

PART III
WRITINGS OF St. GASPAR BERTONI

THE INTEGRAL PASCHAL MYSTERY
SORROWFUL AND GLORIOUS ASPECTS OF THE SACRED STIGMATA

Presentation:

As has been noted above, the Stigmatine Founder spoke throughout his long life – *using various literary forms* - almost from his early poems as a high school student - to among his last letters to his dear friend, Fr. Louis Bragato, pondering the various dimensions of what is called today the “Paschal Mystery.” A few incidences of his remarks will be noted in what follows. The following are taken from:

A. Early Parish Sermons

B. Miscellaneuous

ΩΩ

A. His Early Parish Sermons¹

425:

SERMON 4

The Passion

Preached in the Church of St. Paul’s, in the Camp Marzio section of Verona, on Good Friday, April 3, 1801. - It lasted for about one hour and a quarter.

This Sermon was repeated, with the “Addition” found below, in St. Paul’s, Campo Marzio, on Good Friday, April 4, 1806, in the evening. This lasted about one hour and three quarters.

426: The Passion of Our Lord, Jesus Christ. - *The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart...* [Ps 57:1].

[Introduction: *Is there no one who lays this to heart?*]

Therefore, Jesus has died, and is there no one who is moved? So, the Just Man perishes in a sea, drowning in sufferings, and is there no one to weep? I have to say it again, *and no one lays it to heart.* And so, what is being said here: there is no one who is moved? It would be necessary to be on that mountain a few minutes earlier, when in all His anguish of dying, as He was just about to give up His last breath. One could note however, nature itself responded out of pity for Him: the sun hid its face, the rocks were rent, the earth trembled on its axis. Would I, therefore, see before me only these, my listeners, with tranquil faces, serenely looking on? Why is it these faces are not reddened with weeping? How is it that these hearts are not broken? Why is it that the by-standers are not profoundly moved? And these women, who weep so bitterly over the deaths of their own children, their husbands, their lovers - and these men who are so deeply upset by their own reverses, as well as of those of their fellow-citizens - they do not shed a single tear, nor do they have a simple sigh left for Jesus? Is it that only Jesus is not mourned, He is not wept over? Just listen to His own complaint regarding you: *...Ad I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none...* [s 68:21].

427: Why is it, my brothers and sisters, that there are such coldness, such ingratitude, and even injustice, and that those tears of compassion that you shed so prodigiously at the sufferings of just any poor soul, you so cruelly deny Jesus? Have you perhaps had a change of heart on this very point that the underlying motives - that are even stronger - that Jesus offers you for having compassion in His regard, to not move you? Or, is it that you just do not know these

¹ Cf. MssB ## 425-498

motives? Do you not realize that He has suffered? But, you do know through faith that He had to languish on a cross. Do you understand that He suffered all of this for you? Faith, though, teaches you that "... for us men and for our salvation..."² He did this for us. How can it be, therefore, that you are not deeply moved, believing all this? Should we conclude, then, that there is either lacking faith, and that your faith has grown so languid? It cannot be this, my listeners. May heaven keep me from drawing any such conclusion so insulting to your piety.

[1. 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 that to bring something within the sphere of compassion so that this will excite compassion in others, it is necessary that it be brought close³. 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 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.

[a. A Prayer]:

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.

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.

[b. Ponder the Various Aspects of this Mystery]:

431: I do fear, my listeners, that the sheer multiplicity of facts, even exposed in their natural simplicity, might impede your otherwise gifted intelligences, keeping them all straight in your minds at the end of my sermon. But, since you can all the more easily gather all this in by a

²Nicene-Constantinople Creed

³St. Thomas Aquinas, 4 Sent., d. 17. q. 2. a. 1, sol. 1 ad 1 um.

single glance, I ask you that while I speak, you will keep in mind the various aspects of this mystery: first, the most perfidious betrayal; then, the most unjust sentence; and finally, the most torturous torment.

[2. Judas among the Most Cruel]:

432: I am not unaware that you might be able to recall to memory other examples. It is not totally new in this world to see an innocent, virtuous, beneficent person thus betrayed by a friend, and very often one who has benefited the most from the friendship. Nevertheless, there could not be found any other person more innocent, and better than Jesus. Furthermore, there was no one more trusted and no greater beneficiary in this band than His traitor. For these reasons, there could never be heard, and never will be, a betrayal more perfidious than this one. Just who is Jesus? Is He not that God to Whom by title of creation, conservation and final blessed end, all human beings are indebted for what they have, for what they are, and for all that they hope? Who would ever thought that among all human beings there could ever be found one who would prove to be more disloyal, more cruel, more ungrateful, that he would then decide to betray Him? And yet, such a person was found. He was Judas. He did not only think about this, or just plan it. But, he brought this evil scheme to term, that of betraying this most beneficent God. This God proved Himself to be so beneficent that out of greater love for humanity, He gave up His blessed trappings, and put on our flesh. He became like a king in disguise, and enjoyed treating with human beings on friendly terms. He did this with all His servants, and in particular, with Judas.

[a. Was Jesus' Disguise so complete?]:

433: Maybe Judas did not recognize Him for what He was, in that His disguise was so complete? But how could he not have recognized Him after all those truly divine charms that He manifested? Further, did not Jesus many times, in the presence of Judas make known the nobility of His figure? Was not Judas an eye-witness of many of the miracles that He worked? Even further, did not Judas Himself work some of those prodigies with that totally divine authority that Jesus had communicated to Him?

Just think of all the honor that Jesus inspired for him, from the crowd, even the most uncouth. Even if this were not enough honor, Jesus had prepared a most honorable throne among the 12 places that He had promised that the other Apostles would receive, when He would have returned with them to judge the whole world. Judas, among all these, was the most "domestic" minister, His very own brother and friend, with whom Jesus often dealt, with whom He often ate, and with whom He lived, without ever sending him away from His side.

[b. They had broken Bread together]:

434: That very same night in which Judas had determined to betray Him, Judas was sitting at the same table with Jesus. Jesus could see that his heart was evil, but even so, He did not send him away, He did not reprove him. Rather Jesus reached out to him, showing every manifestation of love. It was that very night when Jesus chose to wash the feet of his disciples, even those of Judas. And when He did mention His approaching death, and even gave indications of his own betrayal, He did this to shake up the hardened heart of Judas, who simply did not grasp these favors. He did all this with such a calm soul that at the same time, He communicated every reason for confidence in His pardon. It happens quite often that such ingrates, harboring evil thoughts of betrayal, are moved to make some response when they are treated well by their friend. It is hard to know whether such as these are moved more by confusion, or by stupor, but often they do make a switch, and transform their earlier hatred, that was so powerfully nourished in them, into like affections of love. But, it did not turn out this way for Judas, and this points out the fact that among betrayers, he proved to be the most perfidious.

[c. Judas received Holy Communion]:

435: As the Supper was drawing to a close, Jesus blessed the bread and wine: ...*Take this,* He said to His Apostles [Mk 14:22, ff.]...This is my Blood... which shall be shed for you.... This is the Pledge that I leave you of My love: ... *Do this, as often as you shall drink, for the remembrance of me...* [1 Co 11:25]. And you, too, Judas, you take this Bread in your own hands. It is no longer bread, but it is My own Body, take it and be nourished. Bring your lips to this chalice - first drink My Blood and then go, and betray Me.

436: I tremble, quiver and shake. He, too, approaches, to receive His Master in this new and unheard of manner, which His charity imposed upon Him. He receives Him into that heart ... But, I can hardly go on. I can see clearly, my listeners, that you hardly have room in your hearts for the indignation that springs up in you at this malice. You are overwhelmed with stupor at such perfidy, and seek some explanation for what could ever move this wretch to such excess. And contrasting such virtue, such amiability in Jesus, you will encounter ever greater difficulty in trying to find it.

[d. Judas had only known Kindness]:

437: It seems to me that you may be making this conjecture: perhaps Judas had been wronged somewhat by his Master. He may have been placed below the other Apostles in some post of honor, and so his ambition was further strengthened by his envy. But these conjectures hardly stand up. Only Judas was given the honor bestowed on no one else, in that he was placed over the meager resources of the little group. Do not try any harder to find out the reason for his perfidy, that I have already pointed out to you.

[e. Bent on Betrayal]:

438: Let us, then, follow Judas, who has already set out to betray his Master into the hand of His enemies who seek to put Him to death: ...*And He said to them, what will you give to me and I will deliver Him unto you...?* [Mt 26:15]. Here it is, this is the reason: sordid gain. What a criminal! But you might have thought that some large sum would have been thrust into Judas' hands, that would have befuddled the heart of this ingrate. But what did Jesus' enemies offer him? Just thirty pieces of silver! Just thirty pieces? When such a stingy hand is able to buy off a disciple, and a disciple who had benefited the most, to perpetrate such an enormous betrayal, they must have been sure of the refusal. But, what did Judas respond? What was his answer? He accepts without even bartering over the miserable amount and reached agreement on just how he would do it. Now I am sure that your hearts will burn with indignation against a betrayer that the world has never seen anyone worse. But, are you not likewise moved with compassion towards Jesus, Who is so good, so beneficent, so lovable and so ungratefully betrayed? What a blow this must have been to His heart. Through grace, let us return to Him, to see how He got through such sorrow.

[3. Jesus in the Garden]:

439: We no longer find Him in the Cenacle room, as He has already left with His disciples. But, we will find Him a short distance away, in Gethsemane.

And here He is, and separates Himself a bit more in order to enter all alone that garden in which He was accustomed to praying the nights through. Judas had already set his plan in motion. Jesus was no longer able to hold back the anguish of His spirit: ... *Then he said to them:*

My soul is sorrowful even unto death... [Mt 26: 38]. ... For if my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have borne with it... [Ps 54:13].

But he is a person who is so dear to Me, and one for whom I have done so much good - this really pierces My heart.

[a. David and Absalom - betrayal]:

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 kindness toward some disguised enemy who then 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 his 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].*

It is true that He felt the heavy weight of so many people for whom He died who would separate themselves from Him: and what a cruel separation He saw this to be! He could see in this how many would share in Judas' betrayal.

[b. Total Betrayal by Apostles: He Must have been an Impostor!]:

442: This is the very kind of argument that His envious enemies would raise against Him to withdraw the simple of hear from following Him! Just look, they would say, what a great success His disciples have had, those first disciples, and most steady students in His school. Did we not say that He is an impostor? If anyone would give credence to Him, then it should b His most intimate friends. But, you can see that these are the very ones who have raised up their hands in opposition to Him.

What do you think of all this, my listeners? Could Judas have wounded Him any more in life? Could we not say that this betrayal alone would be enough to overwhelm Him with sadness? Or, at least, would this not add one more very strong reason among so many others that had already invaded Jesus' heart? This injury by one so close, would this not have been a kind of *coup de grace* to his spirit?

[c. Amazing Sweat of Blood]:

443: And now just look at Him: even though Jesus is the stronger [Mk 3:27] and indeed is invincible, nonetheless, of His own free choice, to satisfy for our sins, He subjected Himself as man to those afflictions that we still experience. Even more, because of the superior knowledge of His mind and the greater sensibility of His heart, He was even further disposed to suffer all this. He is already being constrained to hand over His heartfelt freedom to that sadness that scourges Him, and He falls face first on the ground. Not even the very powerful resistance that He brought

to opposing the dolor which oppressed Him was beaten back. this brought about His sweating right through His clothing in abundance, and dampened it, leaving many drops on the grass, and the stones on the ground under Him. This is a very strange sign of a totally new type of pain, supreme suffering.

[d. Judas leads the Assassins to Him]:

444: Hurry, Judas, hurry! Hasten forward that band of assassins that you are leading with you. Even should you be unable to witness your Jesus killed by the weapons of His enemies to whom you chose to betray Him, you will take delight in knowing that you alone have killed Him, killed Him first with immense suffering that you brought about.

Alas! what will happen to Jesus? Have no doubt about it: there remains still so much for Him to suffer. However, an Angel comes down to comfort Him, and then we see that He even takes the first step to go to meet the betrayer who seeks Him.

[e. The Actual Betrayal]

445: *Friend, why have you come?* [Mt 26:50].

What is Jesus' response to all this? Judas approaches with peaceful air and reached for Jesus' neck, to embrace Him. It seems, therefore, at long last Judas is beginning to be moved. What would Jesus' heart do if this were the case? How He would have willingly received him, how He would have comforted him, by giving him pardon for all! Yes, my listeners. He does not reject him, but receives him, allows Himself to be kissed, and then says:...*And Jesus said to him: Judas do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss...?* [Lk 22:48]. How can he betray You, Jesus, if he is coming to see your peace?

But no, my hearers. You can finally see the supreme perfidy of this betrayal Judas had already made some agreement with those soldiers who had to arrest Him. You can see that at the agreed upon signal, they charge Jesus, they bind Him, they drag Him away, they rain blows down upon Him, with sticks and they kick Him. And where do they drag Him? And here is still one more motive for your deeply felt compassion: an innocent man is being arraigned before the Tribunal, to receive from it the most unjust of sentences.

446: It would be, it is true, a major injustice to condemn to death even one who is truly guilty, without first having heard the case. But, Jesus is not the only one among the innocent upon whom a similar destiny has fallen, being dragged to the place of execution by an angry mob. He is, though, brought before a tribunal to experience deeply the pain that is all the more unjust in that His enemies wanted to go through the motions of making use of the organs of justice to condemn Him.

[e. Overwhelming Commotion]:

447: But how can you gaze on this scene, without an almost overwhelming commotion deep within your hearts? As you look at Jesus, innocent, alone and abandoned, even by his own, standing before those judges who are already His enemies - do you not see how they almost tremble in their haste to carry out their duty which they see as putting Him to death? They look for the witnesses, and even pay them so that they will bear false witness. They interrogate Jesus, and then do not let Him respond - and if He remains silent, they take this for the admission of guilt. And yet, when He does open His mouth to speak, they punch Him in the face. I just do not want to lead your thought, and with that, your hearts that are already very sensitive, before

tribunals such as these. But, this is where Jesus has been led, where everything has served to pervert justice, and where only anger, fury and tumult dominate.

[4. Before Pilate]:

448: Suffice it for me to lead you to Pilate's tribunal. He is a more reasonable and impartial judge for Jesus, as well as for the Hebrews, His accusers, since He is the Roman Governor. And so it was that Pilate, having examined Jesus in accord with the accusations leveled against Him, had clarified His innocence. He had been able to see that it was only out of envy that they wanted Him dead. He goes out from the Pretorium, where all His enemies were gathered awaiting His condemnation, and Pilate declares Him innocent. Praise the heavens, then. Jesus has received a just sentence. He had been betrayed by His own disciple, He had been judged unjustly by the priests who ought to have been favorably disposed toward Him, but finds justice before a foreign judge. I can see that you are consoled, seeing Jesus absolved by that tribunal, which alone had jurisdiction in such cases.

449: But, just a minute! Do you not hear that those who earlier were judges, have now become the accusers, and that they are insisting on His death, and they even bring forward new charges? ... *We have found this man perverting the nation... saying He is king...* [Lk 23:2]. Jesus is brought back to be examined under this point. He confesses that He is indeed a King, but that His Kingdom is not of this world [Jn 18:36]. ... *If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered...*

So much evidence is lacking for Him to be convicted of sedition, because it would be necessary to show the arms that He would have cached away, to uncover His secret plots. However, all His actions, His public statements testify to the contrary. so, the Judge goes back out and proclaims once more that he can find no cause in him. This is all the more significant in that even Herod himself, to whom Jesus had been sent, even though he was more versed in the Hebrew law, let Him go. Then Pilate makes the declaration that he would punish Him with blows and then he, too, would set Him free.

450: How is this explained? If Christ had been declared innocent, how can it be that He is first to be scourged, and then allowed to go free? What injustice is this? - you ask in complete wonder. But, hold back your indignation a little while against the injustice of a sentence such as this. In the interim, listen as Pilate continued the custom that at Passover there would be freed, at the request of the people, a person already condemned to death. Pilate leaves this up to the crowd to decide which of the two they would want to set free. They could choose either Barabbas, who was a real criminal, caught in sedition, and homicide - or, Jesus. I can see, my listeners, that now you tremble all the more, seeing Jesus first declared innocent, and now placed side by side with one condemned. I know that He should not have to wait to be pardoned, as justice would demand that He be allowed to go free. But, what happens? In order to calm down the furor of His accusers, Pilate has decided to make the choice, and he turns toward the people.

451: Entertain no doubts about it. The people seemed well disposed toward Jesus. This multitude is made up of those blind men whose sight He had restored; of those lame whose limbs He had restored; of those mute to whom He had given the ability to speak; of those hungry people, who - after He had abundantly satisfied them - they sought to make Him their king; of those countless infirm, whom He had cured. What is there to be afraid of, then? And with all the less reason, because He is being put up along side of a criminal who was the most hated of all, an enemy of both the public as well as the private good.

452: ..*Whom do you wish that I release to you, Barabbas, or Jesus...?* [Mt 27:17]. The people will certainly choose Jesus.

But, alas! everyone at this gathering of the people presented with the same question, replied to it at the top of their voices: *Barabbas, Barabbas!* [v. 21]. How perfidious they were! What, then, should I do with this innocent man, toward whom you are all indebted? *Let Him be crucified, let Him be crucified!* [v. 23].

What wickedness, ingratitude! What insult, what fury! Here will an innocent Man have to pay as one guilty? Is Jesus to be compared to a revolutionary? Pilate, though, who is convinced of the innocence of this Man, should not give in to such injustice. And yet, Pilate sends Him to be scourged.

453: Shortly he would deny Jesus the justice due Him as an innocent Man under judgment. What is worse, he still denies that He is guilty as He is being condemned. In such sentences imposed on all guilty persons, the judge first specifies how many blows to be imposed, what kind of instruments are to be used in tormenting Him, and the number of those involved in meting out the punishment. These would rarely inflict more blows than had been prescribed. But, Jesus hands Himself over to the discretion of the most irresolute ruffians. They were not content with the simple scourgings, but take up into their hands knotted clubs, heavy chains, iron switches. One is missing the point should he think that the number of the blows was counted, even though these were already prescribed according to their laws. They were not supposed to go over forty lashes, but in this case, they were multiplied without number. No effort was made to stop even when the blood flowed down His body in little streams. Up and down went the blows until the flesh was literally torn. No effort was made to stop until the arms of the executioners had become tired, even though they worked in relay teams. Each new scourger attended to the task with new strength and renewed vigor, laving Him alive only to entertain their cruelty.

[5. The Soldiers]:

454: My soul rebels in mentioning here that harsh joke played on that innocent Man, so badly wounded, and hardly breathing. There was placed on His head a crown of very sharp thorns, beaten down with plaited maces. There was placed in his hand a kind of reed for a make-believe scepter, and a red mantle was draped over Him. In this way, they made fun of Him, making believe that He was a king and bowing down before Him in fake acts of homage. You could hardly tell whether His physical pain, or His shame were the greater. While He was gasping for breath in real pain, they laughed, they struck Him in the face, pouring out over Him their inner bile in mockery.

455: And what court sentence ever allowed the executioners to mock Him as a false king? And all of this took place in the very hall of the Pretorium, under the eyes of the judge, and the judge made no effort to impede them. What a barbaric and unjust judge! Is this how, therefore, that justice, innocence are betrayed? What can you say in your own behalf? Is it that you wanted to allow the people this satisfaction, and then you wanted to let Him go? No, just no. Kill Him as well, kill Him! The people are not content with His death. All right, let Him die, then, but with a single blow. It makes no sense for you to cry out from your balcony: *...Behold the Man...!* [Jn 19:5]. And then show Him so disfigured, so lacerated,. The crowd once more took up the cry, even stronger, that He be condemned. Get on with it, then, condemn Him, and at least draw to a close by an unjust sentence the dolor of this innocent man.

456: And thus, my listeners, Pilate conducts his tribunal in public. He sits down in order to pronounce his sentence before the crowd. Just wait - you would imagine an unjust sentence: but, none will be worse than this one. I do realize that many others have been condemned, innocent though they may have been. But, if there have been unjust judges, where has there ever been one like this one? Was there ever one who first declared that he found no cause for the capital

punishment, and yet condemned Christ to death? This, the height of injustice, was perpetrated on Jesus.

457: Just listen: ... *I find no cause in this Man...* [Lk 23:4], then, such a person should be let go. No: for the judgment is that He should die, therefore, that He should be crucified. Therefore, let Him be condemned as you have asked.

Poor Jesus! He is yours, handed over to you, raging Hebrews. What else is left? You have already heard the sentence: He is in your hands. Even hungry lions and wolves do not leap on their prey as all do now: the executioners, the soldiers, the crowd. The entire city is set in motion, and thus there is prepared the most terrible execution for Jesus.

At this point, however, kind listeners, I cannot go any further to present you an even more dreary scene, if first you do not grant me a brief rest, in order to give some comfort to my own heart.

[Translators' Note: there could be substituted here the addition that opens with the words: "...Listen to the uproar..." - cf. ahead, # 467].

[6. More in Particular - Barbaric Punishment]:

458: The facts that remain now, beloved listeners, to be placed before your consideration are so cruel - that if I was not afraid of lacking excessively in my duties, I would omit them. But, if I do I would conclude my sermon very shortly, not mentioning a point I had proposed to myself to offer these very facts for your reflection. I do believe that you are already sufficiently moved by what you have heard up until now. Take some comfort at least that I will spare in part my own and your spirits, from an additional and even stronger pain. I will prescind now from the most bitter circumstances that you might experience, in theory, that the torment that Jesus underwent were the most terrible.

459: We are still talking about generalities. There is no doubt that among all the ways of dying, that on the Cross is the most bitter. We have this on the testimony of those gentile writers who lived in such barbaric times. In this kind of death there is no kind of torment that is unknown and not employed on these poor condemned wretches. In fact, in this form of execution of the Cross, the greatest torment that the poor guilty person suffers, reach precisely those parts of the body that are the most sensitive because of the presence of delicate nerves in them. These are the hands and the feet; the weight of the whole body itself hanging on the cross continuously increases the pain. The fact that the pain lasts for such a long time renders the death all the more bitter, as it is protracted over a longer period of time.

[7. His 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 disjoined 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.

461: Job [7:5] complained that the Devil, allowed to be his tormentor, had left only the lips around his teeth healthy. However, Jesus' executioners were even more cruel than the demons. They did not leave all over His entire body even a single member in which He was not wounded. They saw to it that not a single sense was without its own torment. With gall, they soured His taste; His sense of smell was tormented because they crucified Him in a place where dead bodies had been thrown, making a fetid odor. His sense of hearing was violated with the most horrible cries, with the insults and most biting slogans they hurled His way, along with the most gross curses.

462: For His sight, they prepared a particular torment, by crucifying Him between two thieves. Hence, anywhere He could turn His head, He would meet that shameful scene they placed before Him. And what I think was the torment to end all torments, before His eyes they hurled countless insults against those languishing in such agony. They ridiculed His moans, and laughed at His suffering.

463: I am just skimming over these facts: but, what do you think of Jesus' torment? What do you think brought the greatest agony? I have already pointed out that this punishment, to which He was condemned with the most unjust sentence, by the most perfidious betrayal. This morning I have placed before you Jesus' Passion, then, as a reality drawing the most sublime compassion. I have just noticed, however, that I have given every effort to prescind from the most bitter circumstances, in order to diminish that dolor that I see is gradually increasing in you. By so doing, perhaps I have only poorly corresponded to the affections of your hearts. I note that once you have come to consider more fully the situation of this Just Man, that there was the desire to remain with Jesus overwhelmed in His sufferings. It seems that there is the yearning not to deny Him the most just response of compassion. What is there to fear Should I not also carry out this pious desire of yours, of extending your tenderness Jesus' way?

[8. Behold the Man!]:

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.

465: And You, o Jesus, take note of the compassion that these pious souls offer you: for such is what I proposed for myself with Your grace obtained this morning. My purpose is to move them and soften their hearts with an affectionate compassion. This was all to dispose them to bring You some comfort in Your pain. It is now up to You to speak, to show and to make known to the what they ought to do and how they can bring consolation to Your most afflicted heart. Even before You open Your mouth, see that they are disposed to anticipate Your requests. Since they know that nothing can bring You more comfort than to see in them that fruit come to them for which You have suffered so much. All You want is for them to love You and to destroy all sin in them

466: They are already disposed to offer You their hearts, freed from every wrong affection. They are planning now the way, the means to be taken, and the time to give up entirely the sin in

their lives. They are disposed to despoil themselves of that affection that is displeasing to you, so that they can begin a new conduct of a virtuous life, in accord with Your wishes.

But, no - they do not intend that all their compassion should be consumed in tears. They want the compassion that they feel for You should move them to console You with their deeds. Come now, give them Your blessing as a kind of pledge that their tears are pleasing to You, that their tenderness for You is beloved to You. our out on them the abundance of Your most efficacious graces, whence they will be moved when they proceed now to kiss Your wounds, and to mingle their tears with Your blood. they will be able to grasp and to carry out for Your comfort whatever You request of their hearts on this point.

[Here begins the third part, following a brief rest. This could substitute the paragraph above, that begins with the words: The facts that remain now... -cf. # 458].

[9. Dragged to execution]:

467: Listen to the uproar! More than the sound of trumpets and drums, it is the unsettling roar of anger, fury, tumult, hoots and insulting whistling. It is like a sea of people in agitation. Christ is being dragged along the street, outside of Jerusalem, to the place of His execution. Why is there such a crowd? *Why have the Gentiles raged...?* [Ps 2:1]. To execute a malefactor, one executioner alone would suffice, and sometimes it is even hard to find one. Is it that against this one innocent man, maliciously condemned, that all have conspired to torment Him? Yes, all play their part, since His personal torment is to be the most painful. All are there, of every order, class and condition.

468: There have been times that an innocent person was persecuted by many, but was always able to find some defense, refuge in others, or at least compassion. It is only Jesus, in being hated, all play their role to bring about His death. There are princes and ministers, Jews and soldiers, lay people and priests, nobles and the masses, learned and ignorant, citizens and foreigners, Jews and Gentiles, Romans and barbarians: all concur in this execution, of the most painful kind. All are able to have a share in it, to incite further the executioners. Some shout their insults from afar. Some seem to enjoy the sight of His spasms of pain in His death: ... *they stood up... met together...* [Ps 2:2].

469: How is it that there is such a furor in everyone, and how is it that in such furor there is also such harmony in such a disharmonious mob? This is what brings the greatest pain to the heart of that innocent Victim: ... *They are multiplied above the hairs of my head, who hate me without cause...* [Ps 68:5]. They give Me evil for good, hatred for love. What is the source, then for such wrath, for such fury? And just notice, my listeners, what wrath, and what fury! Just look: with a slow pace Jesus moves ahead, *led like a sheep to the slaughter* [Is 53:7], *for many dogs have encompassed me* [Ps 21:17], *wild bulls have besieged Me...* [v. 13].

[10. The Crucifixion]:

470: Drained as He was from the excessive flagellation, they placed on His sagging shoulders the cross-bars of His gibbet. How barbaric, and cruel they are! Every step He takes, He grows more weary. He wavers, and falls. Just look at Him, o heavens! Look at Him, stretched out on the ground under this weight. Alas! Just look at Jesus, *the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people...* [v. 7], no longer a man, but He is a worm, crushed under those villainous feet. On the strength of the kicks and blows they rain upon Him, they vainly strove to have Him climb Calvary.

471: Still, what is the source of such fury in the human breast? But, it is not just human beings who are tormenting Him: the Devil himself is among His tormentors. For it is the Devil who, on entering into human hearts, changes them into such fury. Human beings assume his ancient livery against this man-God. Rather, it is not just a single demon, but all hell has broken loose: *...this is the Power of Darkness...* [Lk 22:53]. Do not even begin to think, however, that it is from any sense of compassion in those inhuman executioners for the remainder of the climb. They only did this to keep Him alive for even more cruel, and more protracted torments.

472: And yet they had to harass one another to see who would carry the Cross in His place. And where are His friends who do not step forward, freely offering to carry it for Him? They have abandoned Him.

Hence, the distress of Christ had to be all the more painful as His torment was universal. His suffering was universal not only because it was brought on Him by all, but He hurt in every way possible for a human being to do so. He experienced anguish not only from His friends, but also in the loss of reputation. They dragged two thieves long with Him, and so, *He was reputed with the wicked...* [Is 53:12], being placed among the condemned and the evil. Thus, losing His reputation, He experienced a loss in the honor and glory due Him.

473: The Cross was the torment bringing with it the greatest shame. Such a death was the most shameful [Ws 2:20], *for he is accursed of God that hangs on a tree...* [Dt 21:23].

There remained His robe. Despoiled of all else, even now His clothes were stripped off Him. He was stripped nude! and this in the sight of such a huge crowd! and it all took place at high noon! and on a high hills! *...He shall indeed be filled with reproaches...* [Lm 3:30], *shame has covered his face...* [Ps 68:8]. And that whole day long, the shame He bore wounded Him more, pierced Him more painfully than all His wounds, than all those openings brought to His body.

And now, where are the beauty, the decor, the most pure candor of those members? There is no beauty in Him, no comeliness [Is 53:2]. He is all one large bruise, one terrible wound.

474: Look over all the members of that body just to see if there is a single part that is healthy and without torment. There is no crown of gold, but one of thorns. The black tresses of His hair are all streaked with blood. His eyes are no longer those of a dove [Ct 1:14], but are daubed with mud, covered with dust and spittle. His cheeks are no longer rosy red, but are bruised, swollen by the slaps, the punches, His tresses totally bereft of comeliness. His neck, once a tower of ivory [Ct 7:4], is livid and bruised from the ropes they used to drag Him along like an animal. His shoulders, His back, His sides and legs, all are lacerated by the whips. And, o my God, on what a bed of pain they place Him now, and stretch Him out!

[11. The Nails]:

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.

476: There is no doubt that among all the deaths that of the Cross is the most bitter. We have this on the testimony even of those gentile authors, who, even though they were living in the most barbarous times in which there was no form of torment that was unknown, or unused to carry out execution on condemned unfortunates. These writers, therefore, can offer a sure witness. In fact, on the Cross the greatest torment that the wretched guilty one endured was suffered precisely in those parts of the body where the nerves are the most active. Hence, the most sensitive areas of all seem to be the **hands and feet**. The weight of the body itself as it hangs, increases

continuously the agony. And the slowness of the distress renders the death all the more bitter, as it is all the more slow.

477: Not only are all the other forms of execution surpassed by that of the Cross, but all other kinds seem to be compressed and included in this one alone. Therefore, the gashes brought by the swords, the pulling and drawing of other instruments of torture, the tearing of the limbs, being crushed by wild beasts, all this followed by convulsions, the spasms of the most acute suffering - it was like a fire that burned deep within, literally broiling His members and slowly consuming Him.

478: Furthermore, along these same lines, just see how this awful pain inflicted upon Jesus almost exceeds, and it might even be said, transcends Him. The reason is that He was afflicted not only in His hands and feet, but in all the parts of His body. He was wounded in every way, and in an instant was the recipient of most acute distress. And these terrible wounds became all the more sorrowful as they were reopened as He as furiously stripped of His garments. These had been draped over Him after the flagellation, and had become attached to the forming scabs. This was all very crudely intensified when He was most roughly stretched out on the Cross to bring the arms to the holes already made to nail Him to them. This stretching was so excessive that His bones were dislocated from their proper place. His suffering was augmented even further when the Cross with Him affixed to it was raised up, and then dropped into the deep slit in the ground prepared for it. With this, His distended body was horribly shaken.

479: Job complained bitterly that the demon, who had become his tormentor, had left nothing well, other than the lips about his teeth [Jb 19:20]. Jesus' executioners, however, did not even leave a single member of His entire body unwounded. They even willed that not even any one of His senses should remain without its own particular torment. With gall, they embittered His taste: to torment His sense of smell, they crucified Him in that place which because of the number of bodies buried there, was most fetid; they continuously wounded His hearing with the most horrible shouts, with insults and the most biting sayings, and the most enormous curses. For His sense of sight, they had prepared its own particular torment: right before His eyes they hurled scorn at Him as He languished, they made fun of His groans and laughed at His pain.

[12. Insulting Mob]:

480: And so, after having tormented His body in every way, they insidiously took steps to wound even more profoundly His spirit. What more bitter wound could there be for a loving heart than to see one's death being obtained, but being subjected to insults unto death, precisely by those for whose salvation He has chosen to die? And what deeper laceration could there be for that heart that is already wounded and full of compunction for the sins of all, of all human beings who ever were, or ever will be until the end of time for whom He underwent all this, and for each one is particular? Did He not suffer all this especially for those committing the horrendous crime of Deicide? Was it not He personally Who experienced most bitter contrition as if all these were His own sins, in that He had applied to Himself these words: ... *these are the words of my sins..* [Ps 21:2].

481: Nonetheless, Jesus prays even for them, and also excuses them: ... *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do...* [Lk 23:34]. Yet they do know how cleverly to curse Him: '*...He saved others..*', they derided Him, saying: '*Let Him save Himself...*' [v. 35]. And these are the leaders of the people, and there are Levites among them, and they are the well-educated among them who talk this way. As for the vile members among the crowd, and even the thieves crucified with Him, all join in insulting Him: ... *If You be the Christ, save Yourself...!* [v. 39]. At these wicked voices, the sun left this world, ... *and there was darkness over all the earth...* [v. 44]. And what about Jesus through all this? If even one of them would withdraw into himself and

recognize his sin, Jesus is ready to say to him: ... *this day you shall be with Me in paradise...*! [v. 43].

482: But, even this actually aggravated His pain. Thieves are saved: “but, My People, My Chosen Nation; My dear Disciple, and Judas are damned.” Only one repents and he will be followed by so few. The greater part of those for whom I suffer so much will profit nothing by My distress. What good will there be from so much blood being poured out? [Ps 29:10]. For many, all this blood will serve only for judgment [1 Co 11:29], and this Cross will prove only to be a scandal [1 Co 1:23]. He sighs heavenward, and then looks in great affliction toward the ground, and there He sees Mary.

[14. Mary]:

483: At this sight, the bitter floods of compassionate suffering that had inundated the Mother’s heart, turn in all their might an impetus, to the most bitter sea of pain [Lm 2:13]. They rush into the Son’s heart, and He is overwhelmed by them, as this time the tide sweeps all in its wake.

Sharing thus in His pains, only increases them in the Son. The barbarians do not block her in this, but only deny her the possibility of extending comfort to Him. There is no veil allowed to cover the confusion of His nudity, nor is there permitted a drop of relief to His dying lips burning with fever.

Mary weeps, and with her, John does too: “... Ah, woman [Jesus no longer says, ‘Mother’] ... I now leave you. Behold the one who from now on will be your son in My place [cf. Jn 19:26]. ...And then He turned to the disciple... [v. 27]. And she, He said, now that I have to leave, will be your Mother”.

484: Now from that heaving chest, His panting breath blocks His throat. At the violent shaking of His body, all His members shake in convulsion, and the whites of His eyes appear. O God! Jesus is dying! But, no, my listeners: the end of His sufferings has not yet come. This is but the natural horror of death, it is the love for her life, and one that is so precious, and a life that is so dear. This combat between love and life together seem to exhaust His nature. It is a veritable flood of pains arising from every part of His body, and rushing up out of His spirit, that they seem almost to bring shipwreck to His heart. This distress transcends all human judgment, or experience, in that Jesus’ senses are the more perfect and thus more capable of suffering.

485: His Body is that formed of the most pure blood of the Virgin and through a miracle formed immediately by the Holy Spirit. So, in the words of St. Bonaventure⁴, His body was all the more delicate, and therefore, the more sensitive. The sole of His feet was more capable of pain than would be the pupil of our eyes.

Christ’s soul, both because of the sublime excellence of His mind, and the immense depths of His Heart, was, as St. Thomas teaches⁵, the most disposed to be saddened to a supreme degree for all the motives for sadness that came to Him in abundance.

[13. Total Desolation]:

486: Would that at least this humanity that was agonizing in the sufferings and the sadness of the most tormenting punishment, have had at least some comfort from the Divinity, conjoined and inseparable to it! But, what do these words entail: ...*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me...*? [Ps 21:2; Mt 27:46] - if not to mean: is it not so that the Divinity, as far as easing My

⁴St. Bonaventure [precise citation not given].

⁵St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 46, a. 6.

human nature from its distress, conducts itself with this humanity as though it were not conjoined to it by any union? And not only by a prodigious barrier there is kept in full His glory in the superior part of My soul - but, this very glory, immovable in Me, of a blessed fruition, also militates in Me to even greater discomfort.

487: Even if in others who suffer there is often mitigated either the sadness of the spirit, or the dolor of the body, by reflections that appeal to reason - in this case, by a certain redundancy of the superior forces over those that are inferior, there was closed to Me this path of consolation. And so, since the way to every torment is open in My Body and in My Spirit, with all natural efficacy, thus - every sense, or strength, or potency, is allowed to suffer. This holds true in all intensity and purity for that sadness and that dolor proper to them.

O, all of you, therefore, who pass by today in compassionate meditation along the path signed by My pain, fix upon Me the look of your contemplation, ... *and see if there be any sorrow like to My sorrow...* [Lm 1:12]. O, my Jesus!

488: But, does not the sheer power of Your love not diminish Your pains, or at least, Your interior sadness? Is it not this powerful love that forces You to say: *...I thirst...!* [Jn 19:28]. Is not this the thirst for the salvation of souls, a thirst of suffering even more for their salvation?

So, my listeners, thus His sufferings increase beyond measure. Therefore, if He willingly assumed these in order to liberate us from sin, then He had to take them on in such quantity that they would be in proportion to the greatness of the fruit that He desired. This quantity and proportion He achieved not only by the strength and by the worth that His Divinity always united to His pain and dolor. Hence, even a single drop of His blood was superabundant in removing all the sins of the whole world. Even further, even according to His human nature alone, His distress would have had a certain sufficiency, and His pain would have achieved a notable satisfaction. The reason is that He emptied all of His blood from His veins under the crushing press of the most tormenting execution.

[14. Another Prayer]:

489: O Eternal Father! Your will, Your Decree is now accomplished by me. Now the human race is liberated from sin, not by power alone, indeed possible for Your omnipotence. But, all is accomplished with justice and with full rigor of justice, as Your violated honor required of Me: *... it is consummated...!* [Jn 19:30].

Your justice is satisfied. Enormous was the debt of human sin - and enormous were the pains that My will, in harmony with Yours, assumed in this torture. In this distress, My very life is now lost, and is rather consumed. ... *It is consummated... Into Your hands I commend My Spirit...!* [LK 23:46]. And here, Jesus bows His head and dies.

[15. Wound in the 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!**

491: O my God! Look at Him, my hearers. Unleash your hearts, loosen the bonds of your tears, satisfy the warm affections of your compassion. The motive is all too just, honest - this

alone is reason enough to cry, to weep. You are alone on this day to offer your compassion for this innocent, betrayed Man, this Just Man Who has been condemned, this Crucified Love. Weep for Him. He is Your Father, Your Redeemer. It was for you, for you, that He chose to die. This tribute of your tears is all that the One Who gave all His blood for you is asking.

492: O God! Stop ... What do I hear?... Alas, do you also hear the eloquence of this blood? I am shaking... and I tremble. And what about you? Is your heart still deaf? Well, must I tell you what I feel, that these **wounds** correspond to our tears? But, even better, pay close attention yourselves. Listen: ... *weep not over Me...!* [[Lk 23:28](#)]. Does this mean, then, that Jesus refuses the tribute of our tears? But, how can this be? Listen as He goes on: ... *but, weep for yourselves and your children...!* [[ib](#)]. O God! I understand You, I get it. Our sins are the sole reason for Your suffering.

[16. Let us weep!]:

493: Let us weep, then, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us weep, all of us. Mourn for Jesus, but let our hearts feel compunction. We are the cause of the death of this Just Man. We have betrayed Him, and how many times, and at what price! Just for some sordid gain, for some unclean pleasure. We have been unfaithful to promises made, ungrateful for gifts received, with no understanding of His love. We have been more perfidious than Judas, the traitor. What betrayal, what perfidy, what sin! Pardon, my Jesus, give me pardon: give vent to your tears always. Let us commit no more sins, no more sins.

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.

495: Give to us, O Lord, give to us these thorns that pierce the temples, the horrible fruit of our bad thoughts. **Give us those nails, tragic result of our bold and lascivious hands and feet.** Give to us this cross, shameful accounting for our sin. Our pride, our anger, our gluttony, our lasciviousness, all are Your Cross. We have put You to death, we have crucified You. What cruelty, what barbarity!

[17. We continuously wound Him!]:

496: **And even dead, our scandals continue to lacerate this Body, to wound this side, to open Your Heart, to wrench from You the souls that are so dear to You, and to snatch them from Your paternal bosom.** And your veins are emptied still, this blood is bludgeoned out by us. He is trampled under foot on every corner, in every street, and in every square by so many blasphemies. He is trampled under foot in these temples, at the very feet of these altars, with so many sacrilegious profanations. He is still being trampled under foot in every place, at all hours, by all of us, washed clean from sin so many times by this blood - yet, we sin, and we go on sinning.

497: What supreme fury! What heights of cruelty! How excessive the sin! And should anyone not know what sin is, come to the Cross and learn. Right now, I myself will place it before your eyes, I will stretch it out at your feet. And whoever has not sinned, I am content that such a one would not have to weep this evening. But, we sinners, we who have re-crucified this Son of God

so many times in ourselves - we who have trampled under foot the Blood of the Covenant: we should weep, we should all weep, and weep even more.

498: This is most suitable for us, all of us who would merit to weep eternally, buried in hell, even below the perfidious Judas; worse than the evil Hebrews, even the very demons themselves. We have beat all these in perfidy, in insult, in cruelty. It could very well be that the last blow awaits us in the next few minutes. Let us all weep, Ladies and Gentlemen, before this day of copious Redemption and Salvation draws to a close, and gives way to the day of wrath and vengeance. Let us cry at the feet of the deceased Christ, Who reaches out to us - before He turns in His Majesty and in His anger to pass judgment on our fault. Let us weep, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us weep even more. It is more than helpful for us to weep this day. For this is the day in which pardon is extended even to the crucifiers. This is the day in which Jesus manifests to us His Mercy and gives us His blessing as pledge.

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Sources

OT

Dt 21:23	# 473	Ps 68:8	# 473
Jb 7:5, ff.	# 461	21	# 427
19:20	# 479	Ct 1:14	# 474
Ps 2:1	# 467	7:4	# 474
2	# 468	Ws 2:20	# 473
21:2	## 480;486	Is 53:2	## 464;473
7	# 470	7	# 469
13	# 469	12	## 426; 428
17	# 469	57:1	#487
29:10	# 482	Lm 1:12	#487
54:13	# 439	2:13	#483
68:5	# 469	3:30	#473

NT

Mt 26:15	# 438	Lk 23:35	#481
38	# 439	39	#481
50	# 445	44	#481
27:17	# 452	46	#489
21	# 452	Jn 18:36	#449
23	# 452	19:5	## 455;464
46	# 486	11	#441
Mk 3:27	# 443	26	#483
14: 22, f.	# 435	27	#483
Lk 22:48	# 445	28	#488
53	# 471	30	#489
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4	# 457	11:25	#435
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1807

1297:

SERMON 38
The Spiritual Life
The Resurrection

For 'Low' Sunday, April 5th [98], of the year 1807, Verona, in St. Paul's of Campo Marzio.

[Introduction]:

With what desire, most illustrious listeners, and my most gentle brothers and sisters, with what desire always comes over me when I ascend here in this place to speak . . . And with what pleasure there is for me to speak to you, God knows. Moreover, today I cannot hide my joy, I do not know how to contain my rejoicing.

Having just completed in these past days, the laments of penance, and your justification being completed, celebrated in these days, as I believe, today, for all of you, is Easter. I see you, then, risen in Christ, walking joyfully in newness of life, solicitous to hurry on with the disciples to see Christ in Galilee.

1298: I am speaking, then, with men and women who from fear and contrition, ascend with sureness to the confidence of divine mercy. You have ascended from the joys of this world and from its consolations, through compunction and sadness that is from God. You have now passed over into a holy devout exaltation, into a vibrant spiritual joy in the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is not so much that past sins remembered give pain, as the memory delights and influences the desire for eternal rewards. You are indeed happy, and I call myself blessed today in that I share in your joy.

1299: However, my tongue is not free except to serve the most bold dispositions of your and my heart. You are running along quite well: I have to feel joy, and I must congratulate you. I cannot hold back from exhorting you to move your bodies along toward heaven, even to touch the blessed goal toward which you tend, without ever going back to retrace one's steps. I exhort you not even to give a glance at this unhappy earth, from which, as a sorrowful bitter place, you have by now much distanced yourselves.

[1. *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].*

Here are two very strong reasons for this: I will only try to explain them to you. I promise you on such a day of much joy that my sermon will have much consolation, and as is my custom, it will be brief.

[a. *Be dead to sin!*]:

1301: First of all, *you are dead*. There are various kinds of death. Bodily death: according to this, Abraham, being dead, yet was not dead, since God [the Gospel speaks, Mt 22:32] is not a God of the dead, but of the living. Then, there is the death of the soul. Christ alluded to this in His saying: . . . *let the dead bury their dead... [Mt 8:22]*. Another, very praise-worthy death is that which comes from virtue, of which the Doctor of the Gentiles writes in this same place: . . . *Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth... [Col. 3:5]*. There is still another death, the cause of the antecedent one. This is achieved in Baptism, or in Penance, which is a laborious Baptism. It is of this that St. Paul wishes to have you understand how it is that you are *dead*.

1302: He explains this quite well himself in the Letter to the Romans: *...For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?* [Rm 6:2]. This is about the subject of this death. And what does it mean to be *dead to sin*? It means not to make any more use of sin. Baptism has accomplished this once, and Penance has renewed it: it has put us to death to sin. It is necessary now to carry this death out with our solicitude, that whatever sin should command us, or evil passion, perverse affection, we are not to be obedient, but to be totally deaf to it all. We will thus be as dead, and let us persevere immobile.

[b. No wrong to others]:

1303: A person who is deceased, is said to be a Saint ⁶, never speaks badly of another. The dead do no injury, violence, offer no calumny, oppress no one. They show no envy toward the good, and do not insult the evil. Luxury does not pamper their flesh, nor do they burn with hatred. They do not adulate the powerful and the rich of this world, nor are they attracted by a restless curiosity. They do not seek the applause of the crowds that surround them. They do not chase after gold or silver, or rich, and pompous trappings. They do not cultivate honors, and do not respond to injuries. Pride does not swell them up, ambition does not vex them, and vain glory does not agitate them. The false wealth of this life does not elevate them, the insane fury of wrath does not perturb them. The frail beauty of a face does not fascinate them. This is what it means to be dead, dead to sin: not to be spent on earthy attractions, animal-like affections, the desires of this world and of the flesh.

[c. Dead through Baptism, Penance]:

1304: The Apostle continues: *...Know you not that all we, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death...?* [cf. Rm 6:3]. [You add to this: or washed in the blood of Christ, or Penance]. This is the manner of such a death: Baptism and Penance are our Cross. This is also our sepulcher. We are, in fact, the Apostle continues: *...for we are buried together with Him by Baptism unto death...* [v. 4]. This is so that each one of us would die as he has died, although not in the same way, he has died in the flesh and was buried; we are meant to be both of these in regard to sin. Both of these are 'death', but not of the same subject. The death of the flesh, that is Christ's death to sin, is ours: and both the former, as well as the latter, are true *death*. However, even though this is true, it is fitting that we should still contribute all that activity that is expected on our part. Thus, the Apostle adds: *... that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life...* [v. 4].

[d. Resurrection 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. ANSELM ⁷: 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.

⁶ cf. Cornelius a Lapide, in Col 3:3; Rodriguez [t. 3, tr. 1, 23, 2 (99)].

⁷ Cited by Cornelius a Lapide, Col 3:3.

[e. Going back to flesh-pots of Egypt]:

1306: However, the thought of how much virtue the Apostle might ask of us makes one weep, especially in seeing how much weakness there is in us. After Baptism, we have gone back and aged in the old vices, and after the Manna from heaven, we have again sought out the vile food of Egypt. Even, we have been rejuvenated so many times and liberated from slavery, and we have fallen right back into that sad old age of sin, and once more put our hands freely within chains. Now, however, in this Easter we have once more risen to grace and died to sin. Do we not now wish no longer to abuse such mercy, and to persevere with every effort?

1307: Would that past sins, I repeat this, and never could sufficiently: would that all past sins were buried, as this is the gift of grace. Would that after penance, we would keep ourselves as dead. This is the challenge for our commitment, although we see that even in this, grace must help us very much. Penance does not only cancel previous sins, but also confirms one against future lapses. As we have employed in the sacrament what is our part, namely contrition, the accusation and the will to make satisfaction - so, we also for the future, commit the care of our dedication not to become contaminated anew.

[f. Through Burial of our Sins, we rise with Him]:

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 form 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.

1309: All this while our lives are hidden with Christ in God [**Col 3:3**]. As this fruit of blessedness is to be produced, it is necessary to let it come to maturity. We could still say much about this plant of death, but already without even being aware of it, we have touched upon the more joyful motive of the fruit of life. This, too, contains some difficulties at first sight to understand it, so cutting this out of love for brevity, with just the idea dropped, let us move on in haste to the **second thought**.

[2. New Life: Life of Grace

1310: And let us see right away how there might be explained this hidden aspect of our life with Christ in God. Our brand new life is the life of grace that we possess. It is the life of glory that we await. Both of these are hidden from the eyes of the world. The world has no knowledge of this new kind of life, that is interior, spiritual and holy. In fact, the world thinks of it with abhorrence, and esteems it as melancholic and death. Furthermore, such a life proceeds covered under the humble veil of mortification, of apparent sadness and of corporal tribulations. And grace, the virtues, and the gifts, that are like the soul of this life, remain intimate in the spirit, and enclosed in the mind.

1311: And the good, points out the Holy Father, AUGUSTINE ⁸, the good remain hidden because their good is concealed. What they love is neither visible, nor corporal. And thus, their merits are held back in secret, as are their rewards.

St. GREGORY THE GREAT also explains to you how these virtuous individuals are hidden in God. Thus, he writes in the Gift Book of his *Moralia* ⁹: Anyone who loves to mortify

⁸ *Enarr. In Ps 53:3* [t. 4, p. 493 g].

himself, rejoices much in the repose afforded in contemplation. Such a person is dead to this world, and is shielded from all the perturbations of human realities in the bosom of the interior life where he remains in obscurity.

1312: To cite still another example, CORNELIUS a LAPIDE ¹⁰ relates the story of the Holy Count, Eleazar, 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 there 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?

[3. Life of Glory is unseen]:

1313: But, precisely this life of glory, in the hope of which we now glory, is much less known and seen by the world. Similarly, there is not seen the glorious life to which Christ has risen, and of which He lives in God, that is, near His Father. This is why St. Paul states [Col 3:3, ff.] that our life is hidden with Christ in God: *...When Christ shall appear, who is your life [i.e., the cause of your life] , then you shall also appear with Him in glory... [v. 4].* This is just like the pearl, says St. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ¹¹, whose end is hidden as it is in its shell.

[a. Spiritual Winter gives way to a New Spring-time]:

1314: Even more fitting is the example that St. AUGUSTINE ¹² uses to dilucidate 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.

[b. New Life in Christ]:

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 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].*

1316: And in another place: *...But our conversation is in heaven... [Ph 3:20].* And: *...But you are not in the flesh.. [Rm 8:9].* And again: *... having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ ... [Ph 1:23].* These are some of the sublime affections of a person dead to sin, one who no

⁹ 5. 5 [t. 1, p. 91, 1 B].

¹⁰ Col 3:3.

¹¹ *In Epist. Ad Col.* Hom 7, 2 [t. 11, p. 227/2 D].

¹² cf. *De Script. Vet. et Nov., Test.*, Sermon. 36, 4. [t. 5/1, pp. 176 G, ff.].

longer has a taste for the things of this earth. These **are the sublime feelings of a spirit living hidden together with Christ in God**. Such a person seeks only the **superior realities, those that are of heaven, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God** [Col 3:1]. These are the sweet transports of a heart ravished by the sweet joy of these holy thoughts.

[4. Reasons for Joy: 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 upsetment that would disturb us.

1319: In the meanwhile, as long as our life remains hidden, let us be content with keeping ourselves, and even being considered to be dead: *...we have been crucified to the world, and the world is a crucifix for us...* [Ga 6:14]... thus, we will mortify ourselves as the apostle goes on to say: *...mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth...* [Col 3:5]. He means: you are already dead; persevere in this death by mortification.

1320: Mortify in you the members of the old man, the sinner in Adam [Col 3:5, ff.]- these members are the passions, that even after Penance, they come to life again with their acts which are, as he explains immediately, fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is the service of idols [v. 6]. For all these, there comes, or has come, the wrath of God upon the children of incredulity, reveals to the sight of God and to the Gospel: *...in which you also walked some time, when you lived in them...* [v. 7].

1321: *...What fruit, therefore, had you,. Then, in those things of which you are now ashamed...* [Rm 6:21]. Would you like, then, to return to your vomit? Exhume your sin, put yourself back into slavery, throw away the most copious redemption of Jesus Christ? Would you annul the price of so much Blood, call down this Blood upon yourselves, with all the intolerable weight of His wrath? Would you exchange the supreme future goods that have been promised to you, for the abysmal evils from which God has dug you out? Would you choose rather the glory of your state, an eternal shame; the rights for an inheritance, for a sentence of condemnation? Would you swap divine filiation and its honor for infamy, for a brute-like life? Would you prefer the flesh to the spirit, the earth to heaven, paradise for hell?

[Conclusion: Onward to heaven!]:

1322: No, of course not! 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

SERMON 5
The Ascension

Preached in the Parish Church of St. Paul's in the Campo Marzio section of Verona, on the 14th day of Mary in the year 1801.

[Introduction: Preparing a Place for us!]

At the harmonious sound of the angelic trumpets [Ps 46:6], at the joyful jubilation, Jesus in triumph ascends toward His Kingdom. I am quite sure, devout listeners, that you, too, direct your yearning on this day toward heaven. There you have affixed your hearts where indeed is guaranteed happiness¹³, where there is perfect beatitude and where peace is eternal. You are indeed exultant, animated by these noble promises with which Jesus consoled you before His departure, when He said: *...I go to prepare a place for you...* [Jn 14:2]. Indeed, your affections have been inspired and placed on such a sublime level.

500: But look, it would not be terribly offensive to your inspired charity to direct a compassionate regard toward so many of your brothers and sisters. They, too, are participants with you in the same promises, and yet, they are discouraged with their eyes lowered. The reason is that they are afraid of being forced to give up those wretched delights that they still badly enjoy. They make no effort, therefore, or they lack the confidence to lift up their eyes boldly toward heaven to where they have also been called.

501: PROPOSITION

As for me, I have to confess, the pain that I feel at their loss does not allow me to do anything other than to direct my words up this day for their salvation. In order to shake them up, I will make clear to them just how stupid it is for anyone to deliberately enjoy the present goods at the cost of an irreparable future good. You should not refuse to extend your helping hands in the form of your most fervent prayers. If you do, then I have absolutely no doubt that we will succeed in lifting them up out of their most sorry abjection.

[1. The Choice: Time - or, Eternity?]:

502: 1. The first point is that one should come to elect quality goods in contrast with those that are excessively inferior; in other words, the choice is between short-lived goods as against those that are eternal.

Let us imagine, then, my brother or sister in sin, that you could accept as directed to you all my words this day. Let us just imagine for a little while that it were possible for us to choose one of these two realities: either to enjoy for a single night a pleasant dream, and then on awaking the next day, to be confronted with a series of misfortunes that should have to last the rest of your life; or, to go without that very brief and only apparent sweetness, and even be willing to suffer a somewhat sad dream, but with the assurance, however, that there would be placed in our hands until death all the goods that this earth could offer¹⁴.

503: Should there be anyone, desirous of that vain happiness of a short dream, who would be content to lose an entire life-time of joy, then I do not know what judgment to make. It would be hard to say whether such a one making such an extravagant choice would merit the more to be

¹³cf. Liturgy for the 4th Sunday after Easter.

¹⁴St/ John Chrysostom *Ad Theod. lapsus*, bk 9, t. 1, 8/1 A.

pitied as imprudent - or rather derided as ridiculous. What else is this present life than a fleeting dream, a waft of smoke, a shadow, a vapor, that dissipates when confronted with eternity? The choice now is up to you: either to enjoy in this short dream some delight forced out of creatures, as it were - or, to enjoy a blessed life that would know no end.

504: That such a choice is given to you, you have from the very words of Christ: *...the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy...* [Jn 16:20]. And do you resolve to rejoice now with the world and thus lose eternal joy? And are you not ashamed of yourself to entertain such a sorry deliberation? What opinion can the truly wise form regarding your judgment? Is not this already some indication of that rectitude of understanding with which each and every one of you, to your great honor have been endowed by God?

505: But, I do not want to find any further fault with you in this since I notice that you already are beginning to be a little shamed of yourself; I can see that such an unfortunate deliberation has proceeded in you rather from not fully understanding the reality as it is in itself, rather than from any malice in your mind. This is also confirmed because I notice in other matters regarding which you surely have full knowledge, as regarding affairs that have to do with the necessities of this temporal life, you make use of prudent and praiseworthy counsel. Hence, let us understand well the quality of temporal goods and heavenly goods, and then all the more clearly will you perceive the ill-judged choice of such a determination. It is not just that you elect a delight that is at best fleeting, but even more you opt for a good that is only apparent over one that is authentic.

[a. Authenticity over Arrogance?]:

506: Apparent goods, over those that are authentic: Indeed, what are these benefits that are enjoyed in the brief dream that this life is, if not just that, goods that are merely dreamed? The avaricious person dreams of having his hands full of gold and silver - but, then with the new day, he gets up thinking that he is still clutching that wealth in his hands, but rather finds his hands empty. Thus is the way it is with the goods of this world, says the Holy Spirit - Who, however, speaking of those persons who abound in this, thus expresses Himself?

They have slept their sleep; and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands... [Ps 75:6]. And just as the illusion of a dream that does not render the state of anyone more comfortable than that of the poor person. He has dreamt that he had become rich, but this only increased his wretchedness realizing to his greater inner sorrow that he was indeed bereft of the wealth that with such pleasure he imagined that he possessed. Much like this, the goods of this present time will never satisfy our hearts. This is an evident sign that such appurtenances are not all that they seem to be.

507: Just listen for a minute: what else does that emptiness mean that you experience after having satisfied your passions; after you have not denied your senses some pleasure that is really forbidden to you? What is that inner yearning, always desirous of other trappings, of ever new delights, over and above those that you achieve only after much effort? What is that regret that still weighs on your heart, and what is this restlessness that only increases, as your desires intensify even the more? Is it not that you are something like a feverish person who wrongly thinks that with just a little water he might be able to extinguish the burning fever, and yet seems to increase it even further?

[b. Inadequacy, or Perfection?]:

508: These are inadequate benefits, in comparison to the last end, which is perfect beatitude: But, I would like to point out that these goods seem to be genuine. However, they are not adequate for the deepest yearnings of our hearts: and this is why they can never be fully

satisfying. Whatever delight and joy that might quiet our spirit put in motion by desires spring from the application of the faculties to objects pleasing to them. However, the object of any being, practically infinite in its desires, can only be an infinite good. How, then, can we want such insignificant rewards, that are so limited, for our satisfaction? If indeed our heart is as vast as another ocean, how could these little streamlets of water ever fill the immensity of its capacity?

509: O, but in heaven, only in heaven will we ever find an object suitable to our heart: a God, an infinite good. O, my God, only then, then only will I be satiated, when Your glory will appear [Ps 16:15]. Only You can slake my deepest yearnings with the torrent of Your delights [Ps 35:9]. This is why You have created me with an insatiable heart, that it might come to understand that it has been made for You, and that it will always be restless until it rests in You ¹⁵. Human heart, understand your folly! Just to enjoy a passing dream, you would lose eternal beatitude. You chase after the shadows, vanity, and you leave the genuine good, Uncreated Beauty, you lose that God Who is everything.

[2. Counterfeit Gain - or, Real Loss?]:

510: 2. In the last analysis, it is only a matter of depriving yourself of just a few counterfeit goods, and delights that are really base.

These arguments that I have advanced up to now prove of themselves that whenever it is a question of renouncing each and every one of the goods and the pleasures of this life in order to be assured of eternal blessings, it would be supreme folly to prefer the present over the future. However, it is not necessary to go this far. God did not forbid Adam from enjoying all the fruits of the earthly paradise: He forbade only one tree. And the condition with which Adam could have assured for himself and for all his descendants his felicity was so easy to comply with, that his bad judgment is all the more deplorable when he lost so much for such a small gain.

511: This is our own situation now. Are those delights truly honest ones, and are those pleasures truly innocent that you enjoy so much? If so, then continue to enjoy them. However if due to bad intentions of your mind, or if there is an unregulated manner in which you make use of them, or if you love them - you yourself make illicit what, in other circumstances, could become licit. Nothing other is being asked of you than that you reform your heart and that you regulate the use of these realities. Hence, it is apparent that you can indeed enjoy these benefits or delights in this life provided they are correct in themselves, or that they can be rendered good by your manner of making use of them. In this way, you can pass on to eternal joy of heaven, as passing over from what is imperfect to what is more perfect. What it really all comes down to is the necessity of depriving yourself from those false goods and pleasures which are already unworthy in themselves. The reason here is that there is nothing that can change the nature of evil that is intrinsic to these.

512: And will not your poor judgment be all the worse when it is simply a matter of giving up some very insignificant delight that would dishonor your right reason with its malice? Is it not true that you can enjoy abundantly other benefits promised to you? Why would you be willing to lose eternal delights which are promised to you and which, by contrast, and so incomparably advantageous to you? Even further, you really do not have to wait all that long, as in this life as well, you will be compensated with a superabundance of joy.

[3. Present Denial, and Eternal gain]:

513: 3. Because such deprivation will be compensated with an even greater delight:

¹⁵St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Bk 1, t. 1, 69 B.

In fact, even before condemnation to hell, a life of vice forms also in this life in its unfortunate followers, a very grave torment of bitterness and bother. By contrast, virtue is not slow in rewarding its noble lovers, nor does it wait long to crown them with immortal glory in heaven. But, it showers in the meantime with anticipated delights their entire life with sweet hopes nourished with pure pleasure ¹⁶.

514: But, pay no heed to my words, any of you who perhaps is used to looking at a mortified and virtuous life as one of melancholy and sadness: I would not be surprised. The sick person believes that wine is bitter and that music is bothersome, while the healthy individual enjoys its taste and takes pleasure in its sweetness. As long as Augustine lay in the filth of his own pleasures, he himself confesses that it seemed impossible for him to live, in that he could find no comfort outside of them. But, when he made the generous resolution to hold back his passion from those unclean pleasures, he himself tells us ¹⁷: O, how very quickly, how very soon was I able to experience the sweetness of being deprived from that vain sweetness! And those pleasures that just a short while before I had dreaded losing, were now a delight to leave behind - since You, o my God, You expelled them from me. You Who are true and supreme Sweetness, You ejected them, and You entered Yourself in their place, much more sweet than every supreme delight.

515: For this, you could very well believe a person who, after having experienced the bother of illness, the sweetness of restored health is made all the more evident. Let us conclude, then. If the deprivation of some benefit and of a very vile pleasure is compensated not only with an immense excess of beatitude in heaven, but also with the superabundance of joy even on this earth, then what is the extent of poor judgment of anyone who would decide not to give them up - even at the cost of having to lose forever one's future perfect and ultimate happiness? I leave this for you to judge and do reflect upon for a while, until I catch my breath, and then will draw this to a conclusion.

516: PERORATION: And now, sinner, here you are, and all are waiting for your resolution. Yes, all await it. We wait for it impatiently as he desire of all of us, for whom the salvation of your soul is as much in our hearts as our own is. God knows with how much affection, we have begged today for your conversion, and we have not even yet given up the most fervent appeals to obtain it.

517: Heaven awaits it, 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.

518: I can see that the Angels are preparing already to place everything in Paradise in motion for a new, most joyful festival, for the conversion of your heart which they feel is by now proximate. What more? Hell, too, is waiting, with indignant agitation and with fear of your resolutions. And I can almost see it yawning wide at your feet. This is the moment that decides - perhaps it will snatch you to have you lost forever. They are very much afraid, these enemies of yours, offering temptation that the vision of heaven and of so many eternal and incomparable

¹⁶St. John Chrysostom, *In Ps 124.*, 2 t. 5, 216/ B, C.

¹⁷St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 9, 1. t. 1, 157/B.

blessings that are being promised to you, might in the long run move you to resolve to cast aside these very empty earthly delights, with which they have for so long filled your hearts' desire.

519: What do you think, then, what are you going to do? What do you decide? What are your resolutions? Are you still uncertain? Are you still doubtful? But, if you want to go on living as you now do, there is no need to make any resolution. Hell is for you. And I can already see that the demons are making even greater efforts to tighten your chains, while you delay making the resolution of escaping from their hands. Come on, now. If you do resolve, resolve in this very instant. The grace of God does not know of slow preparations ¹⁸. Have you, therefore, resolved to kick aside your unregulated passions? Yes, you have, I no longer have any doubts. It would be already an indication of poor judgment that you have not done this before; but, it would seem absolutely impossible that you do not do it at this moment.

520: Lift up your eyes boldly to heaven. Yes, heaven is yours. Already at this hour the Saints of heaven recognize you as their fellow-citizen. Jesus has already prepared the place that you are to occupy, the glory with which He wants to reward you. He already disposes the graces to assist you even unto the final realization. All the high-ways and by-ways of the heavenly city resound with most joy-filled chants and with most sweet music, with which they celebrate as a festival this most blessed moment of your conversion.

[Concluding Prayer]:

521: O, my God, my Jesus! If this is the way it is, if this is the state of the matter, I cannot longer put it off. The proposal of this soul who hands himself over to you - by the words of a poor sinner such as I am, assisted by your grace - and by the intercession of so many prayers of such a pious and devout audience - have gained on this day even a single happy soul to be added to the squads of those blessed souls, like happy prisoners, conquered by Your grace - they now form the most solemn pomp of Your triumph, following Your glorious Ascension into heaven. If this is the way it is, then, I do not request of You any other consolations for myself, no other comforts in the hardships of my life and my spirit. This is enough for me, joined to the hope with which I trust that my innumerable sins are benignly condoned, I will be together with all of these, my devout bothers and sisters, after these few days, to enjoy your glory forever.

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Sources

OT

Ps 16:15	# 509	Ps 46:6	# 499
35:9	# 509		

NT

Jn 14:2	# 499	Ac 7:55	# 517
16:20	# 504		

Liturgy

4th Sunday after Easter			# 499
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Fathers and Doctors

St. Ambrose, <i>In Luc</i> , 2, 19. t. 1, 1288 E			# 519
St. Augustine, <i>Confessins</i> , Bk 1. t. 1, 69, B			# 509
<i>Confessions</i> , Bk 9, 1. 1, 157/B			# 514
St. John Chrysostom, <i>Ad Theod. lapsus</i> . 1,9. t. 1. 8/1 A	# 502		
<i>In Psalm 124</i> , 2 t. 5, 216, 2/B			# 513

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¹⁸St. Ambrose, *In Luc*. 2, 19. t. 1, 1288/ E.

[B] **MISCELLANEOUS**
THE SACRED HEART ¹⁹

1755: Introduction:

The faithful direct their worship of adoration to the humanity of Christ. This adoration, by which the humanity and vivified flesh of Christ is adored,, is not adored on account of itself, as a mere flesh, but insofar as it is united to the Divinity, this is one and the same adoration by which the Incarnate word is adored together with His own flesh.

So, a pious and due worship has been offered by the faithful to the humanity of Christ.

Therefore.

1756: 1. Doctrine:

Devotion toward the most Sacred Heart of Jesus is not new, nor erroneous, nor dangerous, as this has been approved by the Apostolic See.

The Faithful do not adore the Heart of Jesus separate from, or distinguished from His divinity, but they adore it in so far as it is the Heart of Jesus, this word which is inseparably united to the Person of the Word, in that manner in which that emptied Body of Christ in the triduum of His death, without any separation, or distinction from His Divinity, was adorable in the grave.

1757: The Holy See ²⁰, the Mistress of Truth [*The Roman Church is the Mother and the Mistress of all Churches* - Council of Trent, Denz. 946] has pursued this with thousands of Briefs with indulgences in order to favor this devotion and to spread it throughout Christianity.

a.. The Apostles: of this Devotion were:

- Father Colombiere, a religious of heroic holiness: **Claude de le Colombiere, was a most celebrated preacher, so fervent in the divine spirit, that it appeared from his sermons and the most sublime devotion which he nurtured, that** he was seeking in all the greater perfection. [This is from Concina, the tract of Penance, in Disc. 3, c. 6].

1758: - Margaret Mary Alacoque: was always honored by Benedict XIV with the title of Venerable [t. 4, De Beat., Book 4, part 2, c. 31, n. 20] - whom all of France followed to venerate her tomb. Her life was written by Msgr. Languet, one of the most learned and zealous Prelates that France ever had [cf. Ben. XIV, De Fest. D.N.J.C., Book I, c. 15, n. 5].

b. The Sacred Congregation of Rites asserts: **The worship of the Heart of Jesus is propagated in almost all parts of the world, with the blessing of their Bishops.**

The Roman Church granted to the Feast of the Sacred Heart its own Mass and Office.

1759: 2. History:

This Devotion to the Sacred Heart is not new.

It did not have its origin with Thomas Goodwin, a Socinian, or Calvinist heretic.

It is necessary to distinguish in this devotion its private cult, and that which is public. It is certain that this private cult was introduced much before the great saints.

¹⁹ **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.

²⁰ **NB:** this segment, translated in simple print, is in Italian.

a.. The Saints:

- In the Life of St Gertrude, printed in Venice in 1510, among the many devout exercises offered to the Sacred Heart, similar to those more familiar and public forms of ours, in chapter 5, 120, of the 4th Book, *The Herald of the Divine Love*, p. 252, there can be read that on the Feast of St. John the Evangelist, this Saint appeared to her, not that he had not spoken to her in his Gospel, and responded that for now she should first teach in order to come to know the Divine Word and that the sweetness and gentleness of His Heart is reserved to be discovered in the last times - so that from hearing these things there might be re-enkindled the world that had already become tepid and was languishing. **The purpose was that from hearing such things, this world, which had become old and weighed down with torpor, might be warmed anew and by the love of God.**

1760: - St. Mechtilde attests that the Son of God appeared to her and ordered her to venerate with every manner of **oblation** [*ossequio*] His Most Sacred Heart in the Divine Sacrament, and that there was no more complete book that contained the favors for this devotion obtained.

These two saints died two centuries before Goodwin.

- St. Clare each day greeted and venerated the Heart of Jesus, and called this exercise her delight.

- Similar **oblations** [*ossequi*] we read practiced by St. Bernard, St. Bonaventure, St. Brigid, St. Frances of Rome, St. Francis de Sales and by many other souls favored by God.

1761: b. Witnesses:

Blosius, the light of the Benedictine Order, spoke of this more than a century prior to Goodwin, as those devoted of the Sacred heart speak of it today.

Lanspergius, a Carthusian Monk who died in 1539, spoke more than 100 years prior to Goodwin. In Letter 26 [Book 10 of Lanspergius; Works, called the 'Minor'] counsels all to keep the image of the Sacred Heart in a fitting place, in order to revere it often, and to kiss it, with the desire it ***kissing the very wood of Jesus' side and His wounded Heart***.

1762: The Venerable Father Ignatius of Nantes, a Dominican, who died in 1648, 30 years before making public the devotion of the Sacred Heart - and who was acclaimed a Saint by the people, and in 1650, in the Acts of the General Chapter, was listed among their religious outstanding in holiness - in his Meditations on the Most Divine Heart, printed in Florence by order of the Father General in 1643, writes:

Jesus Christ, from the very first instant of his conception, as He was in the spiritual heart the first lover of heaven and heart, so through the inflamed transfusions of the supreme part in the heart of flesh burned and died of love.

1763: *Christ understood perfectly the infinite malice of sin, contrary to the supreme good, and He detested and abhorred it infinitely, and transfused into the heart of flesh a continuous pain, one that was ineffable of immense dolor, whence the life of the Heart of Jesus was totally suffused with love and all with suffering. And because the Heart of Jesus of the mind and of the flesh is the most beautiful, the most candid, the most lucid and the most lovable - and all the eternal hearts, the most dear and the most loved by God, there is no one among the Saints who did not admire It, and who did not adore it, and out of thanksgiving who would not offer it always to the Eternal Father.*

1764: After the mid-way point of 1600, it became a public festival, nor did the English heretic have any part in it, in the occasion for which it was instituted. A great part the Venerable La Colombiere gave us with his printed retreat.

Also before him, Fr. Eudes, one of the most zealous Missionaries in France, had obtained from the Holy See a Papal Brief very generous in its indulgences for the Feast of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

3. Solemn Origin

1765: The solemn institution had its origin solely from the Prelates and Shepherds of the Church and from the Holy See. All this is proven with some evidence by Gallifet, in chapter 2 of his work in Latin, approved by Benedict XIV before he became Pope, in the year 1726 - and even more in the same work translated into French and dedicated to the some Pontiff in the year 1743 [Benedict Tetamo: **Concerning the true worship and Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus**].

The first images were exposed in France with the authentic approval of the Bishops, and thus were the Feasts as well: as well as the New Offices and Masses. From the Holy See, there were added also the indulgences.

a. Spread

1766: The Confraternities, through the testimony of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, were erected canonically and favored with indulgences. These were erected in the churches of almost all the different religious Orders: the Benedictines, the Hermits and the Canons of St. Augustine, the Fathers of the Order of Preaches, and in all of the four classes of Franciscans and the two Orders of the Carmelites, the Trinitarians, the Celestines, the Servites, the Theatines, the Barnabites, the Camillians, the Somaschi Fathers and the Scolopi Fathers: and above all, in the most noble parish Churches, the collegial and metropolitan churches. There should also be remembered especially the Roman Arch-confraternity, to which Benedict XIV in 1751 privileged its altar.

The members of this are counted in the thousands. Among them, are the illustrious, the most learned priests, Bishops, Cardinals, and every condition of persons, from every walk of life, nation, order, secular and regular.

The number of these Confraternities with authentic registers of Rome up to 1765, were more 1,080.

1767: The Clergy of France in 1763 established this Feast in all the Dioceses of the Realm.

b. Object

The object of the Feast of the Sacred Heart: it consists in that marvelous and practically divine complexity of aspects, formed both of the bodily and wounded heart of Jesus, as well as by that most holy soul by which that Heart finds life - as well as from the Person of the Divine Word, hypostatically united to that heart, and from which it is divine - as well as from that immense love with which that heart burns - and from the many virtues of which the sacred Heart is the Symbol and the Seat - and also from the sufferings and the anxieties endured by this Heart. For indeed this complexity of aspects that are so sublime, so admirable, so divine, so lovable, that this is the authentic, proper and adequate object of the Feast of the Heart of Jesus.

The Advocate who implored and obtained in 1765 the Decree for the New Mass....

4. Theology

1768: It manifests a carnal wound, a spiritual wound.

a..

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 fall 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.

b.

1769: Thus, Benedict XIV notes that the Church never had the custom to solemnize with its own Mass and Office any of the divine attributes, or the internal virtues and abstract perfections of Christ, unless under some sensible object that would clearly represent them, or under some sensible fact, or mystery, which renders them more vividly evident. The example of this would be that the Church does not venerate the 'patience' of Jesus Christ without any symbol, or mystery: but rather worships His **Wounds**, His Passion, His Cross. Not only should one never exclude from the Feast of the Sacred Heart every sensible object, but this simply cannot be done.

1770: Could there be found a more felicitous symbol of God's love? The innumerable relationships that the heart has with love in all human beings have already produced a universal sense, through which all the nations, both the most worldly uncouth as well as the doctors, the poets, the painters, the sacred and profane writers, all recognize in the heart and almost attribute to it love, and very often they confuse one for the other.

c.

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 by the hypostatic 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 love**²¹.

5.

1772: The Church has happily seen its plan carried out. With this sensible help: the Feast, Confraternities, indulgences, images, and in promoting for herself a devotion of this kind, she has seen Holy Communion frequented every First Friday of the month, and the renewal of the devotion for the Most Holy Sacrament, and to see on the most licentious of days, such as *Carnevale*, the Churches and oratories filled with people. And this is done in order to make reparation for the offenses committed against the love of Jesus, and seeing this all celebrated in a solemn and happy feast, not so much for its pomp, or the noise of the multitudes, but much more for the piety, the tenderness, the love of those devoted to the Heart. And generally the devout are reminded most often of the charity of Jesus and this love is returned with more fervor.

²¹ 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. 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.

1773: The most beautiful praise of this Devotion is the solid and entire piety of one who professes it; and perhaps the greatest obstacle to professing it is the need to ask for it not only with external acts or vocal prayers, but also at least with a little loving gratitude and fervor.

1774: The authority of the Church is its greatest praise.

The opinion of the Reverend Father M. Bernardino Membrive, a Dominican, Preacher of the Catholic King, Provincial of Scotia, Consultor of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, notes:

Reading the book by Gallifet, there was presented to my soul the prophecy of Simeon: 'He will be a sign that will be contradicted' [cf. Lk 2:34]. And I understood that that which happened then to the Person of Jesus Christ, happens in our time to His heart as well. I am persuaded that to combat the proposed devotion, and to impede that it be received, would be the same as depriving the Church of those fruits of piety which form her are usually produced.

Rome, from the Convent at the Minerva, February 26, 1726....

[The beginning of the Definitive writing]

1775: *What is man that you should make so much of him? Subjecting him to your authority?* [cf. Jn 7:17].

What is man? Create, o Lord, the heavens, the earth, decorate these with stars and plants, supply the earth with animals, fish and birds with a simple *fiat*. And then finally: *Let us make man to our own image and likeness* [cf. Gn 1:26]. *What is man that You would direct your heart toward him?* [cf. Jb 7:17] - making him the end of other creatures and in Your own image, capable of knowing You and loving You?

1776: Man became ungrateful after a few days and lost himself and his descendants: You promised us from his very seed a Liberator, who is your own Son. You gave Him up to death for us: *See what charity!* [cf. 1 Jn 3:1]. *What is man that You should place Your heart upon him?* [cf. Jb 7:17]

this Man put to death his own Redeemer, and in that same night that he betrayed Him, You instituted a sacrament of Love, in order to communicate Yourself to him, and to be with Him even to the consummation of the world. *What is man that You would set Your heart upon Him?* [ib].

1777: But, this man became cold toward Him, and further rejected this benefit, ground it under foot, and You place before his eyes in these last times ***Your Heart, visibly wounded for him.*** *What is man that You would set Your heart before Him?* [ib]

To provoke him to love you, You employ such industry of love. I understand, o Lord. You are an Abyss of goodness, of charity; and man is an abyss of ingratitude, of malice. ***The one abyss of misery calls out for the Abyss of Mercy.***

1778: But, what if there were one who was so wretched that he would not only call out, but who would disdain, who would deride, who would insult this Mercy, calling this devotion - and I do not know if this is more through stupidity or wickedness - a new devotion, an erroneous devotion, dangerous - and very soon, as he is even more wretched, thus he needs even more the Mercy: let us prove to him that this devotion is ancient, it is solid, it is salutary, and descending with our charity even to the depths of his misery, in order to bring him help that he might, too, share in such mercy - or, let us lead him to esteem, admire, and to know this....

[INCOMPLETE]

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[II] JESUS,
THE TEACHER ²²

1779: *For the Grace of God our Savior has appeared ...* [Tt 2:11].

Grace: a gratuitous gift of Christ.

Has been revealed: because previously the Son of God lay hidden.

Grace: mercy, the remission of sins. Before justice appeared [in the flood; Sodom].

Previously there was nothing but sin.

And it made salvation possible for the whole human race. *There are no more distinctions between male and female: slave and free* [Ga 3:28].

Preparation for this school: God is the Teacher, Who therefore appears - by remitting sins and by infusing grace.

Grace has taught us that we must be self-restrained and give up ...all our worldly ambitions... [Tt 2:12].

1780: It is grace that instructs us. The execution of this is easy: it teaches and works with us.

We must be self-restrained and give up: not only flight: but also hatred and detestation.

Impiety: depraved dogmas, as far as the mind is concerned.

Worldly ambitions: voluptuousness, avarice, honors, as to what pertains to the heart.

Soberly and justly and we are to live religious lives in this world: as for what pertains to exteriors.

While we are waiting in Hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing [Advent] of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ [Tt 2:13].

A blessed hope: If our hope in Christ is for this life only... etc. [cf. 1 Co 15:19].

Blessed: because truly the supreme Beatitude is hoped.

It is Blessed: because it brings about the beginnings of beatitude.

The Advent of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ : there are two Advents: one of grace, and the other is of retribution.

[THE BEGINNING OF THE COMPLETE DRAFT] ²³

1771: **Has appeared:** two words, ladies and gentlemen, on this apostolic text that we have read this evening at Mass: since today, unexpectedly all instruction had to be lacking.

Today, too, ladies and gentlemen, due to an un-thought of accident, there had to be lacking to your piety that solid pasturage of the Word of God. So, I offered myself so suddenly and simply, in that it seemed to me that I should trust that the Lord would not all us to miss instruction altogether, on the day in which He was born, which He did precisely in order to instruct

²² **NB:** [Latin phrases will be translated in **bold print.**] Teaching school was always considered as one of the prime purposes of the Stigmatine Community as is evident from a Proposal submitted to an early General Chapter, Feb. 1874. It is reflected in the Stigmatine motto, taken from Mt's Missionary Mandate: for forth and evangelize: *Euntes Docete!* The Christian formation and teaching of youth is a prime apostolate - as is teaching and forming Seminarians is listed among the principal duties of the *Professed*, the *Apostolic Misisonaries* - cf. Part IX, CF ## 158-186: *concionando, instruendo, ad perfectionem instruendo, clericorum institutionem, institutio christiana puerorum, correptione educare, Professorum munus est docere non solum in concionibus, exercitiis, lectionibus...et etiam rudimenta fidei...* [cf. especially CF 182]

²³ **NB:** the 'Complete Draft' apparently this has been lost.

us. ***For the grace of God has appeared...*** [Tt 2:11]. Two words, therefore, out of love on this sentence of the Apostle.

1782: Let us see just who this Teacher is Who comes to teach - what His doctrine is = what are the rewards proposed to anyone who would profit by this School.

Who is the master: ***The grace of our Savior...instructing us*** [ib., vv. 11,12].

The Savior, who is Grace: the Grace of the Savior, for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. [Jn 1:17]

For all men: great excitement in learning:

1. The God Man: the Nobility of the Teacher. ***Blessed is the man whom You shall instruct, O Lord: and You shall teach him out of Your Law...*** [Ps 93(94): 12]. He is a Teacher Who teaches with deeds: ***Jesus began to do and to teach*** [Ac 1:1]

2. Grace: The Teacher at home - He is a Teacher who not only teaches but Who leads others to perform. - He moves us b gratitude, seeing us delivered from our sins...²⁴

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²⁴ **NB:** Translators' Note - the Discourse on Jesus the Teacher - ends abruptly right here.

[III] **A FEW LETTERS TO MOTHER LEOPOLDINA NAUDET**

†††

Letter 45:
'School of God'
[June 1, 1814]

9280 Very much Esteemed, Reverend Mother,
Since the Lord stands above all our internal contrasts, it only follows that we ought to keep the eyes of our confidence riveted upon Him, without ever being disheartened in any case. Since we are most sure that ***He has strengthened His mercy towards them that fear Him...*** [Ps 102:11]. What shall we do in recognition for so many mercies? We will do more than we thought, or could think, if now we just do what we should do. And what should we do right now? We should do that which a baby does with regard to his mother who holds him in her arms, and not wish ever again to be put down on the ground ...

9293: I am getting better little by little. In your charity, reverend Mother, please pray that I draw fruit from this **school** which the Lord has deigned to ask me attend, so that I might dispose myself to serve Him. Tomorrow I will begin to get up for meals, as up until now I have only got up in the afternoon...

...

Letter 92:
His 'Wounds'
[July-August 1825]

9415 Reverend Mother,
The news from Milan brought me great pleasure. May the Lord be praised.. The Emperor seems well disposed toward your Work. The Governor, assisted by Count Joseph Cipolla, and the Delegate, Baron Paul di Lederer, have indicated that they are in favor that which pleases their patrons, and these seem to be most favorable circumstances...

9418: Furthermore, we are living in times, that whether little is going on, or nothing at all, there is needed the greatest caution. It is necessary to go behind, following after the traces pointed out to us by Divine Providence, which goes on ahead of us....

I thank you for the little book of the life of Fr. Bianchi. I have read it with great joy; Would that I would know how to profit from it! It seems that **my wound** is not going so well, if we can give credence to appearances, which so many times before, have deceived us. If it indeed it does heal nicely, then I will believe that it would have been due principally to the prayers of the holy Prince, and your own charitable concerns which would have obtained such a grace for me...

...

Letter 104:
Wounded, but not dead!
[May 15, 1826]

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. The work increases for the conversion of every manner of person, whose heart God has touched in this Jubilee. We need the assistance of many prayers in order to complete worthily our office of cooperators in the

salvation of those souls that the Lord sends into our hands, in order that the knots and the bonds of their sins might be loosened...

...

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, so I take the liberty of asking you to pray a Novena once more with the holly Prince, because it does seem that the Lord allows me to keep going on the strength of these extraordinary helps...

...

Letter 131:
Pray!
[March 18, 1828]

9511: Dear Reverend Mother ...

9512:The Lord once more took from me the Mass and Divine Office this morning, because there has begun to break open again that little tumor on the knee. We will see what this will take. In the meantime, I cannot move around. I will make the remembrance as best I can, but not at the altar, as I did yesterday. May Your reverence also pray for me, and do all you can to finish your work as soon as is possible. I am afraid of a storm breaking out, and therefore, it would be necessary then to have completed all this...

...

Letter 132
FIAT!
[March 19, 1828]

9513: Dear Reverend Mother,

I ought to thank God profusely for the charity of Your most illustrious Reverence for the prayers that you have offered, and asked for others, for my health. And even though the Lord did not hear these entirely due to other purposes of His, and for this I have to say: ***Thy Will be done.*** Nonetheless, I am sure, for the great confidence that I feel in the power of prayer, and for the divine goodness, that there would have been protection from some even greater danger.

Also last year on the Feast of St. Joseph, this illness began. This year, on the Vigil I had to go to bed because of a swelling that developed on the sole, and then up to the knee, it seems that it has infected some glands, and not without real suffering to touch. Thanks be to God, it has not spread as it seemed to threaten, but Dr. Gregory prudently condemns me severely to bed, and to certain interventions...

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[IV] A FEW LETTERS TO FR. LOUIS BRAGATO

Letter 2:
“Left in the Stigmata!”
[November 18, 1835 ²⁵]

...

9688: All of this was simply our duty. And since we have given willingly to our most beloved Sovereign your very person, which to us was the most dear and useful that we had, what price can we put on our poor holdings here? Now your debt is to God alone, Who, with his gifts, for which I thank Him, has made you grow *in wisdom and virtue, and holiness and justice before Him* [Lk 1:75], and with these signs of exterior honor wishes to exalt you before me.

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.

...

Letter 4
[A Description of an Apostolic Missionary]
[December 1, 1837]

: To the Most Reverend, most Honorable, and most Observant
Fr. Louis Bragato
Imperial Court,
VIENNA

Most Reverend, most dear and most honorable Fr. Louis,

9799: ...I come now to satisfy your charitable and fraternal curiosity, and to provide you with a bit of matter for your usual recreation after supper, as in the times of the famous Chilo! Fr. Marani on school days, is at the Stimate; evenings and on free days he is at the Dereletti. At the Stimate, he teaches his classes and studies a bit in the library for his preaching. At the Dereletti, on Saturday evenings and Sundays, he hears confessions and with great fruit for the people of that neighborhood. **The other evenings, he offers a Conference in Moral Theology for about 10 or 12 priests, as we used to do in days gone by at St. Firmus²⁶.** After his methodical presentation, he acts like Fr. Guerreri; he outlines and defines as the circumstances demand, and this is every day, the most intricate cases; and the Lord gives him the light and the prudence that is far from ordinary.

9700: On Thursdays' he examines as usual the clerics at the Seminary, and after that, receives his penitents in any manner and at any hour, interrupting his dinner, supper, and putting off his own rest. Similarly, on feast days, while he hears confessions in the Choir of St. Stephen's which will continue even to the time to be able to come then for the instructions at St. Sebastian's. which he will then continue until the Lord is pleased. The people listen to him very willingly, and it seems that the Word of God is not just thrown about, but is received in good ground. Before taking up the course of his instructions, I sent him to St. Zeno's, to preach the Octave for the Deceased...

...

²⁵ [Translator's Note: Fr. Bragato had left for the Royal Court just a few months earlier, July 1835].

²⁶ Fr. Bertoni remembers here how the Stigmatines began: informal meetings of priests of like mind, - for prayer, pondering theological questions - for the renewal of the priestly life - a second reason [according to Fr. Ceresatto] why the Congregation was begun.

Letter 5:
“Find Refuge in the Glorious Wounds”
[January 29, 1840]

...

9707: As for the rest, keep your chin up! And when you need a little joy, fly in thought to Fr. Michael's little room. And if you do not always have the wings ready to support yourself over the clouds, in the bosom of you 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....

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†††

†

The End

