

Brief Biographical Sketches

Volume II

Fr. Joseph Marchesini

of the

**Congregation of the Priests
of the Sacred Stigmata
of Our Lord Jesus Christ**

VERONA

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Preface

The first centenary of the foundation of the Congregation is to be celebrated with as much solemnity as possible. The Congregation was founded on November 4, 1816, when Venerable Gaspar Bertoni entered the Stimmate, with his first Companions. As a commemoration of this event, it was decided to gather Recollections of our Fathers and Brothers, who have died after 1886. The Reminiscences of our deceased confreres before this date, were already published on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Superior General, Fr. Peter Vignola, of venerated memory.

The [First World] War, however, has discouraged any exterior celebration of this event. Moreover, it has called to arms a number of those assigned to gather these reminiscences. Therefore, they have been unable to present them in time for publication.

Only the under-signed, who is most advanced in years, being the oldest member of the Congregation and the most unoccupied, has been able to fulfill this assignment. He was given the task of compiling the reminiscences of Fr. Peter Vignola, his predecessor in the Office of Superior General; of Fr. Vincent Vignola, his Master of Novices¹; and of Fr. Joseph Marchesini, his Prefect.

All three of these men were most dear to the complier – all three were native Veronese – and all three were contemporaries of our Venerable Founder. Since the others were unable to fulfill their task, the undersigned is happy to publish the biographical sketches of at least these three men. He believes that their lives can be held up as models of the Christian and Religious Life, and which, only with difficulty, could ever be surpassed.

May God grant, through the intercession of His Most Holy Mother, that this small and poorly arranged booklet, might contribute something to enkindle in us, during the centenary celebration of the Congregation, that spirit of our Venerable Founder. This spirit is in the hopes of each and every one, and the object of the efforts of us all.

From the Stimmate, November 4, 1916

Fr. Pio Gurisatti

¹ The Biographies of the Vignola Brothers is the subject matter of Volume I of this series.

Chapter 1 His Birth

On the 22nd of November 1856, young Joseph Marchesini, aged 23, inspired, as he said, by Mary Most Holy, exchanged the comforts of his home, for the most mortified life that was then lived at the Stimate.

He was born September 5, 1833, on Via Pallone, the son of Louis Marchesini and Ursula Ruzzenenti. They were parents who were rich in the goods of this world, but also - and what is more important - in their long-standing faith and in the solid Christian virtues.

His father had a great affection for the Priests at the Stimate, and especially for their Founder, the Venerable Gaspar Bertoni. Mr. Marchesini hardly let a day pass without making his way at least once, and even twice, to that hermitage. He was often accompanied by his sons, especially by Joseph who was the oldest.

Years later, Fr. Joseph stated that his family was so close to the Stimate that his Father hardly did anything, whether in spiritual matters, or those concerning his considerable holdings, without first consulting Fr. Gaspar.

At his death, Mr. Marchesini was assisted by the Stigmatines. Fr. Marani stayed with him to the last to care for his soul, while Brother Paul Zanoli was almost always at his side as Infirmarian.

There can be little wonder, then, with such an example, that the Marchesini family grew up most attached to our early Confreres. At one and the same time, two of the sons, Joseph and John Baptist, the second born, were Novices. The latter, however, entered shortly before Joseph. John, however, before the end of his Novitiate, partly because of his health, and partly because he was needed to administer the family estate, returned home. When Joseph entered the Congregation, the administration of their property was left in the hands of outsiders.

I felt it was necessary to mention these particulars to show the good influence of the example of these parents on their children. Mr. Marchesini was truly a Stigmatine in spirit, and his sons wanted to be Stigmatines in fact.

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Chapter 2 His education

One of the great concerns of Louis Marchesini was to provide a Christian education for his sons.

He, therefore, decided that all of his children would attend Catholic schools. His daughters were enrolled in the Schools taught by the Sisters of the Holy Family. His two older sons, enrolled at St. Sebastian's, taught by the Jesuits, and the third son attended a College in Brescia, conducted by this same Company. He never let his children leave the house alone, even to go to school, or to Church, and they always went together. Fr. Joseph mentioned this years later. He said that at the time of his Father's death, he was already 20 years of age. For the first time in his life, he left the house alone. He said he felt so strange that he looked around rather sheepishly, and felt very self conscious. The Church that he attended was actually quite close to his home, as the family attended the Parish conducted by the Fathers of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri. He usually attended this Church for Christian Doctrine. For daily Mass, he usually came to the Stimate, which was also near his home. He also attended the Oratory at the Stimate, and it was where he went to Confession.

How edifying it was to see Joseph, as a young man, always among [61] the first to arrive for the Oratory, of which he was Prefect. He gave no heed to human respect, and often served Mass, and frequently received Holy Communion. It was also most edifying to hear him say that he had never taken part in games, attended amusements or diversions of any kind. Never in his life did he ever set foot in any theater, and I say this, not only for the purpose of seeing a show, but even to see what they looked like inside. He had no friends, or companions, but always accompanied his Father, or his brothers, or was with some of the family servants.

One of his pass-times was to sit by the window of his house to watch a soccer game. Sometimes, he would be joined there by a fine young man of the nobility, as his house provided a good view. Among those he used to visit was the Marchese, Louis di Canossa, during the early years he was a priest [a future Cardinal].

He did enjoy hunting and also had a great love for horses. When he would go out for his recreation, it would either be horse-back riding, or driving in a carriage. This was always with his Father's permission. Even when he went hunting, it was always on their own property, and in the company of good people, such as Fr. di Canossa, during his years he was a Canon. This is one little anecdote I recall that Fr. Joseph recounted in his humble way.

One day when they were out hunting together, as every now and then, they would indeed come across a hare. According to the rules, it was Fr. di Canossa's turn to shoot first. However, Joseph, without reflecting was ready for the kill sooner. Fr. di Canossa was a little angered, seeing himself deprived of the first shot. In a polite, but

firm manner, he brought this to young Marchesini's attention. Joseph took it well, and meekly responded that his guest was right.



Chapter 3 **He enters the Stimmate**

Shortly after his Father died, as we have already seen, young John Baptist Marchesini was already an Aspirant. His younger brother was away at College in Brescia. Necessarily, then, and also because his Father had so directed, Joseph took charge of the administration of the entire estate. This was comprised principally of large and fertile fields that were quite extensive and distant from one another.

Joseph was a most precise and exact man, and this large estate took up much of his time. His widowed Mother, although grieving for the loss of her husband, was content and happy to see the manner in which the family affairs were being handled.

One day, without her least suspecting it, Joseph let her know that his mind was made up to follow his brother, John, to the Stimmate. On hearing this news, that was so unexpected, she was deeply concerned about what his departure would mean. In her consternation, she hurried to speak with Fr. Marani, now the Superior General of the Congregation, who had long been a family friend and counselor. She asked him to use all his influence and authority to dissuade her son from taking such a step.

Fr. Marani had been well aware of the situation for some time. Whether it was to accede to her wishes, or to put Joseph's vocation to the test, he used every possible argument to have the young man give up this resolution of his. However, the fervent young man remained firm and resolute in his desire to follow what he believed to be the Will of God, and the inspiration of Mary Most Holy. Then, other persons of influence talked to him, even Priests, for the purpose of proving his vocation still further. All was to no avail. Joseph consistently answered that he wanted to be a Priest more than anything else.

What caused the greatest admiration for him and was a source of edification, was the fact that he wanted to enter to become a Brother. This was the deciding factor in that the fervent young man gave proof of his spirit of mortification and humility. This was the foundation of his vocation, and he retained this same spirit for the remainder of his life.

At long last, all the obstacles and difficulties that stood in his way were overcome. Being most happy and contented, he received the blessing of his Mother, and attained his longed for grace. As we have seen, he entered November 22, 1856.

In gratitude to God, he never tired of repeating: ***This is my rest forever and ever: here will I dwell for I have chosen it.*** [Ps 131:14].

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Chapter 4 His Novitiate, Profession and Studies

As was the custom in those times, among well-to-do families, Joseph, in his early years, had only taken those studies that would provide him with an education sufficient for his state in life. For all practical purposes, he had completed to what would be comparable to the high school of today. Hence, he did not even dream it would be possible to complete those studies that were necessary for the Priesthood. He was content, as he had said, to become a Brother. However, the Superiors thought otherwise, and to obey their orders, he prepared himself for the task of hard study.

He was vested and began his Novitiate, on the Feast of the Espousals, January 23, 1857. During the two years of probation, he reviewed his earlier studies, and also completed those studies called 'Rhetoric.' The very day he took his Perpetual Vows, January 23, 1859, he began his course in Philosophy, to be followed by that of Theology.

Notwithstanding the fact that he was endowed with a fairly good memory, his difficulties were not insignificant. Those that he encountered and overcame, were further complicated by his somewhat delicate health.

There was also the fact that this new way of life was notably different from what he had been accustomed to. At home, the family usually had a light lunch at noon, and the main meal [64] at night. So it was, at noon at the Stimmate, he had little appetite, whereas by supper time, which consisted of a little plate of beans, he was famished.

Another fact seems worthy of note. At home he was accustomed to smoking. On entering religion, perhaps he could have asked permission to break this habit gradually. He knew, however, that the life in religion meant a life of mortification. He was expected to endure some mortification, so he never brought the subject up. It was edifying and most amusing, to hear him tell the story of how one day, while on a walk, outside of *Porta Nuova*, he passed near a man who was smoking a cigar. He walked close to him so that he could get the smell of the smoke. Some might say that this is a small thing, but genuine religious understand it better. They know, as did he, that without the spirit of sacrifice, one cannot be a religious.

Because of this good spirit of his, and due to his desire for regular observance, as well as for what I would call his tenacity in observing good order in all things, he

was judged most suited to be put at the head of the small group of Novices, aspirants and Professed of that era. He was named the Prefect.

One of his duties was to ring the bell for the community exercises. Sometimes I can still see him, with the bell in his hand, as he awaited the first sound of the clock, that he might ring the bell promptly. His punctuality was a characteristic trait of his entire life. He also expected it of others in conformity with the old rule that states: ***rivaling on earth the heavenly spirits, they will hasten – even fly – to do the will of the Lord!***

In this assignment of Prefect, over the young students, and with his spirit of mortification and sacrifice, as we noted earlier, in the 6 years, due to his intense efforts, he completed all his requirements. He was then promoted to Major Orders and the Priesthood.



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Chapter 5 His Ordination

After Joseph had received the Major Orders of the Sub-diaconate and the Diaconate, in the shortest period of time, Fr. Marani himself brought him to Trent. There, Bishop Benedict Riccabona, our long-time friend and benefactor, ordained him a Priest on Sunday, March 23, 1862.

On the 25th, the Feast of the Annunciation of Mary most Holy, surrounded by his Religious Confreres, by his family and relatives, he celebrated his First Mass in the Oratory of the Stimmate.

Full of gratitude for so great a grace, that far exceeded his humble but ardent wishes, joyfully he repeated the words of the Prophet: ***What shall I render to God for all that He has rendered to me?*** [Ps 115:3]. He wondered how he would be able to correspond to God for such a great and outstanding grace. He resolved that he would belong entirely to God, and he would sacrifice himself to Him, by consecrating to Him and to his beloved Congregation that had done so much for him, his entire person, body and soul, and all his belongings. He resolved that for the future he would no longer consider anything his own, but that all belonged to God and to the Congregation.

These were his thoughts and he fulfilled them. Through his life, he maintained these sentiments. It was but natural that as a Priest, he would keep this same religious spirit. As it was a source of much edification to our young students, the Superiors confirmed him in the important office of Prefect.

In that year, 1862, renovations at the *Trinita'* were being completed. It was planned to move the young hopes of the Congregation there, i.e., the Aspirants, Novices and the Professed. By the 4th of November, all was in readiness, and the long-awaited [66] change took place. A solemn entrance into the new Novitiate and Student House was observed.

Fr. John Baptist Lenotti was at the head of the Community there. He was named Spiritual Father and Novice Master, and also had the task of teaching Philosophy and Theology. Fr. Vincent Vignola was named teacher of literature, mathematics and physics, and Fr. Marchesini, newly ordained, was named the Prefect and master of Exterior Discipline.

How zealous he was for regular observance! By his good example, he was always at the fore. He never asked of others what he did not do himself. He did it all with such energy, but at the same time, with such kindness and charity, that the young students acquired a love for him, and even sought his company. He had a knack of dealing with them, through his edifying conversation. He would often tell them stories from the lives of the saints, or cite some episode from the publication of the annals of the Propagation of the Faith. More than one of them was inspired by him to offer their lives for the Foreign Missions.

He was always happy in giving to the Students now and then, with permission, little gifts that they could put to good use. These were, for example, little statues that he used to make every year for the Christmas Crib. As time went on, their number and beauty increased.

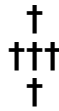
When the devout House Chapel was completed, he provided for it a beautiful and precious silver Ostensorium. We still have this, as well as other precious objects he gave, as the need arose for them. He always had in mind bringing happiness to the young students, and of inspiring them to good.

For this same end, he sought to provide for them some diversions, especially during the summer months and carnival season. Throughout his life, he had the job of providing gifts for the feast of St. Lucy, according to the custom of Verona.

Then came the year 1866, with the change of government throughout Veneto, including Verona. In that year, Fr. Joseph had to separate himself from his beloved Students. Fr. Marani [67] had hoped to present the Congregation to the new government, not as an approved Religious Institute, but wanted to establish the fact that the Congregation was exempt from the Law of Suppression, and the confiscation of all its goods. He, therefore, was forced to disperse the members.

He sent the Students to the summer house in Villazzano, which the Prince-Bishop of Trent had offered. The rest of the Priests he distributed to the Stimate and *Santa Maria del Giglio*, so that they could care for the respective Churches, hearing Confessions and conducting the Oratories. Fr. Marani himself went to a house facing the Giusti Gardens.

Fr. Marchesini, with a few companions, were sent to a House he owned, situated on what was called the 'Pozza Estate.' There he would look after the administration of the estate, and also take care of the Church situated upon it. Up until this time, the Church had been under the care of some Diocesan Priests, who were supported by the Marchesini Family. It was opened for the convenience of the people of that area, who lived too far away from the Parish Church.



Chapter 6

Fr. Joseph at the 'Pozza Estate'

In the golden book of the *Imitation of Christ* it is written: *The habit and the tonsure matter little ... the total mortification of the passions make the true religious.* This is also phrased in the well-known proverb: *The habit does not make the monk!* It can also be said, then, that the Religious House does not make the good religious. To accomplish this, there is needed about all good will and the spirit of mortification. Fr. Joseph was visible proof of this, as he and his companions lived a true cloistered life on the Pozza Estate.

From the beginning there, he set up his own schedule, which he observed exactly. He arose at 5:00 a.m.. He then would set about putting his room in order. After this, he would go down to Church for common prayers, meditation and Mass which was always preceded with due preparation, and followed by a thanksgiving. Following this, he would pray the Minor Hours of his Breviary.

After these exercises of piety, he had a light breakfast. Then, he would dedicate himself to study, especially of moral theology. He would look after his affairs, as the family estate about this time had been equally divided among himself and his brothers. In this matter of his financial administration, he always manifested a great spirit of dependence on his Superiors. He would come in to Verona, at least once a week, to take counsel from his Confreres, and to give them a report.

At noon, there was dinner. This was followed by recreation and then Spiritual Reading, Vespers and Compline. He would study some more, and then visit the fields. Next would be the Rosary, Matins and Lauds, followed by supper and the end of the day.

On Sundays and Holy Days, he was kept quite busy in Church, hearing Confessions, preaching and conducting the Oratory.

He always made a Novena before the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin. The entire month of St. Joseph was observed, especially the more Solemn Novena immediately preceding his Feast. There was a sermon every night, and this served as a sort of

Retreat. There was always a very large number of the faithful in attendance. They came not only from the area surrounding the house, but even from some distance. The good that was done there was abundant, as is evident from the large number of Holy Communions that were received every year on the Feast. There would also be a Mass of Devotion.

In the evening, there was a Penegyric on the Saint, and the day was closed with Solemn Benediction. Every year, this was imparted by the Superior General of the Congregation, assisted by a good number of his Priests and Students. The attendance was so large at these services, that the Church could not contain everyone. The crowd overflowed into the Square and the near-by streets.

Returning now to the theme of the Schedule, it varied somewhat during the summer months. All, however, was permeated with that order and precision that was established in the beginning. Throughout his entire life, he was well known for this.

As has been said, even as a young boy, he was a great fan of bird hunting. In the circumstances in which he found himself out in the country, he was surrounded on all sides by his own fields. He very easily and freely could have gone hunting, but he never felt that it was fitting to ask either Fr. Marani or Fr. Lenotti, who were successively the Superiors General of that period. Only after being on the Pozza Estate for eight years, the new Superior General, Fr. Peter Vignola, who succeeded the first two, suggested it to him. We can only imagine the satisfaction and contentment of Fr. Joseph on these hunting excursions he had been permitted.

He never let them interfere in the least with his regular practices of piety. On such days, he would get up a few days earlier, so that he might fulfill them exactly. The thought passed through his mind that he would be able, for example, to recite the Canonical Hours in those brief intervals of time when there were no flights in sight. However, he rejected this thought as a temptation.

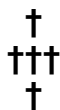
The visits that Fr. Joseph enjoyed the most were those of his Confreres. During the summer months, they would come out to spend a day or two with him. He always received them with an evident and cordial welcome. He went far out of his way to make them feel at home, and his company was to them a great delight. One day, one of his confreres joked with him and told him that he was a rich country gentleman. He answered back that he owned nothing of his own, but that all belonged to the Lord, the Blessed Mother and to St. Joseph.

In this situation, all through the long, legal battle with the government, the Congregation had to live on alms. Fr. Marchesini was most solicitous to provide for his Confreres, from whatever earnings he was able to realize from his crops, or the slaughter of his animals. He sometimes gave money to his Confreres.

It would be too lengthy to narrate here every detail of the life that was lived on the Pozza Estate, during the years of the dispersion of the Congregation. May it suffice to refer to the observations of the laity. They remarked about the austere life

that he lived, his great reluctance in visiting, or receiving visits from his relatives. They also noted his opposition to taking any trips for his own diversion, even though [70] he had at his disposal carriages, horses and every other means for them. Most outstanding was his rigorous reserve with lay people, especially women, who were in his employ. Whenever such contacts were necessary, he conversed briefly, and with gravity and modesty.

This was Fr. Joseph's life on the Pozza Estate, during the long years of suppression, or rather of suspension of the Congregation. When the case was finally resolved against the government, he returned, as we shall see, to the life of the Community.



Chapter 7 Fr. Joseph, Missionary

During the litigation of the Congregation against the government, it was the general consensus that the Congregation would lose the case, and that it would be destroyed. However, Divine Providence disposed otherwise, and victory was eventually ours. The other Houses were returned to the Congregation, i.e., the Stimate, *Santa Maria del Giglio* in Verona, and San Bernardino in Trent. The Students were called back from Povo, and were lodged at St. Teresa's next to the Stimate. The Priests and Brothers were distributed, according to the needs of each place.

After some time, Fr. Joseph was called back to Verona. At first, he was assigned to *Santa Maria del Giglio*, and then later, to the Stimate. He still would go out to the Pozza Estate on the Eve of every Holy Day, to care for the Church. He would stay out there for a few days now and then, to look after his affairs, as the property was in his name.

Just about this time, there was an effort made to take him from the Stimate. The over-all idea was one day to inherit his vast estate. Calumnious accusations were leveled at him. It would be too lengthy a matter to go into them in detail, and perhaps, too, all who knew Fr. Joseph also know that the accusations were absurd. Nevertheless, a most careful investigation was undertaken, and the evil interests of the accusers came to light His innocence was clearly and abundantly proven.

There is no doubt that this sad affair deeply disturbed him. When he came to know the source of the accusations, he laughed about the matter, and forgave his detractors. By his conduct, he grew in his esteem and affection for the Congregation, which he was to prove by his deeds, no matter what the cost to him personally. I will only indicate one of these, but it can rightly be called 'heroic'. I entitled this Chapter: 'Fr. Joseph, Missionary' – for good reason.

He was already over 46 years of age, and except for the short sermons that he gave on Holy days in the Church on the Pozza Estate, he had never really preached. He had never given the slightest thought to being a Missionary in this sense. The main reason was that public speaking caused in him such a panic that unless it was seen, it would be hard to believe.

Many requests were coming in at that time for Missions and Retreats, and there was only a limited number of Missionaries. Those who had heard him preach at the Pozza Estate, tried to assure him that he would do well on such assignments. At first, it seemed to him that this suggestion was only a joke. His Confreres gave him to understand, however, that he could please his Superiors very much if he showed his willingness for such assignments. By an heroic act of self-denial, he accepted for the first time the assignment to preach a retreat to the young boys of the Oratory at *Santa Maria del Giglio*.

When his first such venture proved to be a success, he had little difficulty in repeating the performance at the Oratory of the Stimmate. The ice had been broken, and he had taken his first step. The next step, however, was extremely difficult, that is, going from those Oratories of our own Houses, into public Churches. The author remembers very well that just before Fr. Joseph's first public sermon that he was to give in the Diocese of Trent, he took his pulse. The count was 120 [72] to the minute. At the beginning of his sermon, he was all out of breath. Thanks to God and his own determination, and the good disposition of his audience, who were most receptive, he took courage. He calmed down, and brought his first sermon to a happy conclusion. The rest of his sermons at that Mission followed suit, and in the end, his work as generally extolled.

He only lived this life as a Missionary for three years. In that time, he had preached throughout the Dioceses of Verona, Trent and Padua. He then went with a Companion to preach in Valstagna, at Brenta, which is a large and fairly well populated city. The day prior to the closing of the Mission, he suffered a severe throat infection. It was felt that he should leave the Church that night, and return to Verona. He was confined to bed immediately, and remained there for several days. The doctors decided that he should not take up these preaching assignments again.

During these three years, whatever Fr. Joseph accomplished, he did with much sacrifice and even heroism. He made it sufficiently clear to all that he had a sincere attachment for the Congregation. He was later honored by the Superior General who conferred on him, as was the custom in those times, the **Grade of Missionary**. He thereby acquired the right of active and passive voice in all subsequent General Chapters of the Congregation.

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Chapter 8 His Outstanding Virtues

Before bringing this brief Biography to a close, it seems to me only proper to mention something about those virtues that in some way established the nature of Fr. Joseph.

The first virtue, as all know, and which is the foundation for all the others, is Humility. He always took the last place. In the services in Church, he never allowed anyone to carry the Little Umbrella in the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament. On rare occasions, to obey his Superiors, he was the Celebrant at some services. He used to say of himself: 'Did you see [73] the ne'er-do well, acting as a prince?'

One day, a young Aspirant who had heard that he entered the Congregation at a relatively advanced age asked him what occupations he had had up until his entrance. As Fr. Marchesini at the time was looking after his family estate, he answered that he had been a farmer. He wanted to give the idea that he had come from an ordinary social level. The young boy believed that he had been a farmer.

He went once to visit the House at Bassano. Among the sights of the city, he was also brought to visit the museum. Before entering, the guide offered them the Guest Register to sign, that they might write their name and titles. Fr. Joseph was the last to do so, but when the guide noted that he had not included any title, he asked him: 'Don't you have any title?'

Fr. Joseph took the pen in hand again and wrote: 'A Common Man.' On leaving, he told the story to his Companions.

I would never finish if I were to record all the anecdotes that prove that the most natural thing in the world for him to do was to humble himself.

All that has been said of his Humility can also very well be applied to his Mortification. As a long-standing habit, he rarely ate much at dinner. He would nibble at whatever was placed before him. He was always content with whatever had been prepared, and in whatever way it was seasoned.

In those days, much less wine was available than is now, and even that was diluted with water. He would only drink about half a glass. It is true that in the long period between dinner and supper, because of a weakness of his early years, he always would eat something. In the years he was out in the country, this usually consisted in a slice of warmed over polenta. When he was at the Simmate, he had permission to put two buns in his pocket, These were usually laid out for breakfast, and he would eat them at a set hour in the day. The Superior told him many times that he should go to the Refectory and eat them with some coffee and milk, or with [74] whatever he desired. He, however, never made use of this privilege. It was both edifying and amusing for those who knew of the hour of his lunch to go at that hour

to his room. It was quite a sight to see him relishing those buns, as though he were a poor beggar.

With this same spirit of poverty and mortification, he manifested dependence on his Superiors for whatever he needed. This was also true of that time during which he was administering the family estate. It remained true even later when he ceded this administration to others. He did this to conform to the life of poverty, according to the decrees, that had recently been emanated from the Holy See.

Another virtue of Fr. Joseph was likewise outstanding: this was his holy Modesty. Without fear of exaggeration, it can be said that in this he was much like St. Aloysius Gonzaga. He was always recollected and composed, and not even in jest would he permit the least word that would in any way offend this virtue. In his contact with women, he was most reserved, and even austere. His own sisters and relatives on their rare visits to the Pozza Estate were never introduced into his room, but were always received in the waiting room. When he went to extend his greetings, as on the New Year, to members of his family, he always went in the company of someone else, and preferably the Superior. It was pointed out to him that at least after the annual accounts had been made, he should go to visit his brother. His answer was that this would be all right, but he did not wish to go if his brother was away, as only his sister-in-law would be home, and in this case, he did not want to go.

In the place of these insignificant facts, many others could have been recounted. However, I feel that what has been said is sufficient to make known the love this good Priest had for all virtues, and especially for that one that is called the 'Beautiful Virtue.'

Because of his way of life, after his virtuous and exemplary conduct was known to the Superiors, they decided to name him the Master of Novices, when the Novitiate had been transferred to San Bernardino's in Trent. He was to teach them by his example, and by his words, the path of perfection [75] and holiness.

All had been arranged for his transfer. He had made the arrangements for others to look after the administration of his estate. Fr. Joseph, accompanied by the Superior, set out for Trent, and actually had begun his new assignment. However, he was only to remain there a short time. Just after his arrival, he became ill. His condition seemed to be worsening, so he was recalled to Verona.

Before reaching the end of his days, Fr. Joseph gave one more example of subjection and blind obedience to his Superiors. He accepted the assignment which he felt was beyond his physical strength. Doubtlessly, the violence that he had to do to himself brought on a further weakness. This aggravated his sickness and eventually led to his death.

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Chapter 9 His Last Illness and Death

We have already mentioned Fr. Marchesini's devotion to his Patron Saint, St. Joseph. He hoped that every March 19th would be celebrated in his Church with the greatest solemnity.

In 1902, he completed his 40th year in the Priesthood. He wanted to commemorate this with an image of St. Joseph, as he had distributed every year, together with a medal to those who took part in his celebration. It seemed that he had foreseen that this was to be the last such occasion, that he would be able to observe this happy custom. On the back of the holy card, he had printed a little remembrance.

Shortly after that last celebration, he began gradually to lose ground. He soon was unable even to give a short sermon to the boys of the Oratory. Then, a slight paralysis developed, and he was no longer assigned to any scheduled Mass. The [76] time was left up to him to choose as he felt would be best for him.

This paralysis increased with each passing day. More than once, he lost his balance completely and fell to the ground. It was finally decided that he was no longer able to go about on his own. Hence, every week end, he was always accompanied in his trips to the Pozza Estate.

As he wished to celebrate Mass every day, he received the faculty of saying the Votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Soon, however, his memory began to fail, and very few times was he able to make use of this faculty. After a while, his speech became less coherent, and he had to struggle to make himself understood.

Even in this unfortunate state, he showed his true attachment to the Stimate, as well as his perfect detachment from his well-to-do-family. Despite his harsh trials, right up to the last, in the best way that was possible to him, he showed where his heart was. As we noted before, he considered all that he owned as belonging to the Lord.

He received the Last Sacraments, and died a holy death, on May 18, 1903, in the 70th year of his life.

To the good and faithful Religious, is the reward promised by Jesus Christ, and he is gratefully remembered in the pious suffrages of those who come after him.

The End!