹¹ At Roccapiemonte Crostarosa made the deposition: "In the Conservatorium of Scala I was called Sister Maria Celeste del Deserto (Sister Maria Celeste of the Desert): a name which I took together with my change into the Salesian habit. The change of name required under the new Rule led me to be called Sister M. Celeste del SS. Salvatore (Sister M. Celeste of the Most Holy Saviour), which name I still retain at the present time." (*Radici*, p. 450). Ursola instead took the name of Sister Maria Illuminata del S. Cenacolo (Sister Maria Illuminated by the Holy Cenacle); Giovanna that of Sister Maria Evangelista di Gesù (Sister Maria Evangelist of Jesus).

¹² *inanimate*: 'animate' - "inspired."

¹³ *mastra*: 'maestra' - "Mistress." This means Sister Maria Angela del Cielo (Teresa de Vito) (Sister Maria Angel of Heaven), who, as may be read in the *Libro di memorie* (Book of Memorials) of the Monastery of Scala, died on 30th. May 1783 "at the age of about eighty-one." (73), cf. *Imitazione*, p. 62, note 154; about her cf. DUMORTIER, *Les premières Rédemptoristines avec une notice sur leur institut* (The First Redemptoristines with a notice about their Institute), Lille - Bruges 1884, pp. 135 - 179; S. MAJORANO, *Il P. Carmine Fiocchi direttore spirituale. II. Corrispondenza con suor Maria Angela del Cielo*, in *Spic. hist.* 31 (1983) pp. 3-83 (S. MAJORANO, Fr. Carmine Fiocchi, spiritual director. II. Correspondence with sister Maria Angel of Heaven, in *Spic. hist.* 31 (1983) pp. 3-83.

Chapter 18

1.

Fourth Chapter ¹

**Here are mentioned many graces which the Lord
deigned to communicate to the aforesaid nun.**

A. 2. The Lord began to favour the aforesaid nun with a profusion of graces and mercies; more than any other, the most precious for her were the sacramental communions that she made every day by the order of her spiritual Father. 3. At Holy Communion the Lord began to make her feel the transformation of her own self into that of Jesus: then there in a divine light were stamped upon her all the virtues of the sacrosanct life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to the greatest satisfaction and joy of her soul.

B. 4. One ² morning, at Holy Communion, a voice in the centre of her soul told her a phrase that is said in the Creed at Mass, that is: “*Consubstantialem Patri*”, ³ (of one substance with the Father), so that her whole soul was filled with blessings, like a balm poured out. 5. In it were all the virtues, that breathed their fragrance in the Word of God made Man, and my soul understood that these virtues were there to regulate all the actions of her own life and those of all the lives of the just. 6. But after the divine communications ceased, the poor soul saw herself very unlike that original \that/ ⁴ had been stamped upon her; so she lived at the feet of her Lord, very humbled by how little she corresponded to His many mercies. ⁵

C. 7. Another morning, at Holy Communion, she was told by the Lord: “*Prepare yourself, for during this Lent I shall give you a great gift.*” 8. And the aforesaid soul was overtaken by an extraordinary recollection, in a manner that the sisters of the community seemed to her as shadows, without her being able to think at all either about what effect she had exteriorly, or also about what others did and said, through an absorption that occupied all the powers of her soul, submerged in goodness over every created object. //34r// 9. And in the Word and from the Word a fountain of grace and an enormous flood poured forth, that contained all the perfections and virtues: He breathed them into her. ⁶ 10. Then the Lord Jesus Christ made her a gift of His divine heart: He gave it to her as her own with His infinite love, causing her to shed many tears through the extreme sweetness in her soul; and he also gave her all His most holy life, with inviolable promises that He would unite her to Himself eternally in faith, hope and charity. 11. And it seemed to her that the Holy Spirit made the union by His own will

¹ ¹ No-one has succeeded in understanding the reason for the title *Capitolo quarto* (Fourth Chapter), given that it was used previously (cf. Chapter 4 above). Perhaps the folios 2-33 (smaller in format) represent a new and fuller version which has somehow been glued in with the rest, cf. *above* - Introduction - 2. The Manuscript. It should be noted that before the beginning of the preceding chapter we find *capitolo terzo* (Third Chapter) written, but covered up by the folio glued in.

² *un*: ms add.

³ *Consubstantialem Patris*: ‘Consubstantialem Patri’ (Latin) - “of one substance with the Father.”

⁴ This addition between the lines seems to have been another alteration by whoever revised the ms.

⁵ An asterisk * is inserted here too.

⁶ *egli in essa spirava*: ‘egli in essa le (perfezioni e virtù) spirava’ - “He breathed them (the perfections and virtues) into her.”

Chapter 18

and changed her into the divine, so that from that hour on it seemed to her soul that she had re-awakened to a new life very different from before. *

D. 12. Here we do not pretend to tell of all the graces and favours shown to the soul of this nun by the Lord, and the mercies shown to her, for that would be something ⁷ that would never be finished, but we only speak here of what concerns the Work of the new Institute given to the same nun by the Lord; and this only to the glory of God and to conform to the holy obedience imposed on us.

* *Florilegium no. 69, pp. 86-87.*

⁷ *caoso*: 'caos' - "chaos", i.e., "something."

Chapter 19

1.

Fifth Chapter

Of the manifestation of the Work, and how the Lord deigned to reveal it.

A. 2. On Rogation Day in the month of April of the year 1729, ¹ after the aforesaid nun had taken communion, her soul again experienced that transmutation of her being into that of Our Lord Jesus Christ. 3. But this time not like the past ones, for only her soul experienced that transmutation, and for the briefest of moments, she saw our Lord Jesus Christ, who united His most sacred hands, feet and side with those of the aforesaid nun, but not as a human body, but with a beauty and a divine splendour that no human tongue could ever describe.

B. 4. Then her soul experienced a flood of spiritual purity and sweetness, never before experienced; and she felt herself leaving her present life for a moment of happy beatitude. 5. Then she experienced all the precious blessings of the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ: they were stamped on her heart. 6. And then she heard the Lord say that this seal was stamped not just on her own heart, but on many souls who were to have life in Him by means of her.

C. 7. And then she was given to understand about a new Institute, that the Lord would erect in the world by means of her; and that in Him, in His life, were contained all the laws by which they were to live, and their Rules, like an opened book, written in an infinite divine perfection, with everything contained for all time in this divine Lamb; and so it remained stamped on her soul and in her heart. *

D. 8. So the aforesaid nun remained outside herself because of all the blessings that she felt, she lay in her immobile body, outside herself, for many hours; and although that revelation and divine transformation in her spirit happened with great brevity, nonetheless her soul remained absorbed in God like this through her amazement.

E. 9. Then the community, once the common prayer was finished, ordered the Rogation processions, which it was their custom to have at that time, but the aforesaid nun was aware of nothing, although the other novices called her and shook her //34v// to make her go with everyone else on the said procession, as it was her obligation to do. 10. But when they saw that she was aware of nothing, they realised that something supernatural was happening, because the aforesaid nun was known to suffer from these spiritual swoons; so they left her alone in peace. 11. Then the procession finished and all the nuns withdrew ² from choir; and the aforesaid remained in choir until the hour of

¹ The indication of the year is inexact: it should be 1725. The Rogation days of spring fall on 25th. April, cf. *Imitazione*, p. 60 (The major Rogation Day is on 25th April, concurrent with the feast of St. Mark the Evangelist, and the minor Rogations are three days before the feast of the Ascension - Cath. Enc. Vol XIII, p. 111).

* *Florilegium*, no. 2, p. 13.

² *ritirarono*: 'ritirarono' - "withdrew."

Chapter 19

None, and then she recovered, and recited None with the other nuns. 12. And when she went to the refectory, she was quite amazed to learn what had happened to her.

Chapter 20

1.

Sixth Chapter

**Of the fears and doubts that assailed the aforesaid nun,
and how she discussed it with her elder sister,
who advised her to explain everything to the Mistress of Novices,
which she did.**

A. 2. The aforesaid nun, after receiving that divine communication given to her by the Lord, began to feel many doubts and fears internally, and there were many things for her to take into consideration: all the more so because her spiritual Father was away in Rome on business of great importance regarding his Congregation, and so she had no-one she could confide in about what was happening in her soul, and also because she neither knew or understood where, when or how, or if the Lord wanted to bring about what He had indicated to her; so she was very worried ¹ about whether it was truly something from God or not.

B. 3. So therefore she decided to take no notice at all of what had happened to her, so as to free herself of any fear of being deceived by the enemy, should he have ever intended it, under the pretexts of things of God and false forms, to deceive her, or bewitch her, and disturb her from the peace that she enjoyed there, and from her own abjection, which she so desired. 4. So much the more so because she had only arrived in this monastery about five or six months ago, ² and the above-mentioned, when she had this manifestation in that monastery was some 28 years of age, she had been there so short a time ³ that she was still like a stranger; so that she determined in her own mind to keep quiet, and take no notice of anything that had happened to her.

C. 5. And there she was in humility before her Lord, imploring Him for help and light for pity's sake, begging Him not to let the enemy prevail in her soul. 6. But nevertheless she went on struggling, because the demon did not cease afflicting her internally with terrible fears, trying to tell her that she had put all this behind her, after the past tribulation of the suppression of the monastery where she had first gone, and that, now that she was enjoying a little quiet, she had been confronted by this new event just when she was the least in that monastery; all the more so because she was a novice, because no-one would believe her, and so it could not be a thing of God. 7. In the depths of her heart, she felt a sense of security and peace, but on the other hand, she was torn by two conflicts, as if her life, or interior way, was a total deception of the demon. 8. And she was torn both ways like this for many days, and so she retreated to the centre of her soul and she prayed without intermission, and did not speak to any human creature.

¹ The verb *era* - "she was" needs to be understood here.

² In actual fact this was about sixteen months, as she entered in the January of the preceding year.

³ *preve*: 'breve' - "brief", i.e., "so short a time."

Chapter 20

D. 9. Faced with this perplexity of spirit, she was a little sad and taciturn, and she no longer outwardly radiated that spiritual happiness as ⁴ //35r// she usually did; and then her older sister, a nun of great purity of life, noticed from her appearance that her sister had some internal worries.⁵ 10. She asked her in private what the matter was, and the aforesaid nun replied to her that she was suffering greatly, on account of certain doubts and fears that she had about certain things that were happening in her soul. 11. And so her sister compelled her in confidence to tell her what was worrying her, and kept compelling her, until the nun told her every last thing, firstly, everything the Lord had revealed to her, then her doubts and fears, and then that internal peace and security that God had given her internally. 12. And she told her that the more she withdrew into prayer and internal recollection, the less she felt those doubts and fears, and the more God made her feel sure that it was in no way a deception or a work of the enemy, because she felt the fullness of His love internally; but then, as soon as she came out of that recollection, she was vexed and oppressed by those same fears. 13. Then her sister comforted her, and told her that it would be a good idea to tell all this to the Mistress of Novices, and seek her advice and help in her need, and that it was no good trying to put it out of her mind, which is what she was thinking; but that she should place everything in the hands of the Lord and holy obedience.

E. 14. So when the aforesaid nun heard the sensible advice of her sister, she decided to follow it, and was comforted somewhat in spirit. 15. So the following day she said to her Mistress of Novices,⁶ who was a woman of virtue and spirit, that she needed to confide some spiritual things to her, and they agreed to meet after the morning recreation, in the hour of silence after lunch, so she called her aside somewhere to hear what the matter was. 16. The novice began to tell her point by point what had been happening in her soul, and all her doubts and fears, just the way it all happened. 17. And although the religious novice was sure that her Mistress would be scared or afraid because it was all so unusual, exactly the opposite happened, because the Lord moved her in spirit and fervour so much that she lit up with divine love, and with tears of rejoicing she said to her: “Praised be the Lord, for He has heard our prayers and desires of so many years, for we have petitioned Our Lord to make this monastery of ours perfect, and because we have not had a religious of our observance from the Order of the Visitation as our own foundress, we have spent many years without knowing how to determine what the spirit of our Rules of St. Francis de Sales is. 18. Now the time has come when the Lord will give us firm foundations for our regular life.”

F. 19. And so, full of rejoicing and spiritual contentment, she told her a long history of all the disorders they had suffered in the course of so many years, through not having had a foundress from the Order; and because the Superior they had at the present time was not a monastic nun, there were many disorders in the community, although the

⁴ *che*: ‘in cui’ - “in which”, here: “as.”

⁵ A cross + is added here above the line.

⁶ A cross + is added here above the line.

Chapter 20

aforesaid superior was a good soul, but she had no talent for government, as she was a simple soul; and what is more, the fact that she had not come as foundress from this same Order had been very harmful; and she confided other things to her as well.

G. 20. So after she had finished telling her all this, she ordered her novice to write down a full account of everything that had happened to her, so that upon the return of Father Thomas Falcoia ⁷ from Rome, which was expected soon, she would be able to give him ⁸ what she had written.

⁷ p. [-D, -Tomaso -Falcoia] > \spirituale/. The correction is in different handwriting.

⁸ *capitare*: 'recapitare' - "to deliver", i.e., "she would be able to give him."

Chapter 21

1.

Seventh Chapter

Of many clarities and revelations that the aforesaid nun had about the fulfilment of the Work of the Lord.

A. 2. Two days later, the aforesaid nun went to take communion, still with doubts and fears about what had happened to her; and when it was her turn to take communion, she went up humbly to ask for help from the Lord. 3. As soon as she saw Our Lord Jesus Christ, //35v// suddenly all that darkness fled away, because in the sacrosanct host she could see the Lord dressed in the habit of the Order, which was a dark red colour, and with the mantle exactly in the shape of the habit that the nuns have to wear. 4. This apparition was for only a moment, and was spiritual, and not with the eyes of her body; and it was full of such light and radiance, that it cannot be described by any comparison, because the mantle looked like it was a clear sky; His tunic was both bright in colour and deep red, and resplendent all over. 5. And He ¹ pointed out to her soul all the form and style of it, which was noted down in the Rules; and He also told her that He was certainly not the demon as she had been thinking, and that He was pleased that she was living in His life.

B. 6. And as a sign that this was His Work, He would give her a very great hunger to suffer opprobrium and trouble for love of Him, and in the midst of her troubles, take pleasure and joy in them, and feel a hunger and desire to suffer more things for Him; but most of all, He would receive all the good and all the evil that was done to her by people as if it was done to Him; and that was why she was to change her own life into His, so that she would make Him reborn in the world in the souls of those dear to Him, as a true testimony to the work of salvation that He had done for the love of mankind. ²

C. 7. Moreover, He let Himself be seen writing on the heart of the aforesaid nun with His most precious blood; and he ordered her to write the Rules in his name, and to write for an hour a day, and that hour was to be after Holy Communion, exactly as He would give it and stamp it on her heart and in her memory. 8. He explained to her in an instant everything that was meant by the vestments and the different clauses of the Rule, and the spirit that ³ was contained in it.

D. 9. He told her that under this Rule there was not to be any title of either founder or foundress, but that He Himself would be the foundation stone of the Order, and that the evangelical seeds of His divine words were the mortar, and the heart of the nun the site of this building, and His divine Father the workman for it. 10. And that they

¹ *il Signore* - "the Lord" is to be understood here.

² *Florilegium*, no. 3, p. 14.

³ *in che*: 'in cui' - "in which." (The Italian text reads *lo spirito in che era contenuta* - "the spirit in that was contained" - Tr.).

Chapter 21

were to observe forty days of fasting, during the time when the aforesaid nun was to write down the Rules; and during this time they were always to pray and observe silence, so that in this way they could purify themselves more profoundly; and they were to be detached from their own selves, so as not to impose anything of their own human nature, and to take away impediments, so that His divine majesty could work its mercies in her.

11. And that she had to be like a little child that had not left its mother's breast, and which had no power to do anything, but its mother alone is the one that does everything: and so she would be conceived in the womb of His divine charity, powerless for any good work, conceived and redeemed by the Word, her God made Man, in His divine womb: He was her mother, who nourished her with His Holy Spirit; she would be sustained by this Spirit, and He would inspire her to write down the aforesaid Rules.

E. 12. The Lord ordered her to write everything to her spiritual Father without being afraid, because this was His will.

Chapter 22

1.

Eighth Chapter

How the Lord revealed to the aforesaid nun the great troubles that she would have to suffer for this Work of His.

A. 2. The nun began telling her Mistress in confidence everything that had //36r// happened to her internally; and the Mistress of Novices told her and commanded her to write a detailed account of what was happening to her internally, so that when her spiritual Father returned from Rome, she could give him the letters.

B. 3. Then, it so happened, through the disposition of the Lord, that two other nuns felt a great spiritual joy at the same time, and while they were together discussing spiritual things and God, as they usually did, one of them said to the other: “I don’t know what it is: maybe the Lord wants to give us a grace, and we’ve no idea ¹ what it is; internally we felt our hearts rejoicing.” 4. And while they were both discussing it, one to the other, the Mistress of Novices came along and they continued their conversation; and the Mistress said to them: “I’m sure you’re right that that the Lord wishes to give us a great grace.”

C. 5. So when they saw that she agreed with what they thought, they said to her that if she knew anything, to tell it to them for their consolation. 6. So not able to contain herself any longer, the aforesaid Mistress of Novices told them about it, and so they became even more convinced, they began to feel an internal consolation growing in their spirits, and the Lord confirmed it to them internally with more authentic spiritual proofs that this was truly His work. 7. And both the Mistress of Novices, and others as well, had this spiritual confirmation with many lights from God; and there was a total of seven nuns, to whom God gave confirmation of His Work. ²

D. 8. One evening, the aforesaid nun went to prayer after Compline, and as she prayed with humility before the Lord, her spirit was uplifted in a great recollection into the divine clarity. 9. Then she understood from the Lord that a beginning to His Work was to be made in that monastery, and that this was His will; and that the aforesaid nun was to write the Rules in His name; and that He would dictate them to her: and that she was to be an encyclopaedia of sufferings and a target at which many shots would be fired by worldly people, detailing vividly all that would happen to her, and these things were shown to her as a sea ³ of pain; and that she was to be defamed, despised, abandoned by her dearest friends, and left abandoned and deserted by every human aid; and that she

¹ *indenneme*: ‘intendiamo’ - “understand”, i.e., “and we’ve no idea.”

² Crostarosa does not record the names of these seven Sisters (later on, however, she speaks of six Sisters); this information appears in the long letter about it written by Sr. Maria Raffaella De Vito on 20th February 1726, cf. *Analecta* 3 (1924) pp. 256-268 and 4 (1925) pp. 35-46.

³ *maro*: ‘mare’ - “sea.”

Chapter 22

would be judged as guilty by everybody; and that, derided and scorned,⁴ she would be considered⁵ a creature of shame for devoting her life to it; and that she would be thought of as deluded; and so she would be left without any reputation and buried among outcasts, and deprived⁶ of every spiritual comfort, and full of fears, she would be left in the hands of her enemies and of hell.

E. 10. Then the aforesaid nun, when faced with⁷ this news, felt her whole body go cold, and she sweated and a most profound agitation took hold of her lower nature, which she had never experienced before; but although her lower nature was in such dread and mortal agony, nonetheless her soul was in a total peace and resignation in the most gentle hands of the Lord.

F. 11. Then when her prayers were finished, the aforesaid nun had to be carried by the sisters to her bed, because she was half dead, and overtaken by a bodily swoon, and she lay like this for many hours until her senses began to return to her, and the nuns, thinking that she had some bodily illness, gave her a restorative. 12. Then the Mistress of Novices came to her, and asked her in confidence what had happened to her; and she told her everything that had been revealed to her by the Lord.

⁴ *scernita*: 'schernita' - "scorned"; cf also 42:14; 56:19).

⁵ *simata*: 'stimata' - "considered."

⁶ *prima*: 'priva' - "deprived."

⁷ *aquesta*: 'a questa' - "at this", i.e., "when faced with."

Chapter 23

//36v//

1.

Ninth Chapter

How the Rules were written in obedience to the Mistress of Novices and the ordinary Father confessor, and of various miraculous things that the Lord worked at this time.

A. 2. The aforesaid nun was under the command of the ordinary confessor, ¹ who had examined her about the Work of the Lord, so once she had received a command from him to write down the Rules, and the Mistress of Novices had already commanded her as well by virtue of holy obedience, just as has been said above, she began to write down the Rules, at the appointed hour that the Lord had ordered her to, which was the hour of thanksgiving after receiving Holy Communion.

B. 3. At that time she experienced a very special assistance from the Spirit of the Lord, with an extraordinary recollection in God, and sometimes the functions of her soul were so taken over that she could not meditate at all on the writing she was doing, as if others were dictating what she was to say; and she felt herself assisted, as if many doctors together were explaining to her what she was to say; and many times she did not realise what she was writing. 4. But when the hour of thanksgiving after Holy Communion had finished, she could not write another word; and then she stopped writing, ² until the next communion the following day.

C. 5. And all this time she continued the fast of forty days which the Lord ordered her to do, which she did by eating only bread and fruit, with the addition of other bodily penances. 6. And her body and soul turned out to be so strong that she seemed to live above this low and infirm nature, even though ³ by nature the aforesaid nun had indifferent health. 7. And all the sisters, who had had confirmation ⁴ of the revelation, also did that fast together with her.

D. 8. We cannot pass in silence over a miracle worked by the Lord in the forty days while this Rule was being written. 9. It so happened that one evening, at the hour when all the nuns were retiring to bed, that the beautiful sound of an organ was heard throughout the monastery, without anyone knowing where that sound was coming from, but what the nuns experienced was a very sweet internal recollection, in such a manner that sleep fled from them, through a holy interior awakening of the love of God, with a spiritual fervour and joy. 10. And so they spent many hours in continual prayer, and the nights seemed like days, without anyone suffering damage to their health through lack of

¹ Don Pietro Romano; about him cf. S. J. BOLAND, *A Dictionary of the Redemptorists*, Rome 1987, p. 325.

² *restava di scrivere*: 'smetteva di scrivere' - "she stopped writing."

³ *avenche che*: 'sebbene' - "even though."

⁴ *confirmatio*: 'confirmazione' - "confirmation."

Chapter 23

sleep, or was hindered from being ⁵ early at Matins in the morning. 11. The aforesaid sound was heard only in the locality of the Novitiate, where ⁶ there were twelve novices and the Mistress, which made the number of thirteen nuns. 12. And this sound was heard by all of them equally, loudly and clearly, ⁷ but although it was audible to the ears of the body, however it was much more audible to the spirit, and produced in their souls those effects that we have described above.

E. 13. Meanwhile the aforesaid nun completed the Rule and the detailed accounts of how she had received that Work and all the graces she had received from the Lord, and she handed them over to the Mistress of Novices, who kept them aside until Father Thomas Falcoia returned from Rome, as he was also the spiritual Father of the whole Community. 14. And because the aforesaid Father was expected in Naples some time after Easter Sunday, and this was not far away, ⁸ she decided to wait for him to come, to learn how he would resolve the aforesaid affair, because only the seven nuns, to whom the Lord had given proof //37r// of the Work, were the only ones then aware of it, and none of the other nuns. 15. Not even the Superior of that monastery knew anything about it, because she was a very simple subject and inept at spiritual matters and extraordinary prayers, so Father Thomas Falcoia had ordered the nuns in confidence to address themselves solely to him on these matters, and not to confide any of these sorts of matters when they rendered their accounts of conscience to the aforesaid Superior, but in these matters he wanted them instead to make him aware of everything that happened in the souls of each one of the nuns; and this was done.

⁵ *andē*: ‘andata’ - “going”, i.e., “being.”

⁶ *il quale*: ‘nel quale’ - “where.”

⁷ An asterisk * has been added above the line.

⁸ *brive*: ‘breve’ - “brief”; here it is evident that the letter *e* has been omitted by the author, who elsewhere in the manuscript writes this adjective with a diphthong, i.e., going from *e* to *i.e.* (1:8; 6:7; 14:51). (Note that the expression *era di brive il tempo* - “was of brief the time” has been paraphrased as: “and this was not far away” - Tr).

Chapter 24

1.

Tenth Chapter

**Of what happened,
when the spiritual Father returned to Naples from Rome,
regarding the matter of the Work of the Lord.**

A. 2. After the Feast of the Resurrection, the aforesaid spiritual Father arrived in Naples upon his return from Rome, and the Mistress of Novices, when she learnt of it, immediately arranged to send the aforesaid Father the bundle of letters which contained accounts of what had happened to the aforesaid religious novice regarding the new Institute. 3. But she kept hold of the rules written by the same, because some of the copies were still not finished or completed, which she had ordered from some of the nuns to whom the Lord had given proof of His Work, and they were still being finished off.

B. 4. These accounts reached the aforesaid Father and he read them and then he wrote two letters in reply: one to the Mistress of Novices and another to the aforesaid novice in a very severe and mortifying tone, telling her that she was mad, and that he would pay no attention to her dreams, and to spend her time being humble before the Lord, and to burn the Rules that she had written down, and to abstain from communion until he arrived back in Scala. 5. He wrote another letter to the Mistress of Novices, telling her to make the novice follow his orders, and to mortify her well, and they were not to breathe a word to anyone about what had happened. 6. But, through the will of the Lord, these letters did not reach the Monastery.

C. 7. So, fifteen days later, when nothing had been heard back from the aforesaid Father, the ordinary confessor of the Monastery had a certain secure avenue to Naples, so he said to the Mistress of Novices that, that if she wished to send the Rules to the aforesaid Father, there was a sure method. 8. And so the aforesaid Rules were sent to Father Falcoia, who received them and read them, ¹ and wrote again to the nuns. 9. Inspired by God, he wrote to the Mistress of Novices that she was to allow Holy Communion to the aforesaid religious novice, because he had felt an internal prick of conscience, which had spurred him on to give her Holy Communion; and that he would be arriving in Scala that September, to see what the Lord wanted.

D. 10. Then this second letter arrived at the monastery, before the other two sent a month before the arrival of these last ones written to the Monastery; and shortly afterwards they received the first two letters written to the aforesaid novice and her Mistress, in which he told them that she was to abstain from communion and that they were to burn the aforesaid Rules. 11. So this greatly amazed these nuns, who could not imagine how those first letters had been delayed for so long, as such a delay as this had

¹ An asterisk * has been added above the line.

Chapter 24

never happened in the past, seeing that the said letters had been sent by a very sure way; so both the aforesaid nun and the Mistress of Novices rendered thanks to God for such blessings.

E. 12. Then the aforesaid nun prayed to the Lord to give light and grace to her spiritual Father about the divine will, and humbly //37v// beseeched the Lord to purify her of every trace of self, so that He would carry out only what was to His greater glory, because she would not have the least part in His divine mercies, except her own imperfections and miseries.

F. 13. As she prayed like this before the Lord, she heard Him say that there would be as many obstacles to the carrying out of the Work as there would be acts of selfishness by mankind, and moreover the selfishness of man is the sole opposition to the achievement of the Work. 14. This caused much fear in the heart of the aforesaid nun, because she thought that the Lord was speaking about her imperfections and selfishness alone; so she beseeched Him to purify her, so that she would not be a hindrance to His Work.

Chapter 25

1.

Chapter 11

How the Work of the Lord was approved by many theologians in a meeting called to this effect.

A. 2. The spiritual Father of the nuns, after reading the said Rules and considering them well, felt that without doubt it was the work of the Lord and His will. 3. But although this is what he thought it was, and notwithstanding the fact that the aforesaid Father was a learned man and much esteemed in the City of Naples, from every point of view he thought it was advisable in a matter of such importance to have a meeting with other theologians on how to deal with it, and to hear their opinions. 4. So he contacted many learned and holy men, and they decided to have a meeting of them all together, to look at everything and make the right judgement; and this was done.

B. 5. In this meeting the Work was approved by all, and they said that it was truly of God and there was no difficulty about it at all. 6. Only two difficulties and objections were raised by them.

C. 7. The first was that the said Rule really ought to be combined with a former Rule already approved by the Holy Apostolic See, so that, combined with the said Rule, it could be put into effect by the ordinary bishops of the dioceses without any obstacle; so that the bishops would have no difficulty in issuing a decree for the approval of the new Rule; and so that the nuns would not encounter an impediment to obtaining the above-mentioned favourable decree from the local bishop, since as a new Rule it could encounter obstacles.

D. 8. The second difficulty that was raised at this meeting was how to go about putting the Work into effect, because as the nuns of Scala were under the observance of the Rule of the Visitation of St. Frances de Sales, and all of them had been professed in this holy Institute, the said change of Rule was very difficult, and the life that was to be¹embraced in the Most Holy Saviour, was stricter than what they originally observed and professed. 9. So it was established that, if there was no consensus and acceptance by all the nuns who were already professed there in that Monastery under the original Rule, this change of observance could never be introduced into this Monastery, so as to avoid any disturbance or inconvenience that might have arisen.

E. 10. And this was what the Father director of the aforesaid nuns of Scala decided to do, in accordance with the opinion reached in this meeting.

¹ *dove*: 'dovea' - "was to be."

Chapter 26

1.

//38r//

Chapter 12

**Of the many disturbances that the demon made,
at the time that these deliberations were being held in Naples,
in the above-mentioned monastery of Scala.**

A. 2. During the time that the above-mentioned actions in favour of the Work of the Lord were happening in Naples, the nuns of the Monastery of Scala had no idea what the aforesaid director was busy with in Naples. 3. But the demon shook with rage against the aforesaid nuns, and although he usually made himself heard in the hours of the night, to disturb the prayers of those good souls who were attending to them with all the fervour of their spirits, but particularly at the time that these meetings were taking place in Naples, he began to persecute them in so many sorts of ways, ¹ that there was neither a day or night when he did not terrify them with his diabolical illusions and great noises of hell. ²

B. 4. One evening, after all the nuns were in bed, in the hour of the great silence, the demon entered through the door of the noviciate in the form of a great black dog, and with its mouth open it dragged all the blankets off a novice who was in the first place near to the said door; then continuing on to where the bed of the aforesaid nun was, to whom the Lord had been pleased to reveal the Work of the new Institute, it gave her such a terrible bite on her hip that for three days she suffered great pain in that side, as if she had been struck by a mailed fist. 5. And because she was in so much pain that she could not walk, the spiritual Father commanded that pain to leave her by virtue of obedience, and so it left her.

C. 6. Another time, while he made a great din and uproar in the night time, howling and threatening to bring persecution and trouble to impede the Work of God in that place, he howled out aloud at her: "Accursed meeting!" 7. These words were not understood in their full significance ³ by the nuns at that time; but three days later a letter arrived from The spiritual Father of the nuns, written to the ordinary Father confessor of the monastery, in which it said that the Rules had been approved by the theologians at the meeting held in Naples; so then the aforesaid nuns understood what the demon had said. 8. Nor did he stop here, but continued on, now in one way, now in another, trying to terrify those good nuns.

D. 9. One evening, while the nuns were reciting the Matins of the Divine Office, among the voices of the nuns they could hear like the sounds of animals, who copied the way

¹ *sorte*: 'sorta' - "sorts of ways."

² An asterisk * is placed above the line.

³ *il significato*: 'nel significato' - "in their full significance."

Chapter 26

they chanted, ⁴ without the words, but in a tone like the sound of beasts, and it was like the neighing of horses, and it so disturbed the nuns, that they could not continue ⁵ Matins: partly because the sound of these animals made them giggle, and partly because it terrified some of them.

E. 10. Another day, while a nun was walking in the garden in silence and recollection, as was usual in that monastery, she felt a quantity of stones thrown at her, although there was no way such stones could be thrown at her from outside, because the walls of the enclosure were very high; and the stones came from a place that was not open to the outside; and were thrown from below by an invisible hand. 11. And she was reduced to such a pitch, that it needed another Sister, who happened to be passing nearby, to say to her: “Get away from here, because the demon hasn’t finished yet, and before he causes you some notable damage to your health.” 12. And when that nun left, she felt herself pushed on her arms by an invisible hand, and for many days her arms were so painful that she was unable to move them. 13. It would be too //38v// long a story to write down everything that the enemy did in that Monastery at that time, but later on there will be another chapter with more details.

⁴ The prevalence of *tuono* over *tono* - “tone” is one of the grammatical and lexical facts most characteristic of the Italian language in the 18th Century, cf. B. MIGLIORINI - I. BALDELLI, *Breve storia...*, p. 226.

⁵ *conzeguire*: ‘proseguire’ - “continue.”

Chapter 27

1.

Chapter 13

How the aforesaid spiritual Father betook himself to the Monastery of Scala, and how the Work was made public but was not put into effect at that time.

A. 2. In the month of September of the year 1729,¹ the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns came to Scala, to better inform himself at first hand from the aforesaid the nun about the Work of God, and take the tactic that he thought was most opportune for carrying out the will of the Lord. 3. So he began by examining all those religious Sisters, whom we have spoken of above, to whom the Lord had confirmed the Work received by the aforesaid nun; and after listening to these Sisters who testified, and who had actually been eye witnesses to all that had happened to this nun about the Work - and these were very good souls and were the first nuns in that Monastery - having done this, he then examined this religious novice who had received the aforesaid Rule from the Lord. 4. And after all these examinations, it was confirmed it was the work of God, and so he told all these Sisters to say some prayers, because he wished to call a chapter of the whole Community, and wanted to propose the new Rule in it, without revealing whom it had² come from, nor to whom the Lord had communicated it.

B. 5. And with this resolve, before doing anything else, he went to find the local Ordinary Bishop³ and his Vicar, who were very well disposed towards this Monastery; and confided to them everything that had happened in the Monastery, so as not simply to take their opinion, but to also have their permission in due course to put the Work of the Lord into effect. 6. But both the Bishop and the Vicar did not simply approve it, but actually requested him to put the Work into effect straight away, so that the will of God would be carried out.

C. 7. And so, having obtained both the permission and blessing of the Bishop, he departed, and contacted his companion, who was together with him in Scala at the foundation of the aforesaid Monastery, and who now was the \Head/⁴ of the Congregation and his Superior,⁵ to whom he was subordinate, and then he thought it was a good idea to slyly suggest to this Father that he should sit in the nuns' confessional, so that the aforesaid nun could tell him about everything the Lord had done. 8. Then he ordered the poor religious novice that she should talk to him and communicate everything to him; and this is exactly what the poor little nun did. 9. The said Father, after hearing it all, was moved in spirit, and was moved so greatly that he shed tears of joy; and said to

¹ In fact this was in 1725.

² *fosta*: 'fosse' - "had."

³ The ordinary Bishop of the Diocese of Scala on 6th. April 1718 was Monsignor Nicholas Guerriero (1667-1732), cf. RITZLER - SEFRIN, v, p. 239.

⁴ *trovava* [-*preposito*] > *capo*/. The correction is by the person who revised the Crostarosan text. Maurizio Filangieri was (*fu preposito*) General of the Pious Workmen for two successive triennia (1722 - 1728). Maria Celeste does not record his presence at Scala until the month of June, cf. O. GREGORIO, *Mons. Tommaso Falcoia...*, pp. 161-166.

⁵ *superio*: 'superiore' - "Superior."

Chapter 27

the aforesaid nun: “Verily today have I received a most great internal joy in my spirit.”
10. These were his very words.

D. 11. Next, the aforesaid spiritual Father, seeing everything all smoothed out all at once, resolved to call the Chapter to make known what was involved in adopting the new Rule, and equally, to know what the nuns felt about it, and to hear their wishes, just as he had been advised.

E. 12. //39r// Next, the chapter was convoked, and the aforesaid spiritual Father gave a sermon to all the nuns, in which he explained the Work of the Lord, without naming the channel which God had used; but only gave many eulogies to the Divine goodness and mercy, which had chosen them to demonstrate His glories, in spite of their merits. 13. And this discourse was so devout and tender, that all the nuns began to praise the Lord. 14. And then the aforesaid Father said he wanted the nuns to give him their spoken decision, to know their free will, since the Rules and life they were being asked to embrace were of greater perfection and strict observance; to which all the nuns replied promptly and with great joy, saying that they would embrace the new Rule with great happiness and pleasure, and that they were most determined. 15. Only the Superior, who was that religious Tertiary named as foundress at the beginning, she replied that it was all right by her, but that since this was a serious step to take, she wanted to talk to both the spiritual Father and to his companion, to tell both of them alone about her difficulties; and that otherwise she was quite ready. 16. And thus the Chapter ended.

Chapter 28

1.

Chapter 14

How the demon made use of the aforesaid Superior to disturb and hinder the Work of the Lord, so that it was not put into effect at that time.

A. 2. When the above-mentioned Chapter ended, the nuns were very happy with what had happened, and they embraced each other and praised the Lord, and they were very keen for the Work to be put into effect right away. 3. Meanwhile the aforesaid Superior was filled with the greatest curiosity about why the spiritual Father had decided on this course of action, and where and who this innovation had come from: and if it had come from inside or outside of her Monastery, etc. 4. And she was worried that another Superior would be chosen, and what would happen afterwards. 5. And so, since she had two other nuns who were her closest confidants, she began to ask them both questions, what did they think, and if they knew anything about what was going on; and finding that they knew nothing, she decided to go the following morning to see the companion of the aforesaid spiritual Father, from whom ¹ she thought she could best find out everything she wanted to know, as she was somewhat alarmed in her mind. 6. And first thing in the morning she betook herself to the confessional, and began to question that Father about the causes that had moved the said spiritual Father to such an innovation; and began by asking him if he had any knowledge of who this person was, and where this new Rule came from. 7. And because this Father had been informed of everything by the aforesaid nun by order of the spiritual Father, as was said above; and the said spiritual Father did this so that his companion would not be offended by not being told anything about what was about to be done, and equally so that he would know that he was making this change through the will of the Lord, and not by his own invention.

B. 8. And then the aforesaid Superior, as soon as she understood what had happened, and that the channel from which the Work of the Lord had come was right there in the Monastery amongst the nuns, just what she had suspected and feared, seeing the nuns all happy and of one mind, without her having been told a thing about it, and so, realising this, she became extremely annoyed and began to pressure that Father to do everything in his power to stop its introduction by the spiritual Father, //39v// his companion, who was directing the nuns. 9. And then she spoke to those two nuns who were her closest confidants, and told them everything she had found out from the said Father, suggesting to them many reasons against it; and amongst all of these two of them are stated here in detail: one was that the new Rule, being stricter than the one already professed by them, not everyone would be able to embrace it, both because they were in an approved Rule, and they had been professed under it, and no-one could force the least change in it; the second, that the new Rule had been an invention of that religious novice,

¹ *da chi*: 'dal quale' - "from whom."

Chapter 28

so that she could become the Superior and govern the Monastery herself, with many other things that we do not need to refer to here. 10. And so she filled² her two religious companions with the same ideas, and she persuaded them that they too should go and speak to the companion of the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns, so that he would understand more clearly that not all the nuns were in agreement about changing the Rule, as the spiritual Father of the nuns had claimed.

C. 11. And so her two religious companions were also inspired to go and talk to the aforesaid Father; which is what they did. 12. So among other things, they emphasised to him that he too was one of their founders: and he should not let the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns govern the Monastery in his own way, but that he should also make himself respected as his Superior; all the more so because this same Father was then the \Head/³ and Superior of the Congregation, and the spiritual Father of the nuns was then his subject, and therefore he should make himself obeyed. 13. And so they made such a fuss that they succeeded in getting the said companion to promise them⁴ that, while ever he lived, he would never allow such a change of Rules to succeed.

² *riemi*: 'riempi' - "filled."

³ *trovava [-preposito]>\capo/*. The correction between the lines was not by Maria Celeste.

⁴ *promesse*: 'promise' - "to promise them."

Chapter 29

Chapter 15

1.

How the demon, by a battery of tribulations, prevented the Work of the Lord from being carried out at that time, and how the spiritual Father of the nuns ordered that the Work was not to be mentioned again, nor what happened.

A. 2. When the aforesaid Father * heard all these things he decided to speak to the spiritual Father of the nuns formally, and require him to undo all those steps he had taken to introduce the Work of the Lord into the Monastery, and he spoke to this spiritual Father very angrily, and had much to say to him; amongst other things, that he was deluded just as much as his penitent, and that that particular religious novice, through the desire she had to be the Superior, had brought forth that invention, etc. 3. And when he left, he spoke to the local Ordinary Bishop and to his Vicar also.

B. 4. So now ¹ that the demon had created all this commotion, the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns thought to put out this fire: with discretion and patience he thought //40r// to bring about silence, so that no further cause of irritation would be given to the souls of these emotionally excited people. 5. And so he decided to come to the Monastery and convoke a Chapter, and this is what he did.

C. 6. So he came to the Monastery, and called all the nuns to the Chapter; and spoke in this way, saying that never again should any nun dare to nominate new Rules or a new Institute; or ever discuss it again amongst themselves, either in common or individually, because, if all that had happened was the work of God, the Lord Himself would have disposed things at the time determined by His divine will. 7. And he said many other things that the Lord inspired in him.

D. 8. All the nuns in the Chapter felt much grief and displeasure, but they conformed themselves totally to the disposition of God. 9. But they had already worked out where this tribulation had come from, and from then on ² they decided that, when the aforesaid Superior came to the end of her triennium of office, there would be a new election for another Superior straight away.

E. 10. Then another day, the aforesaid novice, to whom ³ the Lord had showed ⁴ His Work, was called by the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns, and he also brought in those six nuns who had had confirmation of it by the Lord. 11. And in front of these nuns he began to give a mortifying discourse to the aforesaid nun in a very harsh way, telling her that her dreams were false ones, and that she had troubled that Community;

* Father Filangieri - Tr.

¹ [-onde] onde - "whence", i.e., "So now."

² dal ora: 'da allora' - "from then on", cf also 39:37; 42:57; 63:19.

³ a chi: 'a cui' - "to whom."

⁴ manifesta: 'manifestata' - "showed."

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and that never again was she to let herself be swayed by anything that might happen to her in the future, but that she was to ignore it and not believe it, because the demon knows how to transform himself into an angel of light in order to deceive, as had happened to many people, even holy souls; and therefore she should attend to pulling out useless weeds ⁵ in the garden, while the Community was doing its prayers; and that she should do manual work and abstain from going to choir with the other nuns, because she did not deserve to be there. 12. And he concluded this discourse by telling her about a case which turned out ⁶ very dreadfully, and thus troubled of face, at the end, he concluded his discourse by saying that she should reflect well on what he had told her, and that she should repent of her many errors, and that she should humble herself before God, and she should seek His divine light to journey in spirit and truth in the future.

F. 13. All the six nuns that were present were moved to pity, they wept from compassion, but the aforesaid novice did not lose her serenity of soul at that time, and without saying a word she retired alone to the feet of the Lord and spoke to him with her eyes. 14. And after a certain time of this silence, the Lord consoled her, telling her: *“My spouse, what is it that has so afflicted you? It is not the demon here, but I. And so everything that you have received, I have received it and not you; and so stand firm and hope in Me, for you will see what I will do.”* 15. And so the aforesaid nun was happy, and that affliction of spirit left her.

⁵ After the article there is an asterisk *.

⁶ *sortita*: ‘avvenuto’ - “turned out.”

Chapter 30

1.

Chapter 16

More troubles for the aforesaid nun.

A. 2. The Mistress of Novices thought it advisable, for her own governance, to go to the aforesaid Father director, to find out from him how she was to manage the aforesaid religious novice; and the said Father commanded that, through obedience, if anything supernatural happened to the aforesaid religious novice in the future, she was to make sure that the aforesaid was to give him a written account of it, but that not a word of it was to be communicated to the other nuns, by virtue of holy obedience. 3. And this was put into effect so diligently by the nuns, that no further mention was made, either of rules or of anything else, in all that time in the Monastery.

B. After all these things, both the spiritual Father of the nuns and his companion //40v// went back to Naples. 3. And so fierce and terrible a battle of hell began, that it seemed that all the demons had taken up arms, because the companion of the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns raged against him, and as he was then the Superior, he ordered the said spiritual Father not to go to the Monastery of Scala again, or receive any more letters, or guide those nuns again, because he had let himself be deluded by his penitent. 6. And therefore he was thinking of sending another Father to guide the nuns.

C. 7. And believing that the spirit that was moving him was the spirit of the Lord, he spoke quite freely, both of the nuns and of the aforesaid Father, declaring him deluded to every ecclesiastical and secular person,¹ saying so many things that the whole City of Naples was filled with it, and in every circle of society this thing was talked about. 8. But because the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns was known to be sound in doctrine, the Lord did not let him lose the good opinion that they had of him. 9. Nor did it stop here, because the aforesaid Superior of the Monastery of Scala, with new letters, incited him^{*} against letting the spiritual Father of the nuns have anything more to do with the said Monastery, for fear that in time, by means of him, the work of the Lord would be put into effect.

D. 10. Then, to give greater authority to his maxims, he called the Vicar of Scala² to Naples, who he immediately betook himself there. 11. And he also held a meeting of many \learned men/,³ his confidants, and he informed them in his own way according to the maxims that had been suggested to him by the aforesaid Superior of the nuns. 12.

¹ *secolare [-e -Pii -Operaii -e -secolari] dicendo* - "secular [-and -Pious - Workmen -and -seculars] saying." The correction is not by Maria Celeste.

^{*} i.e., Father Filangieri - Tr.

² Father Angelo Criscuolo.

³ *molti [-Padri -Pii -Operaii]>\uomini dotti/* - "many [-Fathers -of -the -Pious -Workmen]>\learned men/. This correction is also not by Maria Celeste.

Chapter 30

There, in this council, the aforesaid nun and the spiritual Father of the nuns were declared deluded.

E. 13. Then after this council, the aforesaid Father, * fully armed with zeal, told the Vicar of Scala to bring the nuns this message in his name: first of all, he wanted the whole Chapter of the Sisters to exclude the aforesaid spiritual Father from directing the Monastery, and then he would send another Father as the extraordinary confessor; and he put himself forward as their director, of both the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Monastery; and if they would accept his advice, he was willing to make a donation to the Monastery of six thousand scudi and more that would yield an income of five hundred scudi annually. 14. In the second place, he wanted them to cast out of the Monastery that religious novice who had received the new rules of the Institute. 15. And thirdly, he wanted a promise from all the nuns that never again would they speak of such an invention as new rules, but that they would always retain ⁴ the existing Rule of St. Francis de Sales; for otherwise he would completely abandon the Monastery, and would never again permit the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns to come again to Scala. 16. This is how he spoke to the Vicar, obliging him to a positive reply.

* i.e., Father Filangieri - Tr.

⁴ *presistito*: 'persistito' - "persist in", i.e., "retain." (Another case in 16:12).

Chapter 31

1.

Chapter 17

How the Vicar betook himself to Scala, and of everything that happened in the Monastery.

A. 2. The above-mentioned Vicar returned to Scala and came to the Monastery. 3. And so as to be better able to convey to the nuns the sentiments of the said Father, he himself wrote a long letter in which he explained all his own sentiments //41r// to the nuns. 4 And in the presence of the whole Chapter gathered there before him, he read out the long letter that contained the sentiments we have already mentioned.

B. 5. And after reading it, he asked all the nuns one by one to say what they thought. 6. And they all replied unanimously that they would never wish to cast the aforesaid religious novice out of the Monastery, because they did not have a just cause for doing this without detriment to their consciences; nor did they wish to shut out the aforesaid spiritual Father, who had care of their souls, when they had no good reason. 7. And so the aforesaid Father could keep his money to himself, for God would not fail to provide for the Monastery.

C. 8. When he finished this discourse, they debated this matter for a long time, and in the end the Vicar bowed to the wishes of the nuns, and had nothing more to say.

D. 9. The aforesaid Prioress was also present, and although she had opposite views, in no way did she have the spirit to say a single word, save that this Father had been coadjutor of the Monastery for temporal matters right from the beginning, and that the Monastery stood to lose a great deal if such a resolution was carried by the nuns: for then this Father would abandon the Monastery. 10. But she said this very timidly, because the whole Chapter of the nuns was present and opposed to her views, and she was very troubled of face; for everything had turned out quite the opposite to what she had intended and planned.

E. 11. The said vicar, having finished that discourse, had the aforesaid novice called, and gave her a good reprimand telling her that she had been the cause of all this trouble, and that she was to withdraw to an attic ¹ of the Monastery, and that she did not merit to be in the company of the other nuns: and therefore she would not be included in any Community act, and with a rope around her neck she was to eat from the refectory floor, and would seek pardon for the scandal, and would do penance. 12. So the aforesaid novice diligently underwent everything that was imposed on her, with the greatest peace in her soul.

¹ *soppigno*: 'suppigno', 'soffitta' - "attic", cf. D'ASCOLI, p. 650.

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F. 13. Then the aforesaid Vicar sent their reply to the said Father and wrote what the nuns thought. 14. When he received this reply, which the aforesaid Father did not expect, he was more filled with anger than ever. 15. He decided to work on the parents of the aforesaid religious novice, and he told them that their daughter had brought turmoil to that Monastery, and so it would be a good idea if they took her out of it for the quiet of the place. 16. But nothing came of this tactic, because it was not the will of the Lord then. 17. And so her parents made inquiries of both the spiritual Father and also the nuns about what had happened, and were assured by them that it was the work of the enemy, and that they should do nothing about what had been said to them. 18. And on the basis of this the aforesaid nuns wrote them a full letter, in which they declared they would never give their consent to the departure of the aforesaid nun. 19. So her father stopped worrying about this trouble.

G. 20. And then the above-mentioned companion of the spiritual Father, seeing himself excluded by the nuns, meddled no further with the nuns, but just kept up his private correspondence ² with the Superior, and she with him.

² *si cartizava*: 'corrispondeva' - "kept up his private correspondence" (other cases in 41:33 and 58:14).

Chapter 32

1.

Chapter 18

Dealing with many things that happened at that time to the aforesaid religious novice, and how the demon afflicted her, and the Lord made her sure ¹ that it was His Way and His Work.

A. 2. The aforesaid religious had the Vicar's order to withdraw herself, just as we have said, into a place of imprisonment in the Monastery attic, and she was very happy to be able to give herself more easily to the exercise of prayer in that solitude. 3. Then, humbled and upset in her own self, but with peace of heart, her internal battles began, with great anxieties and darkness and desolations, as if there was no remedy for her. 4. And she thought that perhaps the //41v// Lord had abandoned her because of her pride; and that therefore she really had been deceived, and everything that had happened in her soul was a lie; and that she had deceived her director, and this is why all these evils had followed; and so she wept before her Lord.

B. 5. Being in this affliction of spirit, the Lord gave her an internal clarity and said to her: "Be assured, it is I: now then, what do you fear? Perhaps I did not tell you that the demon would fight against you? And I have promised you that not a hair of your head would be touched: everything has been explained to you. 6. Confide what happens to you internally to your guide; and live abandoned above and beyond all these humiliations, without fear of what the world does, and creatures and the enemy." 7. Then her soul was reinvigorated by these words, and felt assured internally, that it really was the Lord consoling her, and with this, her spirit rested above and beyond all created things, with the abandonment of herself to God.

C. 8. But then, when that communication ceased, her soul returned to her anguish and very great pains. 9. And one morning, before going to take Holy Communion, being afflicted like this, she thought that, not only did God not love her, but rather, He chastised her as His enemy; and all the things that had happened to her had been dreams. 10. And she thought she heard: "See how He afflicts you everywhere?" 11. She recalled that God had cast her out of the other Monastery that was suppressed, and that He hated her; and she saw herself as the most miserable creature that ever lived in the world, and so miserable and hateful to God and to all creatures. 12. And while she was in this darkness, she had no wish to open her mouth to anyone, nor did she have anyone to tell her pains to.

D. 13. And so, weeping in her heart, she went to communion, and in an instant, the Lord lifted her up to Himself, and she thought she was in the life of her Jesus. 14. and He said to her sweetly within her very substance: "You are my beloved and friend,

¹ *lassicurava*: 'la assicurava' - "made her sure that... it was."

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and therefore I hold you in My kingdom of the Cross and of glory, in pain and affliction in the kingdom of my peace and rest, as I lived while I was a wayfarer on earth.” 15. And he confirmed the new Institute that He had given her, and He told her: *“Do not give yourself pain; you already know that you must be smelted in yourself, so that this Work may be put into effect. 16. And therefore you need this suffering and annihilation, so that you may be buried in this pain and annihilated in your own self, and everything that is Mine becomes pure in you, just as at the beginning of this Work I especially told you and showed you that everything was to be done in Me, the eternal goodness of glory.”*²

E. 17. And so the aforesaid nun was reinvigorated by the Lord, and even in the midst of her pain the Lord never ceased to assure her. 18. And sometimes He gave her the desire to suffer something of the contempt He suffered, with her soul volunteering to suffer, even at the hands of the enemy, whatever trouble and cross it pleased her Lord to send her. 19. At other times her heart was set on fire to pray to the Lord not to let His glory be held back by her faults. 20. And at other times, when she was at prayer in great recollection, the Work of God was set before her by the Lord as if it had already been done; and from this she had a very great peace and assurance in the work as if it was already put into effect.

F. 21. About fifteen days after the aforesaid nun had retired in obedience to the attic by order of the aforesaid Vicar, the Mistress of Novices persuaded him to let the aforesaid nun return to her cell. 22. So she went to find her novice, and told her: “Go down to your cell, and join in with the Community, because I think this retreat is only of use to you for idleness”; and so she went downstairs.

G. 23. But she suffered great deprivation at that time, because she had no way of writing, or of speaking to her guide about the prohibitions and disturbances that had arisen; only through the channel of the local ordinary Father confessor, could she occasionally send some secret letter to her spiritual Father. 24. One of these original letters is given below, and the reply of the aforesaid director to herself, with the original **//42r//** given here in his own handwriting; and here is what I wrote to him:³

H. 25. “Most esteemed Father in the Lord,
“I find myself greatly troubled internally, because it seems I was wrong about what happened to me regarding the lights received from the Lord and everything was a deception, and I am overcome with a great fear. 26. And so as not to live in such fears and afflictions, I think it is best to forget about everything, depending only on God. 27. And so as not to experience that internal scruple of having deceived you in the past, I want to put it all out of my mind,⁴ and by rejecting all of it, live more assured in my solitude, and painful indeed, but beloved cross, so that I may live in this forgetfulness and

² An asterisk * is placed here. Also: *Florilegium no. 121, p. 135.*

³ The letter of September 1725 is published in LIBRANDI - VALERIO, pp. 69-71

⁴ An asterisk is placed above the line.

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abandonment of myself to God. 28. But I cannot even do this, because you, sir, have commanded me expressly to tell you everything that is happening to me internally: and unfortunately, this is the greatest cross that I suffer.

I. 29. “One morning after I had taken communion, my Lord Jesus Christ united me to Himself, just as He sometimes does through His goodness alone; and after my soul returned to its being from this most pure act of union, He, my Lord, commanded me to go and seek out our Mother Superior, who had fierce temptations against me, and He explained to me everything that the demon had suggested to her heart; and said that I should tell her, with charity and humility, everything that I had intended; and that, just as the blood of a lamb breaks a diamond, so His precious and divine blood would break the hardness of her heart, which the demon was oppressing with all his suggestions.

J. 30. “Then I left choir, when the prayers were finished, and immediately went to see our Mother, ⁵ and humbly told her everything that the Lord had explained to me. 31. But what especially concerned her the most was that this dear soul believed that it was I who had advised the nuns, her subjects, not to obey either her own wishes or those of that Father who supported her. ⁶ 32. And she spoke to me in total confidence, and she told me about all the temptations she had against me; and that what I told her was all true: and that the demon had suggested to her that I had drawn all the nuns over to my side, and that I had advised them to oppose her, ⁷ and with these changes to the Rules I was trying to become the Superior in the Monastery; these and other things she told me had been suggested to her by the demon. 33. And she complained that when I had this grace from the Lord about the new Institute, that I had never discussed it with her, even though it would have been appropriate. 34. I replied that never, thanks be to God, had I ever given advice to my Sisters where there had not been proper esteem, respect and reverence shown to their Superior and charity towards my neighbour; and that I loved her profoundly in the heart of Jesus Christ; and that I would always be her obedient little daughter; and that she need not fear, because I would never become the Superior in place of her, if the new Rule was ever introduced into that Monastery, because it was not the will of the Lord for me to become the head in His Work, as this side of things had nothing to do with me, as I was only interested in the glory of my Lord and His divine approval.

K. 35. “When I had finished speaking, our Mother seemed to feel totally relieved, and she told me that, whenever this new Rule was introduced by the divine will, she would no longer be an obstacle to it. 36. And embracing me with tenderness and signs of great cordiality, she told me that she really felt a sense of great relief; and she was completely happy when I left her. 37. But this serenity did not last, because afterwards she kept on letting her spirit be oppressed by the enemy, although however she was not, as before, so grim-faced, both towards me and the entire Community, but more mellowed.

⁵ *dove nostra madre*: ‘dove era nostra madre’ - “to see our Mother.”

⁶ *padre suo aderente*: - “Father who supported her”, i.e., Fr. Tommaso Falcoia.

⁷ *e che... lei*: ‘e che consigliavo loro cose contro di lei’ - “that I had advised them to oppose her.”

Chapter 32

38. So I beg you, Father, pray to the Lord both for her and for me, and I remain begging you to bless me in the heart of Jesus Christ, and I humbly kiss your feet.”

//42v// L. 39. The original reply ⁸ of the aforesaid director ⁹ of the religious novice is given below:

40. Sister Maria Celeste
May Jesus Christ be our life
Scala

41. “My beloved daughter in the Lord, I hope in our blessed God that our common enemies will remain confounded, and exterminated by the divine power, and therefore that they will not prevail in this terrible move that they have made, and so I shall have occasion to see you again. 42. Pray to the Lord, that He may deign to give light and grace to those who have need of it, and that I may not cease to do what honestly and charitably can be done for the greater glory of God, and for the good of yourself and others. 43. And so it should not be thought that I never intend coming, but that I am unable to come, until things take a turn for the better.

M. 44. “That part of your letter is good where you realise your nothingness, and the nothingness of all the things that are not God, indicated to me in another one of your letters. 45. And here, in this part I was in hope for you: turn there often to look at it, for it is beautiful and precious. 46. In the new-born Child, and in His Most Holy Mother, and in Joseph, her holy spouse, we shall meet once again in this doorway, which is open wide in the grotto of Bethlehem. 47. Enter and look at those minds and those hearts, and in what an abyss of nothingness they are found. 48. In union with them, I bless you a thousand times, and remain in them,

Your cordial Father.” ¹⁰

⁸ Maria Celeste quotes Falcoia’s letter, gluing in the autograph folio. Most probably it dates from Christmas 1725. It has been published in T. FALCOIA, *Lettere a S. Alfonso...*, (Letters to St. Alphonsus...) pp. 68-69.

⁹ *diretto*: ‘direttore’ - “director.”

¹⁰ The letter is concluded with the signature, in an abbreviated form, of the author, Tommaso Falcoia.

Chapter 33

1.

Chapter 19

How an extraordinary Father came to the Monastery, sent by the aforesaid companion of the spiritual Father of the nuns, and what followed at that time.

A. 2. Some months after the events spoken of above, the above-mentioned companion felt the need to know what state the Monastery was in where these things had happened, and also because the aforesaid Superior, being troubled in her mind, judged that the nuns were also troubled in their minds. 3. And believing this, that Father decided to send them a Father from the Pious Workmen, solely responsible to him, because he believed that the absence of the spiritual Father prohibited by him had brought about a great inconvenience to the Monastery; and also because, with the Work not having been introduced according to the nuns' wishes, there would have been some bad feeling and discord between the Superior and her subjects, which is what he told the Congregation of his Fathers. 4. And this is why this Father was chosen by him ¹ as the extraordinary confessor of the nuns, with the intention of appointing him and making him the permanent spiritual Father of the nuns in the place of the first one prohibited by him, and after discussing everything with him thoroughly in //43r// confidence, he introduced him by way of the Vicar of Scala, who told them that an extraordinary Father would come to the Monastery for just fifteen days. 5. This is what he said in public, but then he confided in some of the nuns, begging them to accept him, and that this was to the glory of God; and this is what the nuns did.

B. 6. And then this extraordinary Father arrived, and according to what had been represented to him, he believed he would find the souls of the nuns angry and the Monastery in disarray, but after listening to all the nuns, and finding them all in the greatest peace and charity, both among themselves as well as internally, when he had given them all confession, he was full of admiration and also very edified, in such a manner that not only did the Lord then make use of him to report to the \above-mentioned Father/, ² who had sent him, on the good state and perfection of the Sisters and the Monastery, but also to preach eulogies about it to all the Fathers of his own Congregation, who had been informed otherwise by their Superior, according to how he himself thought, and what had been represented to him by the aforesaid Superior of the Monastery in her letters.

C. 7. But this Father had already been told beforehand in Naples, as we said above, that the nuns had lost the guidance of their own spiritual Father because of the aforesaid prohibitions, so he believed that he was to replace him as the spiritual Father of

¹ *da lui eletto*: 'da lui fu eletto' - "was chosen by him."

² *al [-suo -superiore]>padre sudetto/*. - "to [-his -superior]>(the above-mentioned Father/ The correction is by a different hand.

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the nuns, just as the \said Father/ ³ had advised him. 8. So this good Father volunteered his services to the nuns in place of the aforesaid spiritual Father, saying that this same Father ⁴ could no longer continue to guide the Monastery, seeing that his own Superior had prohibited him, and that it was not good for their souls to live without spiritual direction; but if they were in need of his services, then he would speak to his Superior, and be very happy to have permission granted to him to serve them. 9. But the nuns replied that while they were infinitely grateful for such charity, it was not appropriate to go so soon to a new election, but that they would wait for the time when the Lord would be pleased to let their director be able to continue his task. 10. And this is how the said extraordinary Father was sent away from the Monastery.

³ *il [-suo -superiore]>\detto padre/* - "[his -superior]>\this same Father/ The correction is not by Maria Celeste.

⁴ *[-p> -d]etto*.

Chapter 34

1.

Chapter 20

Of the many wonderful things that the Lord did at this time in confirmation of His Work.

A. 2. One day, while the aforesaid nun was at the prayers which are said after Compline, in her recollection and humility, recognising herself as a useless instrument for the works of the Lord, and even worse, thinking that she alone was the sole impediment to the graces of the Lord, she heard these words being said to her: “The time has come for that Father to pay his debts, and so he will be struck down by a grave illness, and he will die of it before My Institute is put into effect, and he will not live to see it,¹ as punishment for the obstacles that he has placed to this Work.”

B. 3. And so it happened, because he suffered a stroke three months later, and was left paralysed with tremors for the rest of his life; so that he was left bedridden by this illness and could never again leave his cell, and even worse, he babbled like a baby rather than spoke.² 4. And he was like this until he died, which happened before the Work of the Lord was put into effect. 5. And before he died, when the ordinary Confessor of the Monastery went to visit him, in his stammering voice he told him: “The nuns of my Monastery will bring in the new Rule, but I will not live to see it.” 6. And so it was, because shortly afterwards he had another stroke, and died of it.³

C. 7. It was the Lord’s will to prove the authenticity of His Work to the nuns in the Monastery with many miracles. 8. There was a nun by the name of Sr. Mary Magdalene,⁴ whose uncle was the Vicar of Scala, called Father Angelo Criscuoli. 9. This nun, after she made her profession, she was struck down by insanity and was reduced to such a state that she ate dung and the nuns were reduced to being constantly with her //43v// and at her side, because, having lost her senses, she had a tendency to throw herself down the well; and so the poor nuns had to always keep her confined day and night. 10. Therefore the Superior assigned a nun to her to keep her confined,⁵ the nun who had been her Mistress while she was a novice. 11. And because she caused great disturbance to the Community, the Vicar, her uncle, wanted to take her out of the Monastery, and spoke about it to the nuns. 12. This news displeased the aforesaid Mistress, called Sr. Mary Raphaela,⁶ who had brought her up from childhood in the Monastery. 13. And so this

¹ *not*: ‘non lo’ - “not... it.”

² *balbuttiva... parlare*: ‘balbettava come un fanciullo piuttosto che parlare’ - “he babbled like a baby rather than spoke.”

³ Father Filangieri died on 27th February 1730 at the age of 74, cf. O. GREGORIO, *Mons. Tommaso Falcoia...*, p. 167.

⁴ M. Maddalena del Santo Sepolcro (Sr. M. Magdalene of the Holy Sepulchre) (Gaetana Pandolfo, 1707-1778); about her see AMRSc, *Libro di memoria* (Book of Memorials), 60v-61v; F. MINERVINO, *Con S. Alfonso nella luce di Dio* (With St. Alphonsus in the Light of God), Pompeii 1986, p. 119.

⁵ *custodirsi*: ‘custodisse’ - “to keep her confined.”

⁶ Sr. M. Raffaella della Carità (Sr. Raphaela of Charity) (Matilde De Vito, 1699-1778), the sister of Sr. Maria Angela, was called to St. Agata dei Goti in 1766 by St. Alphonsus for the foundation of the Redemptoristine Monastery in that city; see F. Bozzaotra, *La vita della serva di Dio Madre Maria Raffaella della carità* (The Life of the Servant of God, Mother Maria Raphaela of Charity), Naples 1884; F. DUMORTIER, *Les premières...* (The first Redemptoristines), pp. 57-90.

Chapter 34

nun said to the Lord that, if in fact this new Rule, that He had been pleased to give their Monastery, really was His divine will being brought about, as they believed, He would be pleased to confirm it with the sign and grace of curing that poor nun of her insanity. 14. Less than a month went by before this sick nun began to recover her senses, went to the Divine Office, and received the sacraments like all the other nuns; and from that moment on, she was able to carry out all the tasks of the Monastery with great perfection of judgement and much exemplarity of life, to the common delight of all the nuns, who are all witnesses to this miracle worked by the Lord in confirmation of His Work. 15. And the aforesaid nun who had received the Work of the Lord found that she had been struck down a year previously by the said illness, and another year after that, the aforesaid religious still had the same illness; and then, a year after the Lord manifested His Work, she was cured.

D. 16. The spiritual Father of the nuns was struck down by a very grave illness, and the whole community was afflicted and prayed to the Lord for his recovery. 17. And the aforesaid nun who had received the new Rule from the Lord, she too prayed to the Lord one day to be kind enough to give the said Father back his health, because she was afraid of how weak he was⁷ and that he might die of this illness. 18. Then the Lord assured her, and He told her that not only would he not die, but that he would live to see the Work completed and put into effect; and that He would give him another ten years of life beyond those that remained to him to live. 19. And so it was, because not only did he live to see the Work put into effect in the Monastery, but also when it was expanded into other places through the foundations that were made.

⁷ *come debole*: 'per come egli era debole' - "of how weak he was."

Chapter 35

1.

Chapter 21

How the Lord declared to the aforesaid nun what the spirit of this Institute was, and how He assured her and fortified her more and more.

A. 2. The Lord never ceased to fortify and confirm all those nuns in the Monastery in favour of His Work, notwithstanding the great difficulties that appeared because of the enemy's work in preventing it being put into effect.

B. 3. The aforesaid nun, was without a guide at this time, because she very rarely had the opportunity to write a private letter to her spiritual Father, by the hand of the ordinary Father confessor, so the Lord was her leader and guide. 4. Therefore one morning, after she had taken communion, while she was in the midst of her internal battles, as has been described in previous chapters, she was lifted up by the Lord //44r// in spirit and clarity. 5. The Lord said to her: * [A] "*Daughter, do you not know with what little human help I will put into effect this Work of my Institute?* 6. *So what is your part in it? Only a little faithfulness. I do not want you to stop telling your spiritual Father about the things that are part of My glory; above all, you must have a total commitment to me, and have no thought for yourself.* 7. *Know that when you find contrary sentiments in many things from your director and you are impugned, it is ordained by Me: do not blame him.* 8. *Do you not remember how I gave you this Institute, which was a transformation of your soul into My divinity, and gave you the spirit of this Institute, and showed you the treasures of My life and gave them to you; and made you a participant in all the works and virtues of My life.*

C. 9. *You know how much I was despised, and persecuted, and humiliated by those most dear to Me, even unto death on a cross; it all happened in humiliation, hiddenness, and contempt, and this is how I glorified the Father, and laid the foundations of My Church, and remedied the evils of the pride that there was in mankind with My own humiliation.* 10. *My life was a treasure hidden in contempt and humility.* 11. *Know that this is the spirit of your Institute: self-contempt.* 12. *And so, to bring about these fruit in you, I brought about the transformation of your soul into My life, producing the same effects in you, and therefore I willed to plant these Rules first in your heart and then in effect, with much doubt, contempt, difficulty and trouble, for a period of many years before the Work is put into effect, so that the foundations of humiliation, poverty and self-contempt will be firmly laid.*

* In his Spanish translation, Father Emilio Lage provides the following footnote: "To edit this chapter of her *Autobiography* (written at Foggia after 1750) Sr. Maria Celeste copied two of her previous writings with some small changes, but without mentioning it. From [A] to [B] it is a communication which she wrote for St. Alphonsus in September 1731. It was published in *Analecta 4* (1925), p. 230-233 with a Latin translation; also in MARIA CELESTE, *Le lettere*, pp. 93-94. The second part of this communication, [B] to [C], was already written by 1726 (which is the year corresponding to this chapter of the *Autobiography*), for the *Trattenimento Sesto* (Sixth Dialogue); cfr. *Dialogues of the Soul*, pp. 88-90."

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D. 13. *You think that I do not love you, and that I do not hear you when you seek¹ providence from me in your needs?* 14. *But it is not so, for I do what is needed. But you fail to conform fully to my wishes, and you are imperfect in so many ways, not just in your will but in your intellect; and this does great harm to the pure love of Me that you owe Me.* 15. *Daughter, do not be afraid to tell your spiritual Father everything.* 16. *What do you think your spirit is? It is love of Me alone.* 17. [B] *What are you in the being of your soul?* 18. *You are an image of My substance. So fear it, if you can fear it.* 19. *My Spirit is but one, and it produces all the good in every created spirit.* 20. *But that soul which is the home of God, when My Spirit breathes into that soul, she comes to life, she performs good works, she makes decisions, and error does not enter into her.* 21. *Therefore it is called the greatest good and virtue independent of every created object.* 22. *It works clarity in the intellect, ardour in the will, and produces the fruit of good deeds, and makes the soul progress in good works; and therefore she cannot err in her knowledge.* 23. *On the contrary, the bad spirit, however much it may cover up its malice, it will give only an appearance of goodness, and it will be known from its results in the exercise of the virtues: if it corresponds in one of them, it will not correspond in another.* 24. *Its effects in the soul are reluctance to do good works, darkness in the intellect, and tepidity in the will.* 25. *And always with the sign of some error, the soul will experience fear, darkness and indecision; the opposite of what comes from the Holy Spirit.*

E. 26. *Daughter, I want you to love me, and what I tell you, do not be afraid to tell it to your spiritual Father.* 27. *Do not worry about being contradicted or despised, because this is My good pleasure.* 28. *Love Me alone, and do not worry about anything else.* 29. *Know that your intellect cannot understand My ways, nor can any creature ever understand them.* 30. *What I tell you is not just empty words, but everything is being fulfilled, even if it seems otherwise to you.* 31. *You have received the three joys: pure love, contempt, and the Cross; and how would you wish to enjoy the effects of them, if not as I enjoyed them on earth? If your director has told you not to believe yourself, he has said well: what you receive is not yours.* 32. *And so do not think any more about yourself, because you are not yourself, nor do you belong to it any more.* 33. *Every time you take communion and receive Me, you die to your own life, so let this be what you have to do to live in My life.” [C]*

F. 34. Thus far the aforesaid soul understood, so she used to say that “in one single moment I received these and other teachings”, which are not mentioned here, so as not to make this account of the Work that we are attempting far too long. 35. It was as if a very learned master had taught her, or the most learned men had made her erudite; and according to what she said, she felt that the faith was no longer a matter of faith for her, as she had been taught many truths in a single moment.²

¹ *chiede*: ‘chiedete’ - “you seek.”

² The affirmations of this page of the *Autobiography* correspond, almost literally, to the letter written by Maria Celeste to St. Alphonsus in September 1731, cf. LIBRANDI - VALERIO, pp. 92-94.

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G. 36. Another day the Lord tackled her about His Work; but because she knew only too well how many oceans of difficulty there were at that time, did not correspond to the Lord by writing down what she heard. //44v// 37. The Lord sent her an angel with an arrow³ in his hands, who dipped it in the blood of the Lamb Jesus, and he wounded her heart with it; and with this wound she was fortified enough in her heart to be able to suffer all the adversities, affronts and contempt, and whatever else she would have to suffer for so arduous an enterprise.

³ *frezza*: 'freccia' - "arrow", i.e., cf. D'ASCOLI, p. 245.

Chapter 36

1.

Chapter 22

Of the deposition of that Superior named above, and the election of the new Superior, and the Profession of the aforesaid nun who received the Work of the Lord, and many other things that happened at that time.

A. 2. As the aforesaid Superior had completed her triennium, the nuns were waiting for this time so as to have a new Superior elected, because they thought this new election was necessary for their greater peace and quiet, and the spiritual profit of their own souls. 3. And so they thought it well to write letters to their spiritual Father, who was not then able to come to the Monastery through the above-mentioned prohibitions by his companion and Superior. 4. So they wrote to ask him ¹ which of the nuns he thought was best able to take on this task, so as to be able to have the new Superior they wanted. 5. And these letters, to make sure that they arrived safely in the hands of the aforesaid spiritual Father, they resolved to send there in person by their ordinary Confessor, so that from his own lips they would be better able to know what he thought; and this is what happened.

B. 6. So the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns wrote to these Religious that it was their duty to hold a new election, according to God and their own conscience, but since they desired to know his own feelings about the new election, his own preference as the person most worthy of this task was the Mistress of Novices, Sr. Mary Angela of the Crucifix, ² a Religious of a most exemplary life and virtuous of habits, adorned with prudence and of great capacity regarding the things of the spirit. 7. And so, upon the return of the Father Confessor with these letters, the new election was arranged by the nuns.

C. 8. So on the day of Pentecost, the aforesaid Superior stood down from her office, which she handed over to the Bishop, and the new election was held on the day of the Most Holy Trinity. 9. Then the Superior placed her office in the hands of the Bishop in the year 1730, ³ and the whole Chapter unanimously elected as their new Mother of the Community, Sr. Mary Angela of the Crucifix, to the general satisfaction and greatest joy of all the nuns. 10. So the greatest peace and growth of the spirit began to flourish among all the nuns in the Monastery, and great fervour in the holy virtues through the good conduct of this Mother. 11. And so an end was brought to the correspondence between the previous Superior and the companion and Superior of the spiritual Father of the nuns, and the aforesaid not long afterwards fell sick with the grave illness from which he died, just as we have said above.

¹ *conzuldasse*: 'consigliasse' - "to ask him."

² This should be *sr Maria Angela del Cielo* (Sr. Mary Angela of Heaven); it is not clear why Crostarosa says *sr Maria Angela del Crocifisso* (Sr. Mary Angela of the Crucifix).

³ The year is not correct. From the *Atti capitolari* (Capitular Acts) of AMRSc it can be seen that the election of Sister Maria Angela is dated 5th. June 1726 (cf. *Imitazione*, p. 67).

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D. 12. In the first year of the governance of the aforesaid Superior, she facilitated with all her power the profession of the aforesaid novice, who had received the Work of the Lord, that is, confirmation of her profession, seeing that the aforesaid had made her profession in the Monastery //45r// suppressed many years ago. 13. So the aforesaid novice made her confirmation with her sister, to the general happiness of all the nuns, as she had done two years in the noviciate.⁴

⁴ Her renewal of profession took place on 28th. December 1726. The chapter of October expressed itself in favour with “votes of agreement,” cf. *Imitazione*, p. 68, note 190.

Chapter 37

1.

Chapter 23

How the spiritual Father of the nuns was made a Bishop,¹ and how he sent Father Alphonsus \de Liguori/² to the Monastery, and how the Lord arranged for His Work to be put into effect in this place.

A. 2. It pleased the Lord, after so many tribulations, for the spiritual Father of the nuns to be created Bishop \of Castellamare/,³ a few miles distant from Naples, so he had to move to Rome for his consecration, and he stayed in Rome for about eight months.

⁴ 3. So between the time that he was prohibited by his Superior \in charge/⁵ of the Congregation, and these months that he stayed in Rome, there was about two years in all when he did not come to the Monastery of Scala.

B. 4. The nuns wanted him to come because of their spiritual needs, since they had been deprived of his help for so long a time, so they prayed to the Lord to hasten his arrival. 5. But he wrote from Rome that he could not possibly come before the end of October or the beginning of November 1731,⁶ because, since the hot weather had arrived, it was dangerous for his health for him to leave Rome through the change in the weather. 6. So he was going to send to Scala a servant of God called Alphonsus de Liguori, a priest and missionary from Naples, to give the spiritual exercises to the Monastery and be their extraordinary confessor, so all the nuns were at liberty to confess the things of their soul to him as if it was his own person.⁷

C. 7. So after the aforesaid spiritual Father wrote to Father Alphonsus, he immediately betook himself to Scala, and came to the Monastery. 8. When he arrived, he had the Mother Superior and her companions called, and he told them that he was the one who had been sent by their spiritual Father, both to give the nuns their spiritual exercises and also as their extraordinary Confessor. 9. But above all, he had been sent to their Monastery, because there was a deluded nun there, as was being said all over Naples;

¹ *vescovo* [-di -Castell a Mare] e - "Bishop [-of Castell a Mare] and." The crossing-out is not by Maria Celeste.

² The addition in between the lines is not by Maria Celeste. Regarding St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori (1696 - 1787) we limit ourselves to listing the latest biographies of the greatest value: R. TELLERÍA, *San Alfonso Maria de Liguori. Fundador, Obispo y Doctor*, (St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori. Founder, Bishop and Doctor) 2 vol. Madrid 1950-1951; TH. REY-MERMET, *Il santo del secolo dei lumi: Alfonso de Liguori (1696-1787)* (The Saint of the Century of Light: Alphonsus de Liguori (1696-1787), Rome 1983; H. SWANSTON, *Celebrating Eternity Now. A study in the theology of St. Alphonsus de Liguori*, Chawton Alton Hampshire 1995. Cf. also F. FERRERO, *Orientación bibliográfica sobre temas alfonsianos* (Bibliographical Guide to Alphonsian Themes) in AA. VV., *Studia et subsidia de vita et operibus S. Alfonsi Mariae de Liguori (1696-1787)* (Studies and Aid to the Life and Works of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori (1696-1787), Rome 1990, pp. 547-563; O. WEISS - F. FERRERO, *Bibliografia alfonsiana (1978-1988)* (Alphonsian Bibliography - 1978-1988), *ivi*, pp. 565-647; OWCZARSKI A., *Bibliografía alfonsiana (1989-1995)* (Alphonsian Bibliography 1989-1995), in *Spic. hist.* 44 (1996) pp. 499-565.

³ *vescovo* [-di -Castellamare] poche - "Bishop [-of -Castellammare] a few" This erasure is also not by Maria Celeste.

⁴ The consecration took place in the church of St. Andrew of the Valley (*S. Andrea della Valle*) on 8th. October 1730. His stay in the Eternal City was from June to the end of October, cf. O. GREGORIO, *Mons. Tommaso Falcoia...*, pp. 259-265.

⁵ *superiore* [-preposito] della - Superior [in charge] of." The crossing out is not by Crostarosa.

⁶ This should read 1730.

⁷ Maria Celeste simplifies the events. The invitation to Alphonsus had been given first of all by the Bishop, when he went to Scala for the first time in June 1730. In September Alphonsus returned to preach the solemn novena of the Crucifix in the Cathedral and the exercises in the Monastery, cf. TH. REY-MERMET, *Il fondatore* (The Founder), in *Storia CSSR* (History of CSSR), pp. 136-138.

Chapter 37

because, although the Lord had been pleased to give confirmation of the Work to six other nuns - He had so disposed things as to assist the nun who had received it, so as to be able to put it into effect at the proper time, seeing that the aforesaid was then still a novice when she received the revelation of the Work - but she alone had been declared deluded, just as the companion \and Superior/⁸ of the spiritual Father had made known throughout the city of Naples. 10. And so Father Alphonsus di Liguori had great fear through his zeal for the health of this soul.

D. 11. He told the Superior he wanted the name of this deluded nun, as it was publicly known that she was there inside their Monastery. 12. The Superior replied humbly that she was pleased that he would be directing⁹ the nuns in the true way of following Our Lord, and that all the nuns would cast themselves at his feet, to receive his advice as their spiritual Father had ordered.

E. 13. Father Alphonsus was in no way satisfied with this vague reply and began to lay down the law to her about telling him what was the cause of all the things he had heard being said about this Monastery. 14. So the Superior and her religious companions gave him a full account of everything that had happened, and how the demon had tried his best to prevent the aforesaid Work from being put into effect.

F. 15. And when the said Father had heard it all, he replied all aflame with holy zeal that he would not be satisfied unless he first examined the aforesaid nun who had received the Rules, and her six other companions to whom the Lord had afterwards confirmed His Work; and further, he wanted to examine all the nuns of the Community in the confessional, and hear what they all had to say: because either it was the work of the Lord and must not just be forgotten, or it was not the work of God and the aforesaid soul must be put back on the true road //45v// of solid perfection; and this is what happened.

G. 16. The following day he sat in the confessional, and the first one he had called was the aforesaid nun who had received the new Rule, and he began his enquiry by telling her that he wanted her to shed clarity on her whole life: what God gave her as a child, and all the graces that she had received from God up to this point. 17. So this is what the aforesaid nun did, telling him how the Lord called her to His service in a special way, when she was only about eleven years of age. 18. When she made her First Communion, the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to her, and told her that He was washing her heart with His precious blood, and that he was choosing her for His spouse; and when He showed her the ugliness of sin, this vision caused her sorrow for all her sins and so great a contrition that she began weeping uncontrollably, and while she was there in the church hearing the Holy Mass, she let out a loud cry and said: “Oh how many sins have I committed!” without having any shame before the bystanders who looked at her and heard her. 19. And by this grace the Lord called her to be His follower, and from then on

⁸ *il* [*-preposito*] *compagno* - “the companion [and Superior]” The correction is not by Crostarosa.

⁹ *istradarsi*: ‘istradasse’ - “would be directing.”

Chapter 37

¹⁰ new graces always kept coming; and God Himself led her in a special way. 20. And she described to him all the graces she had received, and the course of her life until the time when the Work was made manifest and the new Rules received from the Lord, and all the fears and doubts that she had before she made it known, and the internal and external troubles she suffered up till this point.

H. 21. And after this he dismissed the aforesaid nun, and he examined the six nuns who had received confirmation with lights of the Lord as evidence that the Work was His; then he examined the whole Community: including the previous Superior, who, now that she had been released from the office of Superior, no longer had any reason to oppose the Work of the Lord.

I. 22. So Father Alphonsus swung right round and changed his opinion through the will of God, and began to say to all the nuns that the Work was of God, and was not the illusion that it had been judged; and with ardour and zeal he began to influence the whole Community to be disposed to implement ¹¹ in themselves the very great grace that God was giving them. 23. And he gave a lecture to all those who had placed obstacles to it up till this time, causing them many pangs of conscience, because they had been the occasion of delaying the glory of the Lord.

J. 24. At these words of his the previous Superior replied and said that, since this was the will of God, she did not wish to hinder it, but that she would like to be the first to embrace it. ¹² 25. So all the nuns, without even one of them creating obstacles, in total unity and with a holy joy seized each other in a mutual embrace, and rendered ¹³ thanks to the Lord that, after so many troubles and wasted years, He had been pleased to make His Work clear, and put it into effect. 26. And also the same Fr. Alphonsus was so fired by holy joy and zeal for the glory of the Lord, that he could not hold back his jubilation.

¹⁰ *dallora*: 'd'allora' - "from then on."

¹¹ *effettuare [-gr] in* - "to implement in."

¹² *abbracciarla*: 'abbracciarla' - "to embrace it."

¹³ *endevano*: 'rendevano' - "rendered."

Chapter 38

1.

Chapter 24

How Father Alphonsus di Liguori went to the Bishop of Scala, the local Ordinary, and sought his permission to introduce the Rule of the Most Holy Saviour, and the new habit, and how everything was conceded to him, and how the nuns put on the habit of the Most Holy Saviour.

A. 2. Father Alphonsus di Liguori went straight away to the local ordinary Bishop, called Mons. Nicholas Guerrieri, together with two of his missionary companions, one called Father Vincenzo Mannarini, and the other Father Giovanni Mazzini.¹ 3. The aforesaid Bishop heard him with pleasure, because he already knew everything that had previously happened in the Monastery, and he gave the aforesaid Father Alphonsus broad powers to do in the Monastery everything which he knew to be to the glory of God and the profit of its souls. 4. And when the said Father returned from the Bishop he was very happy, then he arranged with the nuns to put the new Rules into effect at Pentecost in the following year. 5. In the meantime, //46r// Father Alphonsus gave the spiritual exercises so that the nuns could prepare themselves for the observance of the new Rule, and to this effect he gave sermons on the life and virtues of our Lord Jesus Christ, and each one of the Sisters attempted to prepare herself for this feast.²

B. 6. Meanwhile the spiritual Father of the nuns was kept informed of everything³ that had been done, and with his blessing the nuns decided to vest themselves. 7. And in the meantime they procured the material for their habits and mantles, and the aforesaid nun cut out all the said habits and mantles for all the religious Sisters, in just the form that Our Lord had appeared to her in. 8. Meanwhile they sent to Naples, to get the pictures of the Most Holy Saviour, that are worn on the breasts of the professed religious.

C. 9. And when everything was completed, the vestiture of the nuns took place on the day of Pentecost in the year 1731.⁴ 10. A beginning was made to the Institute with the grace of the Lord, after all the troubles already mentioned, and to the indescribable joy of all these nuns, the Te Deum⁵ was sung in thanksgiving for the graces without number received from the Lord. 11. May His Most Holy Name be always blessed and glorified, for ever and ever. Amen.

¹ In recording surnames (as we have already been able to establish with Liguori, Guerriero...), Maria Celeste is not always consistent: Vincenzo Mannarini is also called *Mannarina* (56:31) and *Mandarini* (41:15); Giovanni Mazzini is sometimes indicated as *Mazzia*.

² We possess a narrative letter of Maria Celeste to Alphonsus dated September 1730 (cf. LIBRANDI - VALERIO, pp. 72-75). The enthusiastic state of mind with which Alphonsus left Scala is witnessed by what he wrote to Sister Mariangela on 29th. October, cf. *Lettere di S. Alfonso Maria de' Liguori* (Letters of St. Alphonsus Maria de Liguori) I, Rome 1887, pp. 1-8.

³ *quel*: ms add.

⁴ In 1731 Pentecost fell on 13th. May.

⁵ *Tedeum*: 'Te Deum' - "To Thee O God."

Chapter 38

Chapter 39

Second Book

1.

First Chapter ¹

**Of the fervour of those nuns as they took their
first steps in their new life of regular observance,
and how the Lord returned to give the Rules to the aforesaid nun,
and how through obedience she wrote them down again.**

A. 2. Those nuns quickly began to run after their Spouse and Master with great fervour of spirit: their mortifications of the flesh were very extraordinary, in combination with those of the spirit, and they competed in ‘running to the odour of His ointments’; * hair shirts and scourges were their continual exercises, with night vigils in fervent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament or after they had each retired to their own cells.

B. 3. But to give a few more details, there were many nuns who spent the whole night in choir, in praise of God, employing their time in canticles and prayers. 4. They did the same during the day with holy retreats, and at recreation, their conversations with each other were so fervent and spiritual, that you would leave recreation like leaving prayer in choir. 5. And this will be spoken of at more length in another place.

C. 6. As for the Superior and the other nuns in the Monastery, even when all the observances and rules of the new Institute had been put into force, the Monastery still did not have the Rules written by the aforesaid nun, because when all the above-mentioned troubles occurred, the spiritual Father of the Monastery had taken them all away into his own safe-keeping: both the original written by the aforesaid nun, and also certain other copies that, by the order of the Superior, other nuns had copied from the original; so that there was not a single written Rule anywhere in the Monastery.

D. 7. So therefore it seemed advisable to the Superior and the nuns to write to the spiritual Father and ask him to be good enough to send the Monastery the Rules written by the aforesaid nun, because they needed them so as to best maintain their perfect regular obedience, both then and in the future. 8. This is what the Superior wrote to him on behalf of all the Community, asking him for the said Rules. 9. But Father wrote back to the Superior that he was still working on the Rules, and so he ordered the aforesaid nun who had received the Rules to write them down again. 10. And so the Superior gave his order to the said Religious, just as the spiritual Father had commanded her; but the aforesaid nun wrote the spiritual Father back a letter as follows, and here we give the original of it. ²

¹ *Capito*: ‘Capitolo’ - ‘Chapter.’

* There is a reference her to the Song of Songs: *post te curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum*. This is translated by the Douay-Rheims Version as: “we will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments.”

² It is from May - June 1731 and is published in LIBRANDI - VALERIO, p. 83.

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E. 11. “My Father, I have received the order that Your Most Illustrious Sanctity has sent me about writing the aforesaid Rules again. 12. I think it would be a great presumption for me to set about writing them again, so many //46v// years after this soul received them from the Lord, especially since I have not received any commandment about them from the Lord, nor can I remember them at all; so writing them again would require a manifest miracle of the Lord. 13. So my soul greatly fears to tempt God, I am greatly afraid that I will end up putting my own self into them, so I beg you to release me from this obedience, because it worries me tremendously. 14. And bless me and I humbly kiss your feet.”

F. 15. In the meantime, the aforesaid nun was torn both ways after writing to her director the way we have noted above, because on the one hand she thought she had failed in her obedience to her aforesaid director, and on the other hand because she thought she was obliging God to give her new graces. 16. So one evening, while full of these fears, she decided to begin rewriting the Preface about the Spirit of the Institute, but when she tried to begin she could do nothing, and so she decided it would be wrong to try to rewrite the aforesaid Rules, and extinguishing the light she went to bed to sleep.

G. 17. Once she had gone to bed to rest, the aforesaid nun saw Our Lord Jesus Christ on her right side, and He told her: *“You are tired, rest in Me.”* 18. At these words her heart lit up totally, and she began to feel the sweet call of love rush through it, and her spirit found a peace above all her senses; and in that peace she felt the Lord sending her much blood from His own heart, so that she would be able to write down the Rules; and her soul was filled with jubilation and love.

H. 19. Then the Lord asked her: *“Do you have confidence in Me?”* and then, in an act of love, her soul replied to Him “Yes.” 20. And then the Lord answered her and said: *“Do you not believe that I can get you to write the Rule again, not just in draft form, as you wrote it before, but in its complete perfection? 21. I have done with you as doves do, that first lay their eggs, and then convert them with their warmth into other doves like themselves. 22. So by the warmth of My love I caused these eggs to be born in you in the first Rule, and they were the first Rules that I got you to write in draft; but now with the warmth of My charity, I shall cause other doves like Me to be born in you.”*

I. 23. Then, in an instant, all the spirituality contained in the nine principal rules was communicated by the Lord to the aforesaid nun, so that with great distinctness and clarity she would understand all its meanings; and what is more, He got her to understand the doctrines of Sacred Scripture that are enclosed in the Holy Gospels, with new lights as well, so that with them she could explain in the Constitutions the observance contained

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in the said Rules. 24. So if the aforesaid nun had not extinguished the light that night,³ she would have written down all nine spiritual Rules.

J. 25. In the meantime, the aforesaid nun could neither rest nor sleep that night, because the Lord was in her company. 26. And because she was not well physically, she wanted to sleep a little; so the Lord, stretching out His right hand, made her lean her head against His heart and told her: “*Rest here.*” 27. And holding her in His right arm, He supported her. 28. And so much did He comfort her in body and in spirit that, when it was morning, she went straight to her Superior, and told her everything that had happened to her; and she was very happy to give her her blessing, and ordered her to write down the aforesaid Rules, as she had been ordered by her spiritual Father.

K. 29. And so then the aforesaid nun, in just two hours, wrote down all nine spiritual Rules with such speed of pen that it seemed as if her hand was borne along on wings, and then she went on to write the Constitutions and all the other things of the aforesaid⁴ Rule. 30. The Lord gave her a very special assistance, and she saw before her a company of angelic spirits who not only assisted her while she wrote, but, whenever she went about the Monastery or prayed, //47r// she always saw herself surrounded by them, so that she was surrounded by heavenly light.

L. 31. So when the aforesaid nun finally finished writing the said Rules, and completed them with the Constitutions⁵ corresponding to them, she added what was said about customs in the Constitutions of St. Francis de Sales, with all the other things that are there;⁶ and a letter from the aforesaid nun, giving an account of what had happened to her while she wrote it, and she sent him the first letter, which has been recorded here, and which was written before she received the aforesaid graces from the Lord. 32. And she also gives below another letter she wrote to the aforesaid spiritual Father, but written at this time, where she says what the demon made her suffer.⁷

M. 33. The aforesaid nun’s letter to her spiritual Father, in which she says how the demon troubled and threatened her because she wrote down the aforesaid Rules of the Lord.

N. 34. “I have been greatly afflicted by the enemy from the moment I began to rewrite this holy Rule: it is quite incredible what a noise and din he makes throughout the Monastery. 35. One day especially when I was writing, he took a most brutish form, and one night he appeared in our cell with a tongue which hung down as far as his breast, and eyes of fire. 36. I was very frightened by his horrible figure, and he told me in a

³ *notte [-avesse -auto -il -lume] non* - “had not extinguished the light that night.”

⁴ *contenuna*: this is probably to be read as ‘consaputa’ - “aforesaid.”

⁵ *custitutione*: ‘constituzioni’ - “constitutions.”

⁶ For their structure, contents and the sources of the Crostarosan Rules, cf. *Imitazione*, p. 141 - 231.

⁷ It is from May - June 1731 and is published in LIBRANDI - VALERIO, pp. 84-85.

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dreadful voice that if I did not put a stop to this writing, he would give me such trouble that I would soon think twice about it, and that he would make me lose the grace of God. 37. And from then on I had many apparitions that gave me great trouble, so that wherever I went and whatever I did I saw the most brutish representations before me, and wherever I was I saw them without ever being able to be free of them, and I was like an idiot and outside of myself. 38. I was like this for three days, after which I went to see the ordinary Father Confessor, and I told him my trouble; this servant of God exorcised me so that I would be molested no more, and from then on I was free of those vexations.

O. 39. “My Father, in order not to fail in the holy obedience you have given me to write to you about everything that passes through my soul, I have to tell you about something else that happened to me at the time I was writing down the Rules. 40. One day, while I was writing, I felt the company of Saint Catherine of Siena at my side, and she said to me: “Write, O daughter, for your Lord Jesus Christ has blessed your hand with the fullness of His grace and mercy.”

P. 41. “Another day I was given a clarity of love by the Lord in which He showed my soul what the divine purity is, and with it He wanted to espouse my soul in this life. 42. I felt that in the heart of my Lord Jesus Christ I could see three Persons in one act of divine purity, in other words, those of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and this purity was communicated to the three powers of my soul by three crosses, put into my heart by my Spouse Jesus, who, with His precious blood, is the first cross, in the purity of God the Father, and it was stamped on my memory by His divine omnipotence, which penetrates all the creation of creatures, as ordered by His divine love, with a single act of His will and infinite power; the second purity is communicated by the Son by means of the power and light of the intellect, through His Word of divine truth, where the divine and uncreated wisdom dwells; the third purity, of the Holy Spirit in the will of the soul; is the infinite joy of the eternal beatitude of love in God, which cannot be explained by a miserable creature like me. 43. I know very well that I have experienced it like an aromatic fragrance, composed of aromatic herbs, and blended like a single very precious balm, which comforts all my soul because it preserves her from her own corruption. 1731.”*

* *Florilegium*: no. 46, p. 67.

Chapter 40

1.

Chapter 2

How the Lord revealed to the aforesaid nun that He wanted the men's congregation to be founded under the same Rule.

A. 2. One evening while the aforesaid nun, who had received the new Rule, was //47v// in the refectory, - and it was the vigil of St. Francis of Assisi, on 3rd. October of the year 1731 - the Lord in a moment drew the spirit of the aforesaid nun to Himself. 3. For our Lord Jesus Christ showed Himself to her, together with the seraphic Father St. Francis, in a glorious light, and Father Alphonsus di Liguori was present there. 4. Then the Lord said to the aforesaid nun: *“This soul is chosen as the Head of this My Institute: he is to be the first Superior of the men's Congregation.”* 5. And the aforesaid nun saw in God this Work already done and put into effect.

B. 6. It left her soul full of jubilation, unable to take any more bodily food, suspended in an interior joy, and in the company of this holy Patriarch, who then appeared to her as transformed into Our Lord Jesus Christ. 7. And this lasted while the meal lasted, and at that time nothing else was revealed to her; but the aforesaid nun took no account of it: and the vision went away without her wanting to believe it.

C. 8. The next day was the feast of the holy Patriarch, to whom the aforesaid nun was very devoted. 9. She went to Holy Communion, totally unconcerned about what had happened to her the previous evening. 10. Her soul was again overtaken by the clarity and light of the Lord, so that she understood that she had to write into the formula of the Institute the words in the Gospel that say: *“Go and preach to every creature that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*¹ And on these words was based the formula of life, that He dictated to her in His name.

D. 12. The daily² and spiritual exercises were the same ones noted in the Rules already written;³ and the vestments were the same in everything as had been prescribed in the aforesaid Rules. 13. But all the members of the Congregation were to live in apostolic poverty, just like that beloved servant of His, whose⁴ feast was being celebrated that day, and who had imitated⁵ it so closely. 14. And they were to deposit all their worldly goods⁶ at the feet of the Superior: so that a common deposit could be set up, that was to be called the “deposit of the poor”, and this was to be used on the missions, to give relief to widows and orphans according to their needs, at the disposition of the Superior. 15. But if they were given capital or income as a donation, they would

¹ Mk. 16:15 and Mt. 10:7.

² *giornali*: ‘giornalieri’ - “daily.”

³ *scritte*: ‘scritte’ - “written.”

⁴ *che*: ‘del quale’ - “whose.”

⁵ *imitato*: ‘imitato’ - “imitated.”

⁶ *Ma... beni*: ‘Ma che di tutti i loro beni’ - “And they... all their worldly goods.”

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be able to receive it and place it in this “deposit of the poor”; and as something not their own but for others, the Superior would be able to take from this deposit the little that was required for the needs of the brother in their own poverty. 16. On their missions they were not to go too far from where they were living: they were to go in pairs preaching penance. 17. But those who were called to the contemplative or hermetic life were not to be impeded, because these souls who attend to prayer in solitude are of greater help, in the conversion of souls, than those who are destined to be preachers. 18. There were to be at least thirteen to every house, and it was not to be left to their own choice where they went on missions, but it was up to the Superior to choose them and send them.

E. 19. This was the first draft of the contents that the aforesaid nun received from the Lord, and she kept a folio in which she noted down all the things that she had received. 20. And the Rules for the Congregation⁷ of the male brothers were put together at the same time as the Rules for the nuns, as will be said in the right place.

F. 21. The aforesaid nun wrote an account for the spiritual Father of everything that the Lord had told her about the new Congregation of the men, and all the other things that had been revealed to her.⁸

⁷ *Congratiōne*: ‘Congregazione’ - “Congregation” (analogous case in 49:15).

⁸ This account has not been passed on to us. This page of the *Autobiography* synthesises the first draft of the missionary community.

Chapter 41

1.

Chapter 3

How Father Alphonsus di Liguori was told about the new men's Congregation that the Lord wanted; and how the Bishop of Scala died, and the election of a new bishop; \and/ how the Lord arranged the new foundation for the men; and what happened at that time. ¹

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A. 2. Father Alphonsus was very happy about everything that the Lord had been pleased and deigned ² to do in that Monastery, which he visited while he was working on the holy missions, and although he was worn out by them he did not neglect ³ to visit the nuns in the Monastery. 3. Although he was a knight from an Neapolitan estate, the first-born of his house, he had renounced the world, and had retreated to the Chinese Congregation, which had recently been founded by means of the Abbé Ripa. 4. One of his companions was Father Vincenzo Mannarini, a gentleman of the most urbane and noble birth. 5. They had retired there, in order to serve God away from their own secular houses. 6. Both of these two good priests had gone on the holy missions, and they were also attached to the Congregation of Missionary Fathers of the Bishopric of Naples, and they had done the rounds of the missions in Tramonti and the Amalfi coast, which are not far from the City of Scala.

B. 7. So he made a detour and visited the nun's Monastery, to see how things were going with the new changes, so when he arrived, the aforesaid nuns discussed the will of the Lord with him and what had happened to the aforesaid nun of the new Institute. 8. So he sent for her and asked her to tell him what had been happening.

C. 9. As soon as he had heard her, he could not express the joy which lit up his heart. ⁴ 10. Then he discussed it with Father Vincent Mannarini, and with another of his companions, also a great servant of God, called Giovanni Mazzini, who both knew about all that had been happening in the Monastery of Scala. 11. So they too became inflamed with the desire to join him in the new Congregation of the Most Holy Saviour, whenever the Lord decided to begin it. 12. So they decided that each one of them would leave for Naples and discuss this matter with their spiritual Fathers, to learn the will of God from them. 13. And this is what they did: Father Alphonsus de Liguori's spiritual director ⁵

¹ Maria Celeste rewrote the last lines of the title upon a little piece of paper glued over the first version (analogous to what she did in pp. 32v and 33r).

² *degnare*: 'degnato' - "deigned."

³ *curava*: 'trascurava' - "neglect."

⁴ In reality the first response of St. Alphonsus was not so enthusiastic. In this part of the narration Maria Celeste summarises and synthesises. For a more detailed reconstruction cf. TH. REY-MERMET, *Il fondatore...*, (The founder) pp. 136-150 with the final clarifications by E. Lage, *Suor Maria Celeste Crostarosa...*, pp. 99-116.

⁵ The spiritual Father of Alphonsus was Tommaso Pagano until 1732, the year in which he passed under the direction of Falcoia. The decision was not a simple one, but the fruit of research and consideration.

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consented immediately, through the will of God, and he also gave his consent to Father Mannarini; but Father Giovanni Mazzini's spiritual director told him to discuss it with him later on, when the Congregation was already established, so he made him wait four years after it was founded, and only then did he enter. ⁶

D. 14. Meanwhile, Father Alphonsus went to see the spiritual Father of the nuns, to discuss with him about what should be done to help bring about the Work of the Lord. 15. So the spiritual Father told him that he and the two of them, that is, Father Mannarini and Father Alphonsus di Liguori, with all their companions who wished to form the Congregation, should make their way to Scala, and there they would work out what had to be decided; and in the meantime they should pray to the Lord about it, both the nuns and them; and so it was.

E. 16. Meanwhile Father Alphonsus did not know how to keep this secret so well hidden in his heart, that it did not leak out to many brothers of his own Congregation; his heart was burning, for so the Lord disposed; and there were many who wished to transfer to the new Congregation: and those who wished to follow him reached a great number, all priests of spirit and fervour.

F. 17. Father Vincenzo Mannarini was in the habit of going to the house of a gentleman, secular but devout, ⁷ who lived a spiritual life and was a man well versed in every branch of learning. 18. When he went to his house to receive the corn which this servant of God gave, they discussed spiritual things, and he led the conversation around to discussing everything that had happened in the Monastery ⁸ of Scala. 19. And Father Vincenzo did not do this by chance, but because the aforesaid secular had already told him a great deal about the many things that had happened in his soul: ⁹ from his youth he had received many lights about a new Institute, without knowing anything of what had happened in the aforesaid Monastery. 20. And in order to make this truth clear, I now give Father Vincenzo's original letter, sent to the aforesaid nun of the Institute, and is in his own handwriting. ¹⁰

G. 21. So when the aforesaid devout gentleman learnt everything from Father Vincenzo, he offered himself in any capacity for the Work of the Lord, in whatever way they thought his person would be of use in aiding the Work, //48v// and at the same time ¹¹ he begged him to be good enough to take him with them to Scala to speak with the

⁶ Mazzini was able to be admitted only on 23rd. October 1735, cf. F. MINERVINO, *Catalogo dei Redentoristi d'Italia (1732-1841) e dei Redentoristi delle Province Meridionali d'Italia (1841-1869)*, Roma 1978, p. 117. (F. MINERVINO, *Catalogue of Redemptorists of Italy (1732-1841) and of the Redemptorists of the Southern Provinces of Italy (1841-1869)*, Rome 1978, p. 117.

⁷ With this or an analogous expression Maria Celeste denotes Silvestro Tosquez. A native of Troia, he was an advocate and had important responsibilities in the Administration of the Royal Customs; about him cf. R. TELLERÍA, *San Alfonso...*, I, pp. 194-196 and 256-259; O. GREGORIO, *Mons. Tommaso Falcoia...*, pp. 97-98 and 216-236.

⁸ *che nel monistero*: 'che era successo nel monistero' - "that had happened in the Monastery of Scala."

⁹ *suanima*: 'sua anima' - "his soul."

¹⁰ An asterisk * has been placed here. Probably it was to remind Maria Celeste to insert the letter from Mannarini, which however has not been done.

¹¹ *inzime*: 'insieme' - "at the same time."

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aforesaid nun of the Work for the happiness of his soul. 22. And so Father Vincenzo courteously promised to bring him with them, as soon as possible, to the Monastery of Scala.

H. 23. It was the will of God to call the Bishop of Scala to Himself, after the Work of the Lord had already been put into effect in the Monastery of the nuns.¹² 24. The death of this good prelate caused much apprehension and regret, both to the aforesaid nuns and to the brothers called to the Work, because, although they had been given very broad permission verbally, they had not yet had time to obtain the written¹³ decree confirming the aforesaid Rules.

I. In the meantime, the new Bishop of Scala, his successor, was a Father of the Order of St. Francis de Paula, called Mons. Santoro, who was a very close friend of the devout gentleman whom we mentioned above, and this was considered a great providence of God, both by the nuns, and by the brothers called to the men's foundation.

J. 26. Meanwhile Father Alphonsus and Father Vincenzo went to see the Bishop of Castellamare,¹⁴ who was the spiritual Father of the nuns, and once they had informed him how the Lord had given them the means of establishing friendly relations with the new Bishop, both for the confirmation of the aforesaid Rules, and for the new foundation of the Brothers that was being prepared, they sought his permission to bring the aforesaid devout gentleman to the Monastery of the nuns in Scala. 27. And not only did he give it to them, but he wrote a letter to the Superior of the Monastery¹⁵ in which he ordered her through obedience to see to it that¹⁶ the aforesaid nun who had received the Rules had discussions with that devout person: and they could communicate to him what had happened with complete confidence; and likewise any other nun who might wish to confer with him about spiritual things, because he was a man of prayer and doctrine, and very devout, whom the Lord had sent at just the right time to help with His Work.

K. 28. Meanwhile the aforesaid devout gentleman betook himself to Scala and requested the Superior to ask the aforesaid nun of the Work of the Lord to come down and see him, and together with the Superior they had long¹⁷ discussions about what had happened. 29. So he spent several days in Scala, until he was fully informed about everything, and then he betook himself to Castellamare and¹⁸ had a meeting with the spiritual Father of the nuns. 30. And so, full of happiness, they rejoiced in God. 31. And when he had done this, he departed, and began little by little to introduce himself to

¹² Mons. Guerriero passed away in them month of April 1732; he was succeeded on 9th. June by Antonio Maria Santoro (1681 - 1741), cf. RITZLER - SEFRIN, VI, p. 353.

¹³ *in scriptis*: 'in scriptis' - "in writing."

¹⁴ *vescovo [-di -Castellammare] che* - "Bishop [-of -Castellammare]" i.e., Tommaso Falcoia.

¹⁵ Sister Maria Angela, elected, for the third consecutive triennium, on the 1st. June 1732, cf. *Imitazione*, p. 83, note 283.

¹⁶ *conferire*: "to see to it that" - ms add.

¹⁷ *lunghe*: 'lunghe' - "long."

¹⁸ *poi [-si -porto -a -Castel -a -mare -e] si* - "then [-he -betook himself -to -Castel -a -mare -and] had." The erasure is not by Maria Celeste.

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the new Bishop of Scala, and began bringing him up to date with everything that had happened in his diocese and at the Monastery of Scala. 32. And he knew so well how to handle the matter, that he gave the aforesaid new Bishop such a high regard and opinion of the Work of the Lord and the aforesaid nuns, that the Bishop promised him that he would take the Work under his wing, and even protect and favour it. 33. So Father Alphonsus and Father Vincent visited the nuns, and corresponded ¹⁹ with them, together with the devout gentleman, about what was being done and all the good arrangements there were for the new foundation of the brothers.

L. 34. Meanwhile the newly-elected Bishop of Scala went off to his diocese and began to show great benevolence to the nuns, and considered that Monastery a sanctuary in his diocese. 35. So he requested the Superior to discuss some of the secrets of his own conscience with the aforesaid nun, and so he discussed some private matters of his own conscience with her. 36. And there was ²⁰ a unity and mutual charity between the //49r// brothers and the nuns, and the aforesaid Bishop.

¹⁹ *si cartizavano*: 'corrispondevano' - "corresponded."

²⁰ *era [-un] una* - "there was a."

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1.

Chapter 4

Of how when the brothers of the Congregation were at the nuns' hospice, the Lord worked some miracles at that time, and of the fervour of the nuns at that time, and of the clamour that the demons made while the Lord arranged the good beginnings of the men's foundation.

A. 2. When the demon saw these good beginnings, he began to persecute the aforesaid nuns with very real fears and frights ¹ to terrify them. 3. On one occasion, while they were doing the Thursday night vigil before the Blessed Sacrament, he began to make a great clamour and noise below the choir where the nuns were doing their prayers, as if many earthenware jugs and dishes were being thrown down and broken. 4. And three times the nuns went down from choir to see what had happened, and nothing was ever found, so they paid it no more attention, thinking that it was his work.

B. 5. At other times he would take the form of one of the Sisters and walk in front of the other Religious who were going to choir, so silently that he could not be heard walking; but when he reached the door to the choir, he would disappear and be seen no more, to the great terror of the Sisters who had been following close behind.

C. 6. Another time, one evening, while one of the Sisters was scourging herself, near the garden, she saw something that looked like an eye of fire on top of a heap of garbage, or perhaps manure; this eye was as big as a large melon. 7. And the nun was overcome ² with fear and felt like leaving her scourging and going away, but noticing the deception of the enemy, she intrepidly finished her action, and before she departed, she saw that what she had seen before was no longer there.

D. 8. At other times he would make so much noise and clamour at night in the latrines, that the nuns did not dare go there except in company, during the hours of darkness, as the nuns had seen many horrid spectres of the abyss lurking there.

E. 9. Another time, the Sister Dispenser decided to go to the pantry to get some things required for the meal that they were going to serve the following morning, - it was then night and it was the great silence - the demon appeared at the pantry door as the most brutish figure, threatening her so dreadfully that, in her great terror, she remained rooted to the spot and unable to move, until other Sisters happened to go there and helped her get back to her cell, assuming that she had been overtaken by some illness. 10. But she did not say a word so as not to break the silence, and in the morning the key to the pantry was found bent into the shape of horns, and the head of the key bent back

¹ *saventi*: 'spaventi' - "frights."

² *sopra fatta*: 'sopraffatta' - "overcome."

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over the barrel of the same, as if a smith ³ had done it with a fire and hammer, which was amazing to behold. 11. The Father Confessor took the key and brought it to the Bishop, who ⁴ then handed it on to the spiritual Father of the nuns.

F. 12. Another evening, when the nuns were taking turns to do the vigil before the Blessed Sacrament, it being Thursday, a nun, who had to do her hour later on, lay down for a while on the bed in the cell of the Superior who was in choir doing her designated hour. 13. She had scarcely drifted off to sleep, when she suddenly heard herself called by her own name and shaken three times; finally, believing that it was the Superior waking her up to go to choir at the hour assigned to her, she sat up in the bed, but through the great violence done to her she was unable to get up, as there was a great weight on top of her holding her down. 14. She began to invoke the most sweet names of Jesus and Mary, and the demon ridiculed her, ⁵ copying her voice, without //49v// pronouncing those adorable names, but only the tone in which she spoke, appearing to her as a most brutish figure. 15. So the aforesaid nun, full of fear, ran out of her cell and went to choir because of his very great malice, and discovered that not more than a quarter of an hour had passed since she first lay down.

G. 16. One morning, it being Our Lady's birthday in September, one of the nuns wanted to go upstairs to her cell to get her mantle and go to Holy Communion. 17. As she opened the door, she not only felt an invisible hand strike her a terrible blow to her head, but, without her seeing anything, her head was beaten so many times against the door that she was left for dead, and deprived of her senses, and she remained unconscious like this all the way through Communion, Mass and the prayers of thanksgiving that the nuns said after Holy Communion. 18. At the end of it, the Sister on duty, when she went to the kitchen to serve the Community meal and found no trace of that nun who was the Dispenser that year, she went up to the cell of the aforesaid nun and found the door of the main cloister ⁶ locked by key from the inside, and was quite unable to open it. 19. She wondered why any of the Sisters would have locked it on the inside, as it was daytime, and the Sisters needed to have the freedom to go to the cells along that cloister, ⁷ so that the key was only used at night when the Sisters went to bed, so she used all her strength to force the door open, and she could not find the key inside. 20. She went to the nun's cell and found her unconscious on the floor in the doorway; she lifted her up from the ground and saw that she had two lumps on her forehead as big as two pigeon's eggs, and her face was all scratched. 21. She was beside herself with terror. 22. The nun started to recover herself and said that she had heard the door lock behind her when she went upstairs, but that she had seen nothing, but yet she had been struck by an invisible hand. 23. The swelling on her forehead lasted more than eight days, and the key to the

³ *ferrare*: 'ferraro' - "smith."

⁴ *il quale*: 'tramite il quale' - "by whom", i.e., "who."

⁵ *scernendola*: 'schernendola' - "ridiculed her."

⁶ *corritore*: 'corridoio' - "corridor, cloister."

⁷ *dormitorio*: 'corridoio' - "corridor, cloister."

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main cloister could not be found, but only turned up many months later in the same cloister, where there were a number of pictures newly mounted in frames and that lay one on top of another and belonged to one of the religious novices. 24. In one of these pictures a Saint was depicted, showing a demon beside him trying to extinguish the torch that the Saint held in his hands: and that is where the key was found, in the hand of that demon depicted there. 25. I would never be finished if I wanted to make reference to everything that we suffered at that time from these rebels against God and man.⁸

H. 26. Another time, two Sisters were in a cell one night and had gone to bed, when one of them, her religious companion, saw, in the silence of the night, the other nun being lifted up together with the bed on which she was lying, almost up to the vaulted ceiling⁹ of the cell; and believing it was some gift our Lord had given to her religious companion, she knelt down upon her bed, adoring the Lord in the person of her religious companion. 27. But her companion called out to her and told her: “No, don’t do it, it’s not what you think it is!”, because what she was seeing was a work of the enemy, and not that of the Lord as she had thought.

I. 28. So many things happened at the time the Order began, that a great volume would be needed to record everything. 29. It reached the point where the spiritual Father led a procession of all the nuns, and carried the Blessed Sacrament in his hands throughout the whole Monastery, commanding the demon to disturb the nuns no more. 30. And he exorcised everywhere, because he wanted to see if there was some kind of pagan spirit there, dating from ancient times that was perhaps still lurking in that place, but the demon never replied nor gave the least sign, because there was nothing there like what he thought, for it was just an exercise of God, and the Lord had given him permission in His most just judgement.

J. 31. But the more he raged with anger against the Monastery, the more greatly these nuns made every effort to walk with the fervour of religious observance and the practice of the holy virtues. 32. And though I have said something about their fervour and mortification, I do not want to forget to say something here about the other things that happened to their profit, like the many miracles worked by the Lord.

K. 33. But most of all, on the Thursday night vigil all the nuns assisted in turns before the Blessed Sacrament with great fervour, and many of them, took no rest and spent //50r// the whole night there, until the hour of Matins the following morning, and all this time seemed just a moment to them. 34. There they did long scourgings; others assisted with crosses on their shoulders and crowns of thorns, with their hands tied behind their backs and a rope around their necks, and they were well provided with hair shirts. 35. And in this way their hearts were set on fire with a holy love of God.

⁸ *u*: ms add.

⁹ *lamia*: ‘soffitto a volta’ - “curved ceiling”, cf. BATTAGLIA, VIII, p. 714; D’ASCOLI, p. 294.

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L. 36. One night, during this vigil of love, it pleased the Lord to let a bright and clear fire be seen burning above the belfry of the Monastery, so strongly that all the men who had gathered there in the nuns' hospice,¹⁰ the aforesaid devout gentleman, Father Vincenzo Mannarini, Father Alphonsus de Liguori and the archpriest who was the nuns' chaplain, when they saw this fire over the Monastery, they wanted to go there at that hour and see what misfortune had happened, and they called the other priests and seculars of the house to come and see that mysterious fire and splendour shining over the Monastery. 37. But one of them, a servant of God, said: "We don't need to go to the Monastery, because tonight is the nuns' vigil before the Blessed Sacrament, so that's the Holy Spirit burning there!" 38. And he said this, because they were feeling the effects of God's love inside them so strongly, these priests and seculars, that night, through the abundance of the Spirit, that not one of the aforementioned brothers was able to sleep; and they too spent the whole night in prayer, so that all of them together felt the fire of the divine love.

M. 39. The following morning they all went to the Monastery together, and told the nuns everything they had seen, and what they had experienced internally, and how none of them had slept that night, but had passed it in continual prayer. 40. So they gave thanks to the Lord together with the nuns, because at that time there was still a unity of spirit among the brothers gathered there for the Work and the nuns.

N. 41. So many of them desired to do penance in response to the divine goodness, that every one of them did the best they could. 42. So one of them slept on a cross made big enough for someone to be able to lie stretched out on it; others slept fully dressed for the few hours of rest that they took, which were very little; others had woven themselves some shirts with knotted cords sewn inside, and they wore these day and night. 43. This is not to speak of hair shirts, chains, crosses with iron spikes,¹¹ hearts with the most holy name of Jesus embossed in spikes which they wore on their chests, and hair shirts cut down to fit all the limbs of their bodies, that they wore against their flesh every day.

O. 44. There were four nuns that had a copper medallion¹² made about one third the size of the open palm of a hand, with the most sweet name of Jesus engraved on it, and on the day the year began, they heated this medallion up red-hot, and when it was red-hot they branded their chests with it. 45. And for one¹³ of these four nuns, the metal was so red-hot that she gave herself a deep wound and she had the said wound for a year and some months, but then the Lord miraculously cured her.¹⁴

¹⁰ The hospice, in which the Monastery received visitors, stood at a distance of several hundred metres.

¹¹ *punte*: 'punte' - "spikes."

¹² *rametta*: a little sheet of copper or some other material on which a figure is carved, cf. B. PUOTI, *Vocabolario domestico napoletano e toscano*, (Vocabulary of Everyday Neapolitan and Tuscan Dialect), Naples 1850, p. 364.

¹³ *una*: 'per una' - "for one."

¹⁴ Maria Celeste speaks of this incident in a letter to St. Alphonsus of 4th. October 1730, cf. LIBRANDI - VALERIO, p. 76.

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P. 46. The scourgings were continual, both simple and to blood, and in the Monastery of the nuns there is evidence of what I have written here, because there is a room apart over the Monastery, where ¹⁵ the flagstones and the walls can no longer be seen, as everything is covered with blood.

Q. 47. Fasting was frequent, some did not eat meat, others only had soup, others only had bread and water, adding bitter herbs to the bread on Fridays; and the same on novenas and the Advent of the Lord, only bread and some sort of soup of vegetables and herbs. 48. And in this way they made good progress and came closer to their immaculate Lamb, Jesus.

R. 49. And it became necessary for the spiritual Father to order the Superior to moderate these austerities; and the same Father prohibited many of these penal exercises, for he would not hear of such permission being given by the Superior or the Confessor. 50. These nuns were so averse to their own comfort, that many of them with various illnesses did the same mortifications, and would not take any bodily relief: they went to choir at the prescribed times, ¹⁶ when they were weighed down with illness and pain, without asking for any reward, without complaining about the plain food they were given, mortifying themselves of those better things that sometimes, on days of common recreation, were served up by the community according to religious poverty. 51. Then the Superior was forced to command everyone by holy obedience that they were all to eat whatever was put before them, so much had the virtue of mortification grown in these Religious. 52. We have spoken at length about these things here, so that the Sisters of the Order may see the spirit in which the Institute was founded.

S. 53. As for the first novice who took the habit ¹⁷ after the nuns adopted the new Rule, many seculars came to her induction in the nuns' church, to attend this new ceremony. 54. Among the other persons, it was attended through the will of God by a young and very dissolute knight whose life scandalized the whole city, who only came along //50v// to this service out of curiosity. 55. But when the ceremony began, that young man began to be moved, and the Lord worked so much on him with His divine grace, that this knight began to weep uncontrollably, greatly detesting his sins with an inherent sorrow, so much so that during the whole time the ceremony lasted, he wept and wept with the intention of changing his life. 56. When the ceremony was over he went straight to the sacristy, and confessed himself to the Father Confessor of the nuns with many tears and compunction of heart. 57. And indeed from then on he changed his scandalous life into an exemplary and penitent life: he cast aside the vain clothes he was wearing, and dressed himself in mortified and poor clothing, and became a preacher in that

¹⁵ *che*: 'del quale' - "where."

¹⁶ *allore*: 'all'ore' - "at the... times."

¹⁷ *La ... abbito*: quando la prima novizia piglio l'abito - when the first novice took the habit. According to the indications in the *Atti Capitolari del Ricevimento al Abito e alla Professione* (Chapter Acts of Receiving the Habit and Professions) this must be Sister Maria Fedele dello Spirito Santo (Sister Mary Faithful to the Holy Spirit) (Maria Anna Cuomo), who took the habit on 24th. May 1732; cf. also F. MINERVINO, *Con S. Alfonso...*, p. 107.

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city, and became accustomed to going through the city at night exhorting and preaching the divine law and penance, to the amazement and edification of all the City of Scala that knew him. 58. And after his conversion he came again to the nuns' grille to seek pardon for his past frivolities, and thanked the whole community, because he said that the Lord had illuminated him in that church thanks to the prayers of those good nuns; and he also said that he had felt this internally, at the time when he attended the ceremony for this religious novice.¹⁸

¹⁸ See the Appendix on the next page.

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Appendix:

¹⁸ The remaining part of ms. page 50v is a long correction, and it cannot be established with certainty if it is the work of Maria Celeste: twenty lines have been crossed out, corresponding to the title and the beginning part of Chapter 5. The fact that Chapter 5 was not rewritten later and that we go straight on to Chapter 6, induces us to suppose that the crossing out, if it is the work of Crostarosa, was done after the drafting of the following Chapter. However, it should be noted that the discourse still continues fluidly, without evidence of mutilation. However, here is the text which has been crossed out:

Chapter 5

Of a clarity given by the Lord to the aforesaid nun of the Work, in which He declares that He gave the world His divine Word for the justification of mankind in the life of His beloved Son.

The Lord declared to the aforesaid nun to whom He had given the new Rule: *“I want to live the life of the just in you, the life of My divinity. All the justice of My divine simplicity you call the virtues. They were all communicated by My Word to the perfect man, Christ, who was given to you. And from My single divine goodness, all your goodness is born in you from that single act of My divine simplicity; in it is every truth. As God, I abased Myself and united Myself to humanity; as God, I am humility obedient to the will of the divine unity in My humanity, to the will of the Deity; as God, I am simplicity, justice and truth; as God, I am patient in waiting for the sinner at penance; as God, I am charity desiring the blessed man to have My own beatitude. I communicated everything to you in the perfect man, Christ; and to you in Him and through Him, in My simplicity alone, the enjoyment of the Word of God has been given to you as your life, together with the Father, because of your aspiration of love, to produce the effects of the divine Deity in you: the fortitude to fear nothing, an imperturbable serenity, divine wisdom and intelligence, omnipotence to do what God Himself wants, mercy towards miserable sinners, efficacious grace, so as to be free of what the corrupt nature of man is inclined to.”*

I think that perhaps the whole world is, in His sight, a refuge in God, the sole throne of God in Jesus Christ, to whom alone is all the glory and honour.

Chapter 43

//51r//

1.

Chapter 6

How the Bishop of Scala confirmed the new Rules with a decree, and of many other things that happened at that time.

A. 2. As we have indicated ¹ in the preceding chapters, the following were gathered at the nuns hospice: Father Alphonsus de Liguori, Father Vincenzo Mannarini, the gentleman named above, Father Gioan Battista di Donato, the ² ordinary Father confessor of the nuns ³ Father Pietro Romano and the spiritual Father of the nuns: they all gathered together because since they had the task of writing the constitutions for the assembled brothers regarding the aforesaid rule and folio, which the nun who had received it had given them, and this would enable them to share their opinions and work on it together, to decide and establish the written Constitutions for the men, and have the chance of finding a place together in the City of Scala where the brothers could gather together and establish the above-mentioned Congregation.

B. 3. Before anything else, they wanted to obtain the decree in writing ⁴ from the Bishop, in confirmation of the above-mentioned Rules, to safeguard them on future occasions, and because the Bishop was so well-disposed towards the Monastery, having conceived an esteem and opinion of them out of the ordinary, and was so benevolent to this Monastery that they could not wish for more from the many proofs that the Lord had given of His Work.

C. 4. Meanwhile they gave charge of this affair to the devout gentleman, so that he, as a good friend of the Bishop, Mons. Santoro, could request it of him; and this was agreed. 5. Then the aforesaid Bishop, with great pleasure and happiness made the above-mentioned decree, not just with courtesy, but with full authority in writing, and also with an eulogy to the glory of the Lord. 6. So when they had obtained this decree confirming the aforesaid Rules, both the nuns and the above-mentioned brothers of the Congregation were very happy, and gave thanks to the Lord who had shown His Work authenticated by His vicar on earth.

D. 7. Some four years or so had now passed ⁵ since the aforesaid nun had received the new Rules from the Lord, and although the aforesaid had written them down twice - the first time when she had received them from the Lord, and the second time two years and some months later (written the second time under obedience given to her by the

¹ *accennato* [-de]>\ne/ - "indicated []>\in/."

² *monache* [-d. -Pietro -Romano] e. The correction is not by Crostarosa.

³ *uniti*[-mo]

⁴ *in scriptis*: 'in scriptis' - "in writing"; on the same page there is an analogous case.

⁵ This must be understood in a broad sense; in reality it means about seven years. The same applies about what was later affirmed in regard to the interval between the first (1725) and the second (1731) draft.

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spiritual Father, and newly confirmed by a miracle of the Lord) - but both of these two written Rules had remained in the hands of the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns, and then, when he brought them with him to the nuns' hospice, he decided to add some things to the said Rules. 8. Among the other things he innovated, he added another three rules to the nine spiritual rules, so that together with the nine they now made twelve; and to include these three new ones he rewrote them as twelve but he was not able to adapt them so as to fit in with the nine already mentioned.⁶ 9. He also made additions to the nuns' habit, which was only the tunic and mantle: he added the scapular, and other things that he wanted to do. 10. And he added a great volume of these Rules, to the great displeasure of all the nuns, who let him know that they wanted this Rule just as it had been given to the aforesaid nun by the Lord, but in the end, so as not to be seen as obstinate, they submitted themselves to the innovations he had made. 11. And the aforesaid nuns were annoyed by all these ideas of the said spiritual Father, all the more because, with the observance of the new Rule being in force for some years, they had not been able to extract from his hands either the first or the second Rule written by the aforesaid nun; so, to have any chance of extracting it from his hands, they decided to speak to the aforesaid devout gentleman, who was in some manner subject to the said spiritual Father; and this was done.

E. 12. So this gentleman approached him with prudence and said to him that, if he agreed, why not give him both the book with the Rules //51v// written by the aforesaid nun of the Work, and also the other one he had had copied containing the additions⁷ he had made; and upon his return to Naples he would have them copied and corrected in a good handwriting, and then he would have them sent on to the nuns, who for so long had desired the said Rules. 13. So this is how he got the said Rules out of his hands and the aforesaid spiritual Father gave them into his safekeeping; so the nuns⁸ were satisfied and happy to hold them in their hands after so many years.

F. 14. After everything that has been said above, the brothers decided to find a house to rent, where they could meet and make a beginning to the Congregation; and after making exhaustive enquiries throughout the city of Scala, because they all felt they had to begin there, because this was where the Lord had been pleased to manifest His Work, they finally found a house which they thought was suitable and they assembled there to make a beginning to the Work of the Lord. 15. The aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns - contrary to what the Lord had made known to the aforesaid nun, that is, that He wanted Father Alphonsus de Liguori to be the Head and Superior - he elected at that time as

⁶ To the nine rules of Crostarosa (union and mutual charity, poverty, purity, obedience, humility and meekness of heart, mortification, recollection and silence, prayer, abnegation of self and love of the Cross), Falcoia began with those relative to faith, hope and love of God; on the significance and the consequences of this addition cf. *Imitazione*, pp. 219-229; *Incontri*, pp. 285-298.

⁷ *aggiute*: 'aggiunte' - "additions", cf also 44:6.

⁸ The verb *furono* - "were" should be understood here.

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Superior the \ordinary/ confessor of the nuns, \by name canon Pietro Romano/.⁹ 16.
And so began the Work of the Lord in the year 1733.¹⁰

G. 17. In the meantime they met daily at the nuns' hospice, where the spiritual Father was residing, to hold meetings where each one of them could give their opinion about forming the Constitutions and establishing the Congregation which were to be in union with the aforesaid Rules received by the aforesaid Religious, so as to be of one spirit with the observance of the nuns, just as the Lord had declared.

⁹ *monache [-canonico, -cui -nome -d. -Pietro -Romano] e -* “nuns [-canon, -whose -name -d. -Pietro -Romano] and.” The correction is not by Crostarosa.

¹⁰ More precisely on 9th. November 1732.

Chapter 44

1.

Chapter 7

Of the difficulties that began among the brothers of the Congregation, and of many things that happened at their meetings.

A. 2. The spiritual Father of the nuns, just as he had done with the nuns' Rules, began to impose many exercises and vocal prayers at the hour ¹ of retreat after the evening supper, when recreation had finished; and he wrote these things into the men's Constitutions. 3. He even wanted the Office in choir to be said at fixed hours, with everyone present, just as the nuns did, with other difficulties, such as whether they were to run schools or not, and if their houses were to be founded in cities or out in the countryside, and other such things.

B. 4. But in these things the opinions of all the brothers were not unanimous, but they began to have quite a few arguments about them among themselves; and they would visit the Monastery, and complain about the aforesaid spiritual Father, because he wanted to be in charge of all the brothers, and have everyone dependent on him and subject to his opinion. 5. Father Alphonsus de Liguori and \the ordinary confessor of the nuns/ ² were both on the side of the said spiritual Father, as the aforesaid were both subject to him for their spiritual direction; but Father Vincenzo Mannarini and Father Gioan Battista di Donato, and the aforesaid devout gentleman, held a different view about these matters. 6. So they kept on coming to the Monastery of the nuns, and told them about all the controversies that they were having, and complained about all the things that were being added in by the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns. 7. The secular gentleman was of the opinion that, since the Lord had made use of the aforesaid nun to reveal His Work, //52r// then this same nun should settle the disparity of opinions about these things the brothers could not agree on; but the spiritual Father, not content with anything else, wanted everyone without exception to accept what he had decided. 8. So different factions and contradictions began to appear among them, and these contradictions lasted for some time, with the use of strong language, and there began to be some silent hostility among the members of the Congregation.

C. 9. On the other hand, the aforesaid nun who had received the Rules from the Lord, seeing that the spiritual Father was disturbing the Work of the Lord and the very necessary unity of the brothers, had recourse to the Lord with prayer, and He gave her to understand that he was no longer to be her spiritual Father, and that she should withdraw from him, because it was no longer His will for him to be her director. ³ 10. But the

¹ *allora*: 'all'ora' - "at the hour."

² *e [-d. -Pietro -Romano -canonico] > \il confessore ordinario delle monache/. - and [-the -canon -d. -Pietro -Romano] > \the ordinary confessor of the nuns. The handwriting and the interlinear integration are not by Maria Celeste.*

³ *derittore*: 'direttore' - "director."

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aforesaid nun took no \notice/⁴ of what she had heard, but instead withdrew into silence, and no longer confided to the aforesaid Father the things that were happening in her soul.⁵

D. 11. From the moment that the Lord had revealed the Work of the new Institute to her, she had suffered an internal battle, that had gone on continually, for more than five years, with the aforesaid spiritual Father: beginning with the time when the Work of the Lord was begun, until this time when the brothers were divided, he was always fighting the demon and doubting the Work of God. 12. So throughout the whole period that the Lord was confirming things with some miraculous signs, he believed that the Work was of God, but when this confirmation had passed, he returned once more to his doubts and fear of deception and illusions. 13. So he kept the aforesaid nun in constant pain and crosses, and fear and perplexity of spirit. 14. From the moment this companion of his, whom we described above, went public with so many things and spread so much gossip in Naples against the Work of the Lord, attacking the spirit of the aforesaid soul, the said spiritual Father was forever vacillating.⁶

E. 15. Then after the Work of the Lord had already been put into effect, and the nuns had put on the habit of the Most Holy Saviour, he called a meeting of the religious counsellors of the Monastery, together with the Superior, and then had the aforesaid nun called, and raised many doubts and said many things: he explained everything away with many doctrines of the sacred Council of Trent, where it said and proved that visions and revelations were not to be believed, and he asked the aforesaid nun: “How did she know it was God that she heard and experienced?” 16. And what he said in the presence of the nuns was that they had to observe the rules already in force. 17. And this is the origin of the discrediting of the aforesaid nun and the little esteem of the Work of God among them, for later on, as will be said next at the end of the following tribulation, the nuns came out openly, calling her deluded, and declaring her as such, they said that the aforesaid spiritual Father had told them many times that the Work was suspect.

F. 18. So the poor nun, seeing another battle between the male brothers and the religious Sisters the second time around, resolved to leave this guide and seek advice. 19. But she did not decide to make a fresh choice just then, because it was not the right time: she wanted to wait for God to give her the time, when it suited His divine will, and in the meantime she just withdrew from this guide, and kept her silence to see what the Lord would dispose.

⁴ *fece[-ndo]>\conto/* - “took no notice.”

⁵ Cf. the letter that Maria Celeste wrote in November - December 1732 to St. Alphonsus, in LIBRANDI - VALERIO, pp. 110-111.

⁶ Analogous, in regard to Falcoia’s direction, are the assertions in the letters of Maria Celeste to Pietro Romano of 20th. April 1733, *ivi*, pp. 113-115.

Chapter 45

1.

Chapter 8

How the demon managed, by means of a terrible tribulation, to destroy all the Work of God, by plotting a total destruction of what had already been done.

A. 2. In the Monastery of Scala there was a young nun, ¹ who was there in the Noviciate with the aforesaid nun of the new Institute at the same time that the Lord was pleased to manifest His Work to the above-mentioned. 3. This young girl was only about 17 years of age, and had never journeyed by any other way, except that of holy meditations, simply, up till this time, moreover, in her actions she showed much of the frivolity of youth, and was very often worthy of a reprimand. 4. But then, as soon as the Work of the Lord was revealed, this fellow novice of mine, who was there in the Noviciate in the company of the aforesaid nun who had had the Work revealed to her, she took it upon herself to get involved in the Work in this way.

B. 5. Just as it was said above, the aforesaid nun, after she had received the Work of the Lord, she went and told the Mistress of //52v// Novices everything that she had learnt from the Lord, as she had fears and spiritual doubts. 6. When their long discussion had finished, they went down a staircase where, on the landing, they found this young fellow novice. 7. The Mistress asked her ² why she was there in that place, worried that the above-mentioned had been eavesdropping on what the aforesaid nun had been telling her. 8. But all she said in reply was: “I know everything, because the Lord has revealed it ³ to me.” 9. This is what she said then, but later in private she said many other things.

C. 10. And from then on she interfered in ⁴ the Work of the Lord with many visions and revelations. 11. But as we have said, because many years passed from the time the Lord revealed the Work until it was finally put into effect, in all this time the above-mentioned had more and more of these supernatural things.

D. 12. This young girl was much approved of by the spiritual Father of the nuns, and so greatly did she advance in the opinion of this director, that it was she who directed the said spiritual Father as the guide of the other nuns of the Monastery, by telling him that she had received the power to discern spirits from the Lord, so that she began to uncover many secrets of conscience by way of revelations; so she was singularly loved by the spiritual Father of the nuns, and was esteemed by him as a simple soul to whom God communicated Himself. 13. And in this opinion she was approved by all.

¹ Sister *Maria Colomba delle SS. Piaghe* (Sister Mary Dove of the Most Sacred Wounds) (Agnese Battimelli), who died, according to AMRSc, *Libro di memoria* (Book of Memorials), on 20th. December 1788 “at the age of about eighty-two” (73). What Crostarosa affirms here in regards to the psychology and the mental attitudes of this Sister is verified in the letter of the same to St. Alphonsus of June - July 1732, cf. *Analecta* 5 (1926), pp. 117-120.

² *gli* is preceded by an *s*.

³ *lâ*: ‘l’ha’ - “has... it.”

⁴ *immezzo*: ‘in mezzo’ - “in the midst of”, i.e., “in” (cf also 47:5; 62:27; and also *in mezzo* in 29:11; 35:4; 45:4; 61:6).

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E. 14. And she told the spiritual Father whom he should elect as Superior when the nuns changed their Superior and the new Rule was adopted; and in the same way she told Father Alphonsus to leave his previous spiritual Father, and place himself under the direction of the spiritual Father of the nuns; ⁵ and she told the spiritual Father that God wanted him to be the Head, with all the brothers of the Congregation under him, and they were all to depend on his decisions and determinations. 15. And so it was that the aforesaid Spiritual Father took her advice for directing the aforesaid religious in the doubts that had come to him about the spirit of this soul who had received the Rules from the Lord.

F. 16. She was also much esteemed by the ordinary confessor \who was her uncle/, ⁶ to the point where this same commanded her, by virtue of holy obedience, that she was to write down her life for him,/ which she did. 17. She had her two religious companions to whom she passed on ⁷ what she wrote, and she did it with the permission of [her uncle] ⁸ the \ordinary/ Father confessor. 18. And in this way many things were made public, as were the many letters that she wrote to many people, in which she said she had been commanded by the Lord by way of revelations; and that she went in spirit to preach to the infidels; and that the Lord had taken her as His spouse her five years ago; and that she had received a command from God to be hidden and keep these graces secret, and that was why at the beginning she had not disclosed the things going on inside her; and that she had received the stigmata; ⁹ and other things that are of no importance to our narrative.

G. 19. But her Mistress, who was a nun of solid spirituality, began to have her suspicions about her, and to suffer from temptations, doubts and fears, because, having had her under her direction, she had not known ¹⁰ such virtues in her as would indicate such favours from heaven; nor even the least sign of an extraordinary spirituality in the constant meetings that she had had with the same every day; and so she feared deception. 20. But yet, so as not to cause her discredit and through her own scruples, she did not mention her fears either to the \ordinary/ confessor [her uncle], ¹¹ or to the spiritual Father, because he was directed by her in the guidance of the souls of the other nuns, and especially of the nun of the Work of the Institute, and so great was his opinion and belief in her; that the Mistress thought she would only discredit herself, if she were to tell them about her doubts and fears.

⁵ In reality his transfer to the direction of Falcoia from that of Pagano was a decision suffered and well considered by Alphonsus, and suggested by the same Pagano, cf. TH. REY-MERMET, *Il fondatore...*, p. 162.

⁶ *ordinario* [-che -era -suo -zio], *ed* - "ordinary confessor [-who -was -her -uncle], and." The penmanship is not by Maria Celeste. The same applies to the other two cases, with an interlinear addition, present on this manuscript page.

⁷ *compagnie... comunicava*: 'compagne religiose a cui comunicava' - "religious companions to whom she passed on."

⁸ *confessore* [-suo -zio] > *ordinario*/ - "[her uncle] the \ordinary/ Father confessor."

⁹ *stimate*: 'stimate' - "stigmata."

¹⁰ *conosciuta* - "known" - ms add.

¹¹ *confessore* [-suo -zio] > *ordinario*/ - "the \ordinary/ confessor [her uncle]."

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H. 21. So she decided to ask the devout gentleman, who was very expert on things mystical, to be good enough to examine this young lady somewhat, and teach her a little humiliation and sense of propriety; and this is what she did. 22. She spoke to him and told him of her doubts and fears, and told him that when she was her Mistress, she had found much youthful frivolity etc., in her. 23. And because the aforesaid religious was still in good standing,¹² she still disclosed her spiritual concerns to the aforesaid gentleman and servant of God...¹³ 24. So the first time he went to talk to her after this information,¹⁴ he began to //53r// put her in doubt and fears, telling her that she ought to leave such things and meditate on the Passion of Our Lord, and that the way she was travelling would lead to deceptions and illusions, and was especially damaging to other people's consciences; and after he had completely destroyed her position and humiliated her, he sent her away.

I. 25. But this was the beginning of the ruin of the Work of the Lord, because the aforesaid, not knowing that the nun who had been her Mistress had been the one behind all this, she assumed that the nun of the Institute had been the one who had raised these suspicions about her spirit with the aforesaid devout gentleman, and that he had worked with her in this way, and so she was very angry with the aforesaid gentleman, because he had disapproved of her spirit, in spite of the fact that the spiritual Father of the nuns and the ordinary confessor, [her uncle],¹⁵ not only did not disapprove of her, but held her in an unusually high esteem, revering her as a miracle of the Lord's grace.

J. 26. Moreover, two or three other nuns, her companions, who had¹⁶ permission to read her writings, and who held her in high esteem, joined this nun. 27. And they began to flood the said spiritual Father of the nuns with letters, against both the devout gentleman, and the nun who had received the Rules for the new Institute, and they wrote that the devout gentleman had advised the nuns to leave the guidance of the said Father; and that he had every intention of taking over the governance of the Monastery; and that he was making too much of the nun of the Work of the Institute; and it would be her ruin because a spiritual attachment¹⁷ had been born in her; and that the Monastery was going to ruin; and that God had revealed to her that this man was a hypocrite who only pretended to be holy; and a thousand and one other things, that we do not mention here out of politeness.

K. 28. This was a fabrication of the enemy, very secretly and subtly put together, simply to damage all the Work of the Lord and throw it to the ground. 29. And everything that has been said here by the aforesaid nun, well, she who writes it does not intend to pass any judgement on whether the spirit of the aforesaid is false or not, but all

¹² *accredita*: 'accreditata' - "in good standing."

¹³ Maria Celeste leaves the sentence unfinished, brusquely changing the subject, which turns back to being Sister Maria Colomba.

¹⁴ *informo*: informazione - information, cf. BATTAGLIA, VII, p. 980; B. PUOTI, *Vocabolario domestico...* p. 217.

¹⁵ *ordinario* [-suo -zio] non - "the ordinary confessor, [her uncle]."

¹⁶ *aveva*: - 'avevano' - "had."

¹⁷ *atto*: 'attaccamento' - "attachment."

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that is said here is what happened in spirit and truth, both with the Work of the Lord, and the deceits of the enemy, leaving the judgement of it to Him who is the judge of the living and the dead.

1.

Chapter 9

Continues describing the tribulation which had begun, and how the local Ordinary Bishop was worried and withdrew the decree approving the Work, and how the brothers of the men's Congregation were divided.

A. 2. The aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns, seeing that the aforesaid nun, who had received the new Rule, had now withdrawn from his guidance for a long time, for the reasons that have been declared above, he came to the conclusion that the said nun had made this decision on the advice of the devout gentleman named above, which is what had been represented to him.¹ 3. And he became so angry that he became highly suspicious of the Work of the Lord, and also the spirit of the aforesaid nun, all these years after regular observance had been established in the Monastery, and after the decree had been obtained from the local Ordinary Bishop by means of the devout gentleman, as has been said in previous chapters.

B. 4. So when the aforesaid Bishop began to hear rumours and controversies among the brothers and among the nuns, unlike before, he became much disturbed and was greatly worried about what he had already done. 5. And hearing of illusions and factions, he lost his good opinion both of the Work and his esteem and good opinion of the nuns, and became very worried because he was the one who had confirmed, with such a favourable decree, the aforesaid Rules. 6. So he made it clear to the nuns that they were to give him back the said decree confirming them.

C. 7. So the nuns together with the agreement of the aforesaid spiritual Father who so advised them, decided to request a personal visit from the aforesaid Bishop, and because he was curious to know what the turbulent rebels were quarrelling about, he went straight away to the Monastery and began his personal visit according to the correct protocol, speaking privately with each one individually. 8. Of what was said then by the nuns² nothing is known. 9. The aforesaid nun who had received the Rules from the Lord knew nothing then about what the demon had been doing. //53v// 10. When she went to talk to the Bishop, all the professed nuns had already spoken to him, and because she was the last professed she took the last place; being ignorant of the fact, there was nothing she could say to him, but just went there with the others through obedience. 11. However, she could see that the Bishop was disturbed; he did not show her that usual confidence that he had before, rather, he spoke a few words to her in a distant tone and dismissed her. 12. From what happened later she learnt that there was a full denunciation of the

¹ Cf. also what St. Alphonsus wrote to Maria Celeste in March 1733, *lettere...*, pp. 21-22.

² *Quello... monache*: 'Di quello che qui si dicesse dalle monache' - "of what was said then by the nuns."

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devout gentleman, who was a great friend of the aforesaid Bishop, and who had obtained the decree confirming the Rules, and had given the Bishop the news of the good life of the nuns, and what the Lord had worked in that place, and because of this the Bishop had become greatly attached to the Monastery and had given it his special protection. 13. So the nuns considered the aforesaid nun of the Institute as deluded, and as equally deluded that devout gentleman whom she held in high esteem, and who worked together with her in negotiating the approval of the Rules by the aforesaid Bishop; and they thought she was not just deluded but as partial to him too; and the gentleman as not just deluded, but also discredited as a hypocrite, with a thousand and one other things which we shall be silent on out of politeness; and that the aforesaid nun loved this man because he praised her as a saint, and with his support she wished to be in charge under the pretext of the new Rule.³

D. 14. It cannot be said here how many the works of the demon were, casting down to the ground whatever the Lord had worked in His mercy. 15. And at this time, while this fierce tribulation lasted, no further clamour or noise was heard throughout the Monastery, like the uproar that had been heard before in the Monastery. 16. However the aforesaid Bishop had heard so many dismal things and was very much worried, and decided unilaterally to withdraw the decree he had made approving the Rules; and wanted the nuns to go back again to following their previous Rule of St. Francis de Sales. 17. But the nuns begged him not to make this new change, as it would bring them disgrace and scandal, both in the City of Scala, and bring the Monastery into disrepute. 18. And so they told him that they would be happy if the spiritual Father were to write their Rules, done by him in his own way; and not just as Rules given by an ecclesiastical person, but now that he was a prelate, and a person now in authority in the Church, it would be better to observe those given by him as a Father of the Church: and then there would be no more to say, and the aforesaid nun would have no more part to play in this Work.

E. 19. In the meantime the devout gentleman gave the Ordinary Bishop back the decree confirming the Rule, and gave the nuns the Rule that the spiritual Father had copied from the aforesaid nun's book with the additions he had made to it. 20. But although he had added and changed some things in them, it was still the same Rule taken from the said nun's book. 21. They did this solely to give the Bishop to understand that it was the work of their spiritual Father, and the aforesaid nun would have no further part in it. 22. The devout gentleman retained possession of the book of Rules written by the aforesaid nun of the Work, and did not wish to hand it over either to the spiritual Father of the nuns, or to the Monastery, but by the will of God he kept custody of it himself. 23. And he left Scala for the trip back to Naples, realising now the work of the enemy; nonetheless he wrote some letter to the nuns.

³ In the same words the affirmations of the letter to Pietro Romano of 20th. April 1733, cf. LIBRANDI - VALERIO, pp. 116-119.

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F. 24. The brother priests who had assembled for the Work now ended up divided against themselves: Father Alphonsus de Liguori with Canon Pietro Romano, the ordinary Father confessor of the nuns,⁴ who were spiritual sons of the director of the nuns, were united with him and of the same opinion; Father Vincenzo Mannarini and Father Giovanni Battista di Donato, together with the devout gentleman agreed differently. 25. For each one of them wanted to begin their Congregation under the same Rule and Institute, but with different formalities, according to the disparities and differences of opinion that existed between one and the other;⁵ and from this came all the disrepute and scandals on both sides, as will be said next.

⁴ *il [-canonico -d. -Pietro -Romano] > \p. confessore ordinario delle monache/ -* “the [-Canon -d. -Pietro -Romano] >\the ordinary Father confessor of the nuns/.” The handwriting and the words added between the lines are not by Maria Celeste. * Father Emilio Lage translates from an additional text, which I have added to this translation - Tr.

⁵ Cf. TH. REY-MERMET, *Dalla fondazione all’approvazione pontificia*, in *Storia CSSR*, pp. 180-182 (From the foundation to pontifical approval).

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//54r//

1.

Chapter 10

Of the miraculous signs that appeared in the sacred host before this grave tribulation of the Order commenced, ¹ and the said signs lasted until the departure of the aforesaid nun from her Monastery.

A. 2. More than one month before this tribulation began among the nuns, and [before the] the disunity of the brothers, ² the Lord began to demonstrate certain tangible and portentous signs of this future tribulation, which it is not appropriate for us to pass over in silence, for the sake of the glory of the Lord and to make it known how much it displeases the Lord in His Works when man places himself there of his own accord, and breaks charity and fraternal unity, and how man places an impediment to His works by the love of himself, which only serves to ruin the work of his Creator.

B. 3. The Monastery observed the Rule where the nuns of the Order were required, every Thursday morning, at the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, to have an exposition of the Venerable, to be a memorial of the most divine sacrament of the Eucharist, instituted by our divine Lord at the Last Supper. 4. So the nuns exposed the Venerable as the Rule commands.

C. 5. Once while the Venerable was exposed they saw something appear in the exposed sacred host; it was all the instruments of the Passion of the Lord, visibly: someone saw what looked like bleeding flesh dripping blood in the middle of the host; another saw all the instruments of the Passion of the Lord blood red in colour; another saw stairs with the steps all stained with blood; and others saw a mountain with a black cross. 6. The nun who had received the Rules of the Institute from the Lord saw none of these things, except once when she saw a mountain with a cross and three very bright stars at the top of the cross. 7. But everybody saw different apparitions: some saw one thing and others saw another. 8. And what was remarkable was that, considering that ³ the sacred host was of such a small size, so many different things were seen there and appeared quite big, and the host seemed much bigger than these other objects.

D. 9. And to prove that this was not a chimera or some imaginary vision of the nuns, the Lord wanted to confirm it by making seculars from outside see the same things. 10. So these people were all in church at the same time - the Father Confessor of the nuns, the Dean of Scala who was assisting in the church as the chaplain of the Monastery,

¹ Cf. *Documenta vaticana de apparitionibus Scalae in S. Hostia observatis, an. 1732-1733* (Vatican documents on the apparitions observed at Scala in the Sacred Host in the years 1732-1733) in *Spic. hist.* 1 (1953) pp. 67-82. Maria Celeste's interpretation does not coincide with that of the other protagonists.

² *e... fratelli*: 'e prima delle disunioni dei fratelli' - "before the disunity of the brothers."

³ *essendo*: - "being", i.e., "considering that": ms add.

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and the aforesaid devout gentleman - all these persons saw the aforesaid signs, ⁴ and likewise the archdeacon, by name Father Emanuele d'Aflitto, ⁵ and other devout persons who were there in the church: but they did not all see the said signs in the same way, but one saw one thing and somebody else saw another. 11. It was such a thing of wonder to everyone that these things were discussed throughout the whole City of Scala, and the Bishop sent there for information, and he called on all the nuns, each one individually, to make statements about what each one of them had seen. 12. And even the spiritual Father of the nuns had someone embroider many forms of hosts, with the same mysteries of the Passion of the Lord as had been seen in the sacred host, and they were sent to some cardinals in Rome.

E. 13. These signs followed one after the other while the tribulation lasted; and up till the departure of the aforesaid nun who had received the Rules, these signs still lasted; if then, after the departure of the aforesaid nun, and at what time after her departure, these signs ceased, she heard no further news of it. ⁶

F. 14. Another miraculous thing happened two days before the aforesaid nun of the Institute left the Monastery, as will be said in the proper place. 15. Very early one morning, the reverend Dean, the nuns' chaplain, came as usual to open the church and found the most holy crucifix above the main altar had come down and was unnailed, without breaking either the hands of the crucifix or the nails, but as if it had been unnailed by some human person; and the entire cross came to rest down flat ⁷ on the cushion on the altar, on the epistle side, [i.e., the left side of the altar]; ⁸ and it was held firm there; with the most holy crucifix lying face-down upon the altar dais, just as if somebody had placed it there: something which could //54v// never have happened by human means, because the Monastery keys were all under the Superior's pillow, and the church did not have an interior door into the Monastery, and the aforesaid deacon kept the keys to the church and the door to the Monastery on his person. 16. So the worthy deacon, totally upset and terrified, and almost weeping, called the Father Confessor and told him what had happened; and the Father Confessor called the Superior and the nuns, and after telling them everything, he ordered the nuns, under the precept of obedience, that what had happened was not to be noised abroad outside the Monastery, but that they were to profit from all these warnings from God, and that they were to keep all this secret for the love of God. 17. And the Superior gave the same precept to the nuns, so that it would not become known outside the Monastery, so as to give no cause for scandal. 18. And so they managed to halt a commotion which had arisen among the nuns because of this event.

⁴ *sengni*: 'segni' - "signs."

⁵ Father Emanuele d'Aflitto, the canon of the Cathedral of Scala.

⁶ *no se ne*: 'non se n'è' - "she... of it."

⁷ *colcata*: 'corcata', 'coricata' - "came to rest down flat."

⁸ *cor[-p> -o]*. Perhaps Maria Celeste wished to translate the latin expression 'cornu.'

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1.

Chapter 11

Of the mortifications that the aforesaid nun had by order of the spiritual Father of the nuns, and her troubles.

A. 2. The aforesaid nun saw ¹ the Work of God thrown into complete disarray by the demon, who was jealous of the glory of God and the profit of souls, and had now obtained everything he wanted, both to work disorderliness and darkness of spirit among the religious sisters, and to impede the path they had chosen with such fervour, already begun with such perfection and confirmed with so many graces by the Lord; and he had similarly divided the brothers of the men's Congregation and brought them to ruin, and not only this, but some of them had also begun to fear and pass judgement on the spirit of the nun and the Work of the Lord, so this little ship was on the point of foundering.

B. 3. And the aforesaid nun too began to fear that she had been deceived, and then her internal light from the Lord was totally withdrawn. 4. And although in the past tribulation, before the Work of God was put into effect, she suffered persecutions and tribulations, just as has been written in past chapters, then however it was a flower of suffering, because then she had many internal confirmations from the Lord, and all the nuns in her favour, and the spiritual Father supporting her; but in this latest tribulation it was not like this, because not only was she not illumined by the Lord interiorly, but she felt thick darkness and despair within her soul. 5. And the most painful thing was to see herself persecuted and slandered by her dearest and closest friends, censured by servants of God and otherwise good people who did it all from zeal, believing that they were working for the glory of God. 6. So all her religious companions in the Monastery began to attack her, and by the will of God they changed from close and charitable friends into many rigorous and severe judges, as the Lord so disposed. 7. And they did all this out of zeal and for reasons they thought were justified, because they mistook things for the work of the enemy so much that even the very least action was judged and condemned as guilty, and taken the wrong way by the aforesaid nuns.

C. 8. And so many lengthy letters were written against her and her every action, especially in regard to the aforesaid devout secular gentleman mentioned above. 9. This person did not know that the tribulations had gone so far in the Monastery, nor that the nuns had turned against him so much, and were so confused in their minds. 10. He wrote to the aforesaid nun of the Work, and also to the other nuns, and spoke frankly to them, complaining about the spiritual Father of the nuns and saying that the division of the brothers was because of him. 11. But the letters that were sent to the nun who had received the new //55r// Rules were intercepted by the nuns and they held meetings about them and passed judgement on the spirit of this devout gentleman, and every word, even

¹ In the side margin Maria Celeste has marked a +

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the most innocent, was used to condemn him. 12. So the nuns wrote bundles of letters to the spiritual Father, and the spiritual Father sent great bundles continuously to the Monastery. 13. So his followers among the nuns were thoroughly stirred up and only too eager to carry out what he ordered, against both the aforesaid nun and the devout gentleman.

D. 14. Meanwhile they said publicly than the man was a hypocrite; that he pretended to be holy because he wished to install himself as the Head of the Order; and that he praised the aforesaid nun as a genius; and that there was a spiritual attachment between the aforesaid nun and him. 15. And this went so far that it reached the point of managing to make them suspect, even damaging the reputation of the aforesaid nun. 16. But they did everything out of zeal, believing they were making a sacrifice to God, and this is why the Lord permitted it.

E. 17. So they put in writing all the words that had been said by both the aforesaid nun and that devout gentleman, when they sat at the grille and discussed the spiritual matters that had happened to them internally, the most innocent little words, that had been said in perfectly good faith, at which the nuns had always been present,² for the aforesaid nun had never spoken alone or in private with this person, but always in their presence.

F. 18. So these letters by the aforesaid nuns stirred up such a fire of zeal in the spiritual Father's heart, that he ordered the nuns and the Superior to mortify the nun, and deprive her of communion, and that no-one was to speak to her. 19. And this prohibition was made, because there were many nuns in the Monastery, at the beginning of the tribulation, who objected to these things through the pangs of their own consciences, and defended both the aforesaid nun and the devout secular. 20. \And/ to prevent them having any communication with the nun of the Work of the Lord, they ordered her to be kept segregated from contact with the other Sisters, and even from her two sisters of the flesh; nor was she allowed to write to anyone, nor go down to anyone at the grille, nor even discuss spiritual things with anyone at all; and that, on better and mature reflection, the best thing would be to imprison her to make her repent of her errors. 21. Then they were required by the Superior, who was the spiritual daughter of the aforesaid Father director of the nuns, to obey all these orders; they were put into effect, especially the one preventing her from writing to the devout gentleman, that they had such a low opinion of.

G. 22. So the poor nun, hearing so much public gossip about him, thought to win them over as much as she could with Christian reasoning on the law of charity. 23. But not only did she not quench³ the fire, but she only added to their firm convictions that

² *le quali... presenti*: 'parole alle quali le religiose erano state sempre presenti' - "words... at which the nuns had always been present."

³ *namorzò*: 'smorzò' - "quench."

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she was in love with him and attached to him, and so the remedy was worse than the evil itself.

H. 24. Then the above-mentioned nun, seeing that the fire was not one that she could quench, retired to her cell in silence at the feet of the Lord, praying and humiliating herself in her nothingness, because she thought she had been the cause of this tribulation by her imperfections; but the Lord did not console her as He usually did, on the contrary, inside her she was in darkness. 25. Then to this was added bodily illness, which so thoroughly sapped her strength that she suffered many fainting fits and a fever that consumed her, with a lack of appetite so great that she could not even take the food she needed. 26. Her health declined so much that she lay ill on her bed, with no help from anyone, or any human comfort, because none of the nuns was able to visit her; nor was any infirmarian sent there by the Superior, and neither did the aforesaid Superior go there to visit her. 27. On the contrary, they did not believe that it was illness, but coldness of spirit; and this became evident when the said Superior said to the aforesaid nun's sister: "Why does your sister not come to choir and prayer and the common office?" 28. And her sister replied, telling her that she was ill in bed. 29. But they still did not believe it was illness, but coldness of spirit because she did not come to the common obligations of the Rule. 30. So not even her sisters of the flesh were able to obtain permission to visit her, except very rarely, with orders not to speak to her except what was strictly necessary. 31. And to make sure they were obeying their orders, they secretly sent one of the other nuns to listen outside the door of the aforesaid religious sister.

I. 32. But from time to time the Superior sent along one of those three nuns who had caused this tribulation with the spiritual Father of the nuns, and pretending to take pity on her, they talked to the aforesaid nun and said "You can see it really is the demon's work, bringing into the Work of God this gentleman who pretends to be spiritual, but actually he likes talking and making jokes, and is completely //55v// worldly; and goes around criticising the spirit of the nuns." 33. And a thousand other similar things, for they said: "My sister, I think that, if you want to get out of all the trouble he has caused you, it would be well if you decided to come back under our director's guidance, just like you did before. 34. On the other hand, let me tell you in private that, if you do not return to our Father's guidance, you will be put in prison and punished with bitter penances for the rest of your life." 35. And other things, too many to narrate here.

J. 36. So the nun listened patiently and replied that: "she did not ⁴ know if the secular was good or bad; but out of prudence and charity, his connection with the Monastery should be terminated, ⁵ without scandal or bad publicity against him, because, since he was well regarded by everyone, it would be wise to get rid of him little by little with prudence and dexterity, without discrediting people and the Work of God, which was already in progress, and it was because of him that confirmation of the Rules had

⁴ *nol*: 'nol' - "did not."

⁵ *scermire*: 'allontanare' - "terminated."

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been obtained from the local Ordinary; and so there was a need for prudence. 37. But as for returning to the guidance of the spiritual Father, as they were exhorting her, she had good reasons for the scruples of conscience that forced her to make a different decision.”

K. 38. So these words were very displeasing to those nuns, who had been entrusted with returning the aforesaid nun to this guide at any cost, because the aforesaid spiritual Father had entrusted them, the nuns, to come up with a scheme to return the aforesaid soul to his guidance again. 39. So they began to threaten the aforesaid nun.

L. 40. Meanwhile the aforesaid spiritual Father was advised of everything by the nuns, and to this effect he sent Father Alphonsus de Liguori to Scala, to come and preach at the Monastery, and his preaching was all about going on at length about how many souls are deceived and deluded, and then lost completely to the way of prayer. 41. So then he had her called saying that he wished to talk to her, but the aforesaid nun excused herself by saying that she was not well and could not see him. 42. And he wrote her a lengthy letter, full of doctrines and things that happened to souls lost through spiritual deceptions and attachments;⁶ so the aforesaid nun, in two lines of reply, thanked him for the kindness shown to her.⁷ 43. And then the aforesaid nun, seeing herself deprived of every human aid, in her fears, doubts and temptations from the enemy, abandoned herself completely into the arms of Divine Providence, waiting in pure and blind faith for whatever God wanted to draw forth from such a dark battle, for internally she was so bereft of every light of consolation, both divine and human.

⁶ Cf. *Lettere di S. Alfonso...* (Letters of St. Alphonsus...) pp. 20-32; for its correct interpretation cf. *Incontri*, pp. 112-122.

⁷ This brief reply by Maria Celeste has been lost.

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1.

Chapter 12

Of the discredit and contempt that the Work of the Lord suffered, and how it was publicly said that the aforesaid nun who had received the Rules was deluded.

A. 2. These exterior reprimands increased the internal troubles in the soul of the aforesaid nun, and also increased her tribulations, because there was constant gossiping behind her back in the Monastery, because there were little gatherings in every corner of it; and in the Superior's room there were always little meetings and consultations behind closed doors; and great bundles of letters were being read: and these letters [came] from both the spiritual Father and the loyal brothers, including Father Alphonsus who supported him; and they also came from the nuns' relatives, because they had been dragged into it too, through the letters that were sent from the Monastery, and [which also came] from those devout seculars ¹ who were supporters of the Monastery, and who knew everything that God had done in that place.

B. 3. But since the Bishop and the Vicar of the nuns had been informed differently, the Work was already discredited, ² and the aforesaid nun was talked about as deluded; and therefore those devout persons who were supporters of the Monastery came to find out from the nuns about what had happened. 4. And for this reason the Superior and the nuns spent many hours telling their side of the story; and so many things were said that it would be impossible to describe. 5. And they also declared the devout gentleman //56r// a hypocrite, and the aforesaid nun as deluded.

C. 6. On the other hand the aforesaid spiritual Father, although he was a man of common sense and prudence, in this case the demon so obscured his intellect that he himself lost all his prudence. 7. He went to Naples and told all the Congregation of the Pious Workmen all about it, and all the clergy of Naples, and especially the Penitentiary Canon of the Holy Office of Naples, who was the Consultor to the Cardinal at the time. 8. And he made a particular point of speaking to this person, because the aforesaid nun had once said she wanted to discuss the things of her soul with the said Father Giulio ³; and because the nuns had told him about their aforesaid spiritual Father, he decided to tell him everything. 9. And these disclosures were the source of what was talked about throughout the whole city of Naples, so that in every corner of it they talked about ⁴ these illusions and that deluded nun. 10. And from all of the priests of the Archbishopric of Naples, Pious Workmen, and seculars, there were some who said: "It looks like he's

¹ *come... divoti*: 'come anche venivano da quei secolari devoti' - "and [which also came] from those devout seculars."

² *scredita*: 'screditata' - "discredited."

³ Father Giulio Torno (or Torni), Canon and Superior of the Congregation of the Apostolic missions, was the vicar for the nuns at Naples.

⁴ *trascorrevano*: 'discorrevano' - "they talked about."

Chapter 49

the one who's been deluded and has been too gullible; it's the director who was the first one to be deluded." 11. "It's his own fault. Wasn't he the one who went around saying so much about this nun and praising her ⁵ to the skies?" 12. Father Giulio Torni, when he heard so many bad things from him about the aforesaid nun, said to the aforesaid spiritual Father: "What's going on? Wasn't it you who approved the Work of the new Institute and went around praising ⁶ this soul everywhere? So what's made you change your tune now? You have done great harm." and the Pious Workmen [of his own Congregation] said the same. ⁷

D. 13. So the Lord permitted that all the discredit that he poured out against the Work of the Lord and the person of the aforesaid nun, redounded ⁸ to his own discredit; and these things stayed with him until he died.

E. 14. However, by spreading such things everywhere, the result was gossip and a public scandal and discredit to the Work of God, in such a manner that the neither the spiritual Father nor ⁹ the members of the men's Congregation could appear anywhere in the city, because, since they had accused the aforesaid nun who had received the Work of having illusions, they too were completely derided and the Work totally rejected, because this is what the Lord permitted.

F. 15. So they thought, both the spiritual Father and the nuns and the brothers of the Congregation, ¹⁰ to leave this nun out of the Work, and decided that the aforesaid spiritual Father, whom Father Alphonsus supported, should be the one to write the Rules, both for the nuns, and for the members of the Congregation. 16. But they said this to make it clear that they did not wish to make use of the Rules that the Lord had given to the aforesaid nun of the Work, so that she would not be mentioned ¹¹ again, nor would have any more to do with it. 17. And so the aforesaid spiritual Father wrote and added to the Rules of both of the men and the women, adding the scapular and other things, deforming ¹² the original method. 18. To take away any trace of the previous Rule written by the aforesaid nun, they changed even the title of the Rule, and made the title no longer "of the Most Holy Saviour", but "of the Most Holy Redeemer." ¹³ 19. And this resolution was approved by the nuns and by Father. Alphonsus, and also by the spiritual Father of the nuns; and this is what happened.

⁵ *là*: 'l'ha' - "her."

⁶ *preconizata*: 'annunciata pubblicamente' - publicly announced", i.e., "praising... everywhere" (cf. BATTAGLIA, XIII, p. 67). Note that this is one of those cases, rare in the manuscript, but rather frequent on ms. p. 56r, where Maria Celeste uses a term that does not belong to everyday speech.

⁷ *Operarii* [-della -sua -Congregazione]; *onde* - "Workers [of his own Congregation]; so..."

⁸ *ridondasse*: 'sfociasse' - "redounded" (cf. BATTAGLIA, XVI, p. 199).

⁹ *nei*: 'né i' - "nor the."

¹⁰ *Congrazione*: 'Congregazione' - "Congregation."

¹¹ *mentuasse*: 'menzionasse' - "mentioned."

¹² *dimormandone*: 'deformandone' - "deforming."

¹³ This information is not correct. The change of title was done with Pontifical approval of the men's Congregation (1749) and the women's order (1750).

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G. 20 And the others who supported Father Vincenzo Mannarini took the title of “Congregation of the Most Holy Sacrament,” but however they wrote their Constitutions exactly according to the folio that had been received by the aforesaid nun of the Work.

H. 21. This was done, by both Father Alphonsus and Father Mannarini, discarding the method but not the observances, with this difference however: that Father Alphonsus wrote the Constitutions and regulations according to the what the spiritual Father of the nuns wanted, ¹⁴ and Father Vincenzo and his companions wrote their Constitutions the way they wanted them. 22. And so their discussions ended, because each one of them did what seemed right to him in his own opinion. 23. So also in the nuns’ Rules, the spiritual Father added, to the formula for the habit, the scapular of sky-blue colour, similar to the mantle; and they added many other things. 24. They innovated, but they did not scrap the primitive Rule that the nun of the Work had written, but they certainly scrapped the method.

I. 25. And they did this to annul it, and be able to say that they were not following the observances written by the aforesaid nun who had received them/. 26. So now the aforesaid nun was discredited everywhere, both by the aforesaid spiritual Father and by the nuns, and there was nothing else they could do but this, because the ordinary Bishop of Scala had a scandal in his diocese, because the Work and the aforesaid nun who had received it had been disapproved, and he was now forced by it to admit and confirm the said religious observance in that Monastery.

J. 27 And although he, the spiritual Father and the nuns declared they had adopted ¹⁵ the said Rules of their aforesaid director, and that the Bishop had //56v// annulled every single thing received by the aforesaid nun of the Work, they could do nothing, because the Bishop judged it advisable to require the nuns to return to their former Rule of St. Frances de Sales. 28. And he insisted on this point, both before the aforesaid nun departed from that Monastery, as will shortly be told, and equally after the departure of the said nun of the Work from that Monastery. 29. The aforesaid Bishop wanted every one of them to discard this habit of the Most Holy Saviour; and for many years afterwards they toiled not a little to get the aforesaid Bishop to agree not to require another change of habit. 30. So they made every effort to win the support of the aforesaid Bishop’s friends, and through petitions and supplications, so that their Ordinary Bishop would be content to make them observe the Rules that their spiritual Father had given them, since the nuns had made these shameful changes to them in the City of Scala.

¹⁴ *con tale diversità... monache*: ‘con tale diversità, pero, che il p. d. Alfonso fece le costituzioni seguendo il volere del padre spirituale delle monache’ - “with this difference, however, that Father Alphonsus wrote the Constitutions... according to what the spiritual Father of the nuns wanted.”

¹⁵ *abbraccia*: ‘abbracciare’ - “they had adopted.”

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K. 31. The Lord disposed it all so that everything turned against them, which was no small mortification to the aforesaid nuns, because there were many nuns in that Monastery who had received many of their own proofs from the Lord that the Work was His, and not an invention of the aforesaid nun who had received it; and this proof was confirmed by Him, with many miracles worked by this same Lord, and which they had seen with their own eyes.

L. 32. But their own passions had completely darkened their intellects through the work of the enemy, although they had no bad intentions, but all in the name of zeal, because in actual fact they were good souls. 33. But the Lord permitted ¹⁶ it all, so that all the glory and human esteem of mankind, which both the aforesaid nun of the Work and that Monastery, and the members of the Congregation had received from the Work, was all buried in disgrace and humiliations, and not the least vestige of it remained, and also they were oppressed by it for many years.

¹⁶ *prermesse*: 'permise' - "permitted."

Chapter 50

1.

Chapter 13

How the Lord arranged the departure of the aforesaid nun of the Work of the Lord, without her arranging it, and even without her co-operation, or will.

A. 2. It was the will of God for the aforesaid nun, who had received the Work and the new Rule, to leave that Monastery. 3. So He arranged for the third sister \in the flesh/ of the aforesaid nun, who was still fairly young ¹ and not yet well fortified in the religious virtues, to be greatly terrified by ² ... and much upset by seeing her sister in so much trouble and so mistreated by the nuns. 4. And the nuns told the aforesaid that her sister was to be put in prison and much mortified. 5. And the principal cause of this was because the aforesaid nun had written a private letter to that devout gentleman, where she told him, for the love of God, to write her no more letters, because she would not receive them, as they were being intercepted and used to add fuel to the flames; and his letters had been unfavourably judged and criticised, because he was used to writing to her, communicating to the said nun the things that were passing through his soul; and now they were being seized upon and judged as hypocrisy, etc.; and the fire was being greatly stoked by the enemy. 6. This letter that the aforesaid nun wrote was intercepted by the other nuns, and was the spur that made them decide to imprison her.

B. 7. So her third sister, when she heard whispering among the nuns and the nuns threatening punishments //57r// and mortifications against her sister, the more her fears grew, all the more so because there was a nun there who told her imprudently that, if her sister did not agree to do three things, the first being that she was to no longer write to the devout gentleman; the second, that she was to sign with her own hand those Rules that their spiritual Father had given to the Monastery; and the third, that she was to make a vow to take direction forever from the aforesaid spiritual Father, and if she did not consent to all these three things, not only would she be imprisoned, but she would be given other grave penances and punishments. 8. So the poor girl, when she heard all these things and found that she would not be allowed to talk to her sister, as it was prohibited, and also, spies had been posted so that no-one could go there to talk to her, she went to find her older sister and told her that she could no longer go on living in the Monastery, nor did she have the heart to see her sister die degraded in this way, but she wanted to leave the Monastery and go home and tell her father about the state her sister was in, so that he could do something about it.

C. 9. Her older sister, when she heard this other tribulation, was very greatly upset about it, and tried to encourage her to suffer for the love of God; and begged her to

¹ In reality Giovanna was more than thirty years old, having been born in 1701.

² *per*: the presence of the preposition can be explained by the brusque change in the intentions of the authoress who, probably, was about to write the reason for her fears.

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change that idea, as it was hardly a virtue and that God would help them, because the aforesaid sister was suffering for the love of God and for the sake of His glory: so He would be ready to help her in her troubles. 10. But nothing convinced the aforesaid young girl, because she was too terrified. 11. So she decided to go straight³ to the Superior, and told her that she definitely did not want to stay any longer in the Monastery, but that they should send for her family, because she wanted to go home; that she could serve God better in her own home than in that place; and so persistently that the Superior felt compelled to give her permission to write home to her family. 12. and she explained to them why she no longer wanted to be in that Monastery.

D. 13. So the father of the aforesaid nuns, when he heard this news from his youngest daughter, thought it advisable to send a brother of the aforesaid nuns there to the Monastery, his son, who was a Jesuit father, a man outstanding in doctrine and goodness of life, esteemed by the whole Company of Jesus,⁴ so that he could find out what this news meant from his daughter in that Monastery; and this is what he did.

E. 14. So he sent him to the Monastery, so that the aforesaid Father would first speak and find out what he needed to know from the other two sisters, that is, from the oldest sister and the second, who was the aforesaid nun who had received the new Rules, and that in private he would find out whatever he needed to know from them about the reasons for this unexpected decision by this third girl. 15. Because the father of the aforesaid nuns was an aged octogenarian and very infirm, he was not able to go there in person, and because he was very fond of his daughters, and also respected them, he thought that this way he would find out the truth from the other two.

F. 16. So when their Jesuit brother arrived in Scala he went to the grille and asked for the Superior. 17. And he told her that he was the brother in the flesh of the aforesaid nuns, and that their father had sent him because of the news that had been written to him, and that the third daughter wanted to leave the Monastery without them knowing the reason why; so would she please give him permission to speak in private with all three of them, so that they could find out freely and frankly from the three of them what was the cause of this news. 18. Then the Superior and her two assistants replied and said that he was not allowed to speak with the aforesaid nuns in private in this way, as he wanted, but that according to the Rules there had to be two auditors present, and this is how he could speak to them and in no other way. 19. Then the aforesaid Father suspected the worst and replied to them that since it was a matter of consequence and had to do with a professed religious leaving, and since he was a confessor and preacher, could she not perhaps dispense with this rule for once on this occasion? 20. But when he saw that he

³ *a direttura*: 'direttamente' - "straight", cf also 53:6-8 and 35.

⁴ Giorgio Crostarosa, born on 18th. December 1692, had entered the Jesuits in 1709 and had been ordained about 1721, cf. G. ORLANDI, *Mistica e illusione. Note storico-critiche su alcuni casi settecenteschi di visione, rivelazione e ossessione*, in *Atti e memorie della Accademia Nazionale di Scienze, Lettere e Arti di Modena*, ser. VII, vol. V (1987-88), 252-260. (G. ORLANDI, *Mysticism and illusion. Historical and critical notes on some eighteenth century cases of visions, revelations and obsessions*, in *Acts and memorials of the National Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts of Modena*, series VII. vol V (1987-88), pp. 252-260).

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was not making any headway with his persuasions, he took his leave saying that he would be going to the Bishop, and he would be asking him for permission to sit in the confessional, and speak to his religious sisters there.

G. 21. Straight away the Superior wrote a note to the Bishop, begging him for the love of God not to give his permission to that Jesuit Father to sit in the confessional and hear the aforesaid religious sisters, because it was not convenient at that time to let the aforesaid nuns talk to their relatives for many //57v// good reasons.

H. 22. So then the said Father went to see the Bishop, and told him everything that had happened at the Monastery with the aforesaid Superior, and how he had been denied permission to speak alone with his sisters, and that the father of the aforesaid nun had sent him from Naples for this purpose, because his youngest sister had written that she wanted to leave the Monastery. 23. So since this was a matter of some urgency, would he please give him permission to sit in the confessional to give the aforesaid nuns the opportunity to explain what ⁵ was worrying this young girl so much, and find out what made her make such a decision. 24. But the aforesaid Bishop denied him such permission, saying that in that Monastery it was not the practice for another confessor to take the place of the ordinary and the extraordinary confessors in the confessional whenever he felt like it; nor had individual confessors yet been conceded to the nuns. 25. Then the Jesuit Father became greatly suspicious hearing this reply from the Bishop, and because he was a man of great prudence and presence of mind, he replied straight away and said: “Oh well, now I will have to go to Naples and we’ll go to the Most Eminent Cardinal Pigniatelli, ⁶ and we’ll obtain permission for this matter”, and he took his leave.

I. 26. But this decision frightened the Bishop and he called him back straight away, and not only gave him permission to sit in the confessional but he also wrote a note to the Superior that without further ado she was to allow the said Father to sit in the confessional, and send the aforesaid religious Sisters to talk to him; and this was carried out.

J. 27. So when the said Father came to the confessional, they could not do otherwise than call the religious sisters; but walked to and fro trembling with rage and mocking them with heated words, to which the nuns made not the least reply. 28. The first one to enter and speak to the aforesaid ⁷ Father was the nun who wished to leave, that is, the youngest; and she told him everything, concluding that she did not wish to remain in this Monastery another hour, as she was far too terrified, and she also said that she could not bear seeing her sister in such distress.

⁵ A cross + is placed at the beginning of the line.

⁶ Francesco Pigniatelli (1652 - 1734), cf. RITZLER - SEFRIN, v, p. 283.

⁷ At the beginning of the line there is another cross +.

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K. 29. Next the second sister came in, who was the nun of the Institute, and she told him step by step everything that God had done, and everything that had happened, and all her doubts and fears and afflictions of spirit. 30. The aforesaid Father comforted her and told her to wait upon the Lord with patience, for it was from Him that she was to hope for the remedy that seemed impossible to her. 31. Then she sought his advice about the three things that the nuns wanted to make her agree to, and about which she did not know God's will. 32. He spoke to her about the first thing, of not writing nor having anything more to do with the devout gentleman, and told her that she should do as they wished: and write to him no more, nor have any further dealings with this person; about the second thing of signing the Rules, she should reply that she would comply fully with everything that the Community did, without the least stubbornness, but that she would not set pen to paper about anything, excusing herself by saying that she was nobody special in the Community, and that she simply wished to serve God and observe the same Rule that all the others were observing in holy simplicity, and that she did not wish to take part in any intrigues; the third thing, which was to make a vow to be directed by that spiritual Father that the nuns wanted, he told her that she should never make such a vow against all justice and that it would be a grave error if she were to consent to it, but she should tell the nuns that she would be content with the ordinary Confessor of the Monastery.

L. 33. So therefore he advised her to simply confess herself to the aforesaid ordinary Confessor, without discussing matters of spiritual guidance; and that she should observe silence until such times as the Lord opened another avenue up to her; and never again be directed by the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns in the things of her soul; and that she had done great harm by not leaving the said guide at the beginning of her troubles and doubts.

M. 34. So he examined all the three religious sisters, to see if the other two wished to leave the Monastery, just as the third sister had decided; but the other two sisters did not think it was the will of God to flee the cross and suffering, and to arrive at such a decision themselves. 35. Therefore they replied to him no, they were waiting for help from the Lord and to know what His command was. 36. So the said Father took his leave and he said that he would tell their father to arrange to fetch only the third sister, who //58r// was determined to leave the Monastery; and with this decision he left for his trip back to Naples.

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1.

Chapter 14

How the nuns sent word to advise the aforesaid spiritual Father of everything that had happened regarding the departure of that third sister; and how he came in person to Scala, and by his order a Chapter was held by the nuns; and how from this Chapter the nuns decided to expel the aforesaid nun who had received the Rule and her sisters, through the will of God.

A. 2. Just as has been declared above, the Jesuit Father, when he arrived in Naples, went to their father's house, and told him prudently what he felt he was able to say, and was silent about what his main motive was: as it seemed to him to be appropriate. 3. But he also told him that it was necessary to take the youngest daughter out of the Monastery, because her mind was quite made up to leave the Monastery; nor could he do otherwise, because the Monastery was too strict and the aforesaid weak in virtue, so it was best to put her in a place where the aforesaid could observe and live in peace to the best of her abilities and to the salvation of her soul.

B. 4. So their father ordered the brothers of the aforesaid to go and get her from the Monastery and bring her home, so that then they could find out from her what she wanted to do, so as to take the right course of action in the circumstances. 5. So then her brother ¹ set out for Scala, and when he arrived, he told the Superior that he had come to get his younger sister who wanted to leave the Monastery.

C. 6. But the nuns sent a postal courier with letters to the aforesaid spiritual Father, in which they told him that the Jesuit Father had been and everything else that had happened, and that they suspected that the third sister was about to leave the Monastery, according to what the aforesaid had told them, so that spiritual Father came to Scala straight away, to see for himself what had happened, and be actually present there in person on such an occasion. 7. He now began to worry that after the departure of the third sister of the aforesaid nun, she would tell her father what was being done to her sister, and how she had been much troubled and tormented. 8. And since the nuns all knew how much her father loved and greatly valued the aforesaid nun his daughter, they were convinced that he would send somebody back, with the authority and orders of Superiors, to take her out of the Monastery.

D. 9. To this effect they took counsel amongst themselves, that is, the spiritual father and the nuns, about what to do about this matter. 10. So they made the decision to call an oral Chapter of the nuns, and they would require the aforesaid nun who had received the Rule from the Lord to attend, and they would propose the three points to her

¹ This was Michele, born on 29th. September 1680, cf. *Imitazione*, pp. 84-85.

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that were cited above, that is: that she must no longer write to, nor have dealings with the aforesaid devout gentleman previously mentioned; and that she was to sign the Rules that the spiritual Father had written; and that she would take a vow to be under the guidance and direction of the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns regarding the guidance of her spirit. 11. And if the aforesaid nun refused even one of the three things proposed to her, the nuns of the Chapter would dismiss her from the Monastery. 12. And they decided to act first, before her family came and took the third daughter and found out from her what was happening to her poor sister in the Monastery, so troubled and persecuted ² by the nuns, and the father of the aforesaid nun, they worried, might take it into his head to take her out of the Monastery by force; so before he had a chance to do that, they wanted to use their own authority to expel her in the Chapter they held on the advice of the aforesaid spiritual Father.

E. 13. So the nuns convoked the vocal //58v// Chapter ³ and the aforesaid the nun was called to it. 14. And the Superior proposed the three things to her that were mentioned above, and then went on and told her that if she did not decide to accept all three of the conditions proposed to her by the spiritual Father, the whole chapter would dismiss her from the Monastery: and she could go away together ⁴ with her sister, who was already on the point of leaving, and go home with her brother. 15. So the aforesaid nun replied and said that about writing and having contact with the devout gentleman, she would have no more to do with him, nor would she write to him again. 16. But about the second point of signing the Rules, she was nothing and the least among all the nuns, so it was not appropriate for her to involve herself in the Rules and put pen to paper, but she was prepared to accept them: without any variation she would observe and embrace the same rule that all the other nuns would embrace and observe. 17. About the third point proposed to her, she replied that she could on no account make this vow to be directed by the said Father, because she had strong motives and scruples of conscience that compelled her to never obligate herself to such a vow.

F. 18. Then the Superior on behalf of the whole Chapter dismissed her from the Monastery, saying that it was not good to open the door of the Monastery too many times, but that she could leave with her younger sister. 19. And she added that the whole chapter wished to observe the Rules written by the minister of the Church; and that he had added ⁵ the scapular to the formula of the habit, and other things that he thought appropriate, and that all the nuns were disposed to embrace them; and that if she did not wish to sign the said Rules in her own handwriting, and did not wish to accept direction by the spiritual Father with the above-mentioned vow, then she was dismissing her ⁶ on behalf of the whole Monastery.

² *perseguita*: 'perseguitata' - "persecuted."

³ The chapter was held on 14th. May 1733, cf. *Imitazione*, p. 83.

⁴ A cross + is placed at the beginning of the line.

⁵ *ingionto*: 'aggiunto' - "added."

⁶ *licenziava [-del] allora* - "she was dismissing her."

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G. 20. Then the aforesaid nun knew that this was the will of God, so she accepted her departure from the Monastery without any reply, and said many prayers to God, so that He would show her everything which the Lord wanted from her in that fierce tempest; and she was saying a special novena to St. Vincent Ferrer, so that the Lord would transform that fierce tempest into calm for her, and give her some way of putting her spirit in peace and on a secure spiritual path, and also find a way for her to put her soul into the hands of a good director. 21. But the Lord, in His just judgements, disposed that, on the very last day of the said novena, she left the Monastery, and this was His will.

H. 22. Her elder sister, when she heard that the nuns had cast out her sister whom she greatly loved, she said she wanted to go together with her sister. 23. And so the aforesaid nun sought permission from the Superior to write to her father, because the nuns' father knew nothing about this latest thing that had happened in the Monastery, but had sent their brother to only get the youngest daughter, just as was described above.

I. 24. So the aforesaid wrote a brief note,⁷ and this is what she said:

“Most beloved Father,

“I have to advise you that these good nuns of the Monastery, because of my imperfections, have dismissed me and want me to leave this Monastery of theirs, as disposed by God. 26. So I beg you to let us find another Monastery to be preserved there until whatever God disposes, because it is not good for us to be in a secular house. 27. I beg you not to distress yourself, for God will provide, and bless me, and I kiss your feet.”⁸

⁷ *viglietto*: ‘biglietto’. - “note.”

⁸ This brief letter is published in LIBRANDI - VALERIO, p. 122.

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//59r//

1.

Chapter 15

Of her departure from the Monastery, and of everything that happened after the said departure of the aforesaid nun and her sisters.

A. 2. The brother of the aforesaid nun, who was in Scala because he had to fetch his younger sister, knew nothing of what the nuns and the spiritual Father had done, so when he heard this fresh news, he was bewildered and disturbed, because his father knew nothing of what had happened. 3. So he sent a postal courier to Naples with one of his own letters, and with a note from the aforesaid nun enclosed.

B. 4. And while he waited for his father to reply with a decision - because their aged father was infirm and confined to bed, and completely unaware of what had happened, and had sent him to fetch the youngest sister who wished to leave the Monastery, just as has been said above - he thought of how his father would be afflicted when he heard of all these tribulations, and so he was unsettled in his mind and did not know what to decide.

C. 5. The nuns of the Monastery, after they had done all these things, ordered the aforesaid nun to withdraw to her cell until she left the Monastery; and she was forbidden to speak to any of the nuns, nor were they allowed to visit her, not even to say good-bye to her, and this with the greatest rigour, just as she had been ordered at the beginning; and this she did.

D. 6. But when the nuns had done everything ordered by the aforesaid spiritual Father, they were in a state of shock; and those who had been the cause of this tribulation were like the walking dead, deathly pale and very quiet. 7. The other nuns, who were not to blame, but had been restrained by the Superior and by the spiritual Father aforesaid, wept bitterly; and these were the majority, but they did not dare say a word for fear of the others loyal to the Superior and the spiritual Father.

E. 8. The brother of the aforesaid nun thought a bit more about the turn of events and made his own decision, interpreting his father's will, before his reply arrived from Naples, and before the courier returned. 9. Since he was fed up with going back and forth to the Monastery and having to deal with the aforesaid nuns, he decided to let the Superior know that he wanted to take all his three sisters from the Monastery very early the following morning with no more delay, since he thought that they must be suffering very greatly in that place, which was indeed the truth. 10. The Superior answered him that it would be as he wished, but that the aforesaid nuns were not allowed to leave in the habit of their Monastery, so he should think about providing them with clothing for their departure. 11. This was another source of difficulty for the aforesaid brother, because he

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did not know anybody in that city, and his home was in Naples; and he would need time to go to Naples and back. 12. In the end he decided to speak to the dean,¹ who was the Chaplain to the nuns in the self-same Monastery, who was a good old man and well knew all that had happened to the aforesaid nun, so he sought his advice. 13. And this priest told him that he would obtain three habits for him from one of the other monasteries in the City of Scala; and feeling sympathy for him, he told him that he would worry about those habits; and he also offered him his house, if he wanted to bring his religious sisters there before the messenger came from Naples, and they could stay in his house until such time as they were ready to leave. 14. And in addition he offered to accompany them on their journey to the Monastery which the aforesaid nuns were to enter; which is what he did.

F. 15. Then the brother of the aforesaid nuns, now that he had obtained the habits by means of this priest, according to his promise, on the following morning, which was the second feast of Pentecost of the year 1733, at the ninth hour, for the sun had not yet risen,² the said dean and the brother of the aforesaid nuns arrived at the Monastery. 16. And these nuns discarded their habits, and put on the borrowed³ habits, that were from certain nuns of the City of Scala, called the Monastery of St. Cataldo of the Benedictine //59v// Order.⁴ 17. And when they were dressed they visited the Blessed Sacrament, and the aforesaid nun placed herself totally in the divine hands, offering herself to the will of the Lord, to do with her as He pleased. 18. And then they went down to the door of the Monastery where the Superior and almost all the Community were standing. 19. The aforesaid sisters kissed the Superior's hand and embraced everyone without exception and recommended themselves to their prayers and then silently left the Monastery. 20. But the nuns of the Monastery gave themselves to the most bitter weeping and kept up their tears because a good part, and almost all of them, had not had the least part in this tribulation, but had been forced by the spiritual Father; and those who had been the cause of this disturbance stood there like the shadow of death, pale and silent. 21. So the aforesaid religious sisters retired⁵ to the house of the aforesaid dean and remained enclosed there until the following morning.

G. 22. But towards the hour of midday they saw the Vicar of Scala coming to visit them. 23. And he began to make speeches⁶ and tell them that if they wished to withdraw again into their Monastery, he would fix things up with the Bishop and the spiritual Father so they could re-enter, provided that they sought pardon from the aforesaid spiritual Father and the nuns, and other similar things. 24. But the aforesaid

¹ Don Nicholas Sorrentino, cf. *Imitazione*, p. 84.

² It was the 25th. May 1733; given that the hours were computed starting from the sunset (the twenty-four), the 9th. hour was 5 o'clock in the morning.

³ *imprestito*: 'in prestito' - "borrowed", as Maria Celeste writes in 54:5 and 13; 62:12-13.

⁴ About this, cf. Sarnelli's request for clarification in a letter to St. Alphonsus, published by M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Origines de la Congrégation du Très Saint-Rédempteur. Études et Documents*, I. Louvain 1953, pp. 276-277. (M. DE MEULEMEESTER, *Origins of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer. Studies and Documents*, I, Louvain 1953, pp. 276-277).

⁵ *ritirona*: 'ritirarono' - "retired."

⁶ *discorre*: 'discorrere' - "make speeches."

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nun replied to him that the time for this had passed; that this would be far too frivolous; that first they had to think before they acted; and that she had recognised it as the will of God. 25. Then the Vicar added: “Oh well, the spiritual Father of the nuns sends to you saying: ‘What’s the point of your staying in this city? You should leave as soon as possible, since you do not wish to return to the Monastery!’” 26. But the aforesaid nun told him that, in due time and place they would be leaving, but as the Lord disposed, and they asked him to leave.

H. 27. The two sisters of the aforesaid nun, and especially her oldest sister, had become so terrified, that without thinking of it, after leaving the Monastery, she was always looking behind her, as she always felt that there were spies behind her, just as they did in the Monastery to observe if the aforesaid sisters had gone to talk to her; and her nature remained so terrified from so fierce a tribulation that the aforesaid would say that if such a tempest had lasted much longer, it would have driven her insane, so greatly was her mind upset and her nature terrified by such tribulations plotted by the enemy, and permitted by the Lord.

Chapter 53

1.

Chapter 16

Of everything that happened on the journey, until the aforesaid nun arrived at the Monastery of Nocera de' Pagani.

A. 2. The father of the aforesaid nun received the letter written by her brother and herself, just as has been said above, but being afflicted by his infirmities and other troubles, he was very greatly disturbed in spirit when he heard what had happened to his daughters, the nuns, but he thought that everything was by divine disposition, being a good devout Christian and servant of God. 3. He thought of a possible solution, so he called his eldest son, ¹ the brother of his daughters, the aforesaid nuns, and ordered him to go to Nocera de' Pagani, a place which was about twenty miles distant from Naples, as he had many well-placed and respected friends in that area. 4. Then he told his son to go to them and find out from them what monasteries there were in that place, and where he thought it was most comfortable and suitable, and pay the rent for *//60r//* all three of the nuns, his daughters, but only for a period of three months, until he could come up with the most suitable and comfortable place for their permanent retreat, that he was happy with on mature reflection, so that he would be sure they received the right reception and would be happy. ²

B. 5. Then he replied through the same courier to the nuns his daughters and told them everything that he had decided to do. 6. And he wrote to them that until their older brother came from Nocera to get them, the said nuns were not to leave the Monastery, because upon his arrival both their brothers would accompany them directly to the Monastery where they would be accepted, in Nocera, just as he had arranged. 7. And he also asked the nuns his daughters that when they finally left the Monastery, would they for his consolation come home for a few days, and then go on to their new Monastery, for his consolation among so many infirmities and other troubles. 8. But the aforesaid nuns, having received this letter, did not consent to these paternal requests, but stood firm about retiring directly into the Monastery, as they then did. 9. Then they thought about leaving Scala the following morning.

C. 10. Then, early in the morning, they went down the mountainsides of Scala and reached Amalfi. 11. And as soon as they arrived, the nuns of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity, who are a Monastery of nobles in the city of Amalfi, once they learnt of their arrival, they had a great curiosity to know about what the Lord had done in that Monastery, as the aforesaid nuns had heard about what the Lord had done, having been told everything by the Vicar of Scala, who had been their extraordinary Confessor in the said Monastery - they had heard right from the start about everything that God had done in the Monastery of Scala, they had respect for the Work of the Lord, and they had

¹ Francesco Crostarosa, born on 25th. September 1678.

² At the end of this line there is a cross +.

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even heard about the latest disturbances through the same channel, that is, something of them -so they sent right away for their Procurator to meet them and make them feel welcome, and they also offered them one of the hospice houses that was attached to their Monastery. 12. And this was a singular Providence of the Lord, because the aforesaid nuns did not have a single acquaintance in that district; so they accepted it as an offering made to them by the Lord in their time of dire need, because the nuns had no money, being poor, nor their brother: he had come provided with only enough money to pay for the journey and expenses of a single calesa. 13. So Divine Providence ordained things according to their needs, without them having to procure them.

D. 14. In the meantime they stayed in this hospice of the nuns of Amalfi for ten days, with everything provided for by these good nuns with great hospitality and kindness, in such a way that the aforesaid nun, to whom the Lord had given the new Rule, and who had left her Monastery so drained and unwell, now began to recover her bodily strength, as the Lord had so disposed that the said hospice of the nuns was near the sea, so that in that air and with quietness of spirit she recovered her strength. 15. They went to the nuns' church, which was attached to the hospice, and this was where the nuns went to take Holy Communion and hear the Holy Mass. 16. And they lived there until their older brother arrived from Nocera de' Pagani, to take them to whatever Monastery the Lord disposed.

E. 17. Then those religious and especially the Superior ³ together with the nuns, took such a liking to the aforesaid nun of the Institute that they urged her ⁴ very forcefully to stay on as their Superior in that Monastery, declaring they were willing to put on the habit of the Institute, and adopt its new Rule. 18. But on no account did the aforesaid nun want to accept either the task of Superior, or want on any account to consent to making such a change, because she did not know if it was the will of God. 19. But she was worn out not a little in preventing the nuns from writing to Rome for permission for her to enter, notwithstanding the news that was flying everywhere declaring her deluded. 20. Nor was there anywhere where they did not talk about what had happened to her, her discredit having been extended everywhere through the mouths of every secular and religious person. 21. But the more the said nuns heard her name disparaged, so much the more did they urge her //60v// and beg her to be content to remain with them; and that they wished to embrace the new Rule, so as to be led by her in the way of the spirit. 22. But the aforesaid nun never wanted to agree to this, because she did not recognise it as the will of God, as she felt that the Lord wanted her to live at this time in that contempt of self and humiliation, and without an express sign of the divine will it was not good to accept positions of superiority and the office of governing souls, so she steadfastly renounced it all.

³ Sister Maria Maddalena Bonito, Abbess from 1731.

⁴ *lapplettorono*: 'l' applettarono' - "they urged her."

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F. 23. Then the aforesaid nuns felt a desire to visit the church of St. Andrew the Apostle, where his holy body rests, that miraculously exudes a precious liquid like an odoriferous balm. 24. So they went to the said church, and there they went to confession and the Holy Mass and had the joy of visiting the sanctuary. 25. And in this church the Lord comforted the aforesaid nun, giving her a very spiritual illumination internally. 26. She had been left desolate and so derelict of spirit for so long, with so many doubts and fears about her interior way, with as many exterior tribulations as can be seen in the course of this writing. 27. But the Lord wished to console and fortify her a little, so while she was hearing the Holy Mass in the chapel of the glorious holy apostle, the Lord showed her the happy way that leads from earth up to heaven: at the beginning the way was filled with thorns and crosses, but at the end it was such an immense, radiant and happy way, that she seemed to see Paradise; and there she was headed, not on foot, but flying, carried aloft by the power of God, accompanied and surrounded by many elect souls. 28. And then she understood that these souls were to be saved by means of her; and the Lord told her that He wished to make use of her for many of His works for the salvation of souls. 29. So the aforesaid nun was encouraged for a while, but then went straight back to her dereliction and desolation of spirit.

G. 30. And then the older brother of the aforesaid nun came from Nocera and told her that he had been sent to Nocera de' Pagani by his father, to find out from his friends there about that city, so as to place them for only three months in a Monastery that was not enclosed, and that his visit there had succeeded perfectly in achieving its purpose, because there were many Monasteries there. 31. But one in particular seemed the most suitable for the aforesaid nuns to spend the little time that they were to live there; and this was a Conservatorium for orphans,⁵ but well provided with income and with several workshops, and the nuns gathered there in the above-mentioned were no more than 24 in number. 32. And they were governed by three lay governors: the first was a permanent governor and he was the local parish priest, and the other two were seculars. 33. One was called Nicholas Villani, a doctor and a highly respected citizen of that district, who was a great friend of the aforesaid nun's father; the other was called Francesco Antonio Salvati, and was also a prominent citizen and a good friend. 34. So once the brother of the aforesaid nun told them the reason⁶ why he had come to Nocera, with great joy and enthusiasm they begged him to bring the religious sisters to that Monastery straight away, in spite of the fact that in Nocera de' Pagani news of the tribulations of the aforesaid nun had already arrived, and all her troubles.

H. 35. So the aforesaid nuns immediately took their leave of the nuns of Amalfi who had so favoured them by the will of the Lord, and the following night at the sixth

⁵ This means the Conservatorium of *La SS.ma Annunziata* (The Most Holy Lady of the Annunciation) at Pareti, near Nocera dei Pagani, founded in 1709 by 'the Virgin Daughters of the Poor, and the most needy - as can be read in the testament of their Founder Simone Torre - under the Instruction, and Rule of the Glorious St. Dominic, whose white habit they were to put on' (cf. *Imitazione*, p. 87).

⁶ *informato... fine*: informato dal fratello della consaputa religiosa circa il fine - "informed by the brother of the aforesaid nun about the end..."

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hour they set off on a voyage by sea until they arrived at Salerno, and there they transferred to calesas, and left directly for Nocera de' Pagani, which was some 26 miles distant from the City of Naples. 36. There, with //61r// permission from the ordinary Bishop,⁷ they were received by those nuns and gentlemen governors with great joy and happiness, and they said that it was God who had led them to this Monastery, and that they thought that in them⁸ the Lord had sent three angels from heaven for the needs of their Monastery as will be said next.

⁷ Nicolà (Nicholas) de Dominicis (1664 - 1744), Bishop of Nocera from February 1718, cf. RITZLER - SEFRIN, v, p. 294.

⁸ *esse*: 'in esse' - "in them."

Chapter 54

1.

Chapter 17

**Of everything that God disposed on her arrival in the said Monastery,
and how they put on the habit of the Most Holy Saviour once again,
and other things that happened when they arrived.**

A. 2. A few days after the aforesaid nun had arrived at this Monastery with her sisters, that devout gentleman came to visit them from Naples. 3. And he brought them the book of the Rules written by the aforesaid nun, which he had kept hold of through the will of God, as the aforesaid had not wished to give it into the power of the spiritual Father of the nuns, from the time when the disturbance began in the Monastery of Scala. 4. This had been disposed by the Lord, because later on these Rules were to be used for the new foundation that the Lord wanted, just as will be said in its proper place.

B. 5. Then the aforesaid gentleman, seeing that the said nuns were wearing the habit of St. ¹ Benedict, and not in their habit of the Most Holy Saviour, asked about this change of habit; and the aforesaid nun told him how the nuns of their Monastery had deprived them of it, and their present habit had been loaned to them in charity by a certain Monastery in Scala; and that she would have to return it, and she had no way of making the said habits, because their troubles had cost their aged father much in expenses, and although his house had once been well-off because it was well-connected, now, through many tribulations and infirmities it was in reduced circumstances. 6. And moreover she did not have the means, all the more because the nuns of ² her Monastery had not given her any property, not having wished to return any, either the linen, the beds, or the luggage that they had brought from their father's house; so now they were content to see themselves poor in the image of their Spouse, Jesus Christ.

C. 7. Then that devout gentleman gave them some gold sequins, so that they could make their habits and some other things they needed. 8. So straight away they bought habits and mantles, and put on the habit of the Most Holy Saviour, with alms money, like true disciples of Jesus Christ. 9. And what was most marvellous, and where the Work of God was seen, was that in the change of habit no-one opposed them: neither the Bishop, nor the governors of the place, no-one prevented them, even though all their troubles were known, and they were also considered deluded, and as such they were spoken of publicly. 10. And since it was a new Rule which had encountered great opposition, and was not yet approved by the Holy See, and had also been obscured by so many tribulations of this kind, even so, the Bishop gave them permission to put on the holy habit of the Most Holy Saviour; what is more, he came in person to visit the aforesaid nuns with great friendliness, as will be seen in the following chapter. 11. And all this was a work of the divine Providence.

¹ A cross + is marked at the end of the line.

² Another cross + is placed at the end of this line.

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D. 12. Meanwhile the aforesaid nuns were without beds, or necessary linen. 13. So those nuns gave them beds on loan, and also some pious and devout people donated them all the property they needed, both linen to change into, and beds, that is straw mattresses, according to what the Rules prescribed.³ 14. And she did not seek these necessary things from anybody, but without them making any request, the Lord provided them with all the necessary things according to their needs in a marvellous way and manner. 15. In all this //61v// the aforesaid nun was very happy, because now she could see the fruit of the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ being realised in her, no longer in words,⁴ but in works and in truth; and that if at first the Lord had given her the Rules in words, now she could see it being realised in substance, in her own life, because now she was experiencing poverty, ridicule and persecution everywhere.

E. 16. And internally she was derelict and in a terrible spiritual solitude and abandonment, infirm of body and so full of doubts and fears that the demon rose against her with a thousand and one sorts of temptations. 17. All these graces that she had received from God seemed to her like dreams, and she felt that God had abandoned her to her miseries. 18. So she spent her time in that Monastery withdrawn into her cell or in choir praying to the Lord and seeking His divine light. 19. She did not dare to open herself internally to anyone, because she did not know if there was anyone there capable of [ministering to] her spiritual needs, even more so as everyone spoke publicly of her being deluded. 20. And therefore she kept a rigorous silence so that she would not fall even further into spiritual doubts⁵ if she made the choice of an inexperienced spiritual Father, since at that time she did not know the local people. 21. And so she kept silent and prayed to the Lord.

³ *prescivano*: 'prescrivono' - "prescribed."

⁴ *in [-parole] parole* - "in words."

⁵ *bubii*: 'dubbi' - "doubts."

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1.

Chapter 18

While the aforesaid nun was in the state narrated above she was elected Superior of that Monastery by the Bishop by virtue of holy obedience; and how the Lord reformed those nuns by means of her.

A. 2. So while the aforesaid nun was in this perplexity of spirit the Lord awakened in the heart of the local Ordinary Bishop, and also the governors of that Monastery, an ardent desire to reform the Monastery where the aforesaid nun was living, and which had been ruined to a great degree by the conduct of the previous Superiors who had governed it. 3. The aforesaid nuns had been reduced to a very pitiful state, because only the name and habit of religious had remained to them: they did not observe rules, and although they had some rules and wore the Dominican habit, they lived with a great freedom; not only was there no vestige of religion, but there were personal friendships with people from outside, and they were protected by them, because they were gentlemen from the local area; ¹ [and what was worse, there was a certain ordinary confessor, who was also a gentleman of that district, and who had ... with some of those religious] and the relaxation of customs had reached such a point, that there was a public scandal throughout the whole area, because not only was there not a shred of obedience, to the Superior, but one of them even planned to poison the said Superior who was there at that time, because she had discovered //62r// who knows what wrongdoing ² of hers. 4. Well, by the will of God, she had lost their respect so much that they maltreated and insulted her publicly without the least respect.

B. 5. God permitted this, because at the beginning of her governance, she took upon herself the liberty of going out of the Monastery at night, and bringing other nuns together with her to go to the houses of secular men friends, in spite of the fact that although this Monastery was for orphan girls, no-one of course ever went out doing the rounds begging donations, as was ³ the custom in other areas, because the Monastery was well supplied with earnings and did not have such a need; moreover the surplus ⁴ in the annual receipts was so great that every year they falsified the figures about the money they received. 6. She introduced these abuses into the Monastery because she was very simple and ignorant; but her absences from the Monastery began to be very harmful, because the nuns then began to take the same liberty, and they too not only went out at night without permission, but secretly. 7. And these scandals were known publicly throughout the district.

¹ This is followed by two lines crossed out by another hand (the same is also true of the other alterations in this Chapter); therefore we consider it appropriate to transcribe it here: [*e, quel che era peggio, vi era un certo confessore ordinario, ancor egli gentil uomo del luoco, il quale stava... con alcune di quelle religiose.*] (“and, what was worse, there was a certain ordinary Confessor, who was also a gentleman of the place, and who had ... with some of those nuns.”)

² *Dissattivo*: a term difficult to interpret; perhaps it is intended to mean ‘economic loss,’ as what follows seems to suggest. (I have translated it as “wrongdoing” - Tr).

³ *sul*: ‘suole’ - “was.”

⁴ *sopra avanzava*: ‘sopravanzava’ - “surplus.”

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C. 8. Meanwhile the Bishop and the governors did not know how to remedy such an evil. 9. They let the aforesaid nun of the Institute know that God had sent her there to help those souls, and that the tribulation she had suffered had been ordained by the Lord to make her leave that Monastery and be able to perform this service to those poor lost souls, and reclaim them to His holy service. 10. But the aforesaid nun did not know what to do, nor if it was the will of God for her to bind herself to this Monastery as the Superior, since the said nuns were religious of another Institute, and she had been called by the Lord to the Work of the new Institute of the Most Holy Saviour; and so she was in doubt about binding herself to the office of Superior in that Monastery. 11. So she excused herself to the gentlemen governors and the Bishop, saying that she had only come to live in the said Monastery for about three months, as they well knew, and then retreat to the permanent place where God was calling her.

D. 12. But this reply was of no use at all, because the Bishop and the governors came to the Monastery together in person, and began to start persuading her with so many efficacious reasons and strong sentiments that the aforesaid nun had to bow her shoulders. 13. The Bishop resolutely commanded her by virtue of holy obedience, to accept the office of Superior without the least reply or excuse; that this was the will of God and that in His name he assured her of it⁵ with certainty; and that he obligated her to that office for only three years, and then if she wanted to go to another work of God or remain there for ever, he would leave it to her own choice; and that she could perform that task without putting of her own habit; and that he was giving her her own pastoral power; and that she could imprison the disobedient, and to those who offered resistance she also had the power to send them away from the Monastery. 14. All the religious were present and heard these words, so they offered themselves as ready to obey the aforesaid nun, as what the Bishop said made them become very afraid.

E. 15. The Superior who was then in office, because of the many tribulations that the nuns had given her, and through God's disposition, had been trying to leave that Monastery for a long time, and withdraw to another place; and so she went down on her knees before the aforesaid new Superior, weeping and begging her to accept that charge for the love of God, because she no longer felt equal to it, and she had to move to another Monastery. 16. So the aforesaid nun felt obliged to bend her shoulders under the yoke of her new task as Superior.

F. 17. So from all these circumstances she knew it to be the will of God, and accepted the office of Superior in that Monastery. 18. The Bishop gave her possession and chose her elder sister as Vicar to help her in the work of God. 19. And by the divine will the nuns greatly loved their newly chosen Superior; and she won them over with her sweet manner, and prudently began to call them to her one by one in private, and began to

⁵ *gli lo*: 'glielo' - "her... of it."

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examine the state of their souls; and each of them discovered with her //62v// the state of their souls and the wounds they had; and this is how she found out from them what their shortcomings were.

G. 20. So she began to help them sweetly and charitably and told all of them that she wanted to give the spiritual exercises herself. 21. And because she did not know if she would find a zealous and spiritual person among the confessors there, at the start she did not want to ask for any confessor from the Bishop. 22. So she began by making their meditations rich in eternal truths, and preaching penance to them. 23. So their hardened souls began to move, and they themselves asked for an extraordinary confessor. 24. So the new Superior sent to the Bishop to provide an extraordinary confessor who was a servant of God. 25. The Bishop sent them a father of St. Frances de Paul, a man widely known to be leading a good life ⁶ [because the priests of that district were suspect in that Monastery.] 26. So they were confessed and began their journey in the fear of God.

H. 27. The aforesaid Superior then discharged all the officials in the Monastery appointed by the other Superior, and appointed as Tourière and Portress the Vicar, who was her sister, and two companions, who were two religious of that Monastery and who had always been of exemplary life in that place.

I. 28. Then the grille was closed and the door was locked, and the Sisters acted as auditors when the nuns had to go to the grille with their relatives; \and effectively all the friendships were terminated, although/ ⁷ it took much work to put an end to these friendships from outside. 29. But everything was overcome with the grace of the Lord, and this Monastery became so ordered that it arrived at a state of communal life and good religious observance. 30. And even today it is maintained in a good odour of religious observance through the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

J. 31. Then the odour of this reform ⁸ of customs in this Monastery began to be spread everywhere in the district, because, just as we said, this Monastery had previously been a public scandal; whereas in contrast its good name ⁹ now became known, and everywhere people spoke of this change. 32. And this news was the reason

⁶ Several words follow which have been crossed out by a different hand: [*perché i preti di quel paese erano sospetti con quel monistero*] - [because the priests of that district were suspect in the eyes of that Monastery].

⁷ There follows another passage crossed out, but not by Crostarosa: [*ma quel confessore ordinario, che prima era stato in quel monistero... con alcune religiose di quel luoco, ancor egli veniva al monistero e faceva molte finezze alla nuova superiora, egli persona di autorità nel paese. Inni questa cosa era di sommo pregiuditio alle anime di quelle; in tanto la conzaputa superiora stimo gloria di Dio chiamarlo in segreto e, con tutta... e umiltà, gli parlò di fare sapere che ella già...; onde con rispetto e umiltà lo pregò che egli più non venisse al monistero per amor di Dio, né più richiedesse parlare alle conzapute religiose; e gli parlò in modo che quello confessò il suo fallo e i suoi errori comessi. E si fecero le denuncie in Roma e*]. “[But this ordinary Confessor, who had been in this Monastery before... with several nuns of that place, he too came to the Monastery and said many kind things to the new Superior, and he was a person of authority in the district. For this thing was of the greatest prejudice to their souls; then the aforesaid Superior considered it the glory of God to call him in private and, with all... and humility, spoke to him to let him know that she had already...; whence with respect and humility she requested him not to come to the Monastery again for the love of God, nor to ask to speak again to the aforesaid nuns; and she spoke to him in such a way that he confessed his faults and the errors he had committed. And a report of this was made to Rome and...]”

⁸ *questa riforma*: ‘di questa riforma’ - “of this reform.”

⁹ *fame*: ‘fama’ - “good name.”

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why many gentle-women and many of the local people came to discuss the things of their souls with the aforesaid Superior.

K. 33. And among the others there came a young gentleman, who had led a licentious and scandalous life for many years. 34. And one of the governors of the Monastery was so concerned about him that he brought him with him to the Monastery, to meet and talk with the aforesaid Superior. 35. And he actually did begin to talk to her, and God so worked on the heart of that young man that he promised ¹⁰ her to amend his life; he was confessed and left his evil ways, and became a man of prayer and an exemplary and virtuous life; and continued to be directed according to the spirit of the aforesaid Superior for as long as she lived in that place. 36. And even now he is following this good road, to the edification of the whole district.

L. 37. While the Lord was working these mercies in favour of His souls in Nocera, the Bishop of Nocera received a letter written by the spiritual Father of the nuns at Scala - and it was in his own handwriting - in which he said that he had learnt that certain nuns had arrived in his Diocese, and he thought it advisable to warn him that the aforesaid were vagabonds and idle persons who were making their rounds through the Monasteries. 38. And therefore he advised him to cast them out of his Diocese, before they did him damage in his own Monasteries; and out of great //63r// respect he had decided to advise him, not to allow them into them. ¹¹

M. 39. The Bishop decided to send this letter to the aforesaid nun that he had chosen as the Superior of the Monastery of Nocera; and he did this to do a kindness to her and take her into his confidence. 40. He sent it through his secretary, and the aforesaid nun read it and recognised the handwriting of the letter was that of the aforesaid spiritual Father, so she laughed. 41. But this letter was the reason why the Bishop of Nocera did not just feel sympathetic to the nuns but said: "Now I realise how the Lord is testing these good nuns, and how much the demon is persecuting them through other people." 42. So he replied to the aforesaid letter and said that he thanked him for the advice he gave him in his letter, but the experience he had of the aforesaid nuns was quite contrary to what he had written; and that Virgil, being polite, was a liar. 43. He said this because in the aforesaid letter he had written that a certain priest by the name of Virgil had told him many bad things about the aforesaid nuns. 44. And then the Bishop of Nocera added that the calumnies against these nuns stood out very clearly, because, as the Lord said, "by their fruit ye shall know them" ¹² and that the works of the aforesaid nun

¹⁰ *promesse*: 'promise' - "promised."

¹¹ The letter is not added here. It should be noted however that in April 1735 Falcoia wrote to St. Alphonsus: "*Quantunque avessivo da passar per Nocera, non serve parlar con Celeste, in conto alcuno. O quanto farebbe bene a vestirsi domenicana ancor lei e darsi pace*"; - "Although you have to pass through Nocera, you must not talk to Celeste, on any account. Oh how well she would be advised to put on the Dominican habit and live in peace"; and in November: "*Intorno a parlare con suor Maria Celeste, quando facesse la missione alla Rocca, lo lascio alla sua prudenza ed agli appletti che n'avesse; ma stia sulla sua, quando ciò accadesse e mi faccia inteso di tutto*" - "In regard to speaking with Sister Maria Celeste, when you do your mission to Rocca(piemonte), I leave it to your prudence and to the appeals made to you, but keep track of her, when this happens and keep me informed about everything." (Letters... pp. 268 and 321).

¹² *de fructibus... eos*: 'ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos' - "by their fruit shall ye know them". (Mt. 7:20).

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were quite different from what he had told him. 45. And so the Lord made use of it to confirm the aforesaid Bishop's thoughts. 46. And this is how the Lord worked things, and brought good out of the slander against her, which was public, and it was spoken of freely in every suburb, without these things in any way impeding the work that God did in Nocera for His glory and the profit of souls.

Chapter 56

1.

Chapter 19

Of the discrediting of the spiritual Father of the nuns of Scala; and of the slander and persecutions that the brothers of the Congregation faced, and how the Lord permitted them to be driven out of Tramonti; and the many tribulations and disturbances the nuns had over many years by the will of God.

A. 2. When the religious of the Monastery of Scala cast the aforesaid nun who had received the new Rule out of their Monastery, they were left so upset and confused among themselves by all that had been done on the advice of the aforesaid spiritual Father and his adherents, that they felt like they were inside hell, because those religious who were not involved and had not been part of what had been done in the Monastery, began to speak up by the will of God, and a rebellion started. 3. They began to have remorse of conscience.

B. 4. The local Bishop sent spiritual Fathers there to give the exercises, and some of the Fathers of the Congregation went there too, and nothing calmed their disorder. 5. The spiritual Father of the nuns, once he had publicly named the aforesaid nun of the Work as deluded, the Lord so disposed things that he became a laughing-stock and completely discredited among all the learned and ecclesiastical persons, who told him to his face that he had been the cause of a great scandal and disturbance and that this was for two reasons: either the aforesaid nun was a good spirit (and so why had he gone about discrediting her everywhere?), or the aforesaid was truly deluded (and so why had he approved the Work and put it into effect and after he had done all this, spoken of delusions and broadcast the spirit of the aforesaid nun everywhere, and if she was not from God why had he approved her as good?). 6. And the most intelligent and learned men said so many other things to him that he could not appear because he was everywhere reviled by the [same] ¹ Pious Workmen, and so he was blamed for it by one and all through the divine will.

C. 7. Also the nuns, finding that they had dissension ² among themselves, and for other reasons as well, became disgusted and dismissed him from the Monastery. ³ //63v// 8. And many years later he died in this loss of esteem, and they said that he was the first one deluded. 9. By the will of God, he died exactly when the aforesaid nun went to found her Monastery in this City of Foggia, as will be said next, just six years after the aforesaid nun left ⁴ the Monastery of Scala on his orders. ⁵

¹ *dalli [-medesimi] Pii Operarii* - "by the [same] Pious Workmen." The handwriting is in another hand.

² *dissinzione*: 'discordia' - "dissension."

³ On the tension between the Monastery and Falcoia from 1738 onwards cf. O. GREGORIO, *Mons. Tommaso Falcoia...*, pp. 282 -283. This ended in 1741 when "with the election of Sister Maria Raffaella as Superior and the death of Mons. Santoro, Falcoia restored a good spiritual relationship with Scala, which he kept until his death." (p. 284).

⁴ In the ms.: *uscij*.

⁵ The six years are correct regarding her move to Foggia, but not for the death of Falcoia, which happened on 20th. April 1743.

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D. 10. And the nuns of Scala had still not recovered from this disturbance when he died, but were still bitter in spirit, and there was still disorder, according to the news that Father Alphonsus de Liguori gave this same nun who had received the Rules from the Lord. 11. And when the said Father came to Foggia for his holy mission, ⁶ he told her that there was still no peace among the nuns of Scala, and that they were disgusted with the said spiritual Father: and before he died, they had dismissed him from directing their Monastery. 12. Everything was disposed by God for His most just purposes.

E. 13. Father Alphonsus and his companions, when there was the division of the brothers, as was mentioned in past chapters, then left Scala, because the Bishop of Scala was no longer willing to give them his permission to found a house, because of the all the slander that had been cast against the aforesaid nun of the Work, as has been mentioned. 14. So they had no choice but to leave and move to Tramonti, a few miles distant from the City of Scala where there was another Bishop who was their friend, ⁷ and where Father Alphonsus had held a holy mission some years before. 15. Then he established himself in one of those churches together with his companions; and although they led a penitent and exemplary life of virtue and Christian humility, at every turn they were despised and scorned by everyone as deluded and hypocrites, even from the pulpits. 16. He could not appear in Naples because of the continuous public criticism that he received from some of the theologians and public figures of that city, even to the point of criticising him and calling him a hypocrite and deluded in public, in the cathedral church of Naples. 17. Mortified, and in profound humility and silence, he bore everything patiently and without making excuses, and with joy and meekness he persevered in the work of the Lord.

F. 18. In the end they were cast out by the priests of the church of Tramonti with insulting words. 19. They were laughed at ⁸ by all the learned men because it was they who had discredited the Work, these same having publicly declared that the aforesaid nun who had received it was deluded, and this through the mouth of the aforesaid spiritual Father of the nuns, with whom Father Alphonsus was associated, just as we have said. 20. And when they were cast out of the church of Tramonti, they were in consternation and in danger of being disbanded, because the Congregation was only beginning and there was so much discrediting of the Work, and it was difficult to find a place in another Diocese, so they recommended themselves to the Lord.

G. 21. Then the spiritual Father of the nuns, who was the spiritual Father of Father Alphonsus de Liguori, as we have said, thought to remedy this trouble. 22. He

⁶ The mission took place between December 1745 and January 1746, cf. *Incontri*, pp. 145-150.

⁷ Maria Celeste oversimplifies the narration and falls into errors, attributing to Tramonti, among other things, the difficulties encountered at Villa degli Schiavi, cf. TH. REY-MERMET, *Dalla fondazione...* pp. 180-207.

⁸ *scerniti*: 'scherniti' - "laughed at."

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had a penitent priest with him called Gennaro Sarnelli,⁹ a man of singular Christian virtue and perfection; he was a nobleman by birth, “and as his inheritance he had a baronial estate at Ciorani,¹⁰ near Naples, and the Bishop was their great friend. 23. So he advised the said Father Gennaro to found the Congregation in that place. 24. And the aforesaid priest decided to associate himself with Father Alphonsus de Liguori, and this is what he did. 25. And the first house of the men’s Congregation was founded there.¹¹

H. 26. The other priests, who had separated from Father Alphonsus and the spiritual Father of the nuns, not being of the same opinion,¹² as was said in past chapters, when the tribulation began among the brothers of the Congregation, that is, Father Vincenzo Mannarini and Father Gioan Battista //64r// di Donato and their loyal companions withdrew to a church in the district of \Teano/,¹³ a few miles distant from Naples; and there they began another Congregation of the Institute of the Most Holy Saviour.

I. 27. Both of these two Congregations, both that of Father Alphonsus de Liguori, and that of Father Vincenzo Mannarini, formed their Rules and Constitutions on the Rule that the aforesaid nun had received from the Lord, and from the manuscript that the same nun had written for the Congregation of the men, that¹⁴ the Lord had told her they had to observe. 28. However, regarding the way of following the said observances, which had caused the difference of opinions between the brothers each one determined things according to his own opinion; and thus each one wrote his own Constitutions with such determinations as seemed to him most opportune. 29. These differences were not about the principal points of the observance, but about exterior things, that is, if it was obligatory for the Divine Office to be said in choir in common; if they had to have public schools; or if they had to found their Congregations in cities or out in isolated places; and other similar things.

J. 30. So all these things were the reasons for the division of the Congregation. 31. Then each of them wrote his own Constitutions according to his own opinion, both the Congregation of Father Alphonsus de Liguori and the spiritual Father of the nuns of Scala, and Father Mannarini’s Congregation. 32. But regarding the substance of regular

⁹ About Gennaro Sarnelli (1702 - 1744), declared blessed by John Paul II on 12th. May 1996, cf. AA VV, *Gennaro Sarnelli, protagonista della vita ecclesiale e civile nella Napoli del Settecento*. (Gennaro Sarnelli, protagonist of ecclesial and civilian life in Naples in the 18th. Century). Acts of the Congress held at Naples, 24-26th. November 1994, in *Campania Sacra 27* (Sacred Country 27) (1996); F. CHIOVARO, *Il beato Gennaro Maria Sarnelli Redentorista (1702 - 1744)* (Blessed Gennaro Maria Sarnelli, Redemptorist (1702 - 1744), Materdomini 1996; A. MARRAZZO (editor), *Gennaro Maria Sarnelli. Il Cristo dato agli ultimi. Cronaca e documenti della Beatificazione*, (Gennaro Maria Sarnelli. The Christ given to the disadvantaged. Chronicles and documents of the Beatification), Materdomini 1997.

¹⁰ *Sciorani*: Ciorani, a suburb of Mercato San Severino in the Diocese of Salerno. Until March 1738 the Archbishop was Giovanni Fabrizio de Capua (1685 - 1738); he was succeeded by Casimiro Rossi (1685 - 1758), cf. RITZLER - SEFRIN, VI, p. 363.

¹¹ The foundation at Ciorani was in the years 1735 - 1736, cf. TH. REY-MERMET, *Dalla fondazione...*, pp. 199 - 203.

¹² *non... parere*: ‘non essendo di ugual parere’ - “not being of the same opinion.”

¹³ *di [-Teano] > \Teano/*. Cf. R. TELLERÍA, *Relatio Theanensis an. 1753 super primordiis SS. Sacramenti ac Instituti Alfonsiani*, in *Spic. hist. 12* (1964) (Account from Teano in 1753 about the first Most Holy Sacraments and the Alphonsian Institutes, in *Spic. hist. 12* (1964) pp. 321 - 355.

¹⁴ *che [-che] il* - “that the.”

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observance, they have the same Rule as the nuns, because they were all written on the basis of it and everyone observed it. 33. So this shows us clearly that the Lord wanted all these Congregations to be founded on the solid foundation of humiliation, not just in words but in deeds, and in contempt of self. 34. And all these tricks of the divine Providence, and all these divisions,¹⁵ differences of opinions and tribulations that happened, all were ordained by divine Providence, so that the Institute might be founded upon the solid foundation of the humiliations of the Son of God, and the example of its divine Master, who, with this foundation of His most profound humiliations, willed to found the beginnings of His Church, during His most holy and admirable life. 35. So He willed that, in His Institute, [regarding] all those who were to begin this Work of His, He willed that upon contempt of self and humiliations, crosses and troubles, the foundations of the Institute would be laid. 36. And because of all the machinations¹⁶ that the demons of hell made to destroy it, bring it down and darken it with many tribulations, it¹⁷ was opposed and as if submerged completely, and was on the brink of disappearing completely: but from all these disorders the Lord drew forth humiliations, and ensured that all the glory and honour was obscured completely, that had blossomed in the world at the beginning of the Work, so that the aforesaid nun, to whom the Lord had given the new Rule, remained, for her whole lifetime, in the eyes of all her brothers in the Congregation and the religious of the Order and all the people of the world, both discredited and slandered. 37. And in seclusion and silence in abjection of self, withdrawn from every human contact, she no longer got involved in anything, but she was so happy and full of joy to live like this. 38. And she prayed to the Lord to let her live and die upon such a precious way of humility, and be capable, not in words, but in deeds and in fact, of being transformed into the life of her Beloved, and becoming in herself what the Lord had promised her,¹⁸ when He gave her the new Rules.

K. 39. She held this solitude very dear, like an immense treasure received from the Lord, but then, many years later, when she was in the foundation that we shall soon be writing about, the Lord revealed the treasures of her humiliation and contempt of self and described their value to her, and later, at the end of this book, a summarised explanation of it will be given, so that it can be used to the profit of the religious souls of the Institute, and show clearly how the foundations of the true spirit of the Institute of the Most Holy Saviour are built on the humiliations of the Son of God, our Lord and Master.

¹⁵ *distizioni*: 'distinzioni' - "distinctions" in the sense of 'divisioni' - "divisions."

¹⁶ *tutte le machine*: 'a causa di tutte le macchinazioni' - "and because of all the machinations."

¹⁷ Understood: *l'Opera* - "the Work."

¹⁸ *promesse*: 'promise' - "promised her."

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1.

Chapter 20

How the Lord gave the aforesaid nun a spiritual Father to understand her and comfort her after so much trouble; and how He began to arrange the means for the foundation He wanted in Foggia.

A. 2. While the aforesaid nun was busy reforming the Monastery at Nocera de' Pagani, as we have said, the reform of the customs of those nuns went ahead more and more, because the nuns devoted themselves more and more to observing Community life. 3. Then that young gentleman of the district who had been converted was advised by the aforesaid Superior to make a general confession of his whole life, because that young man had told her in confidence about all his sins in the life he had led up till that point. 4. Then the aforesaid nun, after she had got him well disposed, persuaded him to go to this general confession; and he not only promised her he would go straight away, but he also promised he would let her guide him along the way of prayer, while she remained in that district. 5. Then he went to find a certain priest and servant of God, who was at the seminary of Nocera as rector of it, put there by the Bishop, and a man of a singular life, to whom ¹ the Lord had given ² the gift of the most lofty supernatural prayer. 6. And he lived a secluded life in that seminary, and he had no contact with anyone, but he lived there as a recluse, living a solitary and contemplative life.

B. 7. His name was Bernardino Sommandico, ³ and because the fame ⁴ of his holy life had spread over the whole district, this young convert decided to go to him to make his general confession and then remain under the direction of this spiritual Father, just as the aforesaid nun had advised him. 8. Because the demon was fighting him with strong temptations of the flesh, he had great need of a good ordinary Confessor. 9. So he went to this priest and made his general confession, and he told him about his resolution, that he wished to live a chaste life and serve God. 10. That good priest met with him and was aware that he had previously been the scandal of the district, and seeing his attitude so changed, he asked him in what way the Lord had enlightened him; and the young man told him what had happened to him when he met the aforesaid Superior of the Monastery of Nocera; and he asked his permission to go back to the aforesaid nun, because when it came to directing the things of his soul in matters of the spirit, he wanted to discuss it with her. 11. That good priest told him to continue to discuss things with the nun, and come to him for confession.

¹ *che*: al quale

² A cross + is marked at the beginning of the line.

³ Cf. *Imitazione*, pp. 89-90.

⁴ *fame*: 'fama' - "fame."

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C. 12. Meanwhile the aforesaid spiritual Father had heard all the gossip about delusions that was being said publicly about the aforesaid nun, and also heard what the Lord had done, in both the reform of the Monastery and in the conversion of that dissolute young man. 13. This made him want to visit and meet the aforesaid nun. 14. And //65r// the Lord enlightened him internally and let him know the state of the aforesaid nun, and how she had been oppressed by internal doubts and fears for many years. 15. So he told this young man to tell the aforesaid Superior that he wanted to come and visit her and meet her, and he also told that young man that her soul needed to be consoled.

D. 16. So one morning he had the young man accompany him and he went to the Monastery and had the said Superior called; and as soon as he saw her he told her that she should be happy that the Lord had not abandoned her, as she thought, but everything had been ordained by His divine Providence. 17. So the aforesaid Superior was quite amazed to see her internal life revealed to somebody she had never met, and all the more so because up till then she had not spoken about her spiritual life to any other human being.

E. 18. Then when she saw that the Lord had indeed told the aforesaid servant of God about the state of her soul, she began to open up to him about her spiritual doubts and fears, and the internal abandonments and derelictions that she was experiencing, and the temptations that the enemy was suggesting to her; and how she had been troubled for many years by doubts caused by the spiritual Father; and that then he had troubled her in so many ways and she had not been sure if it had been the will of God to leave his guidance or not.

F. 19. The servant of God told her that she had done great harm by not leaving him in the beginning, but the Lord had ordered everything for her good and spiritual profit. 20. And he ordered her, by virtue of holy obedience, to think no more about what had happened to her, and that he assured her on behalf of God that everything had been His will and the designs of divine Providence.

G. 21. The aforesaid nun confided her state to him and the internal way along which God was leading her; and he assured her that it was indeed from God and told her not to be afraid, but she should be careful not to express her inner thoughts too easily, because there were very few to whom God gave the grace of knowing the state of souls, and her ways were to be admired. 22. So the aforesaid nun asked him to accept her as his spiritual daughter, since the blessed God had clearly chosen him to be her guide. 23. And he was happy to accept her, and he ordered her to neither write, nor talk about the things that happened in her soul with anybody, without his express permission, and this she did. 24. And the Lord began to give her a sense of peace and security after so many troubles and pains, both internal and external.⁵

⁵ In her *trattenimenti* (Dialogues), IX, pp. 118-120, Maria Celeste says that 29th. June 1737 was the day when she finally overcame the "confusion of the abyss" in which she had lived "for five years."

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H. 25. While the aforesaid nun was in charge of the above-mentioned Monastery as its Superior and attending to the reform of those nuns, the Lord offered her many foundations. 26. She had a call to found a Monastery of her Institute in the City of Perugia; another foundation at Roccapiemonte ⁶ near Nocera; and another in Aversa, a place near Naples. 27. But in all these foundations there were many controversies, and the aforesaid nun did not know what the will of God was. 28. Her director told her to attend to the aid of those souls for a little while longer, because then the Lord would show His will; but that for now it was not the will of God to abandon those souls, who were so new and tender on the way, because they were still so weak in the Christian virtues. 29. In the meantime she carried on with the task that God had given her.

I. 30. It so happened that there came to Nocera a certain canon from the City of Foggia, called Giuseppe Tortora, ⁷ and because he came from Nocera de' Pagani he had been appointed to the office of Chancellor by Mons. Cavalieri ⁸ of blessed and holy memory, and he then created him Canon of the Cathedral of that City. 31. But the above-mentioned Canon was accustomed from time to time to visit Nocera de' Pagani, where he was born, to see his relatives. 32. So now that he was in Nocera, and was having a conversation in a spice shop ⁹ one day, he heard some people discussing the latest news about that Monastery where the aforesaid Superior was, and the changes that had taken place, and how the whole area thanked the Lord for taking away so many public scandals from that Monastery; and they described the good work that had been done by those good nuns.

J. 33. That made the aforesaid Canon decide to go and visit the aforesaid Superior, and meet her and talk to her about some doubts on his conscience. 34. While they were talking, one of the governors of the said Monastery was also present, a man called Francesco Antonio Salvati, and he informed the said Canon about all //65v// that had been done in the Monastery by the new Superior. 35. And he also told him about the troubles she had suffered because of the new Rule that she had received from the Lord, and how by this means God had disposed the arrival of the aforesaid nun in Nocera.

K. 36. Meanwhile the Canon felt more and more impelled to go to the Monastery, and asked ¹⁰ the above-named Governor to introduce him personally to the Monastery, so that he could speak in private about certain things of his soul with the

⁶ Only here and in the following (58:2 and 8) does Maria Celeste write the name of the locality, Roccapiemonte, divided into three distinct words

⁷ About him cf. *Imitazione*, p. 96; M. C. NARDELLA, *Il contesto storico-culturale del Settecento nel Regno di Napoli e la condizione femminile*, (The historical and cultural context of the 18th. Century in the Kingdom of Naples and the feminine condition), in T. SANNELLA (editor), *Atti del Primo Convegno di Studi Crostarosiani* (Acts of the First Convention of Crostarosan Studies), Foggia 1991, pp. 19-31.

⁸ Monsignor Emilio Cavalieri (1663 - 1726) was the Bishop of the Diocese of Troia, to which Foggia belonged, between 1694 and 1726; about him cf. G. ROSSI, *Della vita di Monsignor D. Emilio Giacomo Cavalieri della Congregazione de' Pii Operarij Vescovo di Troja, Napoli 1741* (Of the Life of Monsignor D. Emilio Giacomo Cavalieri of the Congregation of the Pious Workmen, Bishop of Troia, Naples 1741).

⁹ *spetiarìa*: 'spezieria' - "spice shop."

¹⁰ *precò*: 'pregò' - "asked."

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aforesaid Superior; the said Governor very gladly promised to take him personally. 37. So when the aforesaid nun had been informed about the wishes of this devout person, because he wanted to speak about useful and spiritual things, she accepted him, with the permission of her spiritual director, who also knew him because he was a native of that district and a man of a good life, and devout.

L. 38. So one day in the company of the said governor he went to the Monastery and asked for the Superior; and the Governor left the said Canon at the grille and went on his way. 39. And the aforesaid Canon had a long discussion with the nun, and wanted to know from the same, for his own comfort, all that the Lord, through His mercy, had done in that place. 40. Then he passed to the discussion of everything he had heard about the troubles of the aforesaid nun, and the new Rule, and her tribulations, and how everything had been a divine disposition. 41. And feeling himself moved in spirit, he consoled her, and told her the words of Sacred Scripture, where it says: “*Do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord.*”¹¹ 42. Then he told her about some of the doubts in his own conscience, and the nun consoled him; and a spiritual friendship was formed between them. 43. Then the said Canon asked her if she would let him write to her from Foggia about the things of his soul.

M. 44. And then he told her that, since the Monastery where she was now was not of her Rule nor of her Order, it would better for her to go to Foggia to make a foundation for the middle class citizens of that City, for whom there were no monasteries for middle class people and for whom there was nowhere¹² to put the girls of this class of people, because there was nothing else in the aforesaid City, besides two Monasteries for the nobility, and two others, one¹³ for penitents and another for orphan girls, and both these Conservatories were poor;¹⁴ and yet there was nowhere for middle class people, and this was all the more urgent because this middle class of merchants and landowners were very numerous in the above-mentioned City of Foggia. 45. And also he told her that he had a niece, his brother’s daughter, and that if she came to make a foundation¹⁵ in the said City, he would see to it that she would be among the first to enter under her direction.

N. 46. The aforesaid Superior replied to all these things and told him that if the Lord so disposed, she was ready to do the will of God; but that for now she was not able to leave for quite some time, above all until those religious were established in the reform of their religious state; and that she had had many other requests for new foundations, but

¹¹ *Viriliter... dominus*: ‘Viriliter age et confortetur cor tuum et sustine Dominum’ - “...do manfully, and let thy heart take courage, and wait thou for the Lord” (Psalm 27 [26]:14). It should be noted that the final *s* of the word *Dominus* has been written in a heavier and different handwriting.

¹² *le quale... luoco*: ‘nella quale non erano monasteri di persone civili, per le quali non vi era luogo’ - “in which there were no Monasteries for middle class people, for whom there was no place there.”

¹³ *uno [-di] di* - “one for.”

¹⁴ ¹⁴ Cf. M. C. NARDELLA, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ *a [-m] fondare* - “to make a foundation.”

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that her spiritual Father had not yet approved her leaving the Monastery to go and found another, because she had yet to firmly establish the reform that the Lord wanted.

O. 47. So the aforesaid Canon replied to her and told her that of course it was her duty to finish the work entrusted to her by the Lord, but when she felt she had to leave that place, she should write to him and he would do everything required in the City to obtain the necessary licences for the aforesaid foundation in the City of Foggia. 48. And so he took his leave of the aforesaid nun, and left Nocera de' Pagani a happy man.

P. 49. When he arrived in this City of Foggia, he spoke to his sister-in-law, whose name was Mrs. Gaetana Roselli,¹⁶ who had been left a widow with three children, two boys and a girl; and he told her everything that had happened, and how he hoped that in time there would be a foundation in this City for middle-class people, and that then his niece would be able to enter it. 50. The mother was happy and constantly encouraged the Canon, her brother-in-law, to put the Work into effect.

¹⁶ [-s>-R]oselli

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1.

Third Book

First Chapter

Of what the Lord disposed for the new foundation in this City of Foggia, and of everything that happened at this time.

A. 2. During the time that the aforesaid nun was occupied with this reform in the Monastery of Nocera, she received ¹ many letters about the foundation in Perugia, and many letters from Canon Tortora in Foggia, and there was also the Duke and Duchess of Roccapiemonte, all wanting her for their foundations. 3. But so far she had not received any clarity from the Lord about it, and in this state of things she passed six years of her governance, in doubt as to what the will of the Lord was, and which one He wanted out of all these three places that were being offered to her, where a Monastery of His Institute might be founded.

B. 4. Because the City of Perugia had requested her not just for a new foundation, but, with permission from the Pope, the Bishop of Perugia had obtained [authority] for her to found her new foundation under her Rule, and have the right to leave, and enter all the Monasteries of the said Diocese, where, due to the order of the Pope, the aforesaid nun was to have had the apostolic faculty of reforming all those Monasteries, which had become so relaxed and decayed in their religious observance. 5. This was a matter of great glory to God and it required long prayers. 6. She had received many letters asking her to come; and even sending her the expenses for the carriages and for her lodgings on the journey. 7. But by the will of God, the relatives of the aforesaid nun prevented this from happening by the will of God, because it was a twelve day journey, and so far from the City of Naples that they could not guarantee their well-being, so they opposed them going at that time.

C. 8. The foundation at Roccapiemonte, being on baronial land, the aforesaid nun had much difficulty there, because of the subjection that such baronial lands were accustomed to require of Monasteries, just as the aforesaid nun had experienced on the estate of Marigliano, where she first became a nun, and then, as was said in the beginning, she had to leave through the tribulations that arose. ² 9. So she was perplexed in her mind about where the will of God ³ wanted this foundation to be made.

¹ *rivevea*: 'ricevea' - "received."

² *sopra vennero*: 'sopravvennero' - "arose." About the attempt that was actually made at Roccapiemonte, cf. S. MAJORANO, *Documenti relativi alla permanenza di suor Celeste Crostarosa a Roccapiemonte (1735 - 1738)*, (Documents relating to Sr. Celeste Crostarosa's stay in Roccapiemonte) in *Spic. hist.* 29 (1981) pp. 3-19.

³ A cross + has been added at the end of the line.

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D. 10. But one morning, after she had taken holy communion, and while she was explaining this affair to the Lord, she heard a voice tell her internally: “Go to Foggia, because that is where I want the foundation made; so write to Canon Tortora right away and tell him that now the time is opportune for the foundation that he wants.”

E. 11. Meanwhile she said nothing to her spiritual Father about what she had heard internally, but only sought advice from him about where he thought it was the will of God to establish the foundation in the places where she had been requested. 12. And he, with an internal movement from on high, told her: “Go to Foggia: such is the will of God!” 13. Then the aforesaid nun told him what had happened to her after Holy Communion, and how the Lord had revealed it to her. 14. So in great happiness she wrote a letter to Canon Tortora, in which she told him what had happened to her, because the aforesaid Canon often wrote ⁴ to the aforesaid nun about matters relating to his conscience, in regard to the many doubts he had about the direction at the Monastery of the Penitents in the said City of Foggia, and that for several reasons he wanted to leave that work.

F. 15. Then as soon as the said Canon received the aforesaid nun’s letter, he immediately shared it with his sister //66v// -in-law called Mrs. Gaetana Roselli, who had been left a widow with three children, as was said above: the daughter was ten years old, and she wanted to consecrate her to the Lord in some Monastery in the religious state.

G. 16. Then both the aforesaid Canon and his sister-in-law became excited, and they took on the task, so that a beginning could be made to the said foundation, which they wanted so much. 17. And because the aforesaid Canon had influence with the Bishop, ⁵ and was a man of ability and talent, whom ⁶ this same Bishop made use of in many affairs of importance - as he even made use of the Canonical Chapter ^{*} for collegiate business - he had his hand in everything, and he was much esteemed by all; and also he had all the gentlemen of the district as his friends.

⁴ *si cartizava*: ‘corrispondeva’ - “wrote.”

⁵ Mons. Giovanni Pietro Faccogli (1669 - 1752), who succeeded Mons. Cavalieri in September 1726, cf. RITZLER - SEFRIN, v, p. 392.

⁶ *a cui*: ‘di cui’ - “whom.”

^{*} Note: *The Catholic Encyclopedia (1913)*: Canon (an ecclesiastical person, Lat. *Canonicus*), a member of a chapter or body of clerics living according to rule and presided over by one of their number.... *Kinds of Canons*. Canons are divided in the following manner: (1) Cathedral canons, who, attached to the cathedral church, form the senate or council of the bishop... (2) Prebendary canons, who have prebend or fixed income attached to the canonry; simple canons, who have no prebend. (3) Canons *de numero*, ie. those of a church the number of whose canons can neither be diminished nor increased; (4) supernumerary canons, who are assistants to the canons *de numero*. *Qualifications*: The Council of Trent says (Sess. XXIII, XXIV) that since the dignitaries of the cathedral were instituted to preserve and increase ecclesiastical discipline it is necessary that those who are appointed should excel in piety and be an example to others; likewise, as they are to assist the bishop in his office and work, only those should be appointed who are able to fulfil the canonical duties. The requisite qualifications are: legitimate birth, proper age, Sacred orders, fitting education, skill in Gregorian chant, known good character and repute...

Chapter 59

1.

Second Chapter

How the said foundation was completed in about a month and half; and how at the beginning they rented a house so that they could start right away; and how the required licences were obtained ¹ and many girls joined for the first intake; and then how the demon tried to hinder the Work of the Lord.

A. 2. In the meantime the said Canon began to talk to the gentlemen of the district and with those who had the government of the City, and especially with a certain senior advocate of the City, a man of great talent and doctrine, called Francesco Antonio Ricciardi. ² 3. And so that no Monastery of either men or women would oppose his plans, he decided to begin this foundation without seeking, from either the city or any individual person, any temporal aid, but for this beginning he thought about renting a house, and with the incomes of the girls who were to enter. 4. This is how it was begun in the name of God.

B. 5. This thought pleased everyone, by the will of God, so in a month, twenty-five middle class girls were enrolled to enter. 6. Then he selected a large house which was there in this city, belonging to the Jesuit Fathers of Orta, ³ and this was the house he rented, and then he recommended it to the Lord. 7. And he straight away wrote a letter to the aforesaid nun in Nocera, and he told her that he had already done everything; and that the only thing left to him to do was to obtain the bull from the Bishop; and that twenty-five middle class girls were already enrolled for the first intake with the full support of all the citizens; and that a house had now been rented to allow the Work to begin quickly; and then they would soon be able to have their own place according to how the Lord disposed; and therefore they should prepare themselves for their journey to Foggia. 8. The aforesaid ⁴ nun received this letter fifteen days after she had written to the said Canon, and she rendered thanks to the Lord for it.

C. 9. Then the said Canon went to Troia to see the local ordinary Bishop, called Giovanni Faccolli, ⁵ the Bishop of Troia and Foggia; and exactly on the day of St. Anthony the Abbot in the year 1738, on 17th. January, he not only obtained the bull *in scriptis* [in writing] ⁶ for the foundation of the Monastery, but ample authority for the

¹ *ottenere*: 'ottennero' - "obtained."

² "Ricciardi was a master jurist in 1740-1, elector in 1747-48, and again master jurist in 1751-52" (M. C. NARDELLA, *op. cit.*, 31, note 21).

³ *Orta*: 'Ortanova' (also the same in 61:2).

⁴ *conzaputa [-ebbe] religiosa* - "the aforesaid nun."

⁵ [-F>-F] *Faccolli*. Maria Celeste had already written his surname using the capital letter, which in her handwriting looks like the same grapheme as the small letter with its dimensions slightly enlarged. A reader, who most probably was the same one who did the crossings-out, must have interpreted this letter as a small one and decided to write a capital F over the top of the original letter in Crostarosa's manuscript.

⁶ *in scriptis*: 'in scriptis' - "in writing."

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new church. 10. Then the aforesaid Canon wrote and advised the aforesaid nun in Nocera by letter every week about what he had done.

D. 11. And in all this time the Lord was pleased to give certain audible signs in the Monastery to the aforesaid nun, because these letters reached her by way of a carrier⁷ from Foggia, on Thursday after lunch. 12. Then on Wednesday they began to hear these audible signs in the Monastery: it was a certain sound, like the sound of bells, but small ones, and festive, and this sound was heard by all the nuns, and they did not know what it was, nor where it came from. 13. So they began to be vigilant, to try and find out where it was coming from; and they noticed that it was coming from the aforesaid Superior's //67r// room, near her bed, from a little picture on a sheet of parchment⁸ in a small painting of the Most Holy Saviour, and those sounds and audible ringing were coming from there; and could be heard even in the other rooms, even though the sound was quite faint; a picture of St. Pascuale did the same.

E. 14. At the beginning the aforesaid nuns did not know what these sacred images were doing, all they were aware of was an internal and spiritual happiness. 15. But then the aforesaid nuns observed that this sound began on Wednesday evenings, and lasted until the letters from Foggia arrived on Thursday mornings, in such a way that the Lord advised the aforesaid nuns in advance by this sound that the said letters were coming, because the aforesaid Canon continued to write all the time until the departure of the nuns. 16. And when the work of the foundation was completed, the said sacred image never made these sounds again, and today it is preserved by the nuns of the new Monastery with veneration.

F. 17. After the Work of the Lord was already in order, and a total number of twenty-five girls from the said City of Foggia had been enrolled, just as was said above, with the full support of the said Canon and many citizens, then the demon, who does not sleep and is always watching and tries to hinder and disturb the works of the Lord, made sure that the families of the girls who had been enrolled to be the first entrants into the new Monastery, found out that the house was rented, and that there was no property to provide a regular income, and began to be afraid and change their minds, just when the Work was about to be put into effect, because the demon spurred some people on to go and talk to the families who had decided to send⁹ their daughters there, and what they said to them made them very reluctant to place their daughters in the new Monastery.

G. 18. Poor Cannon Giuseppe Tortora wrote and told the aforesaid nun about everything the enemy had done after the house was rented and all the necessary licences obtained. 19. So the aforesaid nun, when she saw what the enemy had done, wrote and asked the Canon to complete everything and make haste, quickly and secretly, to arrange

⁷ *vaticale*: 'vatecaro' - "carrier", a term in the Neapolitan dialect for 'vetturale' - "carrier", cf. D'ASCOLI, p. 707.

⁸ *bergamena*: 'pergamena' - "parchment."

⁹ *pone*: 'ponere', 'porre' - "to place", i.e., "to send."

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their journey to Foggia, which God wanted so much. 20. So then they decided to go and get them, both the said Canon and his sister-in-law, in the following month of March.

H. 21. The aforesaid Superior thought she ought to give notice, to both the Governors and the Bishop of Nocera, of her departure from the Monastery, so that he could use his personal authority to provide for the governance of those nuns, letting them know that the time disposed by God had come for her to leave that place. 22. So the Bishop came in person to the said Monastery to talk to the aforesaid nun and in his goodness he asked the same Superior to give her opinion about what was to be done. 23. And the Superior asked him to be good enough to elect the new Superior for the future governance of the Monastery, and not look for someone from outside, so that things would not turn out worse than before. 24. So this most illustrious Monsignor commanded the aforesaid Prioress to choose the new Superior and Vicar, for since she knew these nuns very well and who she could entrust this task to,¹⁰ he would then be able to live secure about the good spiritual government of those nuns. 25. And the aforesaid Superior proposed to the Bishop two good Religious of that Monastery, of exemplary life and of good virtue and prudence, and the Bishop and the Governors of the Monastery confirmed them, to the peace and joy of the whole Community. 26. And by the grace of God these good elected Superiors have maintained their observance and reform up till the present day;¹¹ and that Monastery has been maintained in good odour and religious virtue, to the edification of the whole district: so may it all be to the glory of God.

I. 27. But the Superior and her companions, who were to leave for the new foundation, were not a little worn out by the weeping and tender emotions of those nuns in the Monastery; a large number of them wanted to come with her, and could not be calmed; not just the nuns from inside the Monastery, but also the citizens and the local gentry did not want her to leave their district, both the Bishop and the Governors of the Monastery had grown so fond of her, and they required a great deal of convincing, but in the end they had to accept the will of the Lord. 28. The nuns of the Monastery tried hard to keep her there with their tears, and for many days, until the departure of the aforesaid Superior from the Monastery, they shed tears almost continually, so it was very difficult to resist them.

¹⁰ *conoscendo... cui*: 'conoscendo ella i soggetti di dentro e sapendo a chi si potesse affidare questa carica' - "for since she knew these nuns very well and who she could entrust this task to."

¹¹ *ogni*: 'oggi' - "today."

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1.

Chapter 3

Of the journey of the aforesaid nuns to the City of Foggia, and how the Lord visited ¹ the aforesaid nun on the road, and other things that happened on their arrival.

A. 2. When Canon Tortora received the aforesaid letter from the Superior of the Monastery of Nocera, he got himself ready for the journey, and also his sister-in-law called Mrs. Gaetana Roselli, who was the one who had had the greatest commitment to this Work, because she wanted to place her daughter there, who happened to be the daughter of the brother of the said Canon, called Domenico Tortora, of happy memory. 3. So he was in a hurry to go to Nocera to get the two nuns, so as to make a start to the desired foundation, and so they set out for Nocera de' Pagani, and when they got to the house of the brother of the said Canon called Pietro Tortora, who had worked in Nocera as a lawyer, they arrived there on 3rd March in the year 1738, and they sent someone straight away to advise the nuns to prepare themselves for their departure.

B. 4. Then her spiritual Father came to see her and gave her his benediction. 5. And he ordered her not to communicate the things of her soul to any person without his permission; and that if there was anything where she had difficulties she was to write to him; and at the present time she was to go wherever God led her without fear, and that He would guide her, as she had already experienced. 6. This holy man had such virtue from God, that everything that he spoke to her soul the Lord authenticated with what He did in the aforesaid nun's spirit in an admirable way, in such a way that what he said had a deep effect on her soul. 7. So he told her to go rejoicing, for God wanted her in Foggia.

C. 8. Then the following morning the aforesaid nun and her older sister ² left early accompanied by the said Canon, his sister-in-law and the nuns' brother, and they set off on their journey to Foggia with great joy. 9. They had a middle class girl from Nocera with them that the said Canon was bringing to enter the new foundation - her name was Matilda; ³ and in all there were three carriages travelling with them.

D. 10. On that first day of their journey the weather was very bad and rainy; and because the worst of the weather lasted for many days, the roads were ruined. 11. And the morning they left, since the carriages were hired, ⁴ there was no other choice but to leave in the wet weather, but as soon as they started on their journey, it pleased the Lord to modify the weather and make the sun come out; but the rivers had grown greatly, and

¹ *visisò*: 'visitò' - "visited."

² Her younger sister, Sister Evangelista, preferred not to follow her two sisters, cf. *Imitazione*, pp. 94-95.

³ *Metilda*: 'Matilde' - "Matilda."

⁴ *essendo... galessi*: 'essendo fissati i calessi' - "and since the carriages were hired."

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they suffered many frights and troubles on the road; but the Lord helped in everything, bringing them through safely. 12. And several times the water reached the heads of the horses, but they recommended themselves to the protection of the Most Holy Virgin and they were protected from every evil, although there was trouble from the deep mud, and several times they had to ⁵ pull the wheels ⁶ of the carriages out by hand, because they sank to their axles and the horses could not move them. 13. But the Lord Himself helped us to overcome these troubles with His divine aid.

E. 14. But the aforesaid nun felt little or nothing of these troubles, because the Lord ~~//68r//~~ visited her on the way and gave her an extraordinary recollection, and showed her the immensity of God, and she saw amazing things that cannot be explained in human terms. 15. She seemed to see an immense way, which was so spacious that it included all creatures and all created things, a way lit up by flashes of lightning. 16. And through this immense vastness she winged her way towards heaven, and although this was a way, yet she was borne along by the Spirit and by Divine power along that way with such lightness that she was brought aloft in rapid flight by the sweetness of the Spirit of the Lord. 17. And in the same way she saw all the creatures not capable of reason in this immensity: in the same way, their beings were flying up into the divine immensity and greatness. 18. And then she no longer noticed that she was on the journey all day long, because she seemed to be travelling up into the heavens. 19. The aforesaid nun was never able to forget any of this for the rest of her life, and it was on the second day of her journey, and the effects of this grace lasted many days in her.

F. 20. When the nuns were only a few miles distant from the City of Foggia several gentlemen of the City came to meet them with four coaches, in which there was the wife of Mr. Giuseppe de Angelis, called Mrs. Angela Rosa Roselli, the sister of the said Canon Tortora's sister-in-law, and who intended placing two of her daughters in the new foundation; and she was accompanied by Mrs. Angela Maria Cisterna and Mrs. Anna della Rocca. 21. So they got the two nuns to get out of the rented carriages and placed them in the coaches, which had empty ⁷ places in them for this purpose. 22. The nuns went with their veils covering their faces, with a crown of thorns on their heads, and their crucifixes hanging down from their necks onto their chests, and with their mantles, as the Rules prescribe for Religious who go to found Monasteries; and thus veiled they entered the City, and were taken directly ⁸ to the Monastery of the Penitents in this City. 23. There they got out, at exactly midway through the 23rd hour, ⁹ amidst a very great crowd of people, who had come there in their carriages out of curiosity, mainly because in this City they had never yet seen a Monastery where the Religious went veiled like this: and this event caused a great sensation in the city.

⁵ *bisognia*: 'bisogniava' - "they had to."

⁶ *roti*: 'ruote' - "wheels."

⁷ *vacui*: 'vuoti' - "empty."

⁸ *a dirittura*: 'directamente' - "directly"; see also 60:25.

⁹ At the beginning of March, the 24th hour corresponded to our 5-6 p.m.

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G. 24. Canon Tortora was the ordinary Confessor at this Monastery of the Penitents; and he thought the best thing was to let the aforesaid nuns retreat into that Monastery for a couple of days so that they could be together and then a solemn procession of entry ¹⁰ would be made with the girls accompanied by all the dignitaries of the City, just as we will say. 25. And so the aforesaid nuns stayed from the Thursday to the Sunday at the Monastery of the Penitents, and all the middle class people of the City ¹¹ went to visit them there, to their very great displeasure and torment, because the aforesaid nuns would have liked to go directly to their intended house and be enclosed the very same evening of their arrival in Foggia. 26. But the aforesaid Canon wished to make a solemn entry, so that the citizens would be much more willing to contribute to the Work, so it was necessary for the aforesaid nuns to accept his decision: and since this was the will of the Lord, they did not wish to displease him, nor contradict his resolution.

¹⁰ *entra*: 'entrata' - "entry."

¹¹ *del [-paese] città* - "of the City."

Chapter 61

1.

Chapter 4

How there was a solemn procession on the Sunday and the new foundation was begun in the name of the Lord.

A. 2. As was said before, Canon Tortora had taken the house on rent from the Jesuit Fathers of the College at Orta. 3. It was a place that they kept as a hospice in this City, but they rented out a part of it, because the said house was very big and it had two main doors and two quarters of the house with two entrances. 4. So they rented out the largest apartment to the nuns at a hundred ducats a year in rent: it had a big main entrance with a half-covered courtyard and it had a well and two rooms downstairs, ¹ that they kept as store-rooms; and then you went upstairs, and on the main floor of the house there was //68v// a bedroom, and since it was separate, it was turned into a chapel for celebrating the Holy Mass; the enclosures had been made with the shutters ² so that the nuns would be sealed off there and could make use of this place as a lower choir; and for this purpose they put a confessional and communion rail there, and the nuns received visitors in their parlour where a partition had been set up with a grille and an interior door.

B. 5. The aforesaid Canon had everything arranged before the nuns came from Nocera: he had the chapel blessed and had the first Mass said so that when the nuns came everything would be found in order. 6. The house had eight rather large rooms, with two balconies and many windows, which they blocked out with some very heavy shutters, because the house looked out on many fine views and nearby palaces nearby because it stood in the middle of the population of the City.

C. 7. So when all these arrangements were finished and everything was in order, on Sunday, 9th. March 1738, the aforesaid Canon Giuseppe Tortora arranged the entry of the aforesaid nuns, and organised a solemn procession. 8. At the beginning of it went the whole Chapter of the reverend canons of the Collegiate of the mother church, and at the end went the Most Illustrious Bishop by name Mons. Antonio Manerba, ³ who was back in Foggia, [which is where he was born] ⁴ and had come there to take his native air, because he was now in poor health; then came all the clergy and the City dignitaries in official dress, and the six girls in pairs, with a priest who stood beside ⁵ them with a crucifix before him; then came the two Religious with two Deans of the City on either side. 9. The two Religious were veiled, with a crown of thorns on their heads, and with

¹ *sottane*: 'a piano terra' - "downstairs."

² *gelosie*: 'grate' - "shutters."

³ Mons. Antonio Manerba (1687-1761) was the Bishop of S. Angelo dei Lombardi e Bisaccia (St. Angelo of the Lombards and Bisaccio), cf. RITZLER-SEFRIN, VI, p. 84.

⁴ *Foggia*, [-*essendo -sua -patria*] > \il quale / - "Foggia, [-which -is -where -he -was -born] > \who/ The crossings out and the additions between the lines are by another hand.

⁵ *alato*: 'a lato' - "beside."

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their mantles, and with their crucifixes hanging down from their necks onto their chests; and the priests and the Chapter sang the Te Deum alternately. 10. And as they proceeded on in good order, they brought them first of all to visit the mother church, in which is the miraculous image of Our Lady of Conavetere: ⁶ there the aforesaid nuns offered themselves to the Lord and placed themselves under the patronage of the Most Blessed Virgin.

D. 11. In the meantime the bells rang out in glory, and everybody gathered there, both the nobility and the common people: people of every class followed behind them with kind remarks and weeping with joy. 12. \They left/ ⁷ the mother church and then made their way to the house which had already been prepared for them, as was said above. 13. There, at the bottom of the staircase, Mons. Manerba stopped and the Superior with her companion the Vicar genuflected and sought a blessing from Monsignor Manerba who had done them the favour of accompanying them in the name of the Bishop of the City, called Mons. Faccogli, who was not in residence at the time because he was at Troia and had given him the authority to attend this function and accompany them.

E. 14. Then the aforesaid nuns kissed his feet, he blessed them and congratulated them; and the aforesaid nuns thanked him for all the kindness he had shown them; and then he left them, saying that he would come the following day to visit them, which is what he did. 15. Then at the door to the parlour they found two ladies from the city nobility waiting to receive them, one was called Mrs. Elisabetta Freda and the other Mrs. Rosa Cuoci; these two ladies received them, and after their congratulations and visit they left.

F. 16. The name of these six girls that entered with the aforesaid nuns were the following:

Gabriela ⁸ della Rocca,
Maria Giuseppa Tortora, who was the niece of the Canon,
Victoria and Antonia de Angelis,
Gratia Roselli and Seraphina Roselli.

All these girls were relatives of the aforesaid Canon Tortora.

⁶ *nostra Signora di Conavetere*: 'nostra Signora di Icona Vetere' - "Our Lady of the Old Icon."

⁷ *conzolatione, [-uscirno]* > \uscirno/ - "with joy. [they left] > \They left/."

⁸ *Gabriele* for *Gabriela*: The confusion between the masculine and feminine forms of this name is probably to be attributed to the phenomenon of the indistinct final vowel.

Chapter 62

//69r//

1.

Chapter 5

How the demon fought against this nascent foundation so that it would be abandoned; and how they made a decision to get their own place; and of a misfortune that happened through the work of the enemy, with the Lord's permission, to force the foundation to be abandoned.

A. 2. The aforesaid nuns went into this rented house and found it just bare walls: there were not even chairs to sit on; they found nothing there but just a few cooking utensils and a few benches and tables in that part of the room where the refectory was to be. 3. There they found two helpless lay spinsters who could do nothing because they were of advanced age, so all told they had a total of ten people: that is, the Superior and the Vicar, the six choir girls and the two lay spinsters, which made ten people to start with. 4. So from the twenty-five girls that the Canon had enrolled first of all, there now remained no more than six: many did not come because of the work done by the enemy.

B. 5. But when it was clear that not even all this forced the abandonment of the Work,¹ because the number of entrants soon built up again to a total of 26 in all, even though no family dared let their daughters become nuns, the demon began to make such warfare because of it against this young foundation, that not even the half of it can be told. 6. Because those people who did not wish to place their daughters there with us in the beginning went to see the relatives of those who had enrolled them or were even thinking of enrolling them, and they told them many bad things: and amongst the other things they told a great untruth; that the Monastery had no resources; and that their daughters would die of hunger; and that they knew that the founders were about to depart. 7. And there were some people who took pleasure in this, and spread tales around the City about how the nuns had already left for home; and the lay assistant was called several times by people from outside, and they asked if it was true that the foundresses had gone away because everyone was dying of hunger. 8. And this is how poor Canon Tortora was tormented, and the aforesaid religious Superiors of the place, by the families of these same girls.

C. 9. But in a spirit of truth, they were well off for board, and the Lord never made them suffer from the want of food, but those girls' incomes on which they lived was a godsend as it left them a surplus, and they began to buy many of the furnishings needed for the house. 10. But the gossip² kept on growing, and they said: "How can this be a real Monastery when it does not have its own place and is in a rented house?" 11. And in actual fact they were right about this, because it was amazing how they could be so

¹ *Ma... Opera*: this should be read as: 'ma pur vedendo che neppure si era desistito dall'Opera' - "but when it was clear that not even all this forced the abandonment of the Work."

² *dicerei*: 'dicerie' - "gossip."

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comfortable, considering that these incomes had to pay all the costs of buying food, buying furniture for the house, and also the hundred scudi a year in rent.

D. 12. And also, in those first days, the nuns had to borrow ³ saucepans and other copperware, the cooking utensils they needed, from Mrs. Gaetana Tortora. ⁴ 13. They had to borrow them because the aforesaid Canon, by the will of God, provided nothing but some plates and pottery, and absolutely nothing else; and although his own house was very comfortable, by the divine will, he gave them nothing of his own. 14. Both he and his good sister-in-law, Mrs. Gaetana, were certainly full of fervour, but stingy: not only did they not give them any money, but he reimbursed himself from the incomes of his relatives for all the expenses incurred in bringing the aforesaid nuns there to make the foundation. 15. He kept a detailed account of everything, including the torches of pitch that were bought for the nights while they were travelling; he made a note of all the cost of the repairs to the house and of all those tables and benches and plates and crockery that the aforesaid nuns found there; and he made a note of everything, and reimbursed //69v// himself from the above-mentioned incomes of the first girls that entered. 16. It was a miracle that, with all these things, the nuns did not suffer at all but had a surplus, and they did not incur any debt at this time through God's mercy alone.

E. 17. They began to work hard at instructing those tender souls in the religious life. 18. Early in the morning they had half an hour of mental prayer; then the Superior and the Vicar said the Office in private, ⁵ because the girls were not capable of reciting it in choir in the beginning. 19. Then came the Holy Mass, and they had another hour of choir between Mass and prayers until the hour of None, when they made an examination of conscience, and then they went to lunch. 20. When the meal ⁶ and the reading were finished, just as the Rule requires, they had an hour of recreation, and then the silence was rung. 21. After an hour they had spiritual reading for half an hour, and then another half hour of mental prayer, and then they had manual work, and they learned the manual arts. 22. In the evening the Superior gave the meditation, giving the theme, while they had a final half hour of mental prayer, to ground them firmly in this exercise of mental prayer.

F. 23. However, the Blessed Sacrament was not yet present in the chapel, because the Bishop had said that when we got our own place, he would grant it to us then; so the nuns were very disappointed and like a body without a soul, without that sweetest of companions.

G. 24. But then some of the educandes left and others entered, because out of those who originally entered only two were left; but many others had entered, making the number up to twenty-five, just as was said above, but without it being possible to make

³ *mandavano in prestito*: 'mandavano a chiedere in prestito' - "had to borrow."

⁴ *ove la signora Gaetana Tortora*: 'ove era la signora Tortora', 'dalla signora Tortora' - "from Mrs. Gaetana Tortora."

⁵ *privato*: 'in privato' - "in private."

⁶ *mezza*: 'mensa' - "table", i.e., "meal."

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any of them a nun, because no family wished to put the dowry of some four hundred ducats at risk, which was the agreed amount, because of the continual persecutions that the Work of the Lord suffered from the enemy, with a thousand and one untruths that came out of hell.

H. 25. Canon Tortora and Mr. Giuseppe de Angelis, who were the ones in charge of the Monastery, when they saw that everyone spoke disparagingly of it because it was still in a rented house, they decided to get their own place. 26. So this was why he went to consult the devout advocate mentioned above, Mr. Francesco Antonio Ricciardi, a man of great talent and a very pious man, who was then the patron of the Monastery of St. Clare in this City. 27. So the Canon told him what was on his mind, and he told him particularly that the new nuns in the Jesuit Fathers' house were having to bear the great weight of a hundred ducats a year in rent; and that the said house was in no way suitable for being bought, because there was nowhere for their workshop, because it was situated ⁷among many fine houses owned by people who did not wish to sell them. 28. So Mr. Ricciardi gave him his advice and told him that it was better to get a place leasehold than to make purchases of large buildings, because it would require many thousands of scudi, and then to convert it into a Monastery, another considerable outlay; so they decided to lease something and not make any purchase.

I. 29. Then the same Mr. Francesco Antonio said that, since nobody had given any help at all to the new foundation, as neither the City nor even any individual citizen had given anything, not even the aforesaid Canon Tortora, but they had lived solely on the annuities of the educandes, then the said gentleman would take it upon himself to find this leasehold property. 30. And he made many careful enquiries in many parts of the City, and he considered many properties; finally he chose one of them, in a place with fresh air, which had a view of the countryside and, even though it was inside the City, enjoyed a view outside it and had much empty land around it that could be bought later: it was a St. Clare house, and since he was also their patron, it was he who drew up the whole contract with the nuns and leased the said place. 31. The St. Clare nuns put a lease of 33 ducats a year on the said building; and then the said nuns came to a mutual agreement with the aforesaid ~~//70r//~~ above-mentioned lawyer about the leasing of the said house, which had many rooms,⁸ for a non-refundable lease at the rate of 38 scudi a year. 32. Some animal enclosures made of adobe were removed and a beautiful garden was planted there; and they repaired the church, the choir and all the workshops they needed; and it seemed to be the place reserved by the Lord for their Monastery, and that is how it turned out in fact.

J. 33. So when everything had been repaired, the aforesaid nuns - they had now been a year and seven months in that house rented from the Jesuit Fathers - on the 4th day of October in the year 1739, by the grace of the Lord, moved to their own place,

⁷ *sita [-imzezzo] > \immezzo/* - "situated \among/.

⁸ *molti luochi*: 'molti ambienti' - "many ambients", i.e., "many rooms."

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which is still the Monastery. 34. And that house suited them very well, now that the church was repaired, even though it was not very big,⁹ but average in size; the Blessed Sacrament was put there and public offices begun. 35. And the Superior made a start to regular observance of the Rules, that is, the primitive Rule that the Lord had given her in the Monastery of Scala, without adding or diminishing anything; but she was not able to set the Monastery up as a proper enclosure¹⁰ at that time, following what the Rules prescribe for Monasteries where building work is not yet finished; for they had not even obtained enclosure from Rome, because the aforesaid Canon Tortora and Mr. Giuseppe de Angelis, who were the patrons of the place right from the beginning, refused point-blank to consent to this enclosure being made and the nuns wearing veils. 36. And this opposition was for no other reason than that they were afraid that if there was too much strictness then the families would take their daughters out, and the mothers of the girls in particular supported the said Canon. 37. This matter was of the greatest mortification to the aforesaid Superior, so she prayed hard to the Lord about it, and many times she tried hard to persuade the said Canon, and he told her that later on, when the number of the Religious in the Monastery was made up, then he would do it.

K. 38. But with all this moving already done, the demon did not cease to persecute this nascent foundation, and made use of human tongues, which never stopped wagging and inciting¹¹ many people, and he persecuted the Work of the Lord. 39. So as soon as they found out that somebody intended putting one of their girls in the aforesaid Monastery, and especially if they were strangers, they went to talk to them, and they said such evil of the place, and they asserted such untruths, that everyone was amazed to hear it. 40. Particularly when they made the claim that they were dying of hunger and they had neither incomes nor funds, and also that the religious foundress had been persecuted elsewhere, and also that the news of her persecutions had reached the City of Foggia, so it is enough to say that the demon shook with rage against this new plantation of the Lord.

L. 41. And it so happened that six months after the nuns came to this place, while it was the hour of silence after lunch, and everyone had gone to lie down, during Whitsunday week in the year 1740, on 23rd. April, the turret of a house next door¹² to the Monastery collapsed: it was standing empty because at the time of the great earthquake that struck this City of Foggia in the year 1731, the said house was left half destroyed along with the other ruins of the City. 42. The said house was owned by the Vidmans, whose responsibility it was, but now it was derelict and no-one lived there. 43. So the tower of the said house fell on a room in the aforesaid new Monastery and two of the girl educandes were under it when it fell: they were lying on their beds resting and buried under the stones. 44. One of them was the niece of Canon Tortora and the other

⁹ *non molto grande si bene*: 'sebbene non fosse molto grande' - "even though it was not very big."

¹⁰ *clausa*: 'clausura' - "enclosure."

¹¹ *inzulfare*: 'sobillare', 'aizzare' - "to incite", cf. D'ASCOLI, p. 408.

¹² *condinqua*: 'contigua' - "next door."

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the youngest daughter of Mr. Giuseppe de Angelis called Antonia, and they were both there in the same room, when the turret fell on it, and the roof and ceiling collapsed under the wall of this same turret, and the two girls were buried there under the stones. 45. It can be imagined what affliction this misfortune caused as the people of the City rushed to help with the digging out: Canon Tortora's niece was brought out dead from under the stones, and Mr. de Angelis' daughter was alive but badly injured. 46. Her father had her taken straight home to have her cared for, but later on, when she had recovered, she returned once again to the Monastery. 47. But the poor Canon suffered affliction as can be imagined, and had to console his sister-in-law, who was inconsolable as she had only this one dear little daughter, on whose behalf she had worked so hard and //70v// with such commitment to ensure that this foundation was made in Foggia. 48. But the most high judgements of God are for us both as adorable as they are inscrutable!

M. 49. Then all the girls' other relatives rushed to the Monastery, because someone said that the Monastery had collapsed and was completely destroyed, and that the majority of the girls were dead, so that suddenly the Monastery was seen to be full of all their relatives, who shouted aloud that each one of them now wanted to bring back their daughters to their own houses. 50. And so the Superior, seeing the work of the enemy, replied, and said to all the relatives of the aforesaid girls that, if they wanted to take them away, they should do it there and then, because God does not have need of mankind for His glory, and that He was ready to send those souls that he had chosen for this house of His.

N. 51. Present at this event was a Canon, a servant of God, called Giuseppe Ziccardi, who knew the work of the enemy and gradually began to convince them that everything had been the work of the enemy, as God disposed. 52. And he began to soothe the souls of those relatives, and make them realise that it was the passions of the demon that was disturbing them so much, and not let one move of his succeed, explaining to them that the demon had no other aim than to have the place closed immediately; and this was the truth of the matter.

O. 53. The Lord did not permit the evil one to get away with his frauds, while at the same time that these things were happening, he put it into the hearts of some of the middle class people to place their daughters with us. 54. And so the Lord gradually began to give a firm basis to the foundation.

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1.

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How the first nuns were made and other things that the Lord disposed for the further establishment of the Work, and the deaths of Mr. Giuseppe de Angelis and Canon Tortora.

A. 2. The Lord began to make many young girls enter the Monastery as educandes, and a storehouse was put under construction; and the said Canon spent two hundred ducats on it, and then reimbursed himself later on. 3. Then another room was built on top, the church was enlarged and another workshop was built. 4. Then they began to talk to the girls' relatives about them taking the habit for the first time in the noviciate; and with the help of God this was achieved with the girls' families by 26th March 1742, which that year fell in the Easter octave. 5. And by the will of God, out of all those six first entrants into the Monastery, only one was left who put on the habit.

B. 6. There ¹ were eight girls who were vested as the first novices, that is, five choir sisters and three lay sisters: the first choir Sister was the only one left of the first six who entered; she was the daughter of a merchant in the Foggia market called Mr. Cesare della Rocca; and was called Gabriela in secular life, and then she changed her name, and in religion she was called Sister Maria Angelica della Verità [of the Truth]. 7. Three other sisters took the habit: one called Teresa Parisi, the next was Serafina Parisi and the next was Giuseppa Parisi; and then in religion the first was called Sister Maria Crocifissa [Crucified], the second Sister Maria Emanuela ² //71r// and the third Sister Maria Colomba [the Dove]. 8. There was another from the district of Cerignola and in religion she was called Sister Maria Rosa di Santa Maria [Sr. Mary Rose of St. Mary]. 9. These were the first religious chorists, all from the middle class. 10. Of the three lay sisters, in secular life one was called Lucia, the other Catherine and the third Rose: in religion the first was called Sister Fortunata [Fortunate], the second Sister Perseverante [Persevering], and the third Sister Battista [Baptist], so there were both lay and choir Sisters among the first eight who took the habit.

C. 11. The vesting of the above-mentioned was committed by the Bishop to Canon Tortora, who was also the ordinary confessor of the above-mentioned Monastery. 12. As the Bishop's representative, he presided over the event, he cut off their hair, and celebrated the solemn Mass, to the common joy and happiness, to the glory of the Lord. 13. The flowers in this nascent garden began to give forth an odour of sweetness to the Lord, both by their recollection and by the devotion of the life that they lived there; and even the odour of it was spread abroad among the secular people.

¹ *guste*: 'queste' - "these", i.e., "These first novices who were vested were eight girls", i.e., "There were eight girls who were vested as the first novices."

² *Emanue*: 'Emanuela' - This is an evident lacuna in the name 'Emanuela', probably caused by turning over the page.

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D. 14. There was a certain lawyer ³ called Mr. Giuseppe Antonio Fazioli, a devout man and a good secular, given to the exercise of prayer, a friend of the aforesaid Canon Tortora. 15. It was the will of God that he felt prompted to contact the said Canon, \whose/ good friend he had been for many years, to find out about this new Monastery that had been founded in this City of Foggia. 16. And when the aforesaid Canon told him about everything, and about the life that they lived there, one day the aforesaid decided to go in person to discuss spiritual matters appertaining to his soul with the aforesaid Superior of the said Monastery. 17. For this purpose he was accompanied by Canon Tortora, who introduced him to the Monastery, and told the aforesaid nun that he wanted to discuss some things of his soul with her; the Rev. Canon left him with the aforesaid nun, and went on his way. 18. And then the aforesaid lawyer told her about his many internal doubts and fears, and then they had a long discussion on the subject of prayer. 19. He was very happy to have met this nun, and from then on he frequently came to visit the aforesaid Superior, and he developed much affection for the Monastery.

E. 20. This person was much esteemed and admired in Foggia for his very religious habits. 21. He came from the Frosolone district in the Principality of Abruzzo, ⁴ a man of property, rich and the last of his house; and although he was a secular, he had always abhorred the world and wished to become a priest, even though he was getting on in years. 22. He took such a liking to the place that he bought a house, that now belongs to the Monastery, as a memorial of his generous legacy, and he registered it in the name of the Monastery when he was made a priest; and he lived in this adjacent ⁵ house whenever he came to the City of Foggia. 23. At his own expense he bought up several small ruined properties, ⁶ that lay around the Monastery, for building on later, just as appears in the Monastery records. 24. And he also helped in various ways by providing wheat and other things; every year he gave some sort of subsidy according to how he saw the need. 25. Then the Bishop and Canon Tortora, when they saw this little bit of temporal help that the Lord was giving us by means of the aforesaid devout secular, made him the Patron of the Monastery to greatly encourage his support.

F. 26. The first year this person had contact with the Monastery he was there when the first nuns made their religious profession, and became much more supportive. 27. But a short time later, ⁷ the wife of Mr. Giuseppe de Angelis, with the support of her husband, managed to take her two daughters out of the Monastery on certain pretexts. 28. But a few months later the said Father Giuseppe de Angelis caught an illness and died of it. ⁸

³ *locato*: 'avvocato' - "lawyer."

⁴ *Frosolone... Abruzzo*: 'Frosolone, nel principato dell' Abruzzo' - "Frosolone, in the principality of Abruzzo."

⁵ *condinqua*: 'contigua' - "adjacent."

⁶ *piante*: 'aree edificabili' - "sites, properties."

⁷ *dopo, [-mori -il -signor -si] la* - "later [-died -Mr.] the."

⁸ The *Autobiography* suddenly stops. It is not possible to come up with a satisfactory theory to explain this. Of the little that we know about the succeeding years, cf. *Imitazione*, pp. 100-102; *Incontri*, pp. 145-150. Maria Celeste died on 14th. September 1755, acclaimed by the people of Foggia as "the holy Prioress." About the story of the cause for her canonisation, cf. A. MARRAZZO, *Lo stato attuale della causa di canonizzazione della Venerabile Suor Maria Celeste Crostarosa* (The present state of the cause for

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edited by Antonio Marrazzo

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1. TERRA DI LAVORO. In G. M. ALFANO, <i>Historical description of the Kingdom of Naples divided into twelve provinces</i> , NAPLES 1795 [photo by Giorgio Vasari]	
2. PRINCIPALITY OF CITRA. In G. M .ALFANO, <i>Historical description of the Kingdom of Naples divided into twelve provinces</i> , NAPLES 1795 [photo by Giorgio Vasari]	
3. CAPITANATA. In G. M. ALFANO, <i>Historical Description of the Kingdom of Naples divided into twelve provinces</i> , NAPLES 1795 [photo by Giorgio Vasari]	
4. “So one day, which was appointed as the feast of the glorious Patriarch St. Joseph, she told her mother that she wanted to go with her to confession in the church of St. Thomas Aquinas in Naples, where she was living at the time: so her mother took her with her to confession. Then the girl, who was about eleven years of age, told the Father in detail everything which she had done...” (2:11-12) PLAN OF THE CITY OF NAPLES IN 1725. In C. CELANO, <i>Guide to beautiful, ancient and curious things in the City of Naples for foreign visitors, I</i> , NAPLES 1758 [photo by Giorgio Vasari]	
5. “... One day the Lord called her by an interior voice, and said to her: Look at the material sun, how it illumines the plants of the earth, warms them and makes them grow, so that they may give back flowers and fruits, and it makes the whole world happy with its brightness... This sun which you see in the visible world was created as a symbol of the divine sun, which with My divinity gives light to the interior world of the soul, with the effects that My divine presence produces in souls created by Me... (4:9 & 11) NAPLES: Panorama over the Gulf with Vesuvius [photo by Antonio Marrazzo]	
6. “... and being then about twenty years of age, my Lord, You disposed, without my co-operation, for me to be taken to visit a servant of God in the district of Marigliano... through Your action and moved by You, O my love, she asked me if I would like to remain in their company in this Monastery, and I immediately replied that I would be only too happy to stay and embrace the religious life, as my soul was so moved by Your divine will...” (8:7 & 15) MARIGLIANO: Former Carmelite convent [photo in APGR]	
7. “... Now that my year as Mistress of Novices had finished... they gave me the office of Sacristan, to my very great pleasure, because of the welcome company of the Blessed Sacrament, where I was to serve my	

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- beloved Spouse...” (14:2-3)*
MARIGLIANO: Interior of the church in the former Carmelite convent [photo in APGR]
8. Father Tommaso Falcoia *“used the occasion to tell me that on the coast of Amalfi there was city called Scala, where he and another of his companions had gone to preach holy missions, and on one such occasion both of them had taken on the task of founding a Monastery there for middle class persons...” (14:48)*
SUESCUN J.: Scala. Topographic map of Redemptorist places [photo by Giorgio Vasari]
Key to the map:
 1. *St. Mary of the Snows*
 2. *Fathers*
 3. *Sisters*
 4. *Anastasio House*
 5. *Cathedral*
 6. *Nuns’ hospice*
 7. *Chapel over the Grotto*
9. SCALA: Panorama seen from Ravello [1929 photo in AMRSc]
10. SCALA: Front view of the Cathedral [photo by Antonio Marrazzo]
11. SCALA: Interior of the Cathedral [from an old photo in AHGR]
12. *“... One morning I went to take communion, and the Lord said to me: “This is My will, that you go to the Monastery of Scala, and there you will exercise yourself in the virtue of humility, and you will be as the least of all among those sisters.” So every doubt and fear was lifted from me, and I began to explain myself to my father, showing my firm resolution to retreat to the Monastery of Scala...” (16:13-14)*
SCALA: Redemptoristine Monastery [1928 photo in AMRSc]
13. *“... and then they went down to the door of the Monastery where the Superior and almost all the Community were standing. The aforesaid sisters God kissed the Superior’s hand and embraced everyone without exception and recommended themselves to their prayers and then silently left the Monastery...” (52:18-19)*
SCALA: Entry to the Redemptoristine Monastery [photo by Antonio Marrazzo]
14. *“... but most of all, on the Thursday night vigil all the nuns assisted in turns before the Blessed Sacrament with great fervour, and many of them took no rest, and spent the whole night there, until the hour of Matins the following morning, and all this time seemed just a moment to them...” (42:33)*
SCALA: Interior of the church of the Redemptoristine Monastery [1929 photo in AMRSc]
15. The Bishop not only gave her brother Giorgio, the Jesuit,

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“permission to sit in the confessional but he wrote a note to the Superior that without further ado she was to allow the said Father to sit in the confessional, and send the aforesaid religious sisters to talk to him; and this was carried out. So when the said Father came to the confessional, they could not do otherwise than call the religious sisters...” (50:26-27)

SCALA: Grille of the ancient confessional in the church of the Redemptoristine Monastery [photo in AMRSc].

16. *“The Lord began to favour the aforesaid nun with a profusion of graces and mercies; more than any other, the most precious for her were the sacramental communions that she made every day by order of her spiritual Father. At Holy Communion the Lord began to make her feel the transformation of her own self into the that of Jesus: then there, in a divine light were stamped upon her all the virtues of the sacrosanct life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to the greatest satisfaction and joy of her soul...” (18:2-3)*

SCALA: Interior of the Communion room in the Redemptoristine Monastery [1928 photo in AMRSc].

17. *“... after the aforesaid nun had taken communion, her soul again experienced that transmutation of her being into that of Our Lord Jesus Christ... And then she was given to understand about a new Institute, that the Lord would erect in the world by means of her... and the aforesaid remained in choir until the hour of None, and then she recovered, and recited None with the other nuns...” (19:2, 7, 11).*

SCALA: Choir of the church in the Redemptoristine Monastery [1928 photo in AMRSc].

18. *“... Tthe Monastery observed the Rule where the nuns of the Order were required, every Thursday morning, at the sacrifice of the Holy Mass, to have an exposition of the Venerable, to be a memorial of the most divine sacrament of the eucharist... Once when the Venerable was exposed, they saw something appear in the exposed sacred host; it was all the instruments of the Passion of the Lord...” (47:3 & 5)*

SCALA: Ostensorium [Redemptoristine Monastery - photo by Giorgio Vasari].

19. *“One evening while the aforesaid nun, who had received the new Rule, was in the refectory - and it was the vigil of St. Francis Assissi, on 3rd October of the year 1731 - the Lord in a moment drew the spirit of the aforesaid nun to Himself. For Our Lord Jesus Christ showed Himself to her, together with the seraphic Father St. Francis, in a glorious light, and Father Alphonsus di Liguori was present there. Then the Lord said to the aforesaid nun: “This soul is chosen as the Head of this My Institute: he will be the first Superior of the men’s Congregation...” (40:2-4)*

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- SCALA: Refectory of the Redemptoristine Monastery [1928 photo in AMRSc].
20. *“... when their Jesuit brother arrived in Scala he went to the grille and asked for the Superior. And he told her that he was the brother in the flesh of the aforesaid nuns, and that their father had sent him... so would she please give him permission to speak in private to all three of them, so that they could find out freely and frankly from the three of them what was the cause of this news...” (50:16-17)*
SCALA: Parlour of the Redemptoristine Monastery [1926 photo in AMRSc].
21. *“... the nuns convoked the vocal Chapter, and the aforesaid nun was called to it. And the Superior proposed the three things to her that were mentioned above, and then went on and told her that if she did not decide to accept all three of the conditions proposed to her by the spiritual Father, the whole chapter would dismiss her from the Monastery...” (51:13-14).*
SCALA: Chapter room of the Redemptoristine Monastery [1929 photo in AMRSc].
22. *“... the aforesaid nun desired to be counted among the number of the novices, and her sisters as well, so they made a request to Father Thomas Falcoia, the local director, who approved their wishes. And fifteen days after their entry, they put on the habit of St. Francis de Sales of the Order of the Visitation, and they began the course of their novitiate with much joy and fervour...” (17:8-9)*
SCALA: Novitiate room in the Redemptoristine Monastery [1926 photo in AMRSc].
23. *“... the Sister on duty, when she went to the kitchen to serve the Community meal, and found no trace of that nun who was the Dispenser that year, she went up to the cell of the aforesaid nun, and found the door of the main corridor locked by key from the inside, and was quite unable to open it... and the key to the main corridor could not be found, but only turned up again many months later in the same corridor, where there were a number of pictures newly mounted in frames... In one of these pictures a Saint was depicted, showing a demon beside him trying to extinguish the torch that the saint held in his hands: and that is where the key was found, in the hand of that demon depicted there...” (42:18 & 23-24)*
SCALA: First floor cloister in the Redemptoristine Monastery [1928 photo in AMRSc]
24. *“... the said Vicar, having finished that discourse, had the aforesaid novice called, and gave her a good reprimand telling her that she had been the cause of all this trouble, and that she was to withdraw to an attic of the Monastery, and that she did not merit to be in the company*

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- of the other nuns: and therefore she would not be included in any act of the Community, and with a rope around her neck she would eat from the refectory floor...” (31:11)*
SCALA: Attic of the Redemptoristine Monastery [1926 photo in AMRSc]
25. *“... early in the morning, they went down the mountainside of Scala and reached Amalfi. And as soon as they arrived, the nuns of the Monastery of the Most Holy Trinity... offered them one of the hospice houses that was attached to their Monastery...” (53:10-11)*
AMALFI: View from the breakwater [photo by Antonio Marrasso]
26. *“... they felt a desire to visit the church of St. Andrew the Apostle, where his holy body rests, that miraculously exudes a precious liquid like an odiferous balm. So they went to the said church, and there they went to confession and the Holy Mass and had the joy of visiting the sanctuary...” (53:23-24)*
AMALFI: Front view of the Cathedral [photo by Antonio Marrasso]
27. *“.. the Lord wished to console her and fortify her a little, so while she was hearing the Holy Mass in the chapel of the glorious holy apostle, the Lord showed her the happy way that leads from earth up to heaven...” (53:27)*
AMALFI: Crypt of the Cathedral.
28. *“... the older brother of the aforesaid nun came from Nocera and told her... that his visit there had succeeded perfectly in achieving its purpose, because there were many Monasteries there. But one in particular seemed the most suitable for the aforesaid nuns to spend the little time that they were to live there; and this was a Conservatorium for orphans, but well provided with income and with several workshops, and the nuns gathered there in the above-mentioned were no more than 24 in number...” (53:30-31)*
PARETI: Monastery of the Most Holy Lady of the Annunciation, taken from the belfry of the parish church [photo in APGR].
29. *“... the grille was closed and the door was locked, and the Sisters acted as auditors when the nuns had to go to the grille with their relatives; and effectively all the friendships were terminated although it took much work to put an end to these friendships from outside. But everything was overcome with the grace of the Lord, and this Monastery became so ordered that it arrived at a state of communal life and good religious observance...” (55:28-29)*
PARETI: Front view of the church of the Monastery of the Most Holy Lady of the Annunciation [APGR photo].
30. PARETI: Interior of the church of the Monastery of the Most Holy Lady of the Annunciation [photo in APGR].

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31. *“... in spite of the fact that this Monastery was for orphan girls, no-one of course ever went out doing the rounds begging donations, as was the custom in other areas, because the Monastery was well-supplied with earnings and did not have such a need; moreover the surplus in the annual receipts was so great that every year they falsified the figures about the money received...” (55:5)*
PARETI: inner courtyard of the Monastery of the Most Holy Lady of the Annunciation [photo in APGR]
32. *“... on Sunday, 9th. March 1738, the aforesaid Canon Giuseppe Tortora arranged the entry of the aforesaid nuns, and organised a solemn procession... they brought them first of all to visit the mother church, in which is the miraculous image of Our Lady of Conavetere...” (61:7 & 10)*
FOGGIA: Front view of the Cathedral.
33. *“... they brought them first of all to visit the mother church, in which is the miraculous image of Our Lady of Conavetere... there the aforesaid nuns offered themselves to the Lord and placed themselves under the patronage of the Most Blessed Virgin...” (61:10)*
FOGGIA: Altar with the icon of the Madonna of the Seven Veils or Old Icon.
34. *“... Canon Tortora had taken the house on rent from the Jesuit Fathers of the College at Orta. It was a place that they kept as a hospice in this City, but they rented out a part of it...” (61:2-3)*
FOGGIA: Palace of Freda-Palone, formerly owned by the Jesuits of Orta Nova [photo in AMRFg].
35. *“...Some animal enclosures made of adobe were removed and a beautiful garden was planted there; and they repaired the church, the choir and all the workshops they needed; and it seemed to be the place reserved by the Lord for their Monastery, and that is how it turned out in fact...” (62:32)*
FOGGIA: Sketch of the facade and floor-plan of the church of the old Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour [in APGR; photo by Giorgio Vasari].
36. *“...and that house suited them very well, now that the church was repaired, even though it was not very big, but average in size; the Blessed Sacrament was put there and public offices begun...” (62:34)*
FOGGIA: Altar of the church of the old Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour: West side [old photo in AMRFg].
37. FOGGIA: Left wall of the old Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour: South side [old photo in AMRFg].
38. FOGGIA: Right wall of the church of the old Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour: North side [old photo in AMRFg].
39. FOGGIA: Entrance to the church of the old Monastery of the Most

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- Holy Saviour; East side [old photo in AMRFg].
40. "... *Then the same Mr. Francesco Antonio [Ricciardi]... made many careful enquiries in many parts of the City, and he considered many properties; finally he chose one of them, in a place with fresh air, which had a view of the countryside and, even though it was inside the City, enjoyed a view outside it, and had much empty land around it that could be bought later: it was a St. Clare house...*" (62:29-30)
PACIELLO M.: Front view of the old Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour [Pencil and wash sketch; Redemptoristine Monastery, Foggia].
41. FOGGIA: Old Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour during demolition [old photo in AMRFg].
42. FOGGIA: Old Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour during demolition [old photo in AMRFg].
43. UNKNOWN 18th. Cent. *Figurine of the Child Jesus* venerated by the Ven. Mother Celeste Crostarosa [Redemptoristine Monastery, Foggia].
44. UNKNOWN 18th. Cent. *The Redeemer as a Wayfarer* [Painting from the church of the old Monastery; Redemptoristine Monastery, Foggia].
45. EFFIGY OF THE SERVANT OF GOD SISTER Ma. CELESTA CROSTAROSA born in Naples on 31st. October 1697, who through divine disposition came to Foggia and instituted there in 1739 the Venerable Monastery of the Most Holy Saviour and with exemplarity of Life remained there until her death, which happened on 14th. Sept. 1755
UNKNOWN 19th. Cent. *First image of the Ven. Maria Celeste Crostarosa* [in AMRSc; photo by Giorgio Vasari].
46. FOGGIA: The recomposed body in the restoration of May - June 1992, of the Ven. Maria Celeste Crostarosa, with the new face mask and hands sculpted by G. A. LOMUSCIO [Redemptoristine Monastery, Foggia].
47. "... *the Lord put me in the hands of this Father to make me taste the precious fruits of the Cross, which I had not tasted before, even though he was a great servant of God...*" (14:43).
UNKNOWN 19th. Cent. *Mons. Tommaso Falcoia* [Redemptorist Fathers, Via Merulana, Rome; photo by Giorgio Vasari].
48. Mons. Falcoia "*wrote from Rome that... he was going to send to Scala a servant of God called Alphonsus de Liguori, a priest and missionary from Naples, to give the spiritual exercises to the Monastery and be their extraordinary Confessor, so all the nuns were at liberty to confess the things of their soul to him as if it was his own person...*" (37:5-6)

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- UNKNOWN 18th. Cent. *St. Alphonsus before 1732* [Redemptorist Fathers, Pagani; photo by Giorgio Vasari].
49. Latin inscription to portrait: “May don Giovanni Mazzini rest in peace, one of the founders of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and similar in name and deeds to that Disciple, whom Jesus loved, he enjoyed as frequently as possible the two orders of Divine Love. he also drank the Chalice of Bitterness happily. A preacher of the Most Loving Lord, he was a very diligent guard of all the Rites. Dying as an Observer, he has now gone to the Eternal Fount of Paradise, aged 37, Nov. 3rd. - R. S. 1792. 3rd. Nov. he showed himself ready for Christ’s presence.”
“*Fr. d. Alphonsus di Liguori went straight away to the local ordinary Bishop, called Mons. Nicholas Guerrieri, together with two of his missionary companions, one called Father Vincenzo Mannarini, and the other Father Giovanni Mazzini...*” (38:2)
UNKNOWN 19th. Cent., *Fr. Giovanni Mazzini* [Redemptorist Fathers, Via Merulana, Rome; photo by Giorgio Vasari].
50. Latin inscription to portrait: “Most Reverend Fr. d. Vincenzo Mannarini, Founder and Teacher of the men of the Missionary Congregation, and of the pious Schools under the title of the Most Holy Sacrament, with Love for God and his neighbour, and (having) all virtues especially humility, and famous for (his) meekness, he died in Luceria on 12th. day of the Month of March 1775, his age was about 76.” (Bookshelves in background: top shelf - Summa of St. Thomas Aquinas; lower shelf - volumes of the Sacred Scriptures).
“... *Father Alphonsus de Liguori and the ordinary confessor of the nuns were both on the side of the said spiritual Father, as the aforesaid were both subject to him for their spiritual direction; but Father Vincenzo Mannarini and Father Gioan Battista di Donato, and the aforesaid devout gentleman, held a different view about these matters...*” (44:5)
ASTARITO J., *Vincenzo Mannarini* [Engraving by G. ALOIA, in AGHR; photo by Giorgio Vasari].
51. Mons. Falcoia “*had a penitent priest with him called Gennaro Sarnelli, a man of singular Christian virtue and perfection; he was a nobleman by birth, “and as his inheritance he had a baronial estate at Ciorani... he decided to associate himself with Fr. Alphonsus de Liguori, and this is what he did. And the first house of the men’s Congregation was founded there...*” (56:22-25)
LOMUSCIO G. A., *Blessed Gennaro Sarnelli* [Redemptorist Fathers, Ciorani; photo by Giorgio Vasari].
52. “*will Your Reverence please do me the grace of giving my greetings to all my sisters and ask them to pray to God for me, as they have*

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promised me so many times. Would Your Reverence please do this through obedience...” (GERARD MAJELLA, Letter to M. Celeste Crostarosa, 8th. March 1755, in Spiritual Writings, edited by S. MAJORANO, Materdomini 1992, p. 121.

UNKNOWN 18th. Cent. *St. Gerard Majella* [Terracotta taken from his death mask; Redemptorist Fathers, Materdomini; photo by Giorgio Vasari].

53. CROSTAROSA M. C. *Autobiography*, p. 2r [in APGR; photo by Giorgio Vasari]. (Text of the Preface).
54. CROSTAROSA M. C. *Autobiography*, p. 42v: handwritten letter from Mons. Tommaso Falcoia [in APGR; photo by Giorgio Vasari]. (Ch. 32:40-48).
55. CROSTAROSA M. C. *Autobiography*, p. 62v [in APGR; photo by Giorgio Vasari]. (Ch. 55:19-38).
56. CROSTAROSA M. C. *Autobiography*, p. 71r [in APGR; photo by Giorgio Vasari]. (Ch. 63:7-28) (final page of manuscript).