

## AN INTRODUCTION FOR THE YEAR 1809

*Some important events which touched the life of Fr Bertoni during this year 1809 have to be kept in mind. He continued to be in charge of the Convent of Madalene di Canossa. This implied, among other things, entire nights spent at the bedside of the girls in danger of death. Those were girls who had been taken off the street by the charity of Mother diCanossa. During the four years of this apostolate, at least six of these girls died.*

*In February bishop Innocent Liruti re-organized the so called "Congregations" or "Colleges" of moral and liturgical problems and named Fr. Bertoni "Theological Definitor" of the "College of St. Nicholas".*

*The health of his mother had, in the meantime, visibly worsened. Mother Brunora was diagnosed as suffering from dropsy, which would lead to her death on 6th February 1810.*

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### 4th JANUARY 1809

**[94.] One's bearing ought to be mature and serious: it should not be impatient and anxious.**

We believe that this instruction - as well as the following one - is taken from St. Thomas' *Summa*.<sup>182</sup> We know that when Fr. Gaspar was ordained priest he was busy reading the *Summa* for the third time and that afterwards he often consulted it. He saw to it, also, that his fellow priests should read it.<sup>183</sup> This instruction was either a personal resolution or a practical norm in the Spiritual Direction of other people. It is the summary of a text of St Ambrose from his book *De Officiis*<sup>184</sup>, which St Thomas reported as follows:

*... We approve that kind of bearing which shows some authority, carries seriousness and reveals tranquility. This is good provided that there is no artificiality and affectation. One should walk about with spontaneity and simplicity ...*

Fr. Bertoni chose this quotation from St. Ambrose for his Constitutions, omitting only that "showing authority".<sup>185</sup>

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**[95. Whoever wants interior recollection should get it through exterior modesty. He should not let his eyes wander about nor move his body in an unbecoming manner.**

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<sup>182</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 168, a. 1. [It is interesting to note that Fr. Gaspar cited this same question, a. 2, in his *Original Constitutions* - CF # 256. In this same number, St. Gaspar cites St Ambrose, *De Officiis*, Book 1, c. 20].

<sup>183</sup> St. Gaspar required the study of St. Thomas for his followers: CF # 53.

<sup>184</sup> Here the quote from St. Ambrose as noted by Fr. Stofella is: Book I, c. 18.

<sup>185</sup> CF # 129. [These ideas are noted in the Ignatian Rules for Modesty]. [cf. M.I., *Regulae*, 157-203]

We find the premise to this statement in the same article of St Thomas, quoted above:

... The way we behave externally is somehow a sign of our internal attitudes according to what we read in **Sir.19:27: *The attire of the body, the laughter of the teeth and the gait of the man, show what he is.*** According to St Ambrose, *the attitude of the mind is perceived from the behavior of the body. The movement of the body is somehow the voice of the soul.* Fr. Bertoni read from Rodriguez:

*...This modesty and good exterior behavior is of great help for our own spiritual progress. The relationship and the interaction between body and spirit is a great reality. Between the interior and exterior person, what one has inside is immediately communicated outside and vice-versa. Thus, if the spirit is recollected the body will recollect itself too. If, on the other hand, the body is restless and distracted, the spirit gets immediately distracted and restless too. Modesty, therefore, and exterior recollection is a great value and a sign of interior recollection, virtue and spiritual progress of the soul. This is like the movement of the hands of a clock which are the sign of the harmony of the internal mechanism...*<sup>186</sup>

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### 11th JANUARY 1809

**[96.] During Mass, at the Consecration: a very lively sense of the presence of Christ as a friend who talks with another friend. I also felt the presence of the Father, while perceiving also, in some way, the distinction of these Divine Persons in only one nature. Great reverence and love! This recollection continued for half an hour afterwards, not the experience, though, which....**

The note remains interrupted – the word **which...** indicates incompleteness. And yet here we have, laconically expressed, one of the most noteworthy graces recorded in the *Journal*. Christ as *friend*, reminds us of those outbursts and impulses of the heart towards God, like a person overwhelmed by the appearance of a great friend, as in the entry of 9 Oct. 1808.

With regard to the presence of the Father and the experience of, in some way, the distinction of these Divine Persons, let us hear what St Teresa of Avila said out of her personal experience:

*... As regards the Three Divine Persons, I clearly perceive that they are distinct among themselves... it is, though, a strange certainty. As a matter of fact I do not hear and I do not see anything. Neither with the eyes of the body nor with the eyes of the soul. Yet it is felt when the Three Divine Persons disappear. However I do not know how does this*

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<sup>186</sup> cf. Rodriguez, Part 2, Tract 2, c. 1, 3.

**Web-site Note:** under the heading of The Founder's *Original Constitutions*, 4. General Plan [ cf. CF ## 133-137] there may be found an English translation of the Ignatian *Rules for Modesty*.

*happens. What I do know is that this is not my imagination. Sometimes, in fact, after receiving this grace, I made an effort to bring [the Three Persons] back again, by myself. But I never succeeded. I therefore do know this by experience...*<sup>187</sup>

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### 19th JANUARY 1809

**[97.] Discretion is mother and ruler of all other virtues.**

St. Benedict called Discretion the *mother of all virtues*, when in his **Rule** he treats of the *Ordination of the Abbot*.<sup>188</sup> He made *Discretion* play an outstanding role in the Spiritual Direction of souls, in correction, in the distribution of the necessities of life, in dispensing from fasting during the summer season, in allotting tasks, in the necessary surveillance etc<sup>189</sup>. All these activities belong especially to the Abbot who is expected to exercise that supernatural sensitivity which makes him able to adjust himself to the different personalities, in order to lead all souls to God<sup>190</sup>.

We have come across this virtue as 'the queen of all virtues', in the entry of **18 July 1808**. It was St Thomas Aquinas who presented it as "generator, custodian and moderator of virtues", since the tradition of the ancient Fathers of the desert. Here we preferred to quote St. Benedict's Rule, also on account of a subsequent note which we think comes from the same source. Our reason for doing so is based on short but close connected references.

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### 23rd JANUARY 1809

**[98.] "I believe that few are the priests who could be saved, but much more those who perish" (St Chrysostom).**

**St Augustine feels the same. When his clergy was disturbed by this opinion he told them that he said so not out of exaggeration but because that was his true feeling.**

This quotation is not from the *Opera Omnia* of St. John Chrysostom edited in Latin from 1753 to 1764 in Rovereto. Fr. Bertoni had often it used from the library of his great-uncle, Fr. James Bertoni. He should have read in that book the following expression in a slightly different form: ... *I only express my opinion when I say that I do not think that many priests are going to be saved. Rather, much more are going to perish. The reason is nothing else but the fact that this vocation demands great spirit...* Fr. Bertoni could have contextualized better the whole sentence. We must keep in mind that he quoted by

<sup>187</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, *Spiritual Testimonies*, 5, 21. Works translated in Italian. Rome 1949, p. 440.

<sup>188</sup> St. Benedict, *Rule*, c. 64.

<sup>189</sup> cf. *La Regle de Saint Benoit*. Paris, Mardesous 1933. Analytical Index, p. 166.

<sup>190</sup> cf. Dom Columba Marmion, OSB, *Christ, the Ideal of the Monk*. Paris/Mardesous. Index p. 598. **[Web-Site Note:** Dom Marmion was ordained a priest for the Church of Dublin in 1881, at St. Agatha of the Goths, Rome, at the time (from 1837-1927) home of the Irish College].

heart, though with so much approximation that we can detect the source, i.e. Cornelius a' Lapide's Commentary on James 3,1: **Be not many masters, my brothers, knowing that you receive the greater judgment.** Cornelius a' Lapide, under the heading *Few priests will be saved*, quotes St John Chrysostom in this form: ... *It is formidable what St. John Chrysostom writes, commenting on Acts in Homily 3: I do not speak foolishly, I rather talk from experience and conviction. I do not think that there are many among the priests who can be saved, but many more those who may perish...* We have to correct the last verb which is a subjunctive (**pereant** = *may perish*) in the original text, while Fr Bertoni reported the subjunctive only for the previous verb (**fiant salvi** = *may be saved* ). Cornelius a' Lapide continues quoting St. John Chrysostom in the translation of Erasmus of Rotterdam, as it is found in ancient editions opposite to the original Greek text: ... *The reason is that this vocation requires an extraordinary spirit...*

St. John Chrysostom spoke of the Episcopate as the fullness of priesthood. He tried to rectify the ideas of those who were aspiring to it as a principedom or as a status of relaxation, while ignoring its very nature, its demands, its difficulties, its contradictions, its dangers and above all its responsibilities. All those people lacked that *extraordinary spirit* which such office required. St. John Chrysostom cannot refrain, as delicate a soul as he was, from stating that: ... *I would not say it, if it were not my inner conviction. I do not believe that among the priests there are many who end up being saved; but that the greater part of them end up in perdition...* He talked openly about *the fullness of Priesthood*. As far as the simple priests were concerned, it seems that he saw a fairly good proportion of *success*. As regards the text of St. James which we referred to above, it could have been taken as a basic text for this part of his third Homily in this context. As a matter of fact, I have been unable to find this citation in the biblical categories noted in the scientific apparatus of the work.

St. John Chrysostom follows a Commentary here of St. Augustine on **James 3**. He wrote: See how much we are expected to be careful, when they exhort us with those words **Be not many masters**. And even more with the words **In fact we all fail in many things**. He is therefore compelled to ask for the compassion and prayers of everybody.<sup>191</sup> The dialogue referred to between St. Augustine and his Clergy could have been hinted at in this quotation as well as many other places in the works and in the life of the Saint! As a young priest of 37 years of age, St. Augustine had written to his bishop: ... *in this life, and especially nowadays, nothing is more difficult, more fatiguing and more risky than the offices of bishop, priest and deacon...* In this statement St. Augustine came very close to St Chrysostom's expressions, even without drawing the formidable consequences. We think that what has been said may be sufficient to clarify Fr. Bertoni's entry here.

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[99.] **St Andrew Corsini had a vision of two of his Holy Patrons. He asked them about his own salvation. They answered that he would be granted four more years in which he could make his election and**

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<sup>191</sup> St. Augustine, Saermon 122, *On Diverse Matters*.

**salvation certain. He had already lived 60 or 70 years in a most holy manner.**

Both this and the preceding note show that Fr. Bertoni was influenced by the rigorist trends that were prevalent among the Clergy of his time<sup>192</sup>. One senses that he had not yet begun to correct certain aspects of his intellectual formation, through the influence of the spirit and doctrine of St Alphonsus de Liguori. He will soon be 'among the first to follow St. Alphonsus' Moral Theology: to make it appreciated and to apply it in practice.'<sup>193</sup> He saw to it that one of his sons and disciples, Fr. Charles Fedelini, would one day introduce its text in the Seminary.

We think that in this note, Fr Bertoni presents the incident in the life of St Andrew Corsini with excessive concern. It is obvious to all that the crucial and decisive years in which to reach the degree God calls somebody to holiness - and therefore to make certain one's election and salvation - should be the last ones. ***He who perseveres until the end will be saved.*** Blessed are therefore those 60 or 70 years lived by the Saint . If God grants the Saint four more years to reach the crown of perfection, let him ask of God the grace not to lose heart and to live these four last years in a manner as holy as the other 60 or 70. Let him not fail the Lord. It will certainly not be the Lord who will fail him. By ***persevering until the end*** there is no doubt that ***each will be saved.***

Is then all concern taken away? Of course not! Each person carries always one's own human weakness within. Some concern becomes therefore providential and it is implied in the two Scripture texts which are blended into one by Fr Bertoni. ***So, labor the more, brothers, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election.... (2 Pet 1,10). With fear and trembling work out your salvation ... (Ph 2,12).***

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**[99a]     *We have lost the art of speaking because ...***

For the sake of completeness, we offer this entry. Fr. Gaspar left the entry suspended precisely in this manner.<sup>194</sup>

**[100.]    *[If] one is enchanted by what he sees, the remedy is in the mind. For example, when you see a person alive, think of him as dying.***

For once we can give the original Latin note as Fr. Bertoni wrote it in his *Journal*. Here it is: ***Fascinatio est in visu, remedium in intellectu e.g.: vides viventem cogita morientem.*** First of all it seems that this is a quotation from St Augustine. Surely the second part is, from "***For example...***" The first part of the note is not to be

<sup>192</sup> Fr. Stofella notes here that in the Seminary of Verona in Fr. Bertoni's seminary days the text used was that of Fr. Gabriel Antoine, an author with a rigorist tendency, despite once belonging to the Society of Jesus.

<sup>193</sup> ***Summarium Additionale*, Document 28, p. 594.**

<sup>194</sup> **Web-Site note: the translator simply omitted this entry.**

found in his writings, though it can easily be from Augustine<sup>195</sup> and it makes sense in conjunction with the second part of the quotation. The phrase could have reached Fr Bertoni by second hand.

Let us now try to interpret the note. We have a person who is astounded because he sees the wicked filled with evil doings and yet flourishing in their iniquities and apparently happy. St Augustine comes into the picture and shakes up the "enchanted and fascinated" person and tells him (in the same quotation as above): You wonder at what this man has in this life, but wait a while and consider what this same man will be able to take with himself beyond his death! In the reflection of Fr Gaspar that *fascination* could have been applied to problems of faith or of chastity.

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### [101.] Every day meditate on Psalm 15(14)

This resolution, added to the note on **Discretion** as the **mother of all virtues**, would confirm the probability that St Gaspar was, at that time, examining the Rule of St Benedict. Several verses of **Psalm 15 (14)** are reported in the prologue of the Rule:

*... If we want to fix our dwelling in the tent of the Kingdom of God, we will not make it unless we set out for it along the path of good works... Let us ask the Lord, with the Psalmist, saying: **Lord, who will dwell in your tent? Who will rest on your holy mountain?** After this question, brothers, let us listen to the answer of the Lord who indicates the way to His tent: **He who walks without blame. He who speaks the truth in his heart. He who does not deceive with his tongue. He who does no evil to his neighbor. He who does not take up insult against his neighbor. He who, facing the Evil One and his allurements, knows how to destroy him and to repel far away from the heart his attractions...***

St. Benedict enlarged the Psalm with paraphrases, leaving out part of the next to the last verse and the whole last verse. We think that Fr. Bertoni picked up the last verse too and wrote:

*... **But he glorifies those who fear the Lord!** And concluded: **He who binds himself under oath not to deceive his neighbor. He who did not put out his money to usury and did not accept bribes against innocent people. He who does these things will not fall for ever...***

We want to take this opportunity to point out that Fr Gaspar found in the book of Psalms a continuous reference for the over-flowing of the feelings of his heart. Three Psalms in particular will be very dear to him:

**Psalm 91(90)** *He who dwells under the protection of the Most High, a Psalm of Hope*<sup>196</sup>.

<sup>195</sup> St. Augustine, *Enarrationes* in Ps 48, Sermon 2, 7.

<sup>196</sup> *Epistolario* p. 323 – Letter 8 to Fr. Bragato September 26, 1840.

**Psalm 116,10-19 (115)** *I believed*, as a Psalm of thanksgiving for the grace of Vocation.<sup>197</sup>

**Psalm 123(122)** *I have lifted up my eyes to you*, a Psalm which inspires the necessary attitudes of the heart for Prayer.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> **ib.**, pp. 43, 44 – Letter 10 to Mother L. Naudet, December 21, 1821.

<sup>198</sup> **ib.**, pp. 45, 46 – Letter 11, to Mother L. Naudet, undated.

**1st FEBRUARY 1809**

**[102.] Frequent memory of the life of Christ: with a response of tender love.**

This *frequent memory of the life of Christ* is not presented as a result of human effort. In that case it would not have been recorded in this *Journal*. It was a precious gift of Heaven. We can connect it with a statement expressed at the beginning of both outlines of the *panegyric* of St Francis:

**... Perfection, which has its source and fulfillment in Charity... consists in harmonizing our life with that of our Lord Jesus Christ. Since this divine Master began to do and to teach, His actions, though personal and of a perfection which is above our understanding, were intended generally to be imitated...<sup>199</sup>**

And since this Divine Master began to *do and to teach*, His actions, as His own personal and individual activities, are of and incomprehensible excellence. Yet, they can be imitated. This is nothing other than the imitation of Christ to which that *frequent memory of His life... tends.*

This ardor of imitation is that *tender love of correspondence* which accompanies him. This comes from that charity poured into hearts by the Holy Spirit.. This is indeed that perfection proper to the Saints, those Heroes, **Apostolic Men<sup>200</sup>**.

The gift of this day is the development of that sentiment already received and recorded after St. Gaspar's three Masses of Christmas: ***Oh, what a responsibility do we have to do for Him, partly at least, what He firstly did for us.***

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**[103.] During the Consecration of the Mass: very lively and affectionate sense of Christ's presence.**

The Mass of this day is presented as the most proper mounting for the *jewel* of its mystical gift. In its most solemn moment, something happened to Fr Bertoni's spirit. It was similar to what happened during the Mass of the previous **11 January**: a ***very lively sense of the presence of Christ as a friend...*** We treat here of things which, by their nature, defy any definition. It still remains true that God does not repeat Himself. This brief and incomplete text offers us some indication that Fr. Bertoni was, at times, gratified by God with a spiritual knowledge, of an experiential order, about the presence of God. He was therefore granted a certain *mystical union* with Him.<sup>201</sup>

**[104.] Readiness to accept ignominies for Christ's sake.**

<sup>199</sup> Introduction to the Panegyric honoring St. Francis – MssB ## 1795, ff.

<sup>200</sup> *ib.* – Fr. Bertoni was much inspired by the Early Church, and the Apostles following Jesus – cf. CF ## 189; 226; 232 [Acts of the Apostles] 252; 259; 261; 272; 273;

<sup>201</sup> Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, *Un Modelo di S. Abbandono*, o.c., p. 185.

This too is a gift from God: the logical fruit of the other gifts of this day. We think of the self-offering of Fr. Gaspar for suffering, humiliations, martyrdom and ignominies of **9 and 24 July, 25.27.28.29 Sept**; and also **22 Oct** when Fr Gaspar recorded: ***This attitude is the best gift, of which I feel utterly unworthy.***

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#### 4th FEBRUARY 1809

**[105.] Those who do not begin by praying well, cannot talk well about God either.**

This statement can come either from personal experience or it is a good thought taken from some living authority or book. Fr Bertoni treasured it with a slight tone of personal resolution.

For him, Prayer remains ***the life of our life and the soul of our soul***. Something like ***the breathing: ... I opened my mouth and I drew in the Spirit***. This is what he will tell the Priests when he will instruct them about the ***Union with God***.<sup>202</sup> If we are not provided with this *vital energy*, how can we talk well of God?

This is all the more true in the priestly ministry where it is always Christ who ***works in the first person***. That union is vitally realized with Him as ***the Primary Actor to whom man, as a chosen and living instrument, clings and is led as by the hand***. When Prayer is not done well, it loosens rather than tightens the union with Christ. Then how can one talk well of God?

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#### 14th FEBRUARY 1809

**[106.] She coupled such spiritual strength and energy that made her unshakable against all obstacles which could interfere with her plans. This came from the interior security she had to be following God's will. She strongly believed that there is nothing that could hamper God from realizing what He has established. Her only fear was that she would not correspond duly to the graces of God.**

This is a threefold principle that aims at its being able to be reproduced in one's life. But who is this personality about whom Fr. Bertoni writes? We believe it is a person of the calibre of St Teresa of Avila. The traits are very probably hers. Here are some texts from her *Life* :

*... I happened sometimes to feel tormented by most serious tribulations, having become the object of detraction on the part of this city and of my own Order. Many*

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<sup>202</sup> A Conference presented by St. Gaspar to Priests, entitled ***Union with God***.

*more afflictions of a different nature gave me further cause for anxiety. In those circumstances I could hear the Lord telling me: "What do you fear? Don't you know that I can do anything? What I have promised, I'll accomplish? (it had always been so, in fact!)". I then would muster up courage and become ready to embark upon any new work whatsoever. I would face, for the service of God, even greater torments and suffering, though it was very heavy for me. This experience happened so many times that I can not remember."* <sup>203</sup>

*"Oh, what a joy to have to suffer in doing God's will!"* <sup>204</sup>

*"The only ambition we can have (and God does not allow any other), must be that we serve His Divine Majesty at any cost. In my Foundations I never did anything, as little as it could be, which would have seemed to disagree with God's will."* <sup>205</sup>

*Whatever we do for Him, is always too little."* <sup>206</sup>

*"Blessed be God, because if we do not fail Him he will never fail us first."* <sup>207</sup>

*"Oh, what a misfortune to live in this life! It is like having always our enemies at the door. We cannot leave our arms even for eating and sleeping. We are continuously fearing that somebody, somewhere should attack and storm our stronghold!... Pray, my dear daughters, that his Majesty should always live in me. Otherwise, after having spent my life in such a miserable way, I would not know how to give myself comfort."* <sup>208</sup>

*"It is clear that a person must never rely on oneself. One should never expose oneself to temptation. Even if one had received many graces of Prayer. We can always fall. Be very careful! I beseech you for God's sake."* <sup>209</sup>

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### 15th FEBRUARY 1809

**[107.] First day of Lent: sermon by Fr Joseph.**

**For a good death one should shun idleness, sin and the occasion of sin.**

**Those who have done good things will go to eternal life, those who have done bad things will go into eternal fire.**

**This is the Catholic belief: anyone who does not believe this faithfully and firmly, cannot be saved.**

**You will be converted by [the exercise of] the mind. It is however not so easy by [the exercise of] the will.**

**If you come to listen humbly to a simple and frank Preacher, God will make up for [his] lack of eloquence.**

We think that this was a sermon outline. There will be a dozen more notes of this kind until **22 March**, Wednesday of the Passion Week. These entries will reduce very

<sup>203</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, *Life...* o.c., Ed. Rome 1949, c. 26, n. 2.

<sup>204</sup> Id. *Interior Castle*, Fifth Mansions, c. 2, n. 14.

<sup>205</sup> Id., *Foundations*, c. 27, nn. 14, 15.

<sup>206</sup> Id., *Path of Perfection*, c. 12, n. 1.

<sup>207</sup> Id., *Letters*, Venice 1739. Letter 38, to Alfonzo Ramirez.

<sup>208</sup> Id., *Interior Castle*, Third Mansions, nn. 2-3.

<sup>209</sup> Id., *Life...* , o.c., c. 19, n. 13.

much the customary personal annotations Fr. Bertoni used to jot down. There will be only one sample of his precious *gifts of prayer*.

If we could read *Saint Joseph* instead of *Father Joseph*, we might be able to refer to the little church next to the *Canossian Retreat*. In these entries we would see some notes for the outlines of sermons he preached from **15 Feb** to **22 March** to the people of the parish for Lent. But this interpretation does not seem possible. We have here a sermon outline for **Ash Wednesday: *You are dust and unto dust you will return...*** which Fr Bertoni must have heard from the lips of that unidentified Fr. Joseph. We can ask ourselves: For what purpose? We answer: Probably with the view of making use of it himself, for his own sermon that same day to an audience of the same level as Fr Zeno's.

We cannot understand the use of his *Spiritual Journal* for these sermon outlines, without the urgency of collecting texts for some sermons which he must have suddenly been charged to preach. All these outlines are of a very practical nature and of such low quality that it does not seem worthwhile to have been taken note of in this *Journal* - except, as we said, because of some sudden practical necessity. Let us leave aside these problems and take this as a sample of popular preaching. We can take the place in the pews of the church and listen.

We notice also that the entry of **15 Feb** comes from this unknown Fr. Joseph's sermon, because it is stated so. But we are not sure whether the following notes for the **16<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>**, and so on, refer to the same source. There are, in fact, some texts which do evidence a clear Bertonian character... Whatever their origin, let us then take the texts as they come! They have been compiled by Fr Gaspar. They must reveal something of his own mind. This is the minimum we should be convinced of, in the circumstances.

As regards that Fr Joseph: who was he? It is simply impossible to ascertain. About the first statement of the sermon we have nothing to add. The text which follows the biblical quotation is from St Athanasius' Symbol of Faith. The last paragraph presents a thought the expression of which appears often in Fr Bertoni's preaching as a summary of a statement from Fr P. Segneri's writings:

*... Very many Christians even though they believe that Hell exists and that a single sin can condemn them to it, continue to live in sin... Bad habits harden further the will to sin, in such a way that they do recognize sin but they do not attempt to avoid it...<sup>210</sup>.*

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### **16th FEBRUARY 1809**

**[108.] *Do not follow the crowd in doing evil.*(Ex 23,2)  
*Do not judge by appearances but judge justly.*(Jn 7:24)  
*Do not be conformed to this world.* (Rom 12:2)**

<sup>210</sup> Fr. Paul Segneri, SJ, *Instructed Christian*, Part I, Reason I, nn. 6, 7.

***The just lives by faith.*** (Rom 1:17)

***The Word that I have spoken to you: that will judge you!*** ( Jn 12:48) **God will not judge us according to the principles of this world, nor following the opinions of some more lenient theologians, but according to the Gospel.**

The first text is from **Ex 23:2**. The Latin Vulgate<sup>211</sup> reads: *You shall not follow the multitude to do evil...* Fr. Gaspar, in his Conference to the Seminarians from **Primum Regum**<sup>212</sup>, **will compare such sheep as stupid** - the text from exodus goes on: *... neither shall you yield in judgment to the opinion of the most part to stray from the truth...*

The second text is from **Jn 7:24**: *... Judge not according to the appearance, but judge just judgment.* This is immediately preceded by these words: *....If a man receive circumcision on the Sabbath day, that the Law of Moses may not be broken; are you angry with Me because I have healed the whole man on the Sabbath day...?* The Lord is alluding to His healing the paralytic on the Sabbath.

The third text is from **Rm 12:2**: *... and be not conformed to this world...* this has received a relatively abundant testimony in Fr. Bertoni's entry for **July 22, 1808**, above.

The next text is from **Rm 17:2**: *... the just man lives by faith...!*

The final text is from **Jn 12:48**, but Fr. Gaspar has accommodated it somewhat: *... he that despises Me, and receives not My words, has One that judges him; the word that I have spoken shall judge him on the last day...* Fr. Bertoni's comment here is a development of this: the sermon of God is not the word of men. The former is what will judge.

These are as flashes of *Doom's Day* during and after the sermon on Death!

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### **19th FEBRUARY 1809**

**[109.] If we would consider what great evil is sin, we would not commit even one.**

**It is not sufficient to listen to the divine Word and enjoy it, while practicing only a few things.**

**Herod too enjoyed listening to John the Baptist's [preaching] and practiced some of his teaching but he did not do anything about his ruling passion.**

This seems also to be a sermon outline, or notes intended for some homily to be preached shortly.

The first note is a theme which was very dear to Fr Bertoni all his life. We might recall here the witness of Fr Charles Fedelini, his pupil and *dear son* :

<sup>211</sup> Italian translation is **Martini**.

<sup>212</sup> **Meditation 19 [MssB ## 5649-5700] - 1 Reg 4:16-23.**

...(Fr Gaspar) was one day speaking to his disciples on religious matters, when he suddenly exclaimed: ***I can't continue! What great evil is Sin!*** and he burst into tears...<sup>213</sup>

It seems very probable that this happened in a class room, before his *Disciples* [meaning *pupils*]. Fr Fedelini was at that time doing his two years' course of *Humanity and Rhetoric* at the *Stimate*, under the personal guidance of Fr Gaspar.

The second part of the note refers to **Mark 6,20**: ***For Herod feared John knowing him to be a just and holy man; and kept him, and when he heard him, did many things; and he heard him willingly***. Herod, however did not want to hear what is said in verse 18, i.e. ***It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife!*** This was his ruling passion.

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### **22nd FEBRUARY 1809**

**[110.]** ***I see a rod watching = that is the loving scourge.***  
***If this does not work...I see a boiling cauldron = that's Hell.***

This is the beginning of a rather lengthy sermon outline. The text is from **Jeremiah 1:11, 13** and it is interpreted allegorically following Cornelius a' Lapide. Here is the quotation: *In its tropological sense God shows to the watchers (those who want to repent) the rod of correction as a beginning. If they do not accept it and remain impenitent he reserves the cauldron of the Gehenna for them.*<sup>214</sup> The aim of correction is that the sinner should be converted and live.

The rod is therefore a sign of love: *loving rod*. This *watching rod* will appear again in Fr Bertoni's preaching - he will say in the sermon ***The Consequences of Sin***<sup>215</sup>:

**... Divine Justice - is like a rod covered with eyes to watch over sinners.**  
**To number one by one all their evil deeds. To consider precisely the way,**  
**the time and the amount of their punishment.**

This also is a reflection of what Fr. Segneri wrote in ***The Instructed Christian***.<sup>216</sup>

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**[111.]** **Three are the things needed for salvation:**

<sup>213</sup> ***Summarium Additionale*, Document 20, p.124.**

<sup>214</sup> **Cornelius a' Lapide, *Commentary in Jeremiah*.**

<sup>215</sup> **St. Gaspar Bertoni, 'Consequences of Sin.'**

<sup>216</sup> **Fr. Paul Segneri, SJ, *The Instructed Christian*. Part 2, Reason 12, n. 6.**

1. Avoid small sins. *He who contemns little things shall fall little by little. They are like little thieves who enter by the window in order to open to door to the big thieves.*

2. Convince ourselves that we shall not go to Heaven without the cost of much labor and effort. *The Kingdom of God suffers violence. Make an effort to go in. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.*

3. Have the good will to go [to Heaven]. *He who has good will, has everything.* Demosthenes managed to overcome four natural defects in order to become an orator. a) Longing for [irresponsible] freedom through solitude, by shaving half of his beard. b) A weak voice. c) A poor pronunciation, by keeping a stone in his mouth. d) Raising his shoulder by using a sword.

It is a continuation of the outline for a sermon, begun under the same date, **February 22<sup>nd</sup>**: even though this is not the theme for a completed discourse, which would be followed here as the outline for another sermon – as though he would have forgotten to include the possible dates, as **February 23<sup>rd</sup>**, or **24<sup>th</sup>**. Whatever, these hypotheses make little difference. The brief tract that we have here is not complete. The passage was a bit long – so, it seemed best to divide it as we have here.

The first requirement for Salvation is based upon a hemistich from **Sirach 19:1**, which has already been well commented upon in the note of **24 July 1808**. We add here some statements by St. Teresa of Avila which Fr. Bertoni must have surely read. At the conclusion of the Foundation of Palenza, she admonished the Discalced Nuns and Monks with these words:

*... By means of little things the Devil goes about boring and drilling holes, through which bigger things can enter later on. Never let yourselves say 'there is no harm in this...this is of little importance... In this way much damage are in fact done...' <sup>217</sup>*  
*In her autobiography she wrote: "I was preoccupied not to commit any moral sin, but I used to care little about venial sins. This was in fact what ruined me!" <sup>218</sup>*

In her *Life*<sup>219</sup>, we read that she had noted she had not committed any mortal sin – but, that she paid little heed to her venial sins, and it was these which ruined her. To make little account of venial sins ruins the soul.

As regards the second requirement for salvation, i.e. the practical conviction of the necessity of laboring for salvation, the biblical support is taken from **Mt 11:12** where Jesus praised John the Baptist: ***The Kingdom of God is conquered by force and is the reward of those who take it by violence.***

<sup>217</sup> *Foundations*, c. 29, n. 32. In: *Opere*, Ed. Venice 1723., Rome edition 1949.

<sup>218</sup> *Foundations*, nn. 193, 194. Ed. 1723. Tome 2. Sentences.

<sup>219</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, *Life*, o.c., c. 4, n. 7 – Rome Edition 1949.

The second biblical support is **Luke 13:24**: ***Make an effort to enter by the narrow door*** - that of virtue - ***because, I tell you, many will seek to enter and will not manage*** because they do not use the narrow door but the wide and broad entrance.

The third biblical support is again **Mt 14:24** or **Luke 9:23**. it is always Jesus' word. In both quotations the beginning is the same: ***If one wants to come after me*** - and in the second one we have also the ***pick up his cross every day***. We have already seen at the end of September and in the beginning of October, that Fr. Bertoni used this text to organize his points for the Panegyric of St. Francis. This text, however, is not only for heroic saints, but is rather a matter of everyday spiritual living. Fr Bertoni will write to Leopoldina Naudet in 1828:

**...It's up and down... sometimes straight, sometimes crooked. We follow Him Who walks in front of us with the Cross on His shoulders and keeps on crying: "He who wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross and follow behind me..."** <sup>220</sup>

With regard to the third necessity for salvation, this would be *good will*. It is quite correct to say that he who has it, has all, provided he does whatever he is able to. In some other writing Fr Bertoni completed the Latin quotation as follows ***but the will is not good, if it does not do what he can***. A man of good will has everything, because God, on His part, will never fail him. In the ***Imitation of Christ*** we read about the anxieties about Salvation: *...Oh, if I only knew that I shall (be able to) persevere!... And he suddenly heard God's voice: "If you knew this, what would you do now?... Do now what you would then like to do, and you will be quite sure..."* <sup>221</sup>

There follows the example of the classical pagan, "to show how a strong will can overcome the obstacles which to ordinary people seem insurmountable, and how to reach the height of artistic excellence through labor and study."<sup>222</sup> If Demosthenes was able to exercise such violence on himself for his purposes, what should a Christian do to conquer the Kingdom of Heaven?

With reference to n. 1: "It is related that Demosthenes lived for months on end in an underground room with his head half shaved in order not to be tempted to go out. There [cf. n. 4 above] he would declaim aloud, in front of a mirror as tall as his body. A sword was suspended just above one of his shoulders which he had the habit of raising too high. In this manner he succeeded in controlling his rude bearing and his clumsy mannerisms."

With reference to the 2nd and 3rd points above: "He had a thin and weak voice, a faulty pronunciation of the "r", a short and a belabored breath. In order to strengthen his voice, it is said that he used to run up a slope while proclaiming poems, speeches and

<sup>220</sup> *Epistolario*, p. 242. Letter 144, late spring or summer of 1828.

<sup>221</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Book 1, c. 25, n. 2.

<sup>222</sup> Joseph Arcangeli, *Commentary on Cicero's Orator*. Prato 1885.

conversation in a loud voice. To correct the defects of pronunciation he used to recite rapidly, while keeping little stones in his mouth. To accustom his eyes and ears to the noisy excitement of the crowd, he used to discourse along the shores of a stormy sea."<sup>223</sup> And this rather extended outline is not yet finished.

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[112.] If the matter of our Salvation would depend on God alone, no one would ever be damned: *I do not want the death of a sinner...*

But since it depends also on our cooperation, and this is lacking, and so, many are damned.

It is a great danger to hear God's Word without drawing fruit from it.

The first and the second sentence go together with what was said about the third requirement for Salvation. They confirm that *whoever who has good will has everything*. The scriptural text that is inserted between the first and second statement is from **Ezekiel 33:11**. This is accepted in the liturgical form of the Divine Office for Prime during the ferial days of Lent:

... *As I live, says the Lord, I do not wish the death of the sinner, but rather that he be converted and live*. The original text sounds as follows: *As I live, says the Lord God, I do not wish the death of the wicked but that the wicked turn back from his way and live...*

The last sentence repeats for everybody the moral of the predicament of Herod with John the Baptist: "he likes to listen to him...but does not obey his essential message **it is not lawful!**... nor does he send Herodias back to her husband".

[In a sermon on *The means of salvation* Fr Bertoni will say that Salvation:

...**must be sought after with our cooperation. It is not sufficient to ask help from God. We ought to help ourselves with those powers which God gives us. It is like people besieged in a square, who both act and wait to be rescued... Paradise is not a hereditary Kingdom, but a Kingdom to be conquered... Saints were of the conviction that it is not by a light effort that we are saved but that all powers of man are necessary. It is worth while to believe the Saints, because "he who has crossed the river knows how deep the water is... ]**<sup>224</sup>

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**26th FEBRUARY 1809**

[113.] We must make in ourselves a portrait of Jesus Christ.

<sup>223</sup> Jerome Bartolotti-Dominic Bassi, Introduction to *The Three Orations of Demosthenes* [against Philip] n. 8

<sup>224</sup> The Translator has added this paragraph, not found in Fr. Stofella's Notes for the *Memoriale Privato*. Cf. perhaps MssB ## 4092-4094.

From a little blot of ink on the original notebook, this date could be either the 25<sup>th</sup>, or the 26<sup>th</sup>. The entry seems to have been made in some haste – and the precise date would not make a great deal of difference.

This entry could very well have been inspired by a text of Fr Da Ponte in a Meditation on the Incarnation<sup>225</sup>:

*...God showed, in the last days, His Holiness and all His Virtues by impressing them on the God-made-man. He wanted Him to be a visible portrait of them all, so that we may be stimulated by His example to imitate them while he helps us by His grace to acquire them. In this way nobody can excuse himself from doing it...*

We want to report here a quotation from Fr Surin's Spiritual Letters. Fr. Bertoni read with great interest his *Life* which he will quote also in his writings. That great Jesuit said:

*...What is needed is the image of Jesus Christ. It is this divine portrait which we have to draw in our hearts...*<sup>226</sup>

In the index of the more *notable matters* the word which refers to this quotation has the French **portrait**.

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### 27th FEBRUARY 1809

**[114.] God does not command the impossible. In commanding he reminds us to do what you can and to ask for what you can not.**

This is a text from St. Augustine<sup>227</sup> The **Council of Trent** used them in its Session 6 on Justification:

*...God does not command impossible things. By commanding he admonishes to do what you can and to ask for what you can not, and he helps you so that you can...*<sup>228</sup>

The precise connection between this text and the one that follows on the same day, February 27<sup>th</sup>, it is indicated to us. And so we will proceed to what follows.<sup>229</sup>

<sup>225</sup> Fr. DaPonte, I, of Part 2, n. 3.

<sup>226</sup> Fr. Surin, *Lettres Spirituelles*. Tome I, Letter 24. Lyon 1843.

<sup>227</sup> St. Augustine, *De natura et Gratia*, c. 43

<sup>228</sup> Council of Trent, Sessopm VI. *De Justificatione*, c. 11: *De Observantia mandatorum deque illius necessitate et possibilitate*.

<sup>229</sup> The Translator, however, may have found the link unnoticed by Fr. Stofella: [cf. Bertoni, Vol. 3, pp.20-22]:

*Fr N. Dalle Vedove has discovered the connection between this text of St Augustine and the following lines about the four kings and indeed the note of 28 Feb. On the 27 Feb the Bishop of Verona, Innocence Liruti, had sent a letter to Fr*

**Four Kings received warnings from God through His Prophets that they would lose their Kingdoms, i.e. the King of Nineveh, Saul, Balthazar and Hezekiah.**

**We must not be consumed by melancholy like Saul. We must get down to work.**

The King of Nineveh received the unhappy message through Nahum, the Prophet who had *the burden of Nineveh* = i.e., the grave announcement against Nineveh, in which the description of the destruction of the city was prophetically described. Regarding the king, there are the two final verses: *O king of Assur, your shepherds sleep: your princes are buried: your people is trying to hide in the mountains, and there is no one to gather them. Our wound is not secret, your wound is most serious: all those who have heard the news concerning you, have applauded in great joy: for indeed, to whom has not your malice done evil in every time?*<sup>230</sup>

Two separate times Saul received the message from Samuel: the first was for having offered to God the holocaust without awaiting the arrival of the prophet [cf. **1 K 13:9-14**]. The second time, for having allowed the King Agag and a great part of the booty to escape the absolute extermination Amalecites [cf. **1 K 15:20-30**].

To Baltasar, the warning came through the prophet Daniel, the night of the festive sacrilege:

**...This is the interpretation of the word. MANE: God has numbered your kingdom and has finished it. THECEL: you are weighed in the balance and found wanting. PHARES: your kingdom is divided and is given to the Medes and Persians...That same night Baltasar the Chaldean was slain... And Darius the Mede succeeded to the kingdom, being threescore and two years old... [cf. Dn 5:26-28, 30-31].**

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***Bertoni by which he informed him that he was chosen as a Definitor to help in the Collegiate of St Nicholas. Such office consisted in having the responsibility of giving the last word in the solution of theological and moral cases debated by the Clergy. This was a great honor for Fr Bertoni, which showed the special trust the bishop had in him as a theologian, though not teaching as a professor in the Seminary. It meant also that the humble priest was considered to have much influence and respect on the part of the Clergy. The only one who did not take pride in this promotion was surely Fr Bertoni himself. As the note of his JOURNAL reveals, he took it as an occasion for obedience and an extra work to be carried out with humility and much confidence in God who helps us so that we do what we must do.***

<sup>230</sup> Cf. Martini, c. 3, 18, 19.

Hezechias, the King of Judah, through the Prophet Isaiah had already received from God previously a threat of death: *you will die and you will not live!* Therefore, following prayers and tears, he was granted another 15 years of life with the promise of divine protection and the liberation of the city from the Assyrians. Later on, *Hezechias had shown his treasures to the ambassadors of the King of Babylon, and heard it said by Isaiah that all of this would one day be transported into Babylon.*

*And then Hezechias said to Isaiah: Just is the word uttered by the Lord. And he added: There would only be peace if the promises are kept in my days. Hezechias asked and obtained of not seeing with his own eyes the desolations and the collapse that the Lord wanted to wreak upon the land of Judah [cf. **Is 28:1-6; 39: 5-8. 4 K 19**].*

The melancholy of Saul came as a result of his being reproved [cf. **1 K 16:14**]. *The spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. Then, whenever the evil spirit from the Lord was upon Saul, David took up his harp, and played with his hand and Saul was refreshed and was better, for the evil spirit departed from him.* Saul would have needed much more than the harp! What he needed was a sentence of repentance, and twice he admitted he had sinned, and he did this with that good spirit with which the Lord animated David: but, the prophet was able to say to him: *The Lord has indeed taken your sin away: you will not die!* And his conduct corresponded.

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### 28th FEBRUARY 1809

**115. To be saved, one has to do as in a sea storm:**

**1. [to jettison ballast by] unburdening one's conscience**

**2. to pray, to act and to obey**

**It is sufficient to reflect and bring into harmony the heart and the hands with the tongue which says *Our Father....***

When on a boat and overtaken by a sea storm, people would throw everything into the sea to lighten it and have more chance for the persons to float and be saved. One day, during a sermon in the cathedral, reminding the people of the incident of Jonah, Fr. Bertoni will cry to an imaginary stubborn sinner present in the audience:

**...Oh obstinate sinner, my brother, this [sea] turmoil has happened because of you. Do you wish to sleep in the bosom of sin? Why do you not rise up to appease the Lord? Throw into the sea not yourself but your sins!...or even yourself, yes: into the sea of God's mercy. Come to the Heart of Jesus Christ. He will put you back again on the shore of His Grace...** <sup>231</sup>

This is what unburdening one's conscience is. Then the three verbs which, in the infinitive, are like three imperatives, for those who want to be saved:

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<sup>231</sup> **Sermon 5, May 14, 1801 – *The Ascension*. MssB ## 499-521.**

PRAY: because ***You cannot do anything without Me. (Jo 15:5)*** says the Lord; but ***Ask, and it will be granted to you; search and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you...*** (Mt 7,7)

ACT and OBEY: because ***Not everyone who says to me Lord! Lord!... shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven but he who does the will of My Father... (Mt 7:7,21).***<sup>232</sup>

With reference to the last brief sentence, Fr. Bertoni seems to suggest the simplest means to make the three verbs work together, i.e. ***Pray, Act, Obey*** :

... ***It is sufficient to reflect*** he says ***and bring into harmony the heart*** -by an interior and loving will - ***and the hands*** - by deeds - ***with the tongue which says Our Father...***

To pray and to live as God's children! Here we can find the secret of Fr. Gaspar: faithfulness to the commandment which he found in three most cherished texts:

***Let nothing hinder you from praying. (Sir 18:22)***

***It is necessary to pray always and never give up (Lk 18:1).***

***Pray without ceasing (I Th 5:17).***

In a letter to Naudet he wrote:

... ***It is clear that the Lord wants us to be mindful of Him and that our thought and affection should dwell continuously in Him with recollection... Blessed is the person who gets lost in this abyss... who throws himself wholeheartedly into this Ocean as in a shipwreck! A little child is never more secure than when it abandons all its thoughts and anxieties, and sleeps with its arms around the neck of its mother. It does not see, it does not hear, it does not talk. It is the mother who sees and hears and talks and acts on its behalf...***<sup>233</sup>

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**29th FEBRUARY 1809**

[116.] ***Ask for the Grace to follow Him and to have zeal for His glory and the salvation of [my] soul.***

***"Let him who serves me follow me".***

1809 was not a leap year. The date of 29th February was certainly a human error...to which the holiest of souls are always subject as long as they live on this earth! He simply had overlooked the fact that with the previous entry, the month had come to an end. There is also a bit of a mix up in the original manuscript. The pen is different for this note, as is the ink.

<sup>232</sup> *Pagine di Vita Cristiana*, pp. 117-120. Sermon 29, *On Perseverance*. April 11, 1803. MssB ## 773-793.

<sup>233</sup> *Epistolario*, p. 33. Letter 5, December 11, 1812; cf. also ib., p. 44, Letter 10, December 21, 1812; p. 96, Letter 36, August 31, 1813.

This is a very personal note of Fr. Gaspar. The scriptural quotation is from **Jo 12:26**. It belongs to the texts of the solemn day of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. It follows the short parable of the grain of wheat which unless it falls into the ground and dies, it remains unproductive. If it dies, it brings forth abundant fruit. Martini translates and comments as follows: **He who serves me, let him follow me; where I am, there, will also be the one who serves me.** My ministers are more especially called to fall in behind me, along the way of the cross. He who will follow me along such way, will follow me into blessedness too." Yes, because the complete text has the following words: **And he who will serve me, will be honored by my Father.**

**Let him follow** is therefore a command, as Fr Bertoni reflects. It implies what is intended by the parable of the grain of wheat: the imitation of Christ crucified. Namely: *to bear the cross and to love the cross. To chastise the body and bring it into subjection. To shun honors. To bear willingly with insults. To despise oneself and wish to be despised. To suffer adversities and losses. Not to desire prosperities in this world...* All these thing principles we read in **The Imitation of Christ**, and they are not in accord to man's natural inclination". Fr. Gaspar, then, affirms together with the **Imitation of Christ**. *If you rely on yourself, you will not be able to do anything like this, but if you rely on the Lord... God does not command the impossible.* <sup>234</sup> He would, however, add: *Ask for what you cannot do, because he was sure that God will help us to do it.* And his exhortation is *to ask for the grace to follow Him and to have true zeal for His glory and the salvation of the soul* for which He shed His most precious Blood.

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<sup>234</sup> **Imitation of Christ**, Book 2, c. 12: 'The Royal Way of the Cross, n. 9.

## 2nd MARCH 1809

[117.] Joy according to the World is impure, unstable, unworthy, harmful. Joy according to God is pure, stable, worthy, wholesome. It is wholesome because it overcomes the Flesh, the World and the Devil.

This is a thought for a sermon with two parts clearly opposing each other: 1. **Joy according to the World** 2. **Joy according to God**. The eight adjectives in direct opposition, propose four points for each of the two parts. And yet, it does not seem that in the actual delivery the preacher would prefer to contrast point by point the two parts, and thus divide the treatment of his theme.

We believe that both the statement and the method come from Fr Gaspar's daily reading of the *Imitation of Christ*. We give some quotations:

*Nobody can fully rejoice unless he can testify to his own good conscience... Oh, if one could never seek transient joy what a good conscience he would keep!...*<sup>235</sup>

*Have a good conscience and you will always have joy... Bad conscience is always fearful and restless... Do not rejoice unless you have done something good... The wicked never have true joy...*<sup>236</sup>

*The Master says to his disciple: Do you think that the persons of this time have nothing or very little to suffer? But they have many pleasures - you would say... Oh, how short, how deceitful, how disorderly and shameful are all these!... These people do not understand because they are drunk and blind. They are similar to dumb animals which rush towards the death of their souls for the sake of this mortal life's little pleasure...*<sup>237</sup>

True Joy is a theme which Fr Gaspar treated already in a sermon on *Laetare Sunday*, 11 March 1804<sup>238</sup>:

... The true and only joy of the heart is the purpose and intention dear and sweet to all people. Both to those who serve Christ and live a way of perfection and to those who love the World and are still slaves of vanity. There is a difference, though. While the former are sure of making a proper choice of means the latter make a shameful mistake with serious harm for themselves. Fr. Bertoni wanted to rescue the latter from such dangerous deception by demonstrating to them the true road to true joy. Let us first see - he said - the way followed by the worldly people who seek that aim with such eagerness...

He quickly noted that any worldly joy comes from those worldly goods already listed by the Psalmist (Ps 144:11-15). Namely: quickness of tongue and swiftness of hand. Large number of sons and beautiful and elegant daughters. Full and overflowing barns. Fat and fruitful herds. Farms and palaces supplied to the hilt.

<sup>235</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Book 1, c. 20, n. 3, 4.

<sup>236</sup> *ib.*, Book 2, c. 6, n. 1.

<sup>237</sup> *ib.*, Book 3, c. 12.

<sup>238</sup> *Pagine di Vita Cristiana*, pp. 16, f. – MssB ## 874-895.

Freedom from any slavery! ..."People thought: how happy are those who have these things!" But the spirit of the Prophet added, against all disenchantment: "**Happy the people whose God is the Lord!**" The preacher continued: **Here is where true joy and true happiness are found: in recognizing God as Master, in serving Him with faithfulness. In a word: by living according to God.**" <sup>239</sup>

It is very clear that in this concept we have the merging of both the qualities of the four adjectives of true joy, and the total victory over "**Flesh, World and Devil**".

Here now is the last appeal of the preacher:

**... Let us therefore follow after virtue if we long for true joy. Let us arrange our lives properly, and we shall never lack a true and stable cheerfulness, which the world's adversities will never be able to remove nor diminish. Let us cleanse our conscience well. Our conscience is a good witness for living quiet, peaceful and happy days. When that terrible step, called death, will come -where the empty happiness of the World is changed into dreadful mourning -our security will be confirmed, our delight will be doubled. We shall have nothing to fear. To the short happy years spent in the fear of God on this earth, endless ages of full happiness will be added when we shall be introduced into the very joy of God...** <sup>240</sup>

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**5th MARCH 1809**

**[118.] The Devil wants to ruin people by giving them the sense of security.(St John Chrysostom)**

**Do not put things off from day to day.**

As for the first text, it is most characteristic of St. John Chrysostom. However it is quite difficult to find the precise quotation in the enormous literary works of the Saint. However, St. Teresa of Avila did state: that no one, as long as he lives and is engulfed in the dangers of this stormy sea, can ever be secure. <sup>241</sup>

This thought can be found in the spirituality of Fr. Gaspar through the ***Imitation of Christ*** :

*...Never promise yourself security, however good a religious or devout a hermit you may seem to be..."The security of the saints was always filled with the Fear of God. Though they were shining with great virtues and grace they were no less careful and humble...* <sup>242</sup>.

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<sup>239</sup> **ib., p. 17.**

<sup>240</sup> **ib., p. 24**

<sup>241</sup> **St. Teresa of Avila, *Path of Perfection*, c. 40. Rome edition, c. 11, n. 7.**

<sup>242</sup> ***Imitation of Christ*, Book 1, c. 20, n. 3.**

He could also have read in the preceding lines which would have revealed to him that which he could qualify for the proper dispositions:

*...No one can show external security, unless he who loves to hide himself. No one can talk with self assurance, unless he who willingly keeps silent. No one can confidently be a superior, unless he who loves to live as a subordinate. No one commands with confidence, unless he who has learned to obey. No one can fully rejoice, unless he can testify to his own good conscience...*

We have seen the last line under the note of 2 March. This same doctrine came to Fr Bertoni from Fr Scupoli's ***Spiritual Combat*** as a genuine doctrine of Jesus Christ. *...since You have taught us to mistrust in ourselves and to trust in You and so we fight and pray...*<sup>243</sup>

Writing to Mother Naudet concerning a person under his guidance, he said:

**... I have thought the matter over. Everything will be resolved in this way i.e. that you should begin to distrust in yourself and to trust in God. Act and pray, fear and love ...**<sup>244</sup>

The second text is from Scripture. The complete verse is as follows:

***Delay not to be converted to the Lord and defer it not from day to day. For His wrath will come of a sudden and in the time of vengeance He will destroy you (Si 5:8-9).***

Fr. Bertoni will make use of this text during the Instructions to the Acolytes for the monthly Retreats of 1811 [Instruction 10]. He will use it to combat...

**... a kind of sloth which is among the worst ones.** He will explain: **Although to defer and to put off to a later time is always dangerous, there are two areas in which this attitude is most dangerous i.e. when we defer our conversion from sin to Christ, and when we delay our Confession....**

He will use the motto of from Cornelius a' Lapide: "Do not delay...do not put off... or you will mimic the crow which caws **cras** (= **tomorrow!**)... *Cras* I will get converted. *Cras* I shall change my life!"

He would also quote the Augustinian text used by offered by Cornelius a' Lapide: " Oh man, why do you put it off from day to day? Perhaps this very day will be your last day!"

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<sup>243</sup> Scupoli, ***Spiritual Combat***, Dedication Letter to Jesus Christ.

<sup>244</sup> ***Epistoalrio***, p. 42. Letter 9 – Early in 1813.

6<sup>th</sup> MARCH 1809

[119.] This world of ours is like a large Hospital of sick people. All are moaning. No one is cured yet the medicine is available. The medicine is prayer. But this is either not done or it is poorly done. "Either the one who prays is wicked... or one prays for wicked things... or one prays in a wicked way. Sometimes one does not pray for one's own needs... or one does not pray first for the Kingdom of God... Perhaps prayer is not devout and not persevering.

A knight used to go very often to St Ignatius to ask for prayers, while he continued in his wicked life. One day the Saint asked the gentleman if he would like to help him in carrying a table out of his room. So the gentleman stood on one side of the table and the Saint on the other. The gentleman started pulling the table out, while St Ignatius held fast the table on his own side. The gentleman insisted in pulling the table and the Saint continued to hold it. At last the gentleman said: "If Your Reverence wishes to take out the table he should follow after me". To which the Saint retorted: "You too, Sir, should follow after me when I pray for you, to take you out of your sins."

The image of the world as a hospital was not new to Fr. Bertoni. He read in Fr. Segneri's work<sup>245</sup> that *Grace has given to the sounds of our Prayer a power which can heal every evil and that nonetheless there is a multitude of people who shun or neglect such a remedy which Divine Providence has established for their salvation...* With the same author Fr. Gaspar meditated that *Man, because of sin, has contracted four most serious illnesses: namely ignorance, malice, concupiscence and weakness. Every time one falls again into sin these illnesses get horribly worse. He is unable ever to get completely healed, even when he is free from sin. And yet this is not the worst of evils. The worst is not to be able to cooperate with the doctor. Only God can cure him. But this man does not know how to revert to God. He is unable to commend himself to God. In short, he is unable to pray...*<sup>246</sup>

So, in this big hospital it happens, as Fr. Gaspar notes, **In this large hospital, all are moaning**, languishing, and no one gets any better, even though the medicine, which is prayer, is readily available. However, if our prayers, as Fr. Segneri points out<sup>247</sup>, are not heard, this can never be God's fault: it happens necessarily that this occurs either because of the fault of the supplicant, or because of his defective petition, or by the fault of the manner of praying.

And St. Gaspar goes on: **Prayer is either not done or it is poorly done**. And here with his use of the Italian adverb *male* [poorly, or done in an evil manner], he sounds almost Augustinian. **Either the one who prays is wicked...or he asks wicked things or he asks in a wicked way...** And he continues: **He perhaps does not ask for his**

<sup>245</sup> Fr. Paul Segneri, SJ, *The Instructed Christian*. Part 3, Rule 2.

<sup>246</sup> Fr. Paul Segneri, SJ, *Manna for the Soul*, Meditation for May 10<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>247</sup> Id., *The Instructed Christian*, c. 1, Part 3, Rule 3.

own needs or he does not ask - above all things - for the Kingdom of God. Either his prayer is not devout, or it is not persevering... These are the conditions expressed by St Thomas Aquinas for a prayer worthy to be heeded: *One who asks something for himself should ask for what is necessary for his own Salvation, devoutly and perseveringly...*<sup>248</sup>

The story which is reported by Fr Gaspar can explain a remark which St Thomas<sup>249</sup> made in the same text: *It happens sometimes that the prayer which is done for the advantage of another person is not granted. This is because of an obstacle on the part of the one for whom we pray. It remains however meritorious for the person who prays out of charity...*

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### 10th MARCH 1809

[120.] There are several kinds of fear:

1. natural 2. human 3. worldly 4. servile.

These are all bad, and the world is full of them.

5. initial 6. filial: [only these last two bring to Salvation].

*Your words have I hidden in my heart, that I may not sin against You.*

...not in my imagination nor in my intellect.

Fr. Bertoni had dealt with the theme of *The Fear of the Lord* in the second of his early sermons. It was precisely the first one, as a priest, on **23 November 1800**. He had referred to St Thomas' *Summa*<sup>250</sup> and the Council of Trent's Canons on *Justification*. He had taken only two of the qualifications which St Thomas applied to *The Fear of the Lord* and Canon 8 from the Council's statement:

... I speak of that Fear by which a person is converted to God, or through which one is joined more closely to God. So there are two manners in which one fears God. Firstly one fears the temporal or eternal punishment by which God can punish our faults in a most just way. Secondly one fears the very fault by which he can get separated from God. If we have recourse to (God's) mercy for fear of *the punishment* or of Hell and we are sorry for our sin or we refrain from sin: this is *servile Fear*. This fear is good, according to Trent's Canon No 8 and it comes from the Holy Spirit. (It is clear that Fr Gaspar is not dealing here with the *purely servile* fear, but of that which is open towards *filial* fear). If we have recourse to God for fear of *the fault*, and we draw closer to God: this is *filial fear*, and this is properly the gift of the Holy Spirit...<sup>251</sup>

<sup>248</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 83, a. 15, ad 2 um.

<sup>249</sup> ib. q. 83, a. 7.

<sup>250</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, II-II, q. 19.

<sup>251</sup> *Pagine di Vita Cristiana*, p. 154. Sermon 2, October 23, 1800. MssB ## 399-405 – the first recorded sermon of St. Gaspar as a priest, about a month after his ordination, September 20, 1800.

Some years later, in this hurried note of his *Spiritual Journal*, Fr. Bertoni collected and numbered all the qualifications which distinguish the *Fear of the Lord*, in the quotation of St Thomas' we gave above<sup>252</sup>. He included also that *natural fear* which is mentioned in the second preliminary objection, but it is not treated in the answer because it excludes all moral evaluation. It does not deserve, therefore, any mention in a question which regards the moral good or evil.

St. Thomas' question reads as follows: *Whether Fear is properly to be divided into Filial, Initial, Servile and Worldly*. Fr. Bertoni added the adjective **Human**. St. Thomas did not think it necessary to distinguish *Human* from *Worldly*. He explained this by writing: *We deal here with the fear by which we somehow respectively either **become converted** to God or **a-verted** from God. Because the object of fear is an evil, sometimes man draws back from God because of the evils which he fears. This is called Human or Worldly Fear...* St Thomas' text continues: *Sometimes man, because of the evil which he hears, turns towards God and draws closer to Him. He is converted to God and clings to Him. The evil we are talking about is of double nature. It is an evil of punishment and an evil of fault. If therefore someone is converted to God and clings to Him for fear of the punishment, this would be Servile Fear. If all this is fear of the fault, it would be Filial Fear because it is proper of children to fear hurting their father. If it is because of both kinds of fear i.e. of punishment and fault together, that would be called Initial Fear because it lies in between the two.*

A question arises as to why Fr. Bertoni made those clarifications, evaluating the first three as **bad** and the following two in **leading to Salvation**.

Let us leave aside the *Natural Fear* which, as has already been seen, does not enter into the discussion. We said also that *Human* and *Worldly* fears are one and the same. The rest is clear enough. The question arises about the *Servile Fear*. Does he intend to correct the definition which he preached in that earlier sermon, basing himself on a Tridentine canon? No! It seems rather that he is considering here the *servile fear* as absolutely and purely servile (= **serviliter servilis**, according to St. Thomas<sup>253</sup>). St. Gaspar clarifies his own position in accord with this teaching: the characteristics of the fear which is not *purely servile*(= **non serviliter servilis**) are included in the *initial fear*.

As for the verse taken from **Psalm 119:11**, could express a longing of love after having meditated upon the *Fear of God* : *...Your teaching (= words), oh Lord is not in my imagination nor in my intellect. I want to keep it in my heart. So that love rather than fear may preserve me from sin.*

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**13th MARCH 1809**

**[121.] When the Devil tempts us, he makes use of these two passions: Love and Terror. St Augustine said that these are the two roots of every sin.**

<sup>252</sup> St. Thomas, II-II, q. 19, a. 2., ad 2um.

<sup>253</sup> id., q. 19, aa. 4, 5, 6.

If there were true goods in this world Our Lord Jesus Christ would have given us some examples. The goods of this world are like medicines. Jesus Christ, since the day of his birth, has shown us utmost poverty, utmost suffering, utmost contempt. These are therefore the only true goods.

In St Augustine's original text we read **error** (= **erroribus**) instead of Fr Bertoni's **terror** (= **terroribus**). We ask ourselves whether this entry of Fr Bertoni was a textual quotation. It seems that it may be. In the Index of the *Thoughts and Words* of St Augustine's works compiled by Maurus, we do not find this word. The doctrine, though, is surely Augustinian.

Here is a quotation from St Augustine's ***Enarrations on Psalm 42:7: Why, or for what do I go about sorrowful while the enemy afflicts me? I walk in sorrow. But why? The enemy afflicts me with temptations every day. But how? By instigating us either to love badly or to fear badly.*** By putting into our souls things which we cannot but love badly or which we cannot but fear badly.

Sometimes the *bad love* is substituted with *error* which is ultimately the same thing. Hence we are told to slam the door in the face of the enemy, that we should not feel desire towards him. The snare of the enemy is laid and ready. The bait which he has put into it is **Error** and **Terror**. The first (= **error**) tends to allure and the second (= **terror**) strives to break into pieces and to steal away. How will we avoid the snare? "Shut the door of desire against Error. Shut the door of fear against Terror".<sup>254</sup>

We present here still one more text in St Augustine's ***Catechesis to Simple People***, towards the end. Instead of *bad loves* he deals with the similar *bad desires*. "*The Devil, he writes, does not tempt us only through desires but also through the terrors of insults and sufferings and the very death.*"

No wonder that these *loves* and these *terrors* are at the root of every sin because both in the former and in the latter there lies that greed which, according to St Paul is the **root of all evils (I Tim 6:10)**.

To attract this desire and covetousness (without necessarily taking it always in the most malicious sense) the goods of this world are the first to present themselves. Are they true goods? Do they satisfy the just desires of man? Do they cooperate in helping him to reach eternal Salvation?

The words of Fr Bertoni are an echo of what the ***Imitation of Christ*** says in the last number of the second Book:

*... If indeed there had been anything better and more useful to man's Salvation than suffering, Christ would have surely shown it to us by word and example. He has rather shown us the contrary. He exhorted both his disciples and those who want to follow*

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<sup>254</sup> St. Augustine, *Ennarationes in Ps 30:10*.

*after Him by saying: **If anyone wants to follow after me, let him renounce himself, pick up his cross and follow me...***

Fr. Da Ponte writes: The spiritual cross of Christ is made up, so to say, of three pieces: Poverty, Contempt, Suffering.<sup>255</sup>

Therefore Fr Gaspar concluded: **The only true goods are those which Jesus Christ has shown us since the day of his birth: utmost poverty, utmost suffering, utmost contempt.**

As for the goods of this world, one has to go back to use the creatures according to the doctrine of St Ignatius of Loyola: *Only in so far as they are useful to attain the end, which should be the Glory of God and the eternal Salvation of each person.* Or, in the very word of Fr Gaspar: with the goods of this world, we have to use the same caution that we have with regard to **medicines**.

It is clear that he kept for himself the *three pieces* of the spiritual cross of Jesus. Which is because of what he read on St Teresa's *Life*.<sup>256</sup> *How rich will he find himself who has left all riches for Christ! How honored will he be who refused honors for His sake and even enjoyed to be humiliated and scorned! How wise will he be who rejoiced at being considered mad, because Wisdom Himself received the same treatment.*

The text which immediately precedes this one just quoted, was not only read by Fr. Gaspar but also copied down. He would preach this to the Seminarians and Priests, as well as to the People. We take it from his own script which he prefaces with the following words: **God shed all his blood for this soul (of mine): I didn't even shed a drop of sweat. It is impossible to be saved in this way!** And he continues with Saint Teresa: Why do we like to have so many goods and joys and much glory all the time...and all this at Jesus' expense? Why do we not cry with the women of Jerusalem, at least, if we do not (want to) help Him carry the cross with the man from Cyrene? Do we think to enjoy with pleasure and hobbies what he conquered for us at the cost of His blood? It is impossible? Do we want to reward with empty honors the humiliations which (Jesus) suffered to make us reign for all eternity? It is not even probable! It is a false road. This is not the right direction. We shall never reach the goal!" Fr Gaspar copied also the final cry which Teresa addressed to her Confessor: "Cry out, Reverend Father, this truth - because God has not granted me the liberty to do it."

Except for two or three variants of form that are indeed insignificant, this is the precise text from the ancient edition of her *Life* at our disposal. We can take it from the sermon that Fr. Gaspar preached on the **Benefit of the Missions**. But Fr. Gaspar also preached it to the Seminarians and Priests in the First Meditation of the 9<sup>th</sup> day of the Spiritual Exercises, in this form:

**... Christ entered Heaven with the scars of his wounds. [He said:] This is the price by which I have bought this Kingdom. It cannot be bought by**

<sup>255</sup> Fr. DaPonte, o.c., Part 3, Meditation 7, second point.

<sup>256</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, *Life*, o.c., c. 27:14.

less than this. "To have it at a lower price is impossible!" – as St Teresa has put it...<sup>257</sup>

Fr. Bertoni makes a similar appeal from the very first day of this Retreat:

**"My Priests, why don't you love Poverty and humiliations, things which you admire in the Gospel? One has the impression that it is shameful to imitate Christ, in our time St. Teresa cries out that it is impossible to pretend to want to enjoy Heaven's pleasure together with Christ without sharing in His humiliations here on earth.**"<sup>258</sup>

This is what St. Teresa herself had state: *to wish to have part in His Kingdom, that of Jesus Christ, and not to wish to share in His dishonors and travails, makes no sense.*<sup>259</sup>

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**[122.] One well meditated maxim is sufficient for my salvation: many truths, as convincing as they might sound, astonish our mind, but they do not persuade us in a practical manner.**

It seems that Fr Bertoni was speaking of himself here, but not exclusively. The observation which concludes the sentence is easily applicable to everybody. This was inspired by the Latin saying: *Pluribus intentus minor est ad singula sensus* ( *if one is occupied in many different things, one gives little attention to particulars* ). This takes its inspiration from the teaching of St Ignatius in his Spiritual Exercises. He wrote:

*... What gratifies the soul is not so much to have a lot of knowledge, as rather to hear and taste the things internally. All the rest fosters only curiosity and at times vanity." "When in my meditation I reach a point where I found what I aimed at, I must dwell on this, without being preoccupied of going further [to other things], until my soul is fully satisfied..."*<sup>260</sup>

Fr. Gaspar will present the same principle to the Acolytes in the monthly retreat of 1811: **One can find salvation by pondering well over only one truth.** However, the development of this truth has not been entrusted to writing.

We believe that Fr Bertoni considered the experience of St Francis Xavier which he had written down from his *Life*. "He was converted by St Ignatius with that powerful sentence of the Gospel: **What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and yet loses his own soul?**... The good Saint used that sentence to convert other people too." This is a passage found in a letter of the Saint, *written from India to Fr. Simon*

<sup>257</sup> *Collectanea Stigmatina*, Vol. I, p. 234 - 'The Way of Heaven.'

<sup>258</sup> *Ib.*, p. 123.

<sup>259</sup> As for St. Teresa of Avila, cf. *Path of Perfection*, c. 13.

<sup>260</sup> St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises*. Annotations 2 and 76. cf. also DeFranciosi, *L'esprit de S. Ignace*. III edition, Spes-Paris 1948. c. 14. 'Sur Oraison,' nn. 16, 17.

Rodriguez. It can be found in the **Life** of the Saint, and in a chapter we know that Fr. Bertoni had pondered. The Saint manifested a vivid desire to engrave this great saying of Christ into the heart of Don Juan III, King of Portugal.

...If I was sure that the King [John III] takes into consideration my suggestions, I would beg of him to meditate every day for one quarter of an hour that divine sentence **What profits a man if he gains.....** and to ask of God true understanding together with an interior sentiment of the heart. I should also like that he would conclude all his prayers with these same words: **What does it profit a man...** <sup>261</sup>

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**[123.] O just Father, the world has not known You. (Jn 17:25). They do not want to know God as just. They would like to have a God half-way.**

The comment on this verse by Martini<sup>262</sup> is: You Who render to each according to his works, prepare a fitting reward for those who having left the world in its incredulity, have believed in Me, and have followed Me.' Fr. Gaspar seems to make use of John's quotation against those people who would like God to refrain from condemning the wicked with that **Go away from me you cursed, into the eternal fire! (Mt 25:41)**. There are people who want to think of God only as *merciful* and not as *just*.

†

#### 14th MARCH 1809

**[124.] If we do not take heed of the loving appeals of [God's] Mercy, what else is left for us except to fall into the terrible hands of [God's] Justice?**

On 28 November 1802 Fr. Gaspar preached about the Last Judgment and cried from the pulpit <sup>263</sup>:

**... O sinners, sinners all! The judge has already sounded against you His immutable sentence: Desist from your sins, desist from them. Depart from Me, go away from Me, you accursed...: ... depart from Me, you accursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels... [Mt 25:41]...**

**Why would you delay any longer? Why do you hesitate from throwing yourselves into the arms of this Mercy while there is still time? Act now before this Mercy gives way to all our offenses, to an enraged Justice - why not? Now is the acceptable time for our repentance: for then, it will be absolutely vain and useless. These are the days to insure our salvation.**

<sup>261</sup> Fr. G. Massei, SJ, *Life of St. Francis Xavier*. S. 1, c. 1 [1<sup>st</sup> ed. of 1682.

<sup>262</sup> A classical Italian biblical commentator.

<sup>263</sup> *Pagine d Vita Cristiana*, pp. 92, f. - Sermon 10, On the Universal Judgment. November 28, 1802. MssB ## 710, ff.

On that day, all hope will be lost: ... *for it shall surely come, it shall not be slack...* [Hab 2:3]. When we are least thinking about it, it will come.

To neglect a matter of such importance, is the same as declaring to wish one's own damnation. To put off deliberation, means to expose oneself to the supreme danger. It is the matter of a soul: once it is lost, it is lost forever. This is a matter of a state that will be perpetually unchangeable. This is a concern of an eternity, either of glory, or of pain. Why, then, do you delay?

This Man-God, our Judge, no matter how tenderly He loves us as a loving Father, acts in a given way so that He will not lose us eternally, His Children, under the scourge of His most just vengeance. He threatens us, He warns us, and cries out strongly so that we do not fall under the bitter fatal blow. He commits all His Blood in order to wash our sins. He shows us His merits, because we are invested with the just rights of His Kingdom. He makes us participants in His satisfactions, to lighten for us the weight of our penance: ... *Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you...* [Mt 11:28].

O merciful, infinitely kind Lord! Indeed anyone would be most worthy to share with the demons should he refuse now to participate with such a good Lord. It is only right that such a person should experience all the fury of Your inflexible justice. This is fitting for whoever would disdain Your most excessive Mercy. Anyone rejecting You, merits to be struck down on that day,, with that very bitter condemnation: "Depart from Me!" this will be the lot of anyone who still remains deaf to the gentle invitation: "Come to Me!"

†

15th MARCH 1809

[125.] *Jesus hid his face from them.* He hides Himself with his Grace: leaving them stubborn in their sins. He hides Himself with his Glory: depriving them of it for all eternity.

The quotation is John 7:59. Fr. Gaspar quoted from memory and thus he exchanged a similar expression in Micah with that of John. John has **He hid himself** while Micah talks of God as **hiding his face** in the text: *Then, they shall cry to the Lord and He will not hear them; and He will hide His face from them at that time, as they behaved wickedly in their devices...* (Mic 3:4).

Fr. Gaspar recalled the commentary of Cornelius a' Lapse on Micah: "He will hide His face, that is His favor, care, providence, help. His presence and His support. All these is what *face* means".<sup>264</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Cornelius a' Lapse, Commentary on Jn 7: 59.

The commentary of Fr. Gaspar on John's text could be seen also as a development of that *Woe* of St Augustine in the commentary to the same text: "Jesus as a man runs away from the stones... but woe to those from whose stony hearts God runs away!" And Fr. Gaspar seems to add: "Woe!.. for this time and for eternity!"

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**[126.] Here [on earth] penance is short, light and useful. In Hell it will be very long, immense and useless.**

**He who does not want to repent in this life will go to repent uselessly in the next.**

Here we are referred back to the principle of 14 March. These two statements repeat and develop it. We can refer also to the **Do not delay!** of 5 March, reinforced with a reflection from Fr. Segneri's thought: *On the last day Justice will leave Mercy in full possession of the elect. Mercy will leave Justice in peaceful possession of all reprobate. Now ponder which of these two will fall to you as your final lot...*<sup>265</sup>

During the Carnival time of 1806 Fr Bertoni preached the Spiritual Exercises to the youth of his Oratory. During the sermon on the 'Last Judgment' he made Jesus address the reprobate saying: **If my Blood did not help you towards salvation, let it be used now for your condemnation.** And to the elect: **You have suffered so little, you are now rejoicing so much!** Then addressing the youth he said: **One of these two lots are yours. How stupid if one knows these things only by Faith and yettt does not bother to make amends by living well! At that [last] time repentance will only be useful to increase desperation!**

†

### 16th MARCH 1809

**[127.] Those whom He does not correct by scourging, he condemns for ever. (St Bernard)**

The subject here is God. The original Latin text of Fr Bertoni, however, can have two different interpretations. The first: *Those people whom God, by His scourges, does not correct, will be condemned for ever by Him.* Namely, because they did not change their lives even under the scourges of God". This translation harmonizes well with the following note of Fr Gaspar about the three crosses. The preacher could make a good application and example in the lot of the wicked thief. But Fr. Gaspar wrote a dividing dash which separates the first line from the others, making two different texts.

A second possible translation: *Those whom God does not correct by the scourges, he will condemn for ever at the end.* Namely, because He has spared the rod with them. In this way the worst scourge here on earth, would be the exemption from the scourges

<sup>265</sup> Fr. Paul Segneri, SJ., *Manna of the Soul*, Meditation for May 19<sup>th</sup>.

of God. This is the explicit meaning of what is, according to us, the original text which Fr Bertoni intended to refer himself to, namely St Bernard's. He wrote: *God shows His wrath to (severs Himself from ) that person whom He does not scourge while he is sinning. In fact [God will] damn for ever the person whom He does not correct by His scourges.*<sup>266</sup> The meaning is clear: the future condemnation is one that lasts forever.

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**[128.] Nobody can go through life without the cross. I present to you three crosses, and you choose. The first is the cross of Christ, the second is the cross of Saint Dismas, the good thief, the third is the cross of the wicked thief.**

**In the first one there is glorification: it belongs to innocent people because they are more similar to Christ.**

**In the second one there is consolation: it belongs to patient people because they do not lose resignation and peace.**

**He who does not pick up one of those two crosses, will naturally remain with the third one of the wicked thief, who had to suffer more and without profit. His cross helped him as a ladder to go down to the deepest part of Hell.**

The premise of this sermon plan is found in the Gospel expression of ***Let each one take up his cross.*** Everyone has his own cross.

The idea of the three crosses could easily have come spontaneously to Fr. Gaspar through his meditations. It must have been, however, clarified in the study of the ***Summa*** of St Thomas Aquinas. The saint - following the Holy Fathers Leo the Great, Augustine and Hilary - sees the Cross of Christ no longer as an instrument of torture but the Tribunal which becomes the symbol of the final Judgment of mankind. In the crosses of the two thieves he sees the symbols of the *right* and *left* of the Last day: i.e. the elect and the reprobate.<sup>267</sup>

Fr. Gaspar reviewed all this in the Meditations of Fr. Da Ponte where he pondered:

... the three crucified of Calvary as can be found among our people. Those crucified on Mount Calvary were three men. One was crucified because of his fault...and he bore impatiently his cross. The other one was also crucified because of his fault but he bore the cross with patience. The third one was crucified without having any fault and he bore his Cross with admirable patience. This is what happens also among human beings in this life.

There are some who are punished by God because of their sins but they bear with impatience their punishment. These will be condemned like the wicked thief. They will come down from the cross and go straight into Hell. There are others who are also punished because of their sins but they suffer the punishment with humility and patience, repeating those words of the prophet Micah ***I shall bear [willingly ] the***

<sup>266</sup> **St. Bernard, *Most Pious Meditations*, c. 6, near the end.**

<sup>267</sup> **St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 46, a. 11, c.**

**[punishment and ]wrath of God because I have sinned against Him... (Mi 7:9)**

These people, like the good thief, will obtain pardon for their sin and will pass from the cross into Paradise.

There are others who, though not guilty, are tormented in order to be trained and to receive the prize. These bear the afflictions with great patience in imitation of Christ. These are the most fortunate because the most precious cross and torture is to suffer without guilt. <sup>268</sup>

Beside these references, Fr Bertoni's version has some peculiar characteristics. He changes the order of Da Ponte's Meditation: first comes the Cross of Christ. Of this he says, following St Paul <sup>269</sup> and the commentary of St Augustine<sup>270</sup>, that it is a **glorification**. Secondly, there is presented the cross of the good thief. Of this he says <sup>271</sup> that it is a **consolation**. For the third cross, which is left of course for those who do not stretch their arms to catch one of the first two, the word does not pass from his lips. It would be: **damnation!**

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**[129.] During Benediction: a sentiment of deep tenderness and love and self-offering. I experienced how Christ attracts our hearts, just as He said: *I shall draw everything to myself...and how any goodness, knowledge and pleasantness which is [found] in creatures, belong to Him. He is the only one who has to be praised and loved because of them.***

This was a *gift of Prayer*. Sweetness in contemplation found in the tender affection for the Lord. Lived experience of the ***I shall draw everything to myself (Jn 12:32)*** and St Ignatius' ***Contemplation toward Love*** which Fr Gaspar would soon present to the Clergy in his Spiritual Exercises of 1810. <sup>272</sup> He will develop this in the second point of the Meditation of *God in the creatures*. (The text here follows the presentation of Fr. Nepveu):

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1. *God is present and acts in all creatures.*

*...Consider that God, not being satisfied with having, in some way, given himself to you with so many blessings, continues to give Himself to you in all creatures which have received from Him existence, life and all the perfections which they have. Get accustomed, then, to see God in the creatures because he is really in them. Therefore, by giving his creatures to you, He is giving Himself to you He is in the creatures:*

a) *By His existence, which is closer to their being than your soul to your body.*

<sup>268</sup> Fr. DaPonte, Part 5, Meditation 46, Point 2, n. 3.

<sup>269</sup> Ga 6:14: *... But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ ....*

<sup>270</sup> St. Augustine, Sermon to the People 160, 7.

<sup>271</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Book 2, c. 12, *passim*.

<sup>272</sup> *Collectanea Stigmatina*, Vol. I, pp. 239, 240.

b) *By his power. He not only gives them power of acting, but it is He who acts more than they themselves do. He is the principle cause. In such a way that it is God Who shines in the sun more than the sun itself. It is God Who warms you in the fire, more than the fire itself. It is God Who nourishes you in the food more than the food itself.*

c) *Finally by his goodness and providence. He governs these creatures. He puts them at your service. He directs all their activities towards you and for you. If He gives light to the sun it is for nothing else than to shine upon you. If He gives heat to the fire it is for nothing else than to warm you. If He gives taste to the food it is for nothing else than to nourish you.*

## 2. How we ought to act in our use of creatures.

*From these three manners in which God dwells in His creatures it is easy to draw your conclusions:*

a) *If God makes Himself present for you in all creatures, you should make an effort to make yourselves present to Him in all creatures. To look for Him in all creatures.*

b) *You should use these creatures uniquely for the glory of God and His service. Since God does not act in them except for your advantage you should not act in them except for His sake.*

c) *When you experience the benefit of these creatures - i.e. the beauty of light, the comfort of warmth, the taste of food - you should refer all this to God and not to the creatures. Be convinced that it is God who gives you well-being rather than the creatures.*

*In this way you ought to feel grateful for the good received. Thank God often on your own account and also on the account of the many people who do not think of this at all. You ought to pay attention not to abuse the creatures by attaching yourselves to them or by using them as instrument of sin. This would be the worst ingratitude: i.e. to turn the blessings of God against God Himself. Finally, you ought sometimes to make a sacrifice of these same creatures by giving up the use of them for God's sake.*

**Let us therefore love God because God first has loved us (Jo 13:6 – or, 1 Jn 4:19?)**<sup>273</sup>.

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**17th MARCH 1809**

**[130.] The situation of the habitual sinner is bad for the past, worse for the present and worst for the future.**

**It is morally impossible for him to be converted: he needs only a miracle of Grace.**

This rather severe statement – in accord with the preaching style of the time - might have been picked up from the book ***Preacher's Library*** by Fr V.Houdry S.J.<sup>274</sup> in the analytical index, under the word habit. It was a well known book at the Stimmate.

<sup>273</sup> **Web-Site Note**: Fr. Stofella may be mistaken here with this referenced: cf. **1 Jn 4:19.**

<sup>274</sup> **Editio Novissima**, Venice, p. 243

There is a quotation attributed to St. Bernard <sup>275</sup>: *The repetition of sin causes a habit. This habit generates almost the need of sinning. This necessity generates almost the impossibility of refraining from sinning. This impossibility generates despair. Despair leads to damnation.*" This specific formula is not really found in the citation given, although the sense of it is there. This is what one might call having a *bad past, a worse present and a worst future.*

For the second sentence we refer again to the same source : <sup>276</sup>

*...Two things are necessary in order to convert and change the human heart: firstly the Grace of God which prevents and urges the sinner, secondly the will of the sinner which complies with God's Grace. With this in mind: 1. It is morally impossible that Grace may change and convert a habitual sinner. 2. It is morally impossible that a sinner would like to change his will. The reasoning is obvious".* Hence a miracle is needed.

Fr. Bertoni had treated this matter during a sermon in 1804, entitled ***Conversion delayed until the Last Day*** <sup>277</sup>:

**...I would want that you would have much time: and nonetheless, I can prove to you that you will not convert. You might even have all the opportunity of expert priests who might help you, you will not be converted. I can prove this, as well.**

**And firstly, you will not convert because you do not want to convert. It will perhaps seem to you that here I will slip away from that beautiful principle, since I have the opportunity to speak with such sinners who wish to be converted at death. I know very well that you would like to be converted at that hour, but I also know that you do not wish to be converted now. And so, I deduce: you do not wish to use time well, even that last period.**

**And who does not know the prodigious power of habits, especially those deeply rooted, nurtured for a very long time. Do they have the power to incline and invincibly drag the will to those acts pleasing to them? Right now, you resist the invitations of grace that are so frequent, even continuous. You train your hearts to a hardness, that is intensified each day, and is aggravated beyond all measure, by so many years. At death, this hardness will reach an indeed monstrous level. If your hearts are hard right now, at that moment, they will be supremely hardened... How, then, could you hope to break it down? How do you think you could bend it? How will you ever be able to soften it?**

**This is not simple guesswork, when the Holy Spirit has added His own sentence. It is an incontestable truth: ... a hard heart shall fear evil at the last... [Si 3:27]. A heart that is hardened, uses time badly now,**

<sup>275</sup> St. Bernard, *De Consideratione*. Book 1.

<sup>276</sup> Fr. Houdry, o.c., p. 240 – Point 10: Synopsis of Sermons.

<sup>277</sup> *Pagine di Vita Cristiana*, pp. 47-55 - Sermon 26, December 26, 1804 – MssB ## 970, ff.

and so it will use time badly at that hour. It will continue in its obstinacy, in its hardness: it will remain in evil to the last.

... What is this? O God! Does the soul then only despair?

No: how I would like to see take steps to avoid the danger of despairing: by not putting off to that last extreme your conversion, by not doing immediately what you will then be unable to do

[At this point of his sermon Fr Gaspar described the agonies of pain, the exhaustion of a shattered body, the disturbed imagination, the terror of the imminent Judgment and the Devil. Then he concluded with St Augustine.: **This is a just punishment: that he who did not like to do the good when he could, cannot find it possible to do it when he will like to.**<sup>278</sup>

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### 19th MARCH 1809

[131.] It is not sufficient to correct a fault. One has to correct it as it deserves. (Heli)

This is a reference to the incident of the priest Heli and his wicked sons Ophni and Phineas which scandalized the Israelites (I S 2:22-25). Heli reproached his sons only verbally without taking more serious steps. God found him co-responsible and punished him together with his children. (3,11-18; 4,10-18; 4:10-18).<sup>279</sup>

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### 22nd MARCH 1809

[132.] Those who make a resolution without the determination [of taking practical steps] are similar to those soldiers or hunters who are portrayed in the pictures. They are always on the point of wounding and killing but in fact they never unleash the blow.

"He who has good will has everything, but it is not good that will which does not want to do what it can"

One blames weakness.

What would you say of an old man who throws away his walking stick and goes skating on the ice like children?

One blames the Devil.

What would you say of a farm worker who sells the vineyard stakes of his master, puts reeds to support the vines and goes away with the money to dine in all the inns while the wind breaks down everything?

<sup>278</sup> ib, pp. 50, 54.

<sup>279</sup> St. Gaspar treats these passages in his work on St. Gregory the Great's Exposition on *Primum Regum* - cf. MssB ## 5240-5383; 5457-5554; 5605-5700.

**We have to re-direct our *passion*: namely towards the love of God, and be interested in the heavenly goods... and hate sin.**

We offer the text as found. Those who make a resolution, but it is inefficacious for them, are like soldiers, and so on. This, too, is a sermon outline. It was Easter season and this could have been a theme for the *Eastern Duty* of making the annual Confession and Communion. This also came up in another season, as on July 30, 1808 in this *Journal*: ***One has to be on guard against wishful thinking...*** which refers to Rodriguez' ***Exercise of Perfection***<sup>280</sup> These words are among the extracts taken in Fr. Bertoni's own hand-writing.

The citation continues: *Those who have good desires of conquering their defects - wrote Fr Rodriguez - but they never do it in practice, are similar to painted soldiers who are always over the enemy with their drawn sword, but they never end up in unleashing the sword.* He quoted also ***Is 37:3 ... for the children are to come to the birth and there is not the strength to bring them forth ...*** which is applied to the wishful thinking of those who make vain resolutions. Fr Bertoni concluded with Rodriguez: *Death will come for many who will remain hanging in the air of their resolutions, like Absalom hung up supported by his golden hair. (2 Sam 18:9).*

The second paragraph is a quotation from St. Augustine which we have already seen above on **22 Feb.** To the Latin text there, we have added the second part in Italian.

This is the moment to bring forth excuses: and the first that comes forward is the appeal to weakness. And whatever this is, when it is weakness of mind, it either removes or diminishes the strength of the Will If not to this extent, it is only an aggravating circumstance. Why should anyone be exposed in this way?

The second excuse is as follows: *It is the Devil who tempts us!* It is not necessary to inconvenience the Devil to trip up an old senseless man who ventures onto the ice with children! Nor to break down the vines which a drunkard pretended to be supported by thin reeds. These two examples are to be added to the story of the knight and St Ignatius of **6 March**, and they give us an idea of the social level of Fr Gaspar's audience.

There still remains the maxim which must have been the conclusion of his sermon and the last entry in this *Journal* for 1809.

To make all resolutions effective he said that one should orientate the passions towards doing good. In the ***Summa*** of St. Thomas, Fr. Bertoni had read that: *The passions of the soul incline towards sin in so far as they are outside of the influence of the right reason. But when they are controlled by reason, they belong to virtue.*<sup>281</sup>

<sup>280</sup> Rodriguez, o.c., Oart 1, Tract 1, c. 3.

<sup>281</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 24, a. 2, ad 3 um.

Fr. Gaspar then suggested the way of giving the proper orientation to the passions. Direct love towards the Supreme Good, God. Direct hatred against sin. Direct your interests - which is the passion of desire - towards heavenly goods. It is not without purpose that - as Fr. Gaspar wrote quoting from Rodriguez: *Christ Our Lord said that the Kingdom of God is similar to a man trading in business. He commanded us to make business: Trade, until I come back!*<sup>282</sup>

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**[133.] The Lord would like to speak with certain persons and tell them to withdraw a little, because they are too much disturbed by the noise the world makes around them.**

This maxim is also an entry under **22 March** but it is well separated from the others. It is very close to another statement by St Teresa of Avila: *Oh, how I should like to speak with some persons - says Jesus - but the world makes such a noise in their hearts that my voice cannot be heard. Would it be that they withdraw a little from the world!*<sup>283</sup>. St . Augustine expressed a similar thought: *Something mysteriously harmonious and sweet from that heavenly happiness resounds in the ears of the heart: if only the world would not make such a din!..*<sup>284</sup>

[It is worth noticing that during the time of this note Fr Bertoni had several painful experiences of the worldly *noise* which deeply disturbed his life. On 21 March, the Administration of Verona had issued the order of taking over from his father's goods for rent, in the country property of St. Columbanus, because of bad administration. Fr. Bertoni had to make deep sacrifices in order to scrape together sufficient money to save his father. This was not the first time that Fr Gaspar had to deal with these *worldly affairs* and experience the weakness of his father's administration and irresponsibility in managing the family.<sup>285</sup>

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### 27th MARCH 1809

**[134.] We are tempted again by the same temptations, if we have given in to them the first time. This is the way by which God gives us the opportunity to make the profit which we did not make the first time.**

What Fr Bertoni wrote in his commentary on St. Gregory's Exposition of *Primum Regum* in 1810 can help explain his thought with regard to this note.

<sup>282</sup> Rodriguez, o.c., c. 7. An extract from here is used by Fr. Bertoni. Cf. *Pagine di Vita Cristiana*, pp. 168, ff.: 'Love for God [to be imitate in St. Aloysius]' - Sermon 12. MssB ## 649, ff.. cf. also *PVC*, pp. 32. ff. - Sermon 23. April 2, 1804: 'Freedom from sin and the Devil. MssB ## 896, ff.

<sup>283</sup> Cited by St. Alphonsus Liguori, *True Spouse of Jesus Christ*. C. 16, 2<sup>o</sup>, 10.

<sup>284</sup> St. Augustine, *Enarrationes in Ps 51*.

<sup>285</sup> Web-site note: the Translator has added this thought from: Fr. Dalle Vedove, *Bertoni*, Vol 3., p. 28.

He admired **God's loving Providence** in permitting an initial test which consists in the *Visitation and Consolation* of the **Good Spirit** and of a second manner of tests which consists in taking away this *Visitation and Consolation* and which is the **Temptation of the Evil Spirit, the Devil**. He said that while permitting the **Evil Spirit** to tempt us he uses it as an instrument but always for a good purpose, namely, to prove better His **Elect**. He then addressed himself to God saying: **You have one purpose in testing us, Lord. The Devil has another. Yours is to purify us of our defects, the Devil's is to make us fall... You have unmasked the deceits and the obstacles of our Enemy so that we can avoid them. The aim of these tests in your mind is our perfection, and in the mind of the enemy is our perversion. Make us, Lord, understand the designs of your Providence. May we keep in check the plots and intrigues of our Adversary and give us the means to avoid them. At the end of the testing may we find ourselves approved by You and not condemned.**<sup>286</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Meditation 11 in *Primum Regum* - MssB ## [## 5182 – 5939] – 1 Reg. 2:11 – 2:17 [Jan. 1, 1811- ??]

2nd MAY 1809

[135.] Our mortification should be total. We should not willingly let any passionate feeling of ours remain unchecked as Saul did. He [*did not respect the 'Ban'*] destroying the Amalekites but left out the fattened herds for himself and he also spared king Agag.

Fr. Bertoni learned this strict doctrine from Scupoli's first chapter of his ***Spiritual Combat*** :

*... There is no doubt that God is more pleased when you make a concentrated effort in keeping all your passions under check, rather than if you serve Him by doing something extraordinary and of much importance while consciously and willingly letting only one of your passions loose...*

When he treated the last chapter in connection with the struggle of man when on the point of death he wrote: "Before the approaching of the hour of the last struggle we must arm ourselves well and fight valiantly against the most violent of our passions which disturb us most. This will make the victory easier in the moment which takes away all opportunity of doing it no more." This teaching was supported by the example of King Saul who made the mistake of not paying heed to the commandment of the Lord: ***You will fight against them until complete destruction. (I Sam 15:18)***

Rodriguez used the same incident and saw in King Agag, who subsequently was cut to pieces by Samuel, "that vice or passion which dominates within us and which makes us fall into worse faults and mistakes".<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Rodriguez, Partr 2, tract 1, c. 14.

19th JUNE 1809**[136.] Resist beginnngs...**

These two words are the beginning of a well known couplet of the pagan Latin poet Ovid, which Fr Bertoni had extensively used in his school days. Hence, only two words are enough to bring it to memory. Still we think that here it must have been introduced through meditating on the text of the *Imitation of Christ*. The author, in ch 13 of Book One [n. 4], deals with *How to resist temptations*. It is a frequent theme and in the *Journal* it has several references. We give the full couplet in the Christian context of the *Imitation of Christ*:

**...Fire tries iron and temptation tries the just man... However, we must be watchful, especially in the beginning of temptation because then the enemy is easier overcome, if he is not way suffered to come in at all at the door of the soul, but is kept out and resisted at his first knock. This is why somebody said:**

***Resist beginnings: after remedies come too late,  
When ills have gathered strength by long delay...***

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14th JULY 1809

**[137.] Do not do anything unless for the glory of God and for His Holy Love. This will make you despise the world and ban all vices.**

This statement reveals the concept of Christian perfection as Fr Gaspar learned it from the first chapter of Scupoli's *Spiritual Combat*. That author wrote:

*...The Spiritual Life consists simply in recognizing the goodness and greatness of God together with our nothingness and inclination towards all evils. We have, [therefore], to love Him and hate ourselves. We have to make ourselves subject to Him and, for His sake, to all creatures. We have to dispossess ourselves of our own will while totally resigning ourselves to His divine will. Above all, we ought to do all this purely for the Glory of God and for His good pleasure alone. Because this is how He likes and how fit it is that he should be loved and served.*

The second sentence of this note is just the consequence of the loving execution of the principles of the first.

†

15th JULY 1809

**[138.] When we act under the instinct of nature, even for one single moment, we prevent God from acting and we give way to the activity of a creature. (*The Life of Fr. Surin*, 2,14).**

This is a thought gathered from reading the biography of Fr Surin of the Company of Jesus. The *Catholic Encyclopaedia*<sup>288</sup> writes that "Fr Jean-Joseph Surin [1600-1665] represents a particular mystical side of the Ignatian Spirituality." Both this note and the one Fr. Gaspar would write on the following day, (which have their source in Fr Scupoli's book). These seem to add a further contribution to the particular and systematic practice of genuine sanctification pursued by Fr Bertoni. It is also some indication of how he referred to the Spirituality propounded and lived in France by the Company of Jesus. To the great names of Bourdaloue, Nepveu, Bouhours, de la Colombière and Lallement he added a great disciple of the last one, i.e. Fr Surin. And this is not a complete list.

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16th JULY 1809

**[139.] Lose the habit of doing your own will. Do anything as moved by God's will with the intention of pleasing Him and giving Him honor. (*Scupoli, Addition to the Spiritual Combat*)**

The context of this statement in Scupoli's book was as follows:

<sup>288</sup> Article signed by Arnaldo M. Lanz. His biography in French is: *La Vie de Pere Seurin de la Comagnie de Jesus, homme de Dieu*, Henri-Marie Boundon. Arch-deacon of Evreux.

*... The purpose of the life of any Christian who wants to become perfect must consist in the effort of getting used to forget and as if losing the habit of doing one's own will. At the same time one should do anything as moved solely by the will of God with the intention of pleasing Him and giving Him honor...*<sup>289</sup>

This was in fact already the program since the first chapters of the *Spiritual Combat*. We read in c. 10: *Note well that it is not just enough to intend and to strive for the things which are more pleasing to God. You have furthermore to intend and to strive for them as moved by Him and with the aim of pleasing Him solely.* He agreed with Fr. Surin's thought when he wrote: *In this we clash greatly with nature which is so much turned towards itself that in all things and particularly in the good and spiritual ones, looks for its own comfort and pleasure. It deals with these things feeding itself avidly on them as with harmless food.*

†

### 17th JULY 1809

**[140.] Good example should not be the principle aim of our behavior. This is a common mistake which Our Lord reproved in the Founder of the Passionist, the Venerable Friar Paul. We should endeavor to act well and properly. The [good] example will be just a consequence.**

We take from the Documentation collected for the Ordinary Process for the Cause of beatification of Paul of the Cross, in Viterbo.

The testimony is of Fr Giammaria of St. Ignatius, last confessor of Saint Paul of the Cross:

*... I recollect very clearly that on the day of the Exaltation of the Cross of 1766, he ( i.e. St. Paul of the Cross) was giving the last recommendation to a group of Religious on their way to other Retreat houses. He exhorted them in a very effective way to preserve modesty. Then, after recollecting himself for a while, he lifted his eyes to heaven, he burst into tears and said: A certain person - when he was still a secular - used to walk modestly with the intention of giving good example. The Lord said to him in the heart "My son, do this only to please me. Good example will come as a consequence. In a different occasion he told me that the incident happened to himself...*

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### 23rd JULY 1809

**[141.] To receive and to preserve the inspirations of God, one needs solitude, quiet, internal and external silence. Otherwise either they are not heard, or they vanish and disappear.**

**The Devil tries his utmost to divert the work of the Lord. For this he makes use of all our passions, particularly of the predominant one.**

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<sup>289</sup> Scupoli, c. 1.

To begin the undertaking one ought to have acquired great and heroic virtue.

***The necessary initial budget plan is Poverty. After that, all other virtues. One should not overlook the tiniest thing, and not to delay in welcoming inspirations.***

There are no marks of hand-written dashes separating these sentences to show that they refer to different thoughts or arguments which Fr. Bertoni might have had in different times during that day. They seem to all refer to a particular fact. Even the first sentence which sounds so general. The particular fact is the *work* which the second sentence presents as an object against which the Devil is plotting his deception. The third sentence and the following talk of an ***undertaking some enterprise*** inspired by God and which requires great spiritual energies. The 'work and undertaking' Fr. Bertoni is referring to here is the project of founding a new Religious Congregation. He was aware that the times were difficult. The established Religious Orders were either suppressed or persecuted.

The inspirations of God... are the fruits of the attitude which in the ***Imitation of Christ*** the disciple should have:

*...The devout person makes progress in quiet and silence. In this way he learns the hidden things of the Word of God* <sup>290</sup>. And in the third book: *Blessed those who listen to the movements of the whispering of Divine Inspirations. These do not catch anything of the chattering of the world*<sup>291</sup>.

This is also the teaching of Rodriguez:

*...If you like to have constantly good thoughts and to listen to the inspirations of God keep silence and recollection. Some people are deaf because of an illness in their ears. Some others cannot hear because of the loud noise with which they are surrounded. Similarly the noise and din of words, things and affairs of the world become obstacles and make us deaf to hear the inspirations of God. God needs solitude to talk to us: ***I shall lead her into the desert, and I shall talk to her heart (Ho 2:16)***...* <sup>292</sup>

For the second sentence of the above note, *The Devil tries his utmost...*, we refer to Rodriguez<sup>293</sup> who quotes n. 327 of the ***Spiritual Exercises*** of St Ignatius:

*... The Devil acts with us in the same way as a Captain who wants to conquer a city or a stronghold. He looks for the weakest part in our soul and there he works to attack us and to break through (n. 3). [He then goes on]: ... We all can see that each person has one defect which stands out against the others. It dominates the person. It is the*

<sup>290</sup> ***Imitation of Christ***, Book 1, c. 20, n. 6.

<sup>291</sup> ***Ib.***, Book 3, cc. 1-3.

<sup>292</sup> **Rodriguez**, Part 2, Tract 2, c. 5, n. 1.

<sup>293</sup> ***Id.***, Part 1, Tract 7, c. 2, n. 2.

*driving force of the person. That is why we call that passion predominant. It is natural, then, that the Devil will stick to that in order to divert the person from God's work...*

We come now to the more explicit expression of Fr Gaspar with which he hinted at his project of a new Religious Congregation: **To begin the undertaking... one ought to have acquired great and heroic virtue.** He reminds himself of this requirement.

At this juncture we must consider a *Particular Examen* presented under 4 points which Fr Gaspar developed in 1813 and gave to his directee Mother Leopoldina Naudet, as Foundress of the Congregation of "The Sisters of the Holy Family". We present it here in its complete form because we have the conviction that - with some adaptation - it must have been the scheme of the examination of conscience which Fr Gaspar used to practice for himself, as Founder-to-be of a Congregation which we now think could have been called **The Missionaries of the Sacred Stigmata**. The basis of this Examen is a formula from the Company of Jesus which Leopoldina Naudet had adopted into the Rules for the superiors of her Congregation. As a matter of fact, when Fr J.B.Lenotti, as Superior General of the *Stigmatines*, promulgated the Constitutions, he used part of that formula in the first of the Rules regarding the Director of a community. Among others: "Let him understand that the first care of his office consists in his supporting on his shoulders, as it were the whole Community's prayer and holy aspirations. In this outline, we can find also some principles of genuine spiritual life taken from this *Journal*.

Here is the text of the **Particular Examen** which Fr Bertoni suggests for the second Rule, after the first Part, for the Prioress of the Communities of Mother Leopoldina's Congregation<sup>294</sup>:

**1. Have I taken care to support this house of God? Have I been negligent, neglectful or patronizing? Did I do this while observing the spiritual needs and daily defects of my sisters? At stake is the glory of God, which the Superior has to pursue even if it seems to be an impossible burden to bear. Diligence and care expect the Superior to have heroic virtues, which are reached through *prayers and holy aspirations*. Otherwise the whole undertaking will be quickly ruined and miserably fall. For a new Institute the Superiors are to be like solid columns of religious perfection, based on heroic virtues. Nothing less should be required of those who are meant to be the first in such an Institute.**

**2. Have I prayed with fervor? Have I prayed insistently, as the Lord expects? Have I prayed for each Sister according to her particular needs? Have I prayed for the Sisters as a community that they should have the same attitude in prayer? (Remember that - as St John of the Cross said - a soul which is growing in union with God can be heard by Him more effectively when it says one single word with tender and intimate love, rather than a din of a thousand words.)**

<sup>294</sup> *Epistolario*, Letter 21, pp. 64, ff.

3. Have I nurtured these holy desires with pure intentions inflamed with zeal for the Glory of God. In this manner I shall engage God to keep our house, as it were, suspended in the air until that time when we shall have developed the necessary virtues and more solid works of charity.

4. These *prayers and holy desires* will become more and more similar to the *prayers and most holy desires* of the Heart of Jesus, who experienced them during his life and suffering here on this earth and also now while living in the glory of Heaven and in the most Holy Eucharist, to the advantage of His Church.

This is approximately what I indicated to you last time, Reverend Mother. You should never listen to our timid nature. Where shall I find the strength to bear the immense burden of my defects with the addition of that of others? How will my weakness be able to support and to hold back the ruin of others? And yet for this very purpose did God share His nature with us: so that we should no longer live nor act according to ours! We therefore should not reckon with the strength of our first nature but with the strength of that second nature which we received when we have been made children of God. Do you see now that God expects of you that the timid thoughts and affections of your first nature should not prevent the strong and marvelous effect of the second...

Let us take up now with the apparent contradiction between a **necessary budgetary plan** and **poverty**. This idea is based on **Luke 14:28-33** and Fr Bertoni presented it during the Spiritual Exercises to the Clergy in 1810 in the Meditation of the *Three Classes of People*. He said:

...They would like to follow Christ but at the same time they do not want to give up all things. Which is against what Jesus asked: *He who does not give up whatever he possesses cannot be my disciple*. To follow Christ is the aim. The means is to give up everything. *Who of you, if he wants to build a tower, would not first sit down at table and calculate the price involved and if he has got the money to complete that tower?* The tower to be built is the following of Christ, or as St. Thomas explains, "in the building of the tower it is described the work of perfection of the Christian life. In the giving up of one's own possessions consists the *budget plan* of the tower..."<sup>295</sup>

The **undertaking**, therefore, Fr Bertoni is thinking about in this *Journal's* note is the organization of a perfect following of Christ in a **small Company [of Jesus]** which he felt inspired to found and of which he has just presented somehow the project, after having previously made some reference to it in his visit to the altar of St. Ignatius, September 15, 1808.

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<sup>295</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, I-II, q. 189. a. 10, ad 3 um.

In 1811, Fr. Gaspar developed the same things using the same phrases when giving the Conferences on St. Gregory's *Primum Regum*, in the Seminary. He sounded again, as though he was thinking of his own *Little Company [of Jesus]*:

... A young man who intends to serve the Lord and to keep the Church's regulations, does this at the cost of great effort in view of the self-control expected in keeping his chastity and in bearing the burden of his ministry. Furthermore, he has to give up many things - like relatives and possessions - and be ready to lose even freedom and his very life, which - as Saint Thomas said - *is a prerequisite as a proper disposition of the soul. Who does not see, then, in this young man the necessary funds for building the tower?...*<sup>296</sup>

Therefore: *Poverty* comes before anything else. St Ignatius of Loyola defined Poverty as the *stable rampart of religious life*. He said that as such "we have to cherish it and keep it in its purity as much as possible with God's grace". He used to call it *our mother*.

*And after that, all others virtues.* This is a question of genuine quest for perfection. In this regard, let it suffice in what we have said in connection with the Particular Examen.

The last phrase of this 23 July entry recalls its first sentence, adding the care for a special diligence in all that regards the *undertaking*. As for the *inspirations*, we have already presented the doctrine of Fr Bertoni in the commentary to the note of 8 October 1808.

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### 24th JULY 1809

[142.] We must get ready for a great war with Hell.

1. We need humility to attract help from Heaven: *Put on the armor of God that you might be able to resist.*
2. We need detachment from all things; so that the Devil should not have anything to catch us by.
3. ...

This sounds like a development of the preceding entry of yesterday. Certainly *we must get ready for a great war with hell because the Devil tries his utmost to divert the work of the Lord. He makes use of all our passions especially of the predominant one.* This justifies the self-exhortations which follow and helps us to make an educated guess of even the missing third point.

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<sup>296</sup> Meditation 15 based on *Primum Regum*, MssB ## 5384-5456 - 1 Reg 3:1-9

**Put on the armor of God that you might be able to resist.** The quotation is from memory. The original text could have been even more explicit: ***Put on the armor of God that you might be able to stand up against the deceits of the Devil (Eph 6:11).*** Then ***you might be able to resist*** came to Fr Gaspar from another text very dear to him, i.e. ***God is faithful: He does not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it ... (I Cor 10:13).***<sup>297</sup>

1. **Do we need detachment to attract help from heaven?** Certainly. It is written: ***God resists proud people, but He gives His grace to the humble. (Jas 4:6).*** To withstand the inevitable attacks of the Devil we need the armor of God, which is Jesus Christ. Which is the same as saying: **Put on Jesus Christ!** Put on His virtues.<sup>298</sup>

2. **Detachment from all things...** Evident reference to St, Gregory the Great as reported in Rodriguez: "*We have come into this world to combat the Devil. He is naked and possesses nothing. We have also to become dispossessed of all these things to fight with him. The reason is that if one who is clothed fights with a naked person, he will soon be beaten, because he has what he can be taken hold of and be thrown to the ground. Do you like to engage in a powerful fight with the devil? Take off all your earthly things so that the Devil will not have anything on which to grasp you and make you fall.*"<sup>299</sup>

After this, we can guess the message of the suspended No 3. In the same Homily of St Gregory where he comments on the **Unless one gives up everything which he possesses** and **Let him renounce himself**. He wrote: *...In the first sentence it is said that we should give up our things, and in the second that we should give up ourselves. Perhaps a person can more easily give up one's own things... but much and much more difficult it is to give up oneself. For us, in fact, it is of less effort to give up what we have rather than what we are.*<sup>300</sup>

Therefore, we think that the third point should read as follows: **3. We need detachment from ourselves...** In one of his Homilies on the Gospel, St Gregory went on to say:

*...Yes, let Jesus Christ say it! ...let him renounce himself... because if one does not manage definitely to get detached from himself, neither will he be able to approach Him who is above. Nor will he be able to reach and grasp what lies beyond himself, without having first made a complete sacrifice of what he is." The aim is directed towards what St Paul had already reached: **I live, yet not I: it is rather Christ who lives in me. (Gal 2:20)**...*

<sup>297</sup> St. Gaspar's reflections on St. Gregory's Exposition on *Primum Regum - Meditation 12* [## 5240-5295] - 1 Reg 2:18-25

<sup>298</sup> Rodriguez, Part 2, Tract 7, c. 1, 9.

<sup>299</sup> Rodriguez, Part 3, c. 1, 4. cf. Roman Breviary. Common of One Martyr. Illrd Nocturn.

<sup>300</sup> St. Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies*, Kalamazoo: Cistercian 1990, p. 259 Homily 32.

The whole *Journal* seems to resound with this: especially the "universal mortification" of 8 May and the radical resolutions of 14,15 and 16 July with what will follow.

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**[143.] Mass: union with Jesus Christ. The recollection lasted until lunch.**

Short words but full of meaning. At the same time they both reveal and hide the *secret of the King*. It was a cherished *gift of Prayer* and *union* with Jesus Christ, right within His Sacrifice.

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### 29th JULY 1809

**[144.] God does not turn down any of those who want to militate under the banners of His Son, and who avail themselves of the means He has prescribed: namely prayer and mortification. Indeed, this person will have a glorious triumph.**

It is a point from the *Spiritual Exercises*. The Meditations of *The Kingdom of Christ* and *The Two Standards* have the same conclusion, i.e. the voluntary enrolment in the army of the Lord. However it is necessary to accept the conditions, i.e. to follow Christ in poverty, in self - abnegation, in humility and to take up His weapons which are prayer and mortification. Victory and triumph will follow. We take some passages from the Meditations which Fr Gaspar gave the Seminarians in 1811:

**...We know where God called us from, but we do not know where will He lead us to. We cannot imagine what would God do of us, who are the apple of His eye, if we did not raise obstacles to His grace, but would instead surrender ourselves always and totally to His hands! ... When we abandon ourselves to Him and follow Him faithfully and steadily and, in all humility, do not take the lead before Him...the Lord adds His share...<sup>301</sup>**

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**[145.] Flee from sins as from the face of a serpent. (Sir 21:2)**  
If you had been courageous enough to resist, at this time your temptations would be over.

The scriptural text continues as follows: ***because if you come near them, they will take hold of you...*** Following Martini's Italian exegesis, the comparison is between the teeth of the serpents are like that of lions and Fr. Gaspar explained that Sirach

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<sup>301</sup> St. Gaspar Bertoni's Conferences on St. Gregory Exposition on *Primum Regum* - Meditation 16 a [## 5457-5508] - 1 Reg3:9-14; Meditation 16 b [## 5509-5554] - 1 Reg 3:15-21.

hinted at Eve's serpent, in the singular. The following warning is not necessarily in harmony with the text from Scripture.

It seems to recall the note of 27 March about the recurrence of temptations. More consoling is the note of 31 August and of 13 September 1808. But, as we read in the *Imitation of Christ*. As long as we live in the world, we cannot remain without temptations. We read in the book of Job ***The life of man on earth is a warfare...*** No one is so perfect and holy who would not sometimes be subject to temptation.

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### 30th JULY 1809

**[146.] During the Meditation on the journey of Jesus to the Jordan: I experienced great inner sentiment. [I understood] that we have to show, in ourselves, to the Divine Father, a portrait of His Divine Son.**

This note is very similar to the one on 26 February.

Fr. Gaspar is referring, here, to that Meditation from Fr. DaPonte, from which he took extensive notes. Fr. Bertoni was much moved by the prayer found there, addressed to both the Father and to the Son. This prayer has as its basis the well known saying of the heavenly voice: ***This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased...!*** This prayer goes as follows:

*... Eternal Father, I thank You for the honor You gave Your Son when He humiliated himself so much for our sake. I rejoice because of the love and great pleasure You find in Him. I beseech You to help me, that I may imitate Him in doing always what You like, so that You may find pleasure in me.*

*My dear Savior, I congratulate You on the honor that Your Divine Father and the holy Spirit give You today. In doing this they give You authority to become our Teacher and our Redeemer. O Lord, make me pleasing to Your heavenly Father that I may be worthy to be adopted as His son...*<sup>302</sup>

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**[147.] During the High Mass, in which I was celebrating as Deacon: sentiment of reverence. At the Creed: love for the Incarnation. Much faith and spirit of prayer. The recollection continued also afterwards.**

Indeed, here we have to accept what Fr. Gaspar confided to himself alone, in his own terms: God's secret. That sentiment of reverence, however, which ran through that experience as it permeated through his liturgical service as Deacon on that Sunday, makes us recollect one extract taken by Fr. Gaspar from the *Life of St Ignatius* (by Fr. Mariani, SJ). It talks of the behavior of the Saint in relation to God: "

*...In dealing with God he used to maintain a sense of the greatest external dignity and reverence. He was convinced that he had to seek after this much more than the*

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<sup>302</sup> Fr.DaPonte, *Points of Meditation from the 2<sup>d</sup> and 3<sup>d</sup> Parts of his Book*. The 3<sup>d</sup> Meditation on the Baptism of Christ the lord, divided into five points.

*heavenly consolations. In his prayer he often asked God: 'Lord, grant me humility and loving reverence'...*

His sense of recollection here, as well as that noted elsewhere, is itself a recommendation of the gift received from God.

†††

24th AUGUST 1809

[148.] Many people, especially the young, lose patience without which it is impossible to reach total victory over ourselves. Consequently they let themselves be overcome after having experienced a few trials, as their strength was too fickle.

In an *Instruction* about Patience - which is taken from St Thomas' *Summa*<sup>303</sup> - and was written during the first years of his priesthood, he said: The truth of what we find in **Heb 10:36**: *For patience is necessary for you; that by doing the will of God, you may receive the promise* - can be seen in the following considerations:

1. Our life is surrounded by innumerable and continuous evils. They have entered the world, together with death, after original sin.
2. Many passions militate against the good of our reason with great rage.
3. A host of visible and invisible enemies is intent in causing harm to our body and our soul with many temptations, oppositions, snares and persecutions. There is no time for peace nor truce.
4. God has devised just and loving plans by which to cleanse us and to foster our spiritual welfare.
5. Very good people are not at all exempt from this law of suffering. On the contrary, God provides even heavier sufferings for His holiest and dearest friends. He offers them by His own hand, as it were, the most bitter chalice to drink.
6. The Mother of God's Son was made Queen of Martyrs and mother of sorrows.
7. The Son of God Himself was made to return to His Kingdom through this very way of suffering. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?* (Lk 24:26)

This maxim of Fr. Gaspar seems to be inspired by the *Imitation of Christ*: *The beginning of all evil temptations is fickleness of mind and too little confidence in God ... No one is exempt from temptation in this life...*<sup>304</sup>

To the Seminarians he was instructing in 1810 and 1811, Fr. Gaspar expressed the wish that the Elect might be **faithful and constant in cooperating with Divine Providence**. In that way they would be able to see the consequence of such cooperation i.e. **strong, developing and establishment in virtue. Efforts for a higher and more pure kind of life, supported by a longing for perfect continence and virginity, and by a serious exercise of self-control from the very beginning...** He exclaimed: **This is also a great proof of and inclination to Priestly Vocation!**<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> II-II, q. 136.

<sup>304</sup> *Imitation of Christ*, Book 1, c. 13, n. 5. cf. also the entire c. 35 of Book 3: 'There is no security from Temptation in this Life.'

<sup>305</sup> St. Gaspar's Conferences on St. Gregory's Exposition on *Primum Regum* - Meditation 12 [## 5240-5295] - 1 Reg 2:18-25.

As a conclusion we can say that without Patience - which is intended by Fr Gaspar as perseverance, courage and complete trust in God- **it is impossible to reach total victory over ourselves.**

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**23rd SEPTEMBER 1809**

**[149.] Humility, compunction and trust in God.**

We can just say again that this was a precious *gift of Prayer*. We can only praise the Lord for it and take it as an example and instruction. This is how we have to present ourselves to God.

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**[150.] Simplicity is not enough in helping others to become saints. Prudence is also necessary.**

Yes! We are asked to ***Be therefore wise as serpents, and simple as doves... (Mt 10:16)***. Probably an analogy may be drawn here between what Fr Bertoni said and what St Teresa wrote:

*... It is most important that the Guide be a wise person, of good intelligence and of experience. If on top of this he is a man of learning, this is most helpful ... Though at the beginning [of the way to perfection] it seems that there is no need of much learning, I have always been and always will be of the opinion that any Christian should choose a person with a good learning [to be directed by], if he can. And if he finds a more learned person, all the better. Those who journey on the way of Prayer have more need of this. The more spiritual a person is, the more he needs this... A person dedicated to Prayer who can deal with learned people...will not be deceived by the illusions of the Devil. I believe that the Demons are in real fear of humble and virtuous learned people because they know that learning will detect them and make them perish...*<sup>306</sup>

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**28th SEPTEMBER 1809**

**[151.] During prayer and also after it: very clear understanding of the immeasurable debt which binds us to God by reason of Creation and of Redemption.**

We must underline that **very clear understanding** which lasted **also after prayer**. It is a *gift of Prayer* which goes beyond the time of Prayer. This precious gift seems to be the effect of the ***Contemplation to attain Divine Love*** which we have to stir up *within ourselves*, which concludes the ***Spiritual Exercises*** of St Ignatius. In 1810 Fr. Gaspar presented and explained it to the clergy in the Retreat<sup>307</sup>, following the outline of Fr. Nepveu. We give here only a paragraph, in which we see the personal reflection of Fr. Bertoni:

***...As Augustine said "God became for you, at the same time, Creator and Redeemer so that you should not divide love". The Father wants the whole of our heart by right of Creation. The Son wants the whole of our***

<sup>306</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, *Life*, c. 13. This teaching much influenced the life and spirit of St. Gaspar, as may be seen from his Letter 34, in *Epistolario*, p. 91. Feast of St. Ignatius 1813.

<sup>307</sup> *Collectanea Stigmatina*, Vol. I, pp. 236-241.

***heart on account of Redemption. The Holy Spirit wants the whole of our heart in the name of Sanctification...***

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