

ST. GASPAR BERTONI:



A PROPHETIC BALANCE BETWEEN CROSS AND RESURRECTION

Rev. Joseph Charles Henchey, CSS

Electronic Edition: August, 2004

Last Updated on August, 2006

THE AUTHOR



Rev. Joseph Charles Henchey, CSS was born in Woburn, Massachusetts, USA, not far from Boston, in June 2, 1930.

He entered the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata on January 6, 1946, and was ordained a Stigmatine Priest in Rome, Italy, in July 1, 1956.

He spent 32 years in Rome - 10 years as General Councilor - and also taught at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas [*ANGELICUM*] [PUST] in Rome for more than 20 years. Among his illustrious students were two Brazilian Stigmatines: † Most Rev. Moacyr José Vitti, CSS, present Arch-Bishop of Curitiba, in Paraná State, and † Most Rev. José Alberto Moura, CSS, Bishop of Uberlândia, in Minas Gerais State, both in Brazil. In Rome, Fr. Henchey was also Spiritual Director at the Pontifical North American College.

Returning to the USA, on 2002, he was Assistant Spiritual Director at Blessed Pope John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Massachusetts, for second career men, desiring to spend their last years as priests. Beginning on 2006, he is in charge of the Paluch Chair of Theology at the Mundelein Seminary, nearby Chicago.

For all of his Stigmatine life, Fr. Henchey has been a student of St. Gaspar Bertoni, the founder of the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata.

He can be reached at: jhenchey@st-bertoni.com

His website, dedicated to the Founder, has this address: www.st-bertoni.com.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Subject	Page
Abbreviations, quotations and notes used in this document	4
Introduction	5
A The Sorrowful Aspect	5
B The Risen Lord	9
Summary	16
Endnotes	17

ABBREVIATIONS, QUOTATIONS AND NOTES USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

Abbreviation or Quotation	Meaning
f. (ff.)	Follow page(s) or verse(s)
Ibi (or "ib")	It is an abbreviation of the Latin " <i>ibidem</i> ", and is an editorial short-cut, which means: there; in the same place.
MssB	Manoscritti Bertoni - all typed in five volumes by Fr. Luigi Benaglia ⁱ , CSS - these are all the writings of Fr. Bertoni - they have also been printed out by computer in five volumes with marginal numbers for easy reference.
NB	NOTA BENE [<i>"note well!"</i> - <i>"pay attention!"</i> - usually used in English and Italian manuscripts - from the Latin]
p. (pp.)	Page(s)
Ps (Pss)	Psalm(s)
Psalms number	The Psalm number refers always to the Latin Vulgate. When are quoted two numbers, the second one refers to the modern Bibles, where the Psalm 9 was divided into two.
q. (qq.)	These are abbreviations for: <i>Question/Questions</i> - these are abbreviations usually used with St. Thomas Aquinas.
ss.	Follow pages (or verses) [from the Italian <i>sequenti</i>]
v. (vv.)	Verse(s) of the Sacred Scripture

Notes	Meaning
Footnotes	Author's complementary notes regarding terms and nouns used in this document, in numeral sequence (1, 2, 3...), in the same page (or following), at the bottom.
Endnotes	Author's complementary notes regarding terms and nouns used in this document, in Roman numeral sequence (I, ii, iii, iv...) at the end of the document.

Introduction

In recent months, the cinematographic world has been astounded by Mel Gibson's graphic portrayal of the **Passion** of Jesus Christ. Most of the reviews of this film were more than positive, as it broke nearly every financial record for a movie.

St. Gaspar was also most eloquent in his verbal portrayal of the sufferings of Jesus for the salvation of the world. In his minute descriptions of the suffering and Cross of our **Redeemer**, St. Gaspar followed, for the most part, the writings of the Doctor of the Church, St. Alphonsus Liguori – who founded the **Redemptorist Congregation**, primarily so that the Poor of the Lordⁱⁱ would understand the **copious Redemption** won by their **Redeemer**. In the hopes this work would go on, St. Alphonsus founded the **Redemptorists**, primarily to preach Parish Missions, so that the poor would understand that their hardships in life find **Redemption** in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. St. Alphonsus, in his voluminous writings, shows very little of his reflection on the **Resurrection** of the Lord, on the **Glorious** aspect of the Paschal Mystery.

St. Gaspar Bertoni, however, in his contemplation of the Paschal Mystery followed more the integral teaching found in the spiritual direction offered by **Pope St. Gregory the Great**, **St. Thomas Aquinas** and the Fourth Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* of **St. Ignatius of Loyola**, dedicated almost exclusively to the resurrection.

There follows here a few meditations on texts from the writings of St. Gaspar Bertoni.

A. The Sorrowful Aspect

In his 4th Parish Sermon¹, St. Gaspar portrayed the Passion of the Lord Jesus Christ – this is his reflection:

[Bringing Christ's Passion close]:

428: What, then, is the origin of such insensibility of heart? The Holy Spirit responds for us: ... *The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart...* [Is 57:1]. He is simply not considered, and this is why no compassion is given. This is the real reason, while the Philosopher also teaches on the other hand

¹ Cf. MssB ## 425-498

that to bring something within the sphere of compassion so that this will excite compassion in others, it is necessary that it be brought close ² ⁱⁱⁱ.

Thus, we observe that the miseries of others far from us, either distant in space, or in the passing of time, either do not touch our hearts, or do so only in a very slight manner. For this reason, all I have to do is expose these facts, with all simplicity, as they unfolded. My task, then, is to render Jesus' Passion close, not only to your thought, but also to your very eyes. In this way, the reality of it which is of all events, the most able to draw a compassionate response, will indeed become the object of your most actual and most tender compassion.

429: However, before going on in drawing out for you this sorrowful narrative, there is suddenly before me that warm Cross, that is still marked with the blood of this Just Man. I now place this before your eyes, prior to any other reality, to test the impression that such a sight is able to make on your hearts.

A Prayer:

Holy Cross, that I should now adore as that which alone was worthy to bear that August Victim sacrificed on you for our sins - I know only too well the many and varied affections that you can arouse in the hearts of these listeners. You have now become the standard of their faith, the sure guide of their lives, the foundation of their hope, comfort in their wretchedness, the desire of the just, the terror of hell. But, I ask you that the sight of you arouse today only a sadness and a dolor that will be most vibrant for those terrible sufferings that you brought to our Jesus, when He united Himself to you out of love for us.

430: Show, therefore, to these souls who devoutly gaze upon you those cruel clefts of those nails made in you, first lacerating His hands, and then His feet. Show the very place where His head reclined upon you, expiring, as their loving Father, indeed their faithful Friend, their most tender Brother, their most lovable and most kind Spouse. Lastly, show that blood shed out of love for them, with which you still trickle and redden in long streams. In addition to the impression that you can bring about in them, let there be joined also the eloquence of this blood, as the Apostle describes [Heb 12:24]. Let there be attained, therefore, through you such a great commotion in the hearts of these listeners that I believe I will see this very day, even though I cannot achieve this with my words.

² St. Thomas Aquinas, 4 Sent., 11 d. 17. q. 2. a. 1, sol. 1 ad 1 um.

Fr. Bertoni describes then the terrible betrayal in the Old Testament of King David by his own son, Absalom:

440: And do you think that this betrayal was not sufficient to fill His heart with sadness? Just say, any of you who have experienced it, or who may have known this in the bosom of your own families - or, those who have loved with excessive affection and extended special kindnesses toward some disguised enemy who then brought about your present calamity. Just think of David when he had to flee by this same path from the rebellious Absalom [2 K 1:1, ff.]. David experienced the greatest pain in abandoning all at once his palace, his people and even his wives. There was great suffering in seeing all of this brought about by his most loved son. It was he who betrayed the King, the one who incited the most faithful subjects in the plot against his own father. He even dishonored his own father's bridal chamber.

441: But, there is hardly any comparison in this! Just think of Jesus, and what a bitter sight that is! All the horrible apparatus of this sorrowful Passion is arrayed against Him. He could see that His most favored disciple was the very one who had handed Him over to the unjust judges, to those very cruel butchers, to those horrible sufferings. It is true, of course, that the horrible sight of the sins of the whole world that He was destined by the Father to carry was overwhelming. However, among all these, the most horrible aspect before His face was Judas' enormous crime: ... *Therefore, He confessed, he who has delivered Me to you, has the greater sin...* [Jn 19:11].

Repeatedly St. Gaspar contemplated the Sacred Stigmata, Jesus' five **Sacred Wounds**:

460: Even within this same general heading, just notice how the execution of Jesus surpasses and thus transcends other deaths on the Cross in its torments. He not only had **His hands and feet torn open by the nails which brought their own pain**, but also all the other parts of His body. Covered with wounds, as He was, He experienced most penetrating pain. These openings must have been all the more agonizing in that they were all reopened as His garments were stripped from Him in a very rough manner. These garments had been put upon Him after the scourging had become attached to the open skin. The cruelty increased as His arms were stretched beyond limit so that His hands could be nailed. This stretching of His limbs was so fierce that it disjointed all the bones from their natural place. This suffering was augmented further when the Cross was allowed to slip into the hole on the ground prepared for it. The shock of the Cross falling into lace produced a horrible effect on the body hanging from it.

This Meditation on the Five Wounds leads to a profound Contemplation, in the hopes of bringing the Suffering Jesus closer to those listening to him in Verona, Italy, almost 200 years ago:

464: And now, therefore, no longer just with your thoughts, but also with your eyes you can see His pain. *Behold, behold the Man!* [Jn 19:5]. Just look at this body, how lacerated it is with so many wounds. Not only have they taken from Him every beauty, all graciousness, but even the very figure of a man [Is 53:2]. Just look at His head, pierced by so many thorns. **Look at His hands, His feet that are so wounded; this side that is gaping open.** Look on in sadness, and this will help you grasp this scene and also will satiate the desires of your hearts. You could never weep over Him as He merits to be mourned.

475: O God, how those arms and wrists are stretched and cut and by such crude knots. Now He is fully flattened out on the Cross. **And His hands and His feet are contorted... those very hands and feet that offer themselves now to the nails. The measure is taken for the blows, and how heavy are the hammers raised above. Dear God! It seems that even before they fall, the blows strike my very heart...** I cannot stand, beloved hearers, I cannot stand these particulars that are so atrocious, so sensitive. Let us proceed rather to consider the kind of pain being administered.

Like so many mystics through the centuries, St. Gaspar was also fascinated by the wound in Christ's side:

490: So dies the Just Man. In a most tormenting torture, condemned by a most unjust sentence, by the most perfidious betrayal. Thus, Jesus' suffering ends. Here His enemies have ceased tormenting Him, but their cruelties have not yet terminated. **They insult Him even in death, they lash out against His dead body. With a lance, they open in His dead body a large wound on His right side. The cruel iron penetrates right through to His heart, and the point comes out the other side. What cruelty! What barbarity! O supreme injury! Even worse than the torture itself! O, our love, Jesus! O, who would give to us that dead and bloody body, that we might make reparation with the just obsequies of our tears for the most atrocious injuries of those cruel men!**

Fr. Bertoni offers then his concluding prayer:

494: O God, just what have we ever accomplished by sinning! What injury have we heaped on Jesus! We have placed the King of Heaven below the mud of our own bodies. What should have died in us was that degrading passion, and yet our evil will cried instead: Let Jesus die, let Him be crucified,

but long life to that passion in us. What perversity of judgment, what injustice of choice, what disorder of sin! Give me pardon, O Jesus, pardon! Let us sin no more, no more sins! Death to sin, let sin be put to death! Our evil will is condemned to perpetual contrition. As long as life lasts, these eyes of ours will find good reason to weep - this heart of ours should feel sorrow - these members, suffer.

§§§

B. The Risen Lord

Fr. Bertoni's pastoral appeal in the Mystery of the resurrection is to *Seek what is above!*]:

1300: If you have risen with Christ, I have to take on the sonorous expressions of St. Paul and put them on my own lips: *Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above; where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God... [Col 3:1] - mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth... [v. 2]. - ...for you are dead; and your life is hid with Christ in God... [v. 3].*

Our 'Resurrection' begins here on earth, through Conversion:

1305: Having thus proposed the future resurrection, St. Paul requires another resurrection of us, a new institution in the present life, for the changing of our ways. When, in fact, a fornicator becomes chaste, or an avaricious person becomes merciful, or a wrathful individual becomes meek, there takes place in these instances a **resurrection** which is the principle of the future. And how is this a resurrection? Because one dies to sin, and resurrects to justice. The former way of life is cancelled, and the new and angelic way almost flourishes anew. Thus, we can say with St. ANSELM³: intemperance has died in such a person, and sobriety has risen up; in that young man impurity has died, and purity has risen. In that woman, uncleanness has died, and modesty has arisen. On hearing *new life*, let each one seek out in himself much diversity, and great changes.

We bring this about working in cooperation with God's grace, through the Burial of our Sins, we 'rise' with Him here and now:

³ Cited by Cornelius a Lapide, Col 3:3.

1308: This is the counsel of our apostle, and he proceeds: ... *For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection...* [Rm 6:5]. With this word *planting*, there is implied also the eventual fruit that is expected in us and from us. Just as the Body of Christ buried in the ground, had for its fruit the salvation of the world - so we, too, planted anew in Penance, we have borne the fruit of justice, of adoption, of sanctification, and of numberless gifts. We will bear also later on the gift of the resurrection.

1312: To cite still another example, CORNELIUS a LAPIDE ^{4 iv} relates the story of the Holy Count, Eleazar (Nu 26:63), immobile in his mountainous solitude, lived there a celibate life with his virgin wife, Delphina. She sent him letters to find out how he was getting along. He responded: I am healthy of body and safe. **If you wish to see me, look for me in the wound of the side of Christ. For it is here ^v that I dwell; and here it will be easy to find me. You will search in vain in any other place.**

Do you see, my hearers, **the just idea of a person risen with Christ?** Could such a person even yearn for the lowly realities of this life? Could such a one seek for anything else in this life, other than the supernatural and heavenly goods, among which he will live eternally?

The long Spiritual Winter of sin gives way to the **New Spring-time** of grace:

1314: Even more fitting is the example that St. AUGUSTINE ⁵ uses to elucidate this passage, that later St. ANSELM [100] would copy. In the bitter **winter** even the green tree seems dry to the sight. As the summer approaches, the living root once again is vested with fruit. This is our life, that is much like that **winter**, when the sun is further away from us and concealed behind the clouds. This sun for us is Christ.

For Fr. Bertoni, we are constantly being called to a **New Life**:

1315: We are much like the plants, dry on the outside, and without foliage, without honor, and without the appearance, or the luster of beauty. However, within we have living roots: charity, planted in God, as in a vital, stable, and living earth. The summer will appear, as the glory of Christ comes. And the plants will be seen to come to life again, rising up, and once more give their fruits and vital foliage. There will be the **glorious** traits of beatitude, both in the spirit as well as in the flesh. Come on now, exclaims St. AUGUSTINE [104], come now, most sweet Jesus, that this pact with You be a firm one for

⁴ Col 3:3.

⁵ cf. *De Script. Vet. et Nov., Test.*, Serm. 36, 4. [t. 5/1, pp. 176 G, ff.].

me: that I might die totally to myself so that You alone might dwell within me. Within, totally in recollection, I will keep silence, so that You alone might speak in me. I will be totally at repose, so that You alone might work in me. The Apostle cries out: ... *And I live now, not I; but Christ lives in me...* [[Ga 2:20](#)].

The spiritual reasons for our joy are that **we are already Risen with Christ**:

1317: You, though, my hearers, you also prove how true is that which I promised you at the beginning: that my sermon should have been a reason for much joy among you. And so, to keep my word perfectly of abbreviating it as much as possible, I will soon conclude [and I can do this handily, and you are absolutely right, wise that you are!]. At any rate, it is totally fitting for you, and with all diligence to persevere in your holy proposal to tend in a lively way, toward heaven, without even turning an eye to this earth. If you have indeed **risen with Christ**, seek those realities that are above you, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God: taste those heavenly goods and not the earthly ones [[Col 3:1, ff.](#)].

1318: Heavenward, then, my beloved brothers and sisters, to heaven your thoughts, to heaven direct your affections. Elevate your hearts to heaven, where your treasure is, where your glory is, where your life is. The riches of this earth will flatter you, its honors will enchant you, all of which this earth offers you. But, this is not your life. When our life will indeed appear, we will then seek the delights, the leisure, the repose. And then we will find the riches, but without thorns; the pleasures, but without sadness; the honors, but without jealousies. We will be inebriated by the divine delights [[Ps 35:9](#)]. And we will be seated in the beauty, in the tranquil order of peace [[Is 32:18](#)]. And in the very bosom of God we will have rest from our fatigue, without any necessity to disturb us, without adversities that wear us down, without any worries to upset us.

Fr. Bertoni suggested this as his 'battle-cry': **Onward to heaven!**

1322: ... To heaven, to eternal life, to heaven, you have been called. You are already well along your way, and moving along with giant steps. Follow through to the goal, to your heavenly home. You have been enrolled by God for an eternity to be the citizens of heaven, domestics, heirs of God. Upward, then, with all vigor, with all your strength, hurry onward, hasten your steps. The saints await you, already sure as they are of their happiness and solicitous also for yours. Christ awaits you, and has already prepared a place for you - rather, a throne. Why do you hesitate, why look anymore to earth? To heaven, to heaven! **If you have risen with Christ...**

+

517: Heaven awaits, that I see opened up above your head. Jesus is sitting there at the right hand of God [Ac 7:55]. He is holding between His hands a crown, and He is inviting you to win it with the victory over that passion of yours. I can see all the saints, who are encouraging you onward to come to where they are now. Do not be afraid, they are saying, do not put it off. Even to us, this ascent seemed too difficult, but the grace in which we placed our confidence has made it very easy for us, all sweetness, by extending its living arms out toward our weakness. Many of us living in this land have sinned just like you have and perhaps even more than you have. However, since fortunately in good time we have renounced the vain pleasures of this world, confiding in the mercies of God. And this is why we are now here to give praise to those mercies forever.

St. Gaspar brings this integral understanding of the Paschal Mystery in his meditations on the Sacred Heart ⁶:

1759 The prudent and most wise **Bride of Christ**, the Church, made ingenious because of her love, desired most ardently to see her **Spouse**, Jesus adored and beloved - and she studies further the more sweet and universal means and the more easy and efficacious incentives. And since human beings, made up of reason and the senses, are not moved very much by matters that are purely spiritual in order to have them filial in love with these sublime and invisible realities, she makes use of visible realities: such would be the Infant in the Crib, Christ moribund on the Cross; but also His Blood alone, His Name, His **Wounds**, the Christmas crib, the thorns, the lance, the Cross.

1771: The love of Jesus is much better symbolized by His divine heart. This is the source of that blood shed out of love for us, given life by a most holy soul, deified ^{vi} by the hypostatic ^{vii} union of the Word. That which is to Him totally proper is His being which has always been the most perfect instrument in which there are rendered, and have been rendered, sensible the invisible and ineffable effects of His charity.

His side, opened after His death, is used to show us that Heart, that same Heart wounded by the lance, that WOUND RETAINED IN HIS GLORIOUS BODY, render the Heart so sweet, evident, divine, so much so that it is impossible to venerate the Wounded Heart without remembering and venerating His immense love⁷.

⁶ NB: The Latin sections of this sermon seem to have been copied, and will be translated in **bold** print - these may have been copied from a work in Latin on the Sacred Heart, which Fr. Bertoni cites in **1765; 1774**.

⁷ NB: this passage is very helpful for the Stigmatines in understanding the devotion of their Founder for the **integral Stigmata**, both **sorrowful** dimension as well as the **glorious** aspect.

Sermon on the Sacred Heart: A few days after the second citation above, Fr. Bertoni **preached** for the Feast of the Sacred Heart. Among his thoughts, we find the following:

...The humanity of Jesus Christ is not adored separately and for itself; but always as united to the divine Person, and because of this; the Incarnate Word receives with his flesh a single and identical adoration...

The object of the Feast of the Sacred Heart consists in that wonderful and truly divine union of realities, formed both of that human and wounded heart of Jesus, as well as of His most holy soul, through which His heart lives, and also by the Person of the Divine word... His heart is the symbol and the seat of those sufferings and the anguish endured by that heart...

The prudent and most wise Spouse of Christ, the Church, made ingenious by her love, most ardently yearns to see her Spouse adored and loved and still seeks more universal and appealing means, as well as simpler and more efficacious incentives to bring this about... such as the Infant in the Crib, the dying Christ on His Cross; but also His Blood, His name, His Wounds ... the Cross...

...It has never been the custom of the Church to solemnize with a proper Mass and Office the divine attributes, the interior virtues and abstract perfections of Christ - but, only under some sensible object that would clearly represent these, or some fact evident to the senses, or some mystery that would the more vividly impress itself. For example, the Church does not venerate the patience of Christ without a symbol, or mystery: as Wounds, the Passion, the Cross...^{viii}

Jesus' love is much better symbolized by His Divine Heart ... The open side, after His death, customarily shows us that Heart, the same Heart wounded by the lance, that wound preserved in His glorious body make of it such an appealing, evident, divine symbol, that it is impossible to venerate the wounded heart without remembering and venerating His immense love... The abyss of misery calls out to the Abyss of Mercy...⁸.

It is interesting to note the fact that his Spiritual Diary, the *Memoriale Privato*, seems to begin [1808] and end [1813] with a few of his thoughts on the Sacred Heart.

⁸ cf. Gaspare Bertoni, *Sacro Cuore*. June 5, 1812, in: *MssB* Vol. II, ## 1755-1778. For the Italian, cf. Nello Dalle Vedove, CSS, *Vita e pensiero del Beato Gaspare Bertoni agli albori*

Fr. Bertoni often treated of his own immense personal sufferings in terms of the sacred Stigmata, as being wounded, but not dead! In his Letter 104 of May 15, 1826, he wrote to Mother Naudet:

9447: Dear Reverend Mother,

I render supreme thanks to the charity of Your most illustrious Reverence, for the Novena and for the fascicle that you have lent me. The Lord has been helping me for a time much against my merits, with the prayers of His faithful servants. My health has begun to go downhill, but He wills me **wounded, and not dead.** In this way I will be able to serve Him, and not to abuse His graces, and to do that penance which is necessary for me to do.

Letter 130:
His Wounds
[March 9, 1828]

9509: Dear Reverend Mother,...

9510:... I do offer the Holy Mass, but I do not think that I can say that I am getting much better, My legs are not well, as the **wound on the right** swells a bit, with a kind of vague pain, which I really do not want to heed. I have been going patiently along up to this point, but now I see that nature is not helping me very much^x, so I take the liberty of asking you to pray a Novena once more with the Holy Prince^x, because it does seem that the Lord allows me to keep going on the strength of these extraordinary helps...

While many of his letters to his intimate friend, Fr. Louis Bragato, were for the most part destroyed, Fr. Bertoni did offer some precious insights in this regard, as in his **Letter 2, of November 18, 1835**⁹:

9689: Only keep in mind continuously, that bearing some distinct mark of honor which God imposes upon you, as does our Sovereign, that ***the greater you are, so much the more humble yourself in all things*** [Si 3:20]; and if you cannot be in our small house bodily, be there spiritually as in the ***clefts in the rock*** [cf. Ct 2:14], in **the Wounds of our most lovable and humble Savior, where I leave you, embracing you with all my heart.**

•••

In his Letter 5 to Fr. Bragato, of January 29, 1840, Fr. Bertoni advises his dear old friend, now far away for the past five years as Court Chaplain in Vienna: **Find Refuge in the Glorious Wounds**”:

dlel'800 veronese [1800-1816]. Roma: Postulazione Generale degli Stigmatini 1977, pp. 387, ff.

⁹ **[Translator's Note:** Fr. Bragato had left for the Royal Court just a few years earlier, July 1835].

9707: As for the rest, keep your chin up! And when you need a little joy, fly in thought to Fr. Michael's ^{xi} little room. And if you do not always have the wings ready to support yourself over the clouds, in the bosom of your God, **find your support in the glorious wounds of your Savior. Seek those things which are above, where Christ is** [Col. 3:1]. Sit there, as one of His people, in the beauty of that peace [Is 32:18]. All finishes and finishes soon, but that eternal peace never ends. And pray for us, and you will be remembered in our prayers....

This is Fr. Bertoni's advice also in a retreat he gave to the seminarians - for the second Prelude, Fr. Bertoni offers this:

...Imagine that you see Him, as He appeared to some of His disciples, so full of life, and with the scars of His Wounds, inviting you, too, to heaven, to where He is now going: 'I go to prepare a place for you...' [cf. Jn 14:2] ¹⁰.

In the course of this Meditation, the preacher considers Christ's Resurrection as the model of our sanctification [cf. Rm 4:25]. In His glorified state, Jesus has retained the marks of his Sacred Stigmata:

...For Christ, it was a victory ... The **glorious life**, is a **new life**: to be transformed into that... is achieved by a profound change. 'When Christ was raised from the dead, we might live a new life...' [cf. Rm 6:4]... **Christ has entered with the signs of His wounds**: 'this is the price', He says, 'with which I bought this Kingdom. It cannot be had for anything less...' ¹¹.

For the Canonization of St. Veronica Giuliani [1839], Fr. Bertoni was invited to preach:

...With certain extraordinary individuals, it has pleased the Lord to manifest **the spiritual nuptials** with sensible signs, and with certain formalities that are observed in human marriages, as in the life of St. Catherine of Siena, and a few other saints of the highest sphere. In order to dispose her the more for such an honor, God granted her many graces and visions: of Jesus Christ, who comforted her and stipulated **the nuptial pact**; of the Virgin Mary, who appeared to her seated on a magnificent throne with St. Catherine and St. Rose, assuring her of her impending **nuptials**, and showing her the **wedding ring**, and instructing her on the most sublime virtues. On Holy Saturday, Jesus Christ also appeared to her, informing her of **her nuptials on the next day**, and showing her also the precious ring ... When the time

¹⁰ cf. ib., # 2632.

¹¹ cf. ib., ## 2635; 2637; 2647.

came for Communion, in which the **marriage** would be contracted, she was enabled to hear the Angels singing the sweet melody: **Come, o Spouse of Christ...!**

Summary

The mysticism of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni was a “**Mysticism of Ecclesial Service**”, expressed through the Pauline [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.] and Ignatian ideal of **obsequium**. The Stigmatine Founder lived a **consecration of abandonment toward the Most Holy Trinity, and a total availability toward the Church**. His “total service of God” in the fulfillment of the divine will, was expressed in the purpose he proposed for the community he founded: **Apostolic Missionaries for the assistance [obsequium] of Bishops**.¹²

The human sufferings of life, offered in union with those of Jesus Christ [cf. 1 P 2:3, ff.], will lead us to unite all of ours with the prayers of the Church, **through Christ our Lord**. This inspiration is the ultimate source of Christian Hope, as it will lead to everlasting life. Fr. Bertoni’s prophetic integrality in his Contemplation of the Paschal Mystery is the basis of our hope **by His Wounds, ours are healed** [cf. Is 53:5, cf. 1 P 2:21, ff.].

†
†††
†

¹² Costituzioni del Ven. Servo di Dio, D. Gaspare Bertoni, Fondatore dei Preti delle S. Stimate di N.S.G.C., June 1950, # 1.

ENDNOTES

Author's clarification notes about words and phrases found in this document:

ⁱ **Fr. Louis Benaglia, CSS** [Verona, 1900 – Verona, 1988], copied out the five typed volumes of the *Manoscritti Bertoniiani*. **Gino** was his 'nick-name', familiar name.

I worked with him in 1966-1967 - as he transcribed all of the spiritual writings of the Founder. It was a terribly painstaking work - which he did for the most part at our old Novitiate at Grottaferata, outside of Rome.

He was also a most accomplished musician. He was preceded in death by an uncle, Fr. Cesare Benaglia, who lived into his 90's - one of the oldest Stigmatines ever. Fr. Gino was about 88 when he died.

We can find more information about Fr. Louis Benaglia and other deceased Stigmatine confreres in www.confrades.com.

ⁱⁱ **The Poor of the Lord** – or: The Poor Whom Yahweh Loves – is the usual English translation of the Hebrew word Anawim. This is a word used often in the Prophets and Wisdom books of the Old Testament – then applied to Jesus, and to Mary, the Mother of Jesus – *the Lord saw here **lowly state*** – it means a faith choice – of surrendering many Blessings of God, in the quest for the God of the Blessings. It is in the Beatitudes: Blessed are the Poor in Spirit...!

ⁱⁱⁱ About footnote 2: as St. Thomas noted in one of his early works titled Sentences, it means: Fourth Book of Sentences, Distinction 17, Question 2, in the First Article, Solution 1, in Response to the First Objection.

^{iv} **Cornelius a Lapide** was an outstanding exegete of the 17th century. He was known for his wonderful ability of synthesizing the spiritual sense of the biblical passages, relying heavily on the early Fathers of the Church. He died in the year 1637.

^v When I translated this word from the Italian Fr. Bertoni's writings into English, I had a choice to make, and I chose to translate this word for **here** (instead of "there") with the understanding that St. Gaspar, spiritually, was already in the wound of Christ's side, near to His heart. I could translate this word for there – but, to me, that would mean that the wound in the side is still far from himself – and the persons to whom he was speaking. I think Fr. Bertoni meant 'here' – that he was already spiritually **in** the Sacred Stigmata of the Lord.

^{vi} **To be deified** is a theological expression meaning to participate in the divine nature [cf. 2 P 1:4]. The meaning is: that because the human nature and His Body, were joined in a unique

manner to the Divine Person of Jesus, His human soul is deified – it stays a human soul, but permeated by the grace flowing from the union of the Divine Person to this human nature.

vii **Hypostatic** is another theological term - in the state of grace, we all ‘participate’ in the divine nature, or are ‘deified’ by the presence of the Trinity in our souls, to the extent that we respond to this grace. Whereas in Christ, since His union with the Trinity is on a much more personal level – so, it needs a special word, *hypostatic* - meaning personal, but in a unique way. The union of the Divine and human natures in Jesus is not an union in nature – otherwise, there would be confusion: the union in Jesus of the human and divine is traditionally called *hypostatic* - meaning a union based in His divine person [A most sublime mystery!].

viii As Fr. Bertoni noted, the Church does not usually establish a Feast, or a Devotion, about interior virtues, or abstract perfections of Jesus. It would do this by celebrating a sensible object: like the feast of the Sacred Heart, Holy Cross, or the **Five Wounds**, or the Passion of Christ.

While Jesus is venerated as the Son of God – He is also remembered as a Martyr, a man-God Who suffered terrible wounds – therefore, it was the virtue of His Divine Patience that we honor in some of these devotions. Patience is that moral virtue, which is strengthened by the Gift of Fortitude from the Holy Spirit. It is a moral virtue which enables us to sustain at some length, either pains, or unpleasant difficulties. So we as Stigmatines, venerate the Patience of Jesus – through our devotion to the Sacred Stigmata.

ix Fr. Bertoni is saying that with his long sufferings, his own human nature is not able to sustain much more – so, he is asking for prayers.

x **Holy Prince** – he was a holy man, a member of a noble family – actually a Prince in Italian nobility, but with a wide reputation for holiness. Fr. Bertoni is asking for his prayers.

xi **Rev. Michael Angelo Gramego** (Verona, 1783 – Verona, 1853) was known as "the delight of the nascent Congregation", because his character always joyful and happy. He was ordained a Priest in 1806, before completing his theological studies. He was an excellent and much sought after confessor.

A month after Fr. Bertoni entered the Stimmate, with Fr. Marani, Fr. Gramego offered himself as the second Priest companion. He always professed for Fr. Bertoni the most profound veneration, and a most sincere filial attachment. He loved the little Congregation with a passion, and he did not draw a single breath except in its service.

He taught almost always at our school of Stimmate and he was called "the good teacher". He crowned his humble hidden life of self-sacrifice with a holy death, just one month after that of his most dear Fr. Gaspar.

We can find more information about Rev. Michael Angelo Gramego and other deceased Stigmatine confreres in www.confrades.com.