

# **MOTHER LEOPOLDINA NAUDET**

**Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family  
and her**

**WITNESS OF HUMILITY –  
A MESSAGE FOR THE  
CHURCH OF TODAY**

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**A MESSAGE FOR THE CHURCH OF TODAY**

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**Mother Leopoldina Naudet**  
**Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family**

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## INTRODUCTION

The intention of this reflection is not that of treating exhaustively the theme of Humility, nor that of celebrating the virtues of Leopoldina Naudet <sup>1</sup>. The scope of this study is rather that of considering, reflecting upon and verifying, in the light of the writings of a Christian woman who has preceded us in the pilgrimage of faith, how a humble attitude, so present in Salvation History can still be lived, and whether her experience may still be proposed to Christian men and women who live in a time called by some to be 'Post-modern.'

The development of this work is divided into three Chapters:

- the **First Chapter** offers an introduction to the theme of Humility. It is necessary to withdraw Humility from any subjectivity, and from *devotionism*, and to remember that it springs rather from Jesus Christ, who has stated; *Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.* [Mt 11:29].

In the light of the renewal brought by the Second Vatican Council <sup>2</sup>, this research will seek to grasp what is truly meant by Humility from its being revealed in the Mystery of Jesus Christ, and inserted into Salvation History. Then, we will reflect on that contribution alternating between the Fathers of the Church, and the Spiritual Writers, tapping into the History of the Church. The goal throughout will be that of attempting to affirm the validity of the Witness of Humility, also for men and women of today.

- the **Second Chapter** then gathers certain passages from the Writings of Leopoldina Naudet, in order to present Humility with the unique characteristics of a concrete experience. Among her many writings, we will take into consideration her *Letters, Conferences, Constitutions*, and *Spiritual Writings*, because they seem to be her compositions which more emphatically bring out the Humility that she actually lived. For each one of these writings, the following will be the modality of the work:

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<sup>1</sup> Leopoldina Naudet: cf. the **Appendix**, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> cf. OT 16.

[1] The presentation of texts in which it is possible to ponder the theme of Humility.

[2] These texts will be preceded with a brief historical and descriptive introduction.

- the texts actually chosen will permit in the unfolding of the **Third Chapter**, the attempt at a synthesis of the present-day value of the witness of Leopoldina's Humility. In order to facilitate the operation of an orderly reflection, all the texts quoted will be given a number and preceded by an abbreviation which refers to the immediate source of the idea from the Foundress' various writings. These will be as follows:

|            |   |                                  |
|------------|---|----------------------------------|
| <b>L.</b>  | = | <b><i>Letters</i></b>            |
| <b>CF.</b> | = | <b><i>Conferences</i></b>        |
| <b>C.</b>  | = | <b><i>Constitutions</i></b>      |
| <b>Ms.</b> | = | <b><i>Spiritual Writings</i></b> |

- The ***Letters*** will be sub-divided into groups, keeping in mind the various persons to whom they were addressed.

- only those ***Conferences***, will be taken into consideration where the theme of Humility is expressly considered.

- as for her ***Constitutions***, all of these are permeated with Humility, and so there will be presented certain passages regarding the virtue, following the original order, in order to grasp from them the context into which these have been inserted.

- her ***Spiritual Writings*** are generally considered her most precious writings for anyone interested in understanding the spirituality of Mother Leopoldina Naudet. It is a collection of manuscripts of a spiritual character.

Following the sub-division as presented in her Cause of Beatification and Canonization <sup>3</sup>, under the heading of the Discussion of her Virtues, we will subdivide this research into three successive paragraphs according to the chronological order which coincides with the different periods of Spiritual Direction she received over the years from Fathers Paccanari and Bertoni, and lastly for that stretch of time when for all practical purposes she did not have formal spiritual direction.

- in the **Third Chapter** we will discuss the matter whether in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century it is still worth-while to speak of humility, for the simple reason that it would seem that our modern society allows itself to be impressed only with success at any

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<sup>3</sup> cf. *Positio*, See **Appendix**, n. 2.

cost. We will offer some reflection on how to bring together the paradox noted in the desire to have the first place, with the invitation of Jesus Christ to take the last place at the table of this world.

In the light of the writings of Mother Naudet, we will attempt to trace an Itinerary of humility, having as its foundation that Humility of Jesus Christ and some insight will be meditated on how this might be an expressive witness for the believers of all time.



## CHAPTER I THE MATTER OF HUMILITY

The ‘great humility’ of Mother Leopoldina was recognized by so many who knew her<sup>4</sup>: Fr. Charles Maggi, who was her Confessor, and who ministered to her while she was dying, wrote:

...Lady Leopoldina, that soul who was so dear to God, how exact she was in manifesting her conscience, and in not ever being ruled by her own judgment alone, while she was all the more discerning in hiding her own virtues with a rare level of humility. This virtue was very extended in her, and the foundation of all the others...<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In the *Recollections of Metilda di Canossa*, one may read that she truly desired to the smallest of all; in the *Reminiscences of Sophia Gagnere*, it is related that she often said that to take any glory in that which God achieves through us is to render oneself culpable of the most crass thievery, cited in Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove’s *From the Court to the Cloister. Lady Leopoldina Naudet, Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family*, Scuola Tipografica Missioni Padri Stimmatini, Verona 1954, p. 399.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Lettera da Reggio a Metilde di Canossa*, November 16, in Nello Dalle Vedove, *Dalla corte al chiostrò... o.c.*, pp. 400.

Before analyzing how Leopoldina lived Humility, we need to ask: What is Humility? This might seem to be a rhetorical question, but it is not. The reason is because 'there is no virtue which has been placed under such discussion in the history of Christianity as Humility has' <sup>6</sup>. Fr. Dalmazio Mongillo, OP, in the *New Dictionary of Spirituality*, states that Humility is one of the most ambiguous, the fullest of equivocations in the entire spiritual and religious language <sup>7</sup>.

Humility is even thought to be a 'suspect' virtue because it comes to us, weighed down with its inheritance that renders this an individual virtue, the goal of the quest of each individual's self-perfection. It often appears synonymous with the self-annihilation of the creature before God, who is all – and the diminution of oneself before others, an attitude that today is thought to be no longer fitting to describe God - Who does not crush human beings down, but lifts up human nature and values humanity. At times, it might even seem to be making reference to a false attitude, an effort to show oneself to be even less than that which each person realizes she may already be. It follows from all this that to speak of humility is not easy, especially today, in the light of the interpretations of the 'masters of suspicion', who have left their mark on our culture.

According to Nietzsche, Humility is the great lie of the weak, who in their passivity succeed in this manner to give cleverly an appearance of authentic virtue. For Freud, Humility is a masochistic variant of a guilt-complex. For Adler, Humility is very close to an inferiority complex. Furthermore, how does one reconcile *enslavement* [which is very close to the ancient Latin term, *humilitas* ] as proposed by some American psychologists? <sup>8</sup> How can one make sense today of always choosing the last place according to the Gospel saying, with a world in which it is necessary to struggle in order to be first, since only the one in first place receives any notice? A further difficulty is represented by a certain ambiguity which remains bound to the very idea of humility?

On the one hand, following the development of Salvation History and of Tradition, there is bestowed on Humility an important place, one that absolutely can never be renounced, in the experience of the believer. However, on the other hand, when one tries to speak of the Christian virtues, there is always some

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<sup>6</sup> cf. Edward KACZYNSKI, "Umilta'", in: *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia Morale* . ed. by Fr. Compagnoni, G. Piana, S. Privitera. Roma: Paoline 1990, p. 1392.

<sup>7</sup> cf. Dalmazio MONGILLO, OP, "Umilta'", in: *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualita'*, ed. by S. DiFLORES and T. GOFFI. Roma: Paoline 1985, p. 1610.

<sup>8</sup> cf. A. LOUF, "L'umilta'" – a translation cared for by the Monastic Community of Bose, in: *Sumpathetika*. Magnano [BI]: Ed. Qiqajon 2000, *passim*.

difficulty in finding the proper place for it, even though so many authors are convinced of its priority.

We note, then, that there is difficulty in recognizing Humility as a virtue up to the Middle Ages, and this is because it is difficult to express the absolute primacy of Humility in the categories of philosophical moral from which it is necessary to begin in order to explain the virtues<sup>9</sup>.

The same definition finds greater support in not being considered so much as a virtue, but as the foundation, the bond of all the other virtues: Humility is the mother, the root, the foundation, the bond of all virtues,” is the testimony of St. John Chrysostom. However, the on-going effort has consistently remained in making Humility a virtue, and above all in making it a unit of measure of the esteem greater or lesser, that one would nourish toward herself, with the risk of even weakening its importance to a considerable degree. For this reason, in the **Second Chapter** of this study, the effort will be made to analyze humility in a concrete experience, that lived by Mother Leopoldina Naudet, in order to try then to grasp, even more than the specific virtue of Humility, a state of Humility, i.e., in the original sense of the Greek word, *tapeinosis*, regarding a condition of abasement. It is a condition which, in Faith, it brings about the realization that the Humility of God, unveiled by Jesus Christ [cf. Ph 2:8], becomes the humility of a believing person, in this case of one Leopoldina Naudet.

In order to do this, it is necessary to withdraw Humility from any subjectivity and from any pietistic devotion, and to remember that it is born in Jesus Christ, Who states: *Learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart...* [cf. Mt 11:29].

For Christianity, any reflection on Humility is always one a reflection on humanity [the anthropological dimension], on God [the theological dimension], and on the relationship between God and man [the historico-salvirfic dimension], recognizing its Christological root.

Therefore, in the light of the renewal brought by the Second Vatican Council [cf. OT 16], in order to be able to grasp the authentic meaning of Humility, this reflection will begin with its foundation in the Mystery of Jesus Christ, inserted then into Salvation History – then, the consideration will unfold regarding the contribution brought by the Fathers of the Church and by the spiritual teachers throughout the History of the Church, to see whether it is

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<sup>9</sup> NB: **St. Thomas Aquinas**, of course, did not find Christian Humility in the list of the fundamental virtues formulated by Aristotle. He would catalogue Christian Humility as part of Temperance, considering it as a restraint on the soul. *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 161, a. 4.

possible to communicate the validity of the witness of humility to the men and women of this time.

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**1.1 Humility as an Event that flows from the Encounter between God, as manifested in Jesus Christ, and Humanity.** In these paragraphs, the effort will be to offer a synthesis of the development of the concept of Humility in Salvation History.

**1.1.1 In the Old Testament, the Word of God leads Humanity to Glory through the Path of Humble Submission to God, Creator and Savior.**

In the OT, Humility is seen as an “attitude of the spirit”, which explains its proper positive effects before God and before other human beings. Before God, Humility means an expression of piety, justice. God protects the humble [cf. Mi 6:8], He consoles them [cf. Is 57:15], He raises them up [cf. Ps 147:6] and enters into communion with them [cf. Ps 51:19]. By means of Humility before one’s fellow human beings, one can find God [cf. 2 Ch 36:12]:

...In the OT, there is no mention of the Humility of God, but only of the Humility of men and women, and it stands out in the obedient and submissive conduct toward God and towards the leaders of the people. As for the humble attitude toward God, the believer is induced to it by the realization that each one is created by God and depends upon Him for life... [cf. Gn 2:7; 18:27]...<sup>10</sup>

Along-side being an attitude of the spirit, Humility also indicates the ‘situation of smallness, of the necessity of poverty’, so the ‘poor’ can also be considered as the ‘humble’ ones. The terms utilized in Hebrew to indicate the ‘poor’, are *ani* and *anaw*, deriving from the same verb *anah*: meaning to be lowly, bent over, weighed down. These terms basically describe the socio-economic aspect of poverty, both as an interior attitude, as well as a material situation<sup>11</sup>:

...In the Wisdom Books, the term *anawah* loses its social-economic connotations, coming to express only an interior attitude [cf. Pr 15:33; 18:22; Si 3:17-20]<sup>12</sup>.

The term assumes a religious meaning beginning with the Prophet Zephaniah: to seek God means to seek poverty, which is Humility [cf. Zp 2:3]. After the Day of the Lord, the ‘remnant’ of the People of God will be ‘humble and poor’ [cf. Zp 3:12 – the Greek expressions here are *prays* and *tapeinos* – cf. Mt 11:29; Ep 4:2]. In the OT, the models of this Humility are Moses, the most humble of men

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<sup>10</sup> cf. E. Kaczynski, op. cit., p. 1393.

<sup>11</sup> cf. P. ADNES, Humilite”. In: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, Tome VII, First Part, Paris: Beauchesne 1969, pp. 1143-1144.

<sup>12</sup> cf. Kaczynski, o.c., p. 1393.

[cf. Nb 12:3], and the mysterious Servant who, with his humble submission unto death, realizes the Plan of God [cf. Is 53:4-10].

On the return from Exile, the Prophets and Wisdom writers will preach Humility since the Most High dwells with the one who has a humble spirit and a contrite heart [cf. Is 57:15; 66:2]. ... *The fruit of humility is the fear of God, richness, glory and life..* [cf. Pr 22:4] - ...*The greater you are, the more humbly you should behave, and then you will find favor with the Lord...* [cf. Si 3:18; cf. also Dn 3:39]. Lastly, Zecchariah announces that the Messiah will be a humble king; he will enter Sion, riding on a donkey [cf. Zc 9:9]. Truly, the God of Israel, the King of Creation, is the *God of the Humble* [cf. Jdt 9:11, ff.<sup>13</sup>].

### **1.1.2 In the NT, the Humility of God, unveiled by Jesus Christ becomes the Humility of Human Beings.**

...We have two groups of words in the NT to express the act of humbling oneself, the submission of one person to another, or to the power of another, which is imposed through events. In these cases, one person becomes *praus, tapeinos*. The two groups of words are bound among themselves by the fact that they have basically, in many passages, the same Hebrew word...Many times the words of both groups are used in the same context...<sup>14</sup>

a.] *praus* : ‘meek, humble’ – *epieikes* : ‘meek, clement, good’ – these words in the NT are present in the Pauline Letters, 1 P, Ac and Mt. The influence of the OT is evident only in Mt – while for the rest of these documents is borrowed prevalently from their Hellenistic meaning.

1. *praus* and *epieikes* are Typical Indications of the Lordship of Jesus Christ: against those who would hold for a political Messiahship, Jesus rejects the employment of force in order to establish the Reign of God. His action on earth is that of a non-violent salvific king, alien to war as was prefigured in the OT [cf. Mt 11:29; 21:5; cf. Zc 9:9]. From the moment, though, that at the base of Mt 11:29 there is a Semitic manner of thinking, there is added that the word *praus* indicates also the humble condition of the Messiah. In 2 Co 10:1, Paul mentions *praus* and the *epieikeia* as a characteristic attitude of Jesus Christ in the presence of His contemporaries during His earthly life, and calling to mind His example, Paul exhorts the Church in this direction.

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<sup>13</sup> cf. M.F. LACAN, Umilta”, in: *Dizionario di teologia Biblica*, ed. by Aa.Vv., Torino: Marietti 1917, p. 1311.

<sup>14</sup> cf. W. BAUDER, Umilta”, in: *Dizionario dei concetti biblici del NT* . ed. by Aa.Vv. Bologna: EDB 1986, p. 1902.

2. These words designate also an attitude that is then required of Christians [cf. Ac 24:4; 1 P 2:18]. In Mt 5:5, *praus* appears as the mark of the life of the disciples: as the 'virtue' of those who will inherit the land, i.e., who will have dominion over this world. However, Jesus thinks here also of the 'poor' about whom the OT speaks [this is a citation of Ps 37:11]: those who are now oppressed and disdained have obtained the promise that one day matters will be over-turned in their favor. This Beatitude is fundamentally an implicit affirmation of Jesus Himself: He is the Savior of the Poor. When the NT exhorts all to the *praytes*, this does not refer to a manner of conducting oneself exercised by the human will, but rather manifests precisely where human beings are in communion with Jesus Christ and they are ever more 'uniformed' to His image through the intervention of the Holy Spirit <sup>15</sup>.

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b.[ *tapeinos* – 'a humble condition, inferior, humble – *tapeinophrosune* = 'humility': These terms in the NT are present often [cf. Mt 4; Lk 7; Ac 2; Rm 1; 2 Co 4; Ep 1; Ph 4; Col 3; Jas 4; 1 P 4]. The word is absent in Mk, in the Johannine writings and in those letters not mentioned <sup>16</sup>.

1. The use of these terms in Mt and Lk is intimately bound to the announcement of the eschatological coming of the Royal Lordship of God. The new content that emerges here is variously connected to OT texts and with Judaic literature. The theme is announced by Lk in the Infancy narrative of Jesus: in her Hymn, the Mother of Jesus, takes words from the OT [cf. 1 S 1:11; cf. Ps 113:5, f.] – she praises the greatness of the Lord, Who has looked upon the lowly state of His Servant [cf. 1:48, *servant, slave*, suggests the meaning of 'humility' – cf. v. 38] – and He has raised up the lowly [cf. 1:52; cf. 1 S 2:7; Jb 5:11; Ps 75:8; Ezk 21:31]. The entire undertaking of St. John the Baptist is placed at the service of the coming of God; in preparation for this event, every mountain and every hill will be laid low, as is written in the prophecy of Is 40: 3, ff.

Lastly, Jesus, the One Who is to come, uses the path of humility [Mt 11:29] <sup>17</sup>. Jesus reveals Himself as 'humble'; He is humble towards His contemporaries; He is also 'humble of heart', i.e., in the presence of God; in other words, He is completely submitted to Him, and therefore, He can call to Himself all those who are wearied and oppressed, promising eschatological peace to all those who will follow Him.

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<sup>15</sup> cf. W. BAUDER, o.c., pp. 1903-1905.

<sup>16</sup> cf. H. H. ESSER, 'Umilta', 'meekness', in: *Dizionario dei concetti biblici del NT*. Ed. by Aa. Vv. Bologna: EDB 1986, p. 1907.

<sup>17</sup> cf. H. H. ESSER, o.c., pp. 1907-1908.

2. In Paul, the Hymn found in Ph 2:6-11 shows Jesus Christ, Who *empties Himself* [cf. Ph 2:7 – *kenos* = emptied], through His Self-humiliation is raised up to the point of exaltation achieved by God. Christ's Self-humiliation is the basis and renders possible the new life under His Lordship [cf. vv. 10, ff.] – His is a life that will be explained in an availability to the service in harmony with His example [cf. v. 5: *have in yourselves the same sentiments that were in Christ Jesus* ].

The meaning of this Self-humiliation is defined concretely by the path followed by Jesus: to become obedient even unto death, and a death that was extremely shameful, such as that on the Cross. He knew of no other support than the almost unbelievable promise of the faithfulness of God<sup>18</sup>. When mention is made of 'humility' in Jesus, this does not refer only to a quality in which Jesus would have come to give us an example, but rather this is the genuine and proper path of salvation, the first stage of which consists in an inevitable abasement. This is a matter of the Paschal journey, to which every Christian is called, to follow after Jesus.

...In humiliation and in the glory of the Cross, Jesus has revealed the meaning and the ultimate goal of that invitation to share the 'yoke', i.e., the style of the Father's love, the source of all love, the font and path of the definitive and conclusive Covenant. God, Whom humanity accepts and loves in Jesus Christ, is God-made-man; God, Who is love, sacrifice, gift, *Kenosis*, God Who limits Himself in order to raise up humanity from His misery, in order to share filiation with each in His Son, the ambience, the subject and the term of His revelation...<sup>19</sup>

3. In Ac 8:33, the citation of Is 53:8 has the function of making comprehensible the sense of Jesus' 'humiliation' and 'exaltation.'

4. The exhortations of Jas and 1 P do not add anything new to the exhortations to the OT 'humility', and to that presented by Paul<sup>20</sup>.

On the basis of an analysis of terms, Humility assumes a light of its own in the Mystery of the Incarnation and of Redemption. It can be said that in the NT, the determining characteristic of Christian Humility is the Will of being conformed to Jesus Christ, humble, obedient to the Father's Will. The Humility of Jesus Christ, Model for His disciples, and is known to us through His words and His life. Christ has come to bring the Good news to the Poor [cf. Mt 11:5]<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> cf. H. H. ESSER, o.c., p. 1908.

<sup>19</sup> cf. D. MONGILLO, "Umilta'", in: *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualita'*, ed. by S.DeFLORES and T. GOFFI. Roma: Paoline 1985, pp. 1615-1616.

<sup>20</sup> cf. H. H. ESSER, o.c. p. 1909.

<sup>21</sup> cf. G. ROSSI, "Umilta'", in: *Dizionario Enciclopedico di Teologia Morale*. Ed. by Aa. Vv. Roma: Paoline 1974, p. 1192.

He presents Himself to us as meek and humble of heart [cf. Mt 11:29]<sup>22</sup>. Jesus blesses the little children and presents them to us as models [cf. Mk 10:15, f.]<sup>23</sup>. Far from seeking His own glory [cf. Jn 8:50], He humbles Himself to the point of washing the feet of His disciples [cf. Jn 13:14, f.]<sup>24</sup>. It is that Humility of one who has come to serve and not to be served [cf. Mt 20:28; Ph 2:1-2]. The Humility of Jesus Christ is the sublime expression of the spirit of service<sup>25</sup>.

The Christian is called to be humble as her Master, and she is called to follow Him [cf. Ph 2:5]. Humility in Jesus Christ becomes His will of abandoning Himself confidently into the loving hands of His Father [cf. Jn 4:34]. Making her own the style of love for the Father as revealed by Jesus Christ, each Christian is called to concretize it [cf. Col 3:12-14] in the service of her fellow human beings [cf. Rm 12:10], and of the most weak among them [cf. Rm 14:1] – it is clear that such Humility is bound to charity. Humility has nothing to do with that weakness, or passivity – on the contrary, it demands a full commitment to the service of God and of human beings. Humility is not the attitude of slaves, but of free human beings who are full of love. The manifestations of Humility are nothing other than characterizations of the unique Christian precept of charity [cf. 1 Co 13:4-7]<sup>26</sup>.

In conclusion it might be said that:

- in the OT, there is no mention of the Humility of God, but only of human Humility – the Word of God leads a follower to glory through the pathway of humble submission to God, the Creator and Savior;
- in the NT, the Word of God becomes flesh in Christ Jesus in order to lead humanity to the heights of Humility which consists in serving God in one's neighbors, in humbling oneself out of love for the purpose of glorying God, at work saving humanity<sup>27</sup>.

**1.2 The Meaning attributed to Humility along the Course of the Centuries:** faith always undergoes a process of inculturation. The question needs to be posited in what pertains to Humility, in this long process, that lasted for centuries, keeping in mind the particular emphases of the environment in which it is incarnated, whether or not Humility has been a victim of some alteration. Here

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<sup>22</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1393.

<sup>23</sup> cf. M.F. LACAN, o.c., p. 1311.

<sup>24</sup> ib.

<sup>25</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1393.

<sup>26</sup> cf. G. ROSSI, o.c. p. 1192.

<sup>27</sup> cf. M. F. LACAN, o.c., p. 1312.

the reflection will consider how Humility was understood in the Greek-Roman world, then in the Patristic Period, and finally in the modern epoch.

### 1.2.1 Humility in the Greek Roman World

Many Fathers of the Church sought to research in the thinkers of antiquity to see whether there was any intuition of the eventual Christian realities? A question might be: was there any pagan 'humility'?

...The Latin terms *humilis* and *humilitas*, as their corresponding Greek concepts, are etymologically connected with the word *humus*, and imply something like *pertaining to the earth, lowly, something that can be disdained* - in referring to persons, in a figurative sense, these terms would figuratively designate somebody of little importance, the obscurity of one's origins, the baseness of someone's character. That which is 'base' cannot of itself constitute a virtue, or a positive trait. However, while employing a different vocabulary, classical antiquity knows of categories that make one think in some way of the Christian ideal of Humility<sup>28</sup>. One example would be the *ideal of proper measure*, which is the principal rule of ancient morality, affirmed that virtue resides in a just measure, in the just perception of one's proper limits.

If the reflection on Humility concentrates on the Greek-roman world, there is noted that the morality of the Greeks, from Socrates on ward, was based on the under-lying principle: *Know thyself!* - a slogan written in the temple of Delphi. In the interpretation of those times, this motto meant: 'remember that you are mortal, and not a God!' However, the interpretation that Socrates would make of this shows a more intense moral characteristic, i.e., he understands this as the realization of one's own ethic is a nothing, the acceptance of one's *deficiency*, of one's own insufficient being<sup>29</sup>.

However, the original meaning for the classical world is that every person needs to recognize that she is a mortal being, and not divine, and therefore, each one ought to avoid every excess of wealth, power, happiness - because all of these would lead her to the most serious catastrophes<sup>30</sup>. This honest recognition of oneself as mortal is not understood as humility toward God, because the Greek world did not have the concept of God as Creator, or Transcendent. Even the Stoics, who counseled modesty, patience, self-dominion, did not consider humility toward God, due to their pantheistic view of the world<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 1190.

<sup>29</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1392.

<sup>30</sup> cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p.1190.

<sup>31</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1392.

...The Christian notion of Humility implies the recognition of the transcendancy of a personal God, and that of our creaturely status, ideas that had not totally invaded pagan philosophy ...<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, for Christians, even before being an attitude to assume, Humility is understood as a manner of being, and of entering into relationships. It characterizes a person in the manner of evaluating and accepting oneself both in the position that one assumes in this world, and how one stands before God<sup>33</sup>.

### **1.2.2 Humility in the Patristic Period :**

...Among the Apostolic Fathers, Humility is reduced to the prevailing designation of a penitential attitude of its practical expressions, [especially in First Clement and Hermes]...<sup>34</sup>

It is not possible, given their vastness, to recall here all the writings of this period pertaining to Humility<sup>35</sup>, and so there will be recalled here a few concepts that recur the most often:

#### **a. The Specificity of the Christian Virtue of Humility:**

...St. Augustine summarizes the entire Christian life in the antithesis between 'pride and humility', and he brings out its specifically Christian character...<sup>36</sup>

The Fathers are unanimous in affirming that Humility is not a virtue like the others, but rather stands at the base of every virtue and is a characteristic of every proper relationship between humanity and God. Furthermore, they are unanimous in proclaiming that pride is the root, the source of sin, and Humility is the principle of the return to God.

#### **b. Humility consists in recognizing that which one is:**

...For Augustine, Humility is the beginning, the way, and the culmination of the conversion to God, and it is bound to the knowledge of oneself also as a sinner...<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> cf. **G. ROSSI**, o.c., p. 1191.

<sup>33</sup> cf. **D. MONGILLO**, o.c., p. 1610.

<sup>34</sup> cf. **H. H. ESSER**, o.c., p. 1910.

<sup>35</sup> cf. **P. ADNES**, o.c., pp. 1152-1164.

<sup>36</sup> cf. **E. KACZYNSKI**, o.c., p. 1394.

<sup>37</sup> cf. **E. KACZYNSKI**, o.c., p. 1394.

For the Fathers, Humility does not consist in the lowering of oneself below one's proper condition, but in the recognizing who each one is, not only in the limited human nature as the Oracle of Delphi admonished, but above all in the sinful human condition. This disposition of spirit renders the humble person open to the divine action and capable of reaching with Jesus Christ one's own authentic grandeur<sup>38</sup>.

**1.2.3 Humility in the Middle Ages:** the Augustinian ethical thought, in addition to being continued by St. Bernard, would be divulged by the work of St. Gregory for the monastic asceticism.

...In the Benedictine monastic life and in the Cistercian as well, the virtues are indicated within a well organized orientation. They assume a beginnings of a systematization. The monastic life, in so far as it is virtuous, is a struggle against the vices, and it is the art of living well under the influence of charity. It is expressed above all in Humility, which is explained as the form of charity. Humility is the general manner of situating oneself before God, oneself and others. Along-side Humility, there are held in great esteem obedience, silence, the virtue of religion. In general, the monastic theology of the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, there was noted an evangelical seven-fold number of virtues: poverty, humility, meekness, compunction, piety, purity and mercy...<sup>39</sup>

St. Benedict of Norcia, in his *Rule*, resents Humility as the foundation, the mother and mistress of every virtue and of love itself.

...The monastic tradition was concerned above all with knowing the paths in order to reach Humility. Among these, in addition to prayer and the consideration of one's own sins, manual labor and corporal fatigue have a fundamental place...<sup>40</sup>

St. Bernard, following in the path traced out by the monastic tradition of Cassian and St. Benedict, concerned himself with the Degrees of Pride and Humility. In his treatise on *The Grades of Humility and Pride*, he writes as follows:

...Humility is the virtue, thanks to which a person, through the process of an authentic knowledge of self, considers that she is of lowly condition. The fruit of humility is the truth, which is its first degree; successively, humility disposes one to charity, which is its second degree, where the person in her lowering of herself loves her neighbor in a disinterested manner; finally, humility breaks out into contemplation of the Truth of God, which is its third stage. In the first degree the Son will act; in the second, the Holy Spirit; and in the third, God the Father...<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 1192.

<sup>39</sup> cf. T. GOFFI, 'Virtu' morali', in: *Dizionario Teologico Interdisciplinare*. Ed. by Aa. Vv., Torino: 1977, p. 551.

<sup>40</sup> cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 551.

<sup>41</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1394.

The work of St. Thomas Aquinas which for much time served as the basis of many treatises on Humility merits a particular interest. In the plan of the virtues in the *Summa Theologiae*, Humility is placed among those virtues connected to temperance, and precisely, to modesty. For St. Thomas,

...the achievement of goods, whether moral or spiritual, demands two virtues: one in order to restrain and moderate the exaggerated aspirations of man, and this is Humility; and the other, in order to preserve man from being overwhelmed, and to urge him onward in the conquest of great goals, and this is magnanimity...<sup>42</sup>

...The magnanimity understood in the Christian sense is not opposed to Humility; the perfection of Humility demands in fact that the recognition of one's own nothingness and of one's own sins be accompanied by a parallel recognition and a courageous utilization of the great gifts received from God...<sup>43</sup>

...Humility implies knowledge of the person, of the natural and supernatural capacities, in order to know what is the place assigned to each person by God in the plan of redemption...<sup>44</sup>

In the thought of St. Thomas, Humility enjoys three points of reference:

- Towards Oneself: attending to the rules of right reason, Humility clarifies for each one the exact esteem of one's own abilities.
- Towards Others: the Humility which regulates the relationship with God regulates also that with one's neighbor. Each person being submitted to God can think that in one's neighbor there is some good that she does not have, or also, that in oneself that maybe some evil that is not found in others, and thus each person can consider herself under herself below her neighbors.
- Towards God: the humble attitude before God has nothing to do with humiliation, because each person may elevate herself in proportion to the more she submits herself to God with humility.

... How is one to achieve Humility? St. Thomas indicates two ways the first and the principal way is grace in so far as Humility, as all the other authentic virtues, flows from it as its operative principle; the second way is personal effort. As all genuine virtues, humility is a virtue that is infused by God...<sup>45</sup>

**1.2.4 Humility in the Modern and Post-Modern Epochs:** the authors of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries have strongly emphasized the importance of Humility in the spiritual life. The *Imitation of Christ* served to pre-announce the modern spirituality: the work opens with an appeal to Humility, and returns to this in all the books, as its preferred theme <sup>46</sup>. St. Ignatius of Loyola, at the end of the

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<sup>42</sup> II-II, q. 161, a. 1; cf. also E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1394.

<sup>43</sup> cf. G. ROSSI, o.c., p. 1193.

<sup>44</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1394.

<sup>45</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1394.

<sup>46</sup> cf. *Imitazione di Cristo*, a cura di Giovanni Bacchini [In Latin and Italian] Milano: Edizioni Ares 1996.

Second Week of the Spiritual *Experience* of the Exercises, proposes for the Retreatant three grades of Humility:

- the first is an essential degree in order to be saved: it is that which places the soul under the Law of God, which obliges under pain of mortal sin; [God obliges under pain of sin because he loves humanity, as the mother would have recourse to threats – when the child grows, she will understand that this was all out of love;

- the second degree, more perfect, creates in the soul a complete indifference of will and of affection between wealth and poverty, honors and disdain, a long life or a short one, provided that God be equally glorified. For no reason in this world, would one commit even a single venial sin;

- the third degree demands even more: in order to imitate Jesus Christ, to prefer as He would, poverty over riches, the disdain over honors, and the desire to be held as the most useless and stupid person out of love for Jesus Christ, Who wished in the first place to be considered as such, rather than to be held as a wise and prudent man in the eyes of this world.

For St. Ignatius, to advance in the way of perfection it is required to go out from oneself, to understand the emptiness of creatures, in order to make way for the Creator. It does not mean to undergo mortification, simply for mortification's sake, but to deny oneself in order to stay with Jesus Christ: *If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me!* [cf. Mk 8:34] <sup>47</sup>.

...St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross illustrate the function of acquired humility and especially of infused humility as an element that knows of no substitution in order to reach contemplation. The French School of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century develops the theme of the nothingness of creatures before God and strongly emphasizes the necessity of humiliations...<sup>48</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, philosophical, psychological and sociological research has been concerned in a certain measure with Humility. According to Nietzsche, humility is the virtue that is proper to slaves in capable of vindicating themselves before their masters <sup>49</sup>.

...M. Scheler, in his work on the re-evaluation of the virtues, has in mind the objections brought forward by f. Nietzsche to the life of virtue in general, and to

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<sup>47</sup> cf. **St. IGNATIUS of Loyola**, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, A New Translation by Louis J. Pohl, SJ. Westminster: The Newman Press 1963.

<sup>48</sup> cf. **G. ROSSI**, o.c., p. 1193.

<sup>49</sup> ib.

humility in particular. For f. Nietzsche, humility is the expression of the moral resentment of the weak, a dangerous and calumnious ideal in order to hide the sniveling fear of taking up life decisively and with courage. Scheler, in conducting a phenomenological analysis of the virtues, presents humility as the most delicate, the most mysterious and the most beautiful of the Christian virtues – rather, it is the Christian virtue, *par excellence* <sup>50</sup>.

### 1.3 The Contemporary Value of Humility

The preceding brief panoramic view on the meanings and varying vicissitudes of Humility, throughout the History of Spirituality, is sufficient to have one understand the difficulty of correctly classifying it. This however, does not impede seek to grasp from within Humility the central message which today still has value.

**1.3.1 The Foundation of Humility:** Humility is concretized and grows in historical situations, but may not be reduced to any single one of its manifestations: it needs these, verifies them and transcends them all <sup>51</sup>. This study has already pointed out how varied and insidious are the objections brought up against the virtue of humility all through the long course of the centuries. P. deBerulle, J. Eudes, N. Malabranche and others, however, conceived Humility as self-emptying, abnegation <sup>52</sup>.

Finally, in our own times, J. Pieper, stating that Humility is not an attitude of doing self-harm, or denigrating one's own being and personal activity, tries to present a just perspective in all this discussion. In the course of the centuries, it has been held that Humility would be directed either by the conscience, or by the will, or by an interior sentiment. The directing rule of Humility consists in the knowledge of oneself, and this might be found in that old axiom of Socrates and of the Stoics, *know thyself*. This, then, was taken up by Augustine and the Christian mystics for whom Humility consists in walking according to the truth. St. Thomas Aquinas adds that the knowledge of oneself and of one's own place in the world created and saved by God is the norm of Humility towards oneself, towards the world, towards others and towards God <sup>53</sup>.

The common opinion is that the origin of Humility might be sought in the area of 'lowliness', baseness. In the OT and in the NT, the consciousness of human dependence as a creature and as a sinner on God the Creator and Savior is the fundamental motive of the humble attitude. In all the presentations of

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<sup>50</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1395.

<sup>51</sup> cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., 1617.

<sup>52</sup> cf. P. ADNES, o.c., pp. 1177-1178.

<sup>53</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c. pp. 1395-1396.

Humility, there emerges the recognition of human limitations, the fundamental element which in a certain sense is common to Christianity and to pagan thought. According to modern psychology, the recognition of one's proper limits is the indispensable foundation of the psychic balance and of human maturity. Revelation reminds the believer that without the direct experience of poverty and of humiliation, it is difficult to achieve spiritual humility, and powerfully brings out that there is an ulterior motive to lower human pride: the common condition of sin<sup>54</sup>.

The realization of one's own inconsistency and weakness is influenced by Protestant theology, which affirms that a two-fold recognition is at the source of Humility: that of our creaturely state, and that of the fault inherent in sins. These elements define the negative aspect of this virtue. For a positive and integral conception, it is necessary to keep in mind a further essential aspect: the recognition of the dignity of human nature and of grace.

Humanity, created by God and saved by Christ, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, has to recognize the gratuity of all the gifts received: the Gifts of intelligence and of freedom, of grace and of all the virtues connected to this. The similarity with God and with Jesus Christ from the visage of the authentic Christian virtue of humility<sup>55</sup>.

...The content of humility in Christianity is part of Salvation History. On the one hand, it is connected with the complex situation in the strength of which man, at the very origins of his history, rebelled against the Plan of God – and from the other hand, in the light of the deliverance of the human situation that took place in Jesus Christ...<sup>56</sup>

Jesus Christ reveals the greatest novelty of Christian Humility. The *Kenosis* of the Word has shown believers that authentic greatness consists in a voluntary abasement, animated by charity and directed toward the service of one's neighbors<sup>57</sup>. Humility is the 'way', the pedagogy, chosen by God, and each believer ought to conform herself along her pathway. Humility is the radical condition in which there is matured the believer's positive response to God, which requires one to renounce evil, egoism, in order to adhere to Jesus Christ along the path of the Incarnation, it is an adherence to that way that Jesus Christ has constructed in the obedience of His flesh. Humility is that personal relationship – has been chosen by God in Jesus Christ and this still holds it weight today for the Christian.

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<sup>54</sup> cf. **G. ROSSI**, o.c., pp. 1193-1194

<sup>55</sup> cf. **E. KACZYNSKI**, o.p., p. 1396.

<sup>56</sup> cf. **D. MONGILLO**, o.c., p. 1616.

<sup>57</sup> cf. **G. ROSSI**, o.c., p. 1194.

The humble of heart live and grow into Jesus Christ, and allow themselves to be led by His Spirit in their evaluation of situations and other persons, in truth and rectitude. The Spirit of God in Jesus Christ is the unique, supreme font, to which the believer, of every historical epoch, is inspired and from each one is vivified. But, from always, one arrives at the recognition of God in Jesus Christ only through the way of conversion and Humility is rooted in this and takes life. Jesus Christ, Who is the font of Humility, constitutes also its paradox and scandal. In and from Jesus Christ, the believer brought to light in His meek and humble heart, and thereby 'learns' to be meek and humble of heart.

It is necessary to be enrolled in the School of Jesus Christ, Who reveals to each person the path of humanity. However, His life and His judgments are not those that human beings would like. His life is the path of poverty, of meekness, and this contrasts with power, strength and a guaranteed result. It is necessary to find inspiration from the Crucified, to a Conqueror in His defeat. Jesus Christ presents Himself as the One Who has overcome death, but after this He subjected Himself to it. The Cross is revealed as the power in the mystery of total abnegation without reserve<sup>58</sup>.

His 'own' are called to suffer with Jesus Christ, in a suffering that is presented as the source of the most sublime happiness. It is not any form of *masochism* that Jesus asks of, but rather perfect happiness: the most sublime happiness emerges where men and women are capable of supporting, at peace with pain, without rebelling against God, without unleashing violence on others. The Christological itinerary becomes for each believer an Itinerary of Happiness"<sup>59</sup>.

Humility, therefore, is not some abstract attitude, or being bereft of any precise traits. It means a life in Jesus Christ – in Him, a man matures manners of conduct which characterize the children of God still today. Humility is a person of all times, is one who adheres to Jesus Christ, and follows Him wherever He goes.

### 1.3.2 Humility, its Acts and Its Properties

...Christian Humility is based on the evidence of the total dependence on God in all the dimensions of life presented in the perspective of Salvation History, which finds its central point in Jesus Christ and its realization in the Church, by means of the Holy Spirit...<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., pp. 1617-1618.

<sup>59</sup> cf. X. PIKAZA, *Questo e' l'uomo*. ROMA: Borla 1999, pp. 359-360.

<sup>60</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c. p. 1399.

Humility consists in having that esteem of oneself, that respect, which corresponds to the truth of one's own place in the bosom of the world, created and saved by God. This does not exclude the joy and satisfaction of those goods which are possessed, provided that one does not attribute these to herself, but to God, the Giver of every good. Four principal acts of Humility might be enumerated:

- [1] to thank both the Lord, and others, for the good received, and not to nourish any rancor for human ingratitude;
- [2] to know how to receive gratefully the good of others, recognizing one's own need of good, truth, and other values;
- [3] to know how to contribute good and to know how to give of oneself to others;
- [4] to ask pardon of the Lord and of one's neighbor for wrongs committed, and to extend pardon in our turn <sup>61</sup>.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that Humility is expressed in the manner of existing, where one is situated, and of before reality. There are two aspects that need to be brought out that will recur many times in the writings of Mother Leopoldina, that will be discussed in the chapter that follows:

**a. Humility as a Spirit of Service:** the humble person feels the responsibility toward the community and the common good. The humble individual always gives of herself in those gifts that she may spread about and this is Jesus' own attitude: *...the Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve...* [cf. Mt 20:28]. A spirit of such service is nothing other than a manifestation of love – the gift of which Vatican II speaks: 'Man on earth is the only creature whom God wants for Himself, and thus, can only find himself fully through a self-less gift of himself.' [cf. GS 24].

Humility as a spirit of service turns to the profit of the entire community and not only of personal self-realization, and for this it is indispensable that the members of the Christian community have an interior attitude of service. Humility, as the spirit of commitment and of service, inspires a person to fight against the evils of the human condition of whatever type they may be: economic, political, cultural, national and international, and never permits one to remain passive and active in their presence.

However, 'the humble person cannot become either the slave of the world, surrendering her own dignity, and abdicating her own greatness <sup>62</sup>, or an

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<sup>61</sup> ib., p. 1396.

<sup>62</sup> cf. POPE JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptor Hominis*, # 24.

arrogant and unfeeling tyrant before the demands of natural equilibrium of the world. Each one needs to make the effort to be a humble administrator in the Name of God Who is the sole Lord of the entire created universe [cf. Gn 1:28<sup>63</sup>].

**b. Humility is intimately co-related to Love:**

...Humility finds its energy in love; it is a style of manifesting love. It is received and matures in the contest of trust; it withdraws a person from those preoccupations of guaranteeing oneself, and draws each one toward the one who loves her, is the basis of that peace which flows from communion with the beloved, and leads to bringing oneself into harmony with the other, and moves one to take upon herself the concerns and the suffering of the other, to assume that initiative to make life different, to moderate the care and the worry concerning oneself, establishing thus for all new conditions of existence...<sup>64</sup>

Humility matures in that balance and fragile and delicate harmony between love for oneself and that for others, lived and seen in the perspective of the love of God. It is bound to the reality of one's person, as it tends to correct the manner of representing one's relationships, to consider them for what they really are, and not as one would like them to be.

...a man is one who truly is what he is, and not what he may think he is, and the self of each person lives and becomes in a kind of osmosis with others. And thus the life of humility vacillates between what is already, and what has not yet come to be, in an endless process. The goal is to become what each is called to be...<sup>65</sup>

Humility lives in that balance which springs from that precise area of being loved, and wanting to be loved and of loving<sup>66</sup>.



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<sup>63</sup> cf. E. KACZYNSKI, o.c., p. 1398.

<sup>64</sup> cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., p. 1619.

<sup>65</sup> cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., pp. 1617-1618.

<sup>66</sup> cf. D. MONGILLO, o.c., p. 1620.

## CHAPTER TWO HUMILITY IN THE WRITINGS OF MOTHER NAUDET

After having synthetically observed Humility in the unfolding of Salvation History, and in the History of the Church, and having noted its Christological root, it is important here to present this dimension with the characteristics of a concrete experience: that of Mother Leopoldina Naudet, who ‘tried to imitate our Lord Jesus Christ in the best possible way’<sup>67</sup>, and to follow Him along the path of Humility.

It is opportune to begin with the analysis of the writings of Mother Naudet, in order to try to gather from them traces of her humility. These writings of a special individual, above all when they are autobiographical, reveal in their immediacy, the spirit, the intentions and certain depths which otherwise would be imperceptible.

...Leopoldina’s writings that remain to us are sufficiently numerous and also quite varied. None of these were written with a view to being one day printed, and some of these could be classified as ‘occasional’ compositions. They contain spiritual arguments and the treat of matters and concerns regarding the foundation of the Institute of the Holy Family. Almost all of the originals are found in the Archives of the Sisters of the Holy family in Verona... They are all manuscripts, with the exception of some that have been edited in recent times...<sup>68</sup>

Among the multiple writings, the following will be taken into consideration: her *Letters*, *Conferences*, *Constitutions* and *Spiritual Writings* - because these seem to be those which the more greatly shed light on the Humility lived by Mother Leopoldina. For each of these writings. Much information will be drawn from the *Positio*.

†††

### 2.1 HER LETTERS

#### 2.1.1 Introduction

...We possess 154 Letters of the Servant of God. For some of these, there still exists the original – for others we have a resume’, and for others, there exist copies. The first Letter that we have goes back to 1799, and the last was written in the year 1834. These

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<sup>67</sup> cf. her *Original Constitutions*, p. 44, n. 1.

<sup>68</sup> *Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum P.N. 1227. Veronen., Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servae Dei Leopoldiane Naudet [1773-1834], fundatricis Congregationis Sororum a Sacra Familia, Veronae. Positio super virtutibus.* Vol. II, Doc. XIV: *Writings of the Servant of God: Intro.. 1, Romae, 1994, p. 1250.*

are addressed to various persons whom Leopoldina had known in the different places of her pilgrimage: Vienna, Prague, Padua, Murano and Verona...<sup>69</sup>

The Sisters of the Holy Family have chosen 104 of these Letters and have gathered them into a manuscript for the use their own Institute, under the title: *Spiritual Letters of the Servant of God, Leopoldina Naudet*. This correspondence, in its content, respects the life of Leopoldina as it unfolded.

## 2.1.2 TEXTS ON HUMILITY

Of her various letters, these will be sub-divided into groups, based on those to whom they were sent, and there will be quoted only certain passages, which shed some light on that Humility desired, lived and suggested by Mother Leopoldina.

### 2.1.2.1 HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH FR. NICHOLAS PACCANARI

In an early period of her life [1799-1808], her letters are addressed for the most part to Fr. Nicholas Paccanari<sup>70</sup>: and they concern matters of spiritual direction and take up some problems and happenings in the life of the Community.

**LETTER 4:** from Prague, July 8, 1799, where she indicates the extent of her alienation from self-love:

*...There continues within me that great persuasion of my own nothingness...<sup>71</sup>*

**LETTER 14:** after a correction she had received from Fr. Paccanari, this was written from Loreto, June 127, 1800, she describes her 'wretchedness':

*[L.2]... I do feel that which I ought to be doing, or to put it more truthfully, I do feel it, but without knowing just precisely in what this consists. I note that I do place certain impediments with my wretchedness in the way of this knowledge, and at the same time, also in the way of the execution of that which I do know. And I cannot see, not even in any detail, just what these miseries are. This failing to see them, convinces me all the more of my weakness and blindness, and keeps me in great humiliation. In this manner, I find myself only rarely with my companions without having the thought that they are much more advanced than I am before the Lord. They are corresponding at least to that which the Lord wills from them. And a flood of thoughts and comparisons, all in favor of these companions keeps me occupied, in the manner that I ought to conduct myself before all of them, and to recommend myself to their charity. Every time that they obey me it is for me an objection of humiliation for myself, and admiration for them. These sentiments, the more*

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<sup>69</sup> *Positio*, Vol II, DOC XIV: *The Writings of the Servant of God*: Intr. 1, o.c., p. 1250.

<sup>70</sup> cf. the **Appendix n. 3** of this present study.

<sup>71</sup> cf. *Spiritual Letters of the Servant of God, Leopoldina Naudet*, L.1, p. 4

*frequent they are regarding my companions, I experience them also in the presence of every other person. And I am now at the point of humbling myself interiorally towards any other person whom I may meet...*<sup>72</sup>

She recognizes having been lacking with regard to her Spiritual Director:

*[L. 3]... I failed because indeed I ought not to be lacking in trust in the Lord, rather, I should put my trust in Him, in that He, having willed that that I should depend on you, nothing ought to interfere with this. The Lord has led me to understand that I should wait in humility, and to receive those helps that you will know how to share with me; and I am not to have that presumption of demanding them, that which has come from my pride. But all I can do, under the title of charity, is to ask you to help me in the desire that I do have of pleasing the Lord...*<sup>73</sup>

**LETTER 16:** this is a spiritual manifestation regarding various themes: natural defects, self-love, her sensitivity, love for silence, her call to holiness. This was written from Rome, between October and November of 1801:

*L. 4:...I have a nature that bears with it great obstacles to virtue. But I do not pay much attention to these, but rather to the contrary virtues. The reason is that for me to think of my virtues has not helped me, because there are so many of them, and I get discouraged. Sometimes it seems to me that my passions are within me like so many mad dogs, that are chained; and I often beg the Lord to keep these chains very strong, so that they do not slip away. That which I feel is that they would like to do this often, and this gives me upsetment which I feel principally in my nature. These miseries of mine seem like mud. I do not pay much heed to them, because it seems to me that as there are so many of them within me, they would muddy me up all the more. And it helps me very much to go beyond myself, and to seek outside of myself the help of God...*<sup>74</sup>

*[L. 5]...My self-love still torments me a great deal... Or, to put it better, I take a certain pleasure in the clarity with which I seem to look on matters, and that just view that I think I have in judging these. However, this self-love holds me down low, because I am afraid that in the punishment of that pleasure that I experience on occasion, the Lord might take this gift away that I know comes from Him. And since I do esteem Him very much, I fear also very much to lose Him, because I believe that the Lord, in His Mercy, and in order to humble my pride has permitted that I would have this experience, from the failings that I have committed, of that evil that exists within me. And it is He alone Who is the One Who keeps me from committing even greater thoughts, since I have every disposition within my nature to do this...*<sup>75</sup>

*[L. 6]...I have always desired humiliation and mortification, even though I receive them badly, because I had hoped to conquer that repugnance. But now I confess that, even when there comes over the desire for them, I remain quiet, as I know that they do not do me any good...[my health was suffering much from them]...All this I*

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<sup>72</sup> *Letters*, o.c., pp. 9-10.

<sup>73</sup> *Letters*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>74</sup> *Letters*, p. 11.

<sup>75</sup> *Letters*, pp. 15-16.

*have to say to my confusion, nor am I able to explain to myself where this comes from...*<sup>76</sup>

*[L. 7]...I was always one who spoke little... It does happen that there comes over me the desire to speak, when the conversation centers on matters I know something about. And since I do have a good memory, it almost naturally comes over me that I would say that which I have learned, or read. I would like to know whether it might be better to keep silent, even in those occasions, for my greater humility and mortification...*<sup>77</sup>

*[L. 8]...I find myself in an internal disposition of peace and confidence, and the persuasion that the Lord wants me to be a saint, and this is because He gives me so many stimuli, inspirations and advice, as I never lose track even for an instant of the thought and the sentiment of the presence of God, etc. At the same time, in this deepest part of my spirit, there is also the sight of my miseries. As these pass, it seems to me that the Lord moves me through the foundation of holiness, while the humiliation that comes over me occasionally, the knowledge of myself that these have given me - and that diffidence that I feel should surely serve me. But, I live in great fear of those faults that I might commit in the future...*<sup>78</sup>

**LETTER 22:** This contains extracts of letters on personal matters, and is dated from Venice, May 10, 1806. In this she does state: *God alone is the author of the endeavor, and we can do nothing with out Him.*

*[L. 9] ...In these days we have seen in practice that our plans were changed several times in a single week. And why? In order to make us die to ourselves, and at the same time, to have us touch with our own hand that He alone is the Author of the enterprise and there is known the necessity that we have to make recourse in all to Him and without Him, to do nothing but to be ready and prepared in every moment to work, at the first hint that we understand just what is His will...*<sup>79</sup>

**LETTER 23:** This is an extract of a letter written from Venice, on November 9, 1806. Leopoldina offers this principle: *...we have to allow ourselves to be instructed by the Humility of the divine Master...*

*[L. 10]: ...Let us indeed be instructed by the Divine Teacher, and with genuine humility of heart, let us submit ourselves to the blows that strike us, because in this way, we will learn to submit our judgment, and to die to ourselves. We can be afraid of nothing, because the great Sovereign Whom we have the happiness of serving, is all powerful, and His promises cannot fail...*<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> *Letters*, p. 16.

<sup>77</sup> *Letters*, p. 17.

<sup>78</sup> *Letters* p. 17-18.

<sup>79</sup> *Letters*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>80</sup> *Letters*, p. 29.

### 2.2.2.2 HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE BELoved OF JESUS <sup>81</sup>

**LETTER 24:** she wrote this to her beloved Sisters in Christ, at Mantua. The themes treated are: the spirit of the Institute of the *Beloved of Jesus*, charity, obedience, and the observance of the Rules. It is dated January 21, 1808, and is written from Verona. There are many exhortations pertaining to Humility:

**[L. 11]:** *...Be humble, obedient, detached from all, and particularly from yourselves, and then you will enjoy the fruit of all these virtues, and then you will indeed be able to say that you are the Beloved...* <sup>82</sup>

**[L. 12]:** *...The spirit of this Union ought to be poor in itself, despoiled not only of one's proper will, but also from desires and from inclinations, that might tend to one aspect, rather than to another, regarding our purpose. But, each one full of confidence in God our Lord, is to say: 'Behold Your handmaid: let it be done to me according to Your Will' . Leave to God Alone the care of fulfilling within you His most lovable will, and dying to yourselves, allow yourselves to be guided as pleases the Divine Wisdom the more...* <sup>83</sup>

**[L. 13]:** *...If you will have humility and consider that each one of you is the last, then it will come to be that charity is the better observed; because, then you will not contend with each other, you will not blame each other, you will not have that concern that your sentiment might prevail over that of your companions. Briefly, by means of this you will work so that your union might be a genuine paradise, where each one finds herself content, and you do not have to suffer from any superiority that one among you might want to exercise over the others, but there will come genuine union and charity. Have an authentic esteem for each other. And this will be easy for you when, by means of your knowledge of yourselves, you will notice your own misery, and you will observe the virtues in others...* <sup>84</sup>

**LETTER 25:** this is another letter addressed to the Community of the *Beloved* in Mantua, dated March 12, 1808, also written from Verona. The themes present in this letter are: humility and humble discourses, the future of the Institute and the monthly retreat:

**[L. 14]:** *When you find yourselves in the situation of hearing and receiving some demonstration of esteem, humble yourselves, beloved Sisters, humble yourselves, and try to recall to mind some of those holy women who founded religious institutes. And then you will find for yourselves in these praises a motive to humble yourselves. This humility, which seems to be so difficult to acquire, is the fruit of the knowledge of oneself. Ask for this from God, and with this light, you will find it more easily. And you will see that the actions and the works that seem to be the best, are always*

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<sup>81</sup> **NB:** For the *BELoved OF JESUS*, cf. **Appendix # 4** of the present study.

<sup>82</sup> *Letters*, p. 30.

<sup>83</sup> *ib.*

<sup>84</sup> *Letters*, p. 31.

*quite stained, and share in our misery. In this you see that the very lights from God obscure these in carrying out that we are about. In a few words, whatever is within us is nothing more than poverty and failing in every good. It is very urgent to me that you might come to understand well these matters. And believe me: self-love is the fruit of a great lightness, which keeps one from understanding her own nothingness, stopping at mere appearances, to which one gives a certain weight which they do not have, and a price and worth that is only extrinsic. On this matter of humility, I will give you a reflection that I have made myself. And this is that in addition to the general necessity that there is in this virtue, the Lord wills it particularly from our Institute, to which He sends it many times. And it is clear that He does not want that this Institute have other foundations than that which others have had. So, let us follow the paths of Providence concerning ourselves, let us humble ourselves, and not with simulating pride in humiliation. How admirable is the Lord, and how well He know how to form and to perfect those virtues that He calls upon to form a given edifice! Let us think often, therefore, that in order to form this, the foundations are needed, and that we are presently involved in these. Very shortly these will come to an end, and all the more quickly will the rest be accomplished. I think often of the beauty of the building that the Lord wants us to make...<sup>85</sup>*

**[L. 15]:**...[A servant of God said]: *‘In all the religious Institutes, there may be seen at their beginning that there reigns the spirit of death to this world and to nature, and that there dominates there the spirit of grace. Human nature is scarcely seen: Jesus Christ appears there in an admirable manner.’ This, my beloved Sisters, is what we need to do on our part. We need to aim at the denial of ourselves, and to live in conformity with the spirit of our vocation, penetrating well into the greatness of this, and on how much this requires of us.. And hence, as I told you when I was there [and which I now repeat, being a comparison that seems to me to be so well-suited] if a child of tender age had a wrinkled face and the appearance of an old man, you and everyone would say that this person could no longer live, nor grow. The same would be said of a new Religious Institute, that in its infancy, if it already had the defects of those of extended time in existence that had weakened them and aged them. If we wish, therefore, that there be growth in life, let us seek mortification, the denial of ourselves, and the perfect observance, with all those other virtues which will serve to nourish this principle and to increase it. Let your endeavors be animated by an interior spirit that would make you do all this...<sup>86</sup>*

**[L. 16]:** ... *I end with a quote from St. Teresa. She says: ‘The state of Religion is a heaven [if there can be one on earth], for anyone whose sole interest is to give pleasure to God, and does not pay any attention to what would be of contentment to herself. When one would come to want anything else, then she will lose everything, because she simply cannot have it.’ Seek only what pleases God, and then you will see how much happiness can be enjoyed already in this world. To be ever more forgetful of ourselves and to practice mortification, concern yourselves very much in this time of Lent with the Lord’s Passion. I tell you this, because I intend not only that this be your meditation, but even more your imitation in every encounter, seeking to accompany the suffering Jesus in your every chore and exercise of your day. He will infuse into you His Divine Spirit, so that you might benefit from every*

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<sup>85</sup> *Letters*, pp. 32-33.

<sup>86</sup> *Letters*, pp. 33-34.

*such holy exercise that fruit that the saints would find in it, and so many servants of God who practiced it. Pray to the Lord also for me, poor and wretched as I am, so that in harmony with that comparison which the great St. Ignatius made, that I be not like those high peaks which receive immediately from heaven the dew, but they do not send it down into the valleys: and while they put on weight and get richer, the mountains themselves remain arid and dry...<sup>87</sup>*

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**2.1.2.3 HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH FATHER ROZAVEN**<sup>88</sup> - another group of her Letters is found in her correspondence with Fr. Lodovico ROZAVAN. These are found within her correspondence from the year 1815 – and these letters become quite numerous in the years 1824-1830. It was in this period that Mother Leopoldina was providing a definitive form to her Constitutions.

Fr. Rozaven, was a former *Father of the Faith*, and in a later period he was Assistant General of the Company of Jesus, and was then among the most capable persons to serve as a counselor regarding the writing and approval of Constitutions, and also in that those of Leopoldina were inspired by those of St. Ignatius. There are also a few letters sent by Fr. Rozaven to Mother Leopoldina, but only very few of those written by the Servant of God, addressed to him. Here the interest will center only on those letters written by the Constitutions; the spirit of her Institute, and the fusion, or not, with the Institute of Sophia Barat; the possibility of having a foundation of the Company of Jesus in Verona.

**LETTER 28:** this was written to Fr. Rozaven, to thank him for the interest he had manifested in her regard, and defining herself a ‘wretched’, she recommends herself to his prayers. She wrote from Verona, the Convent of St. Joseph – Monday of Holy Week. March 7, 1815:

*[L. 17]: ...Permit me to express personally my gratitude for the interest, as I have come to know through my good Sister, that you retain for me, and for the goodness with which you remember my wretched person before God...<sup>89</sup>*

*[L. 18]: ... My Sister will have informed you of our projects, and will have made known the mercies which the good God has directed to us, and especially toward me, who am the most miserable of all. He has saved us in the storm, and with a marvelous chain of graces He had conducted us little by little even to the point of giving to me the most vivid*

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<sup>87</sup> *Letters*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>88</sup> **NB:** for Fr. Lodovico ROZAVEN, cf. *APPENDIX*, n. 5.

<sup>89</sup> *Letters*, p. 38.

*confidence that will lead us to the desired goal, which is to serve Him in everything, according to our vocation...*<sup>90</sup>.

**[L. 19]:** *...In this time of waiting, reverend Father, help us with your prayers. And have those who are zealous for the Glory of Our Divine Master do the same, begging Him to render me that which I ought to be, in order to cooperate in His designs for me. I have always before my eyes the holiness that would be necessary to have, but I continue to be quite miserable: and this is unconceivable, after so many mercies...*<sup>91</sup>.

**LETTER 59:** she wrote this one from Verona to Fr. Rozaven, on June 15, 1827, in order to present to him some considerations, comparing the Institute of the *Madames of the Sacred Heart*, founded by Sophia Madalene Barat<sup>92</sup> and her own.

**[L. 20]:** *...A little after the election of the Holy Father<sup>93</sup>, i.e., in January 1824, with regard to a certain priest sent to Rome by the Madames of the Sacred Heart, you made known to me your impressions and your opinion regarding us: i.e., since our rules are like those of the Madames, whenever I would have presented some questions, you would have responded that I come to some understanding with those rules. Whatever helps the interior life pleases me; as a result, I do not like noise. And in one of your letters, Reverend Father, you said to me, and I have understood in so far as I know these Madames, as they do make a considerable amount. You also spoke to me in one of your letters of May 1821 in a manner rather elevated in the spirit that God has given to me. It is very difficult, you said, that humility can resist for a long time in the midst of much external noise, etc. ...*<sup>94</sup>

**LETTER 61:** this is a letter addressed to Fr. Rozaven, that she wrote from St. Teresa's Convent, sometime in January/February of 1828. The themes treated here are: the comparison with the *Madames of the Sacred Heart*, her relationship with God and His work:

**[L. 21]:** *... 'The Lord, Who is rich in Mercy' [Ep 2:4], pours this out in abundance upon me, even though I am so wretched. He does not cease to fill my soul with graces, and to fill it with interior consolations. I experience above all a sense of joy for all that God is in Himself, for His infinite perfections, etc. I love that humiliation that I feel in His presence, I enjoy not being anything, because he is all. And in the uninterrupted vision of the truth, in which it seems to me that God immerses me ever more, experience the peace that derives from it...*<sup>95</sup>

**[L. 22]:** *...If there is something of good that is found in us, this is Jesus, Mary and Joseph who have accomplished it all. As for whatever I say, the world continues to offer me something, and I suffer sincerely from this, because all that I do on my own*

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<sup>90</sup> **ib.**

<sup>91</sup> **ib.**

<sup>92</sup> **NB:** for SOPHIA MADALENE BARAT, cf. *APPENDIX* n. 6.

<sup>93</sup> Pope Leo XIIth.

<sup>94</sup> *Letters*, p. 63.

<sup>95</sup> *Letters*, p. 67.

*is to commit errors and to slow down the carrying out of God's work. In this manner, it seems to me that I see the truth and that my name be eclipsed and God alone glorified...*<sup>96</sup>

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**2.1.2.4**      **HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH FATHER BERTONI**<sup>97</sup>:  
from 1812, there begin her letters addressed to Fr. Bertoni. Mother Leopoldina addressed many documents to him but he, in the interests of maintaining confidence, destroyed these once he had responded to his penitent. There remain to us only some bits of the spiritual letters of Mother Naudet sent to Fr. Bertoni.

**LETTER 62**: this is a letter in which she manifests the spirit of her Institute, 'the Devotion to the Holy Family, its Christological centrality, and seeks advice:

*[L. 23]: ...I am really a bother, but I cannot be at peace without giving you disturbance. In the desire of going on in the exposition of the spirit of the Institute, I find myself in a matter that I do not know if I will be able to explain it. But, you who understand my worthlessness, will put up with me and perhaps will understand. But, it is fitting that I expose my spirit, and I entrust totally to your confidence. I have always found within me a sole devotion, which is that for Jesus. And there my heart is so concentrated that the devotion that I have for Mary Most Holy and for St. John are but relative with that compared to what I nurture for Jesus our Lord. And I do not think of these holy personalities unless in so far as their relationships with the Most Holy Humanity of Jesus; and they are therefore most dear to me, because I see them in praying with him. And this is not so for me regarding the other saints. In indicating, therefore, the Devotion to the Holy Family, I would like to individuate the most loving Heart of Jesus and that of Mary – and St. Joseph, then, as the one who the most familiarly converses with Jesus and Mary, he attained so to speak in those most holy hearts that charity toward God and towards his neighbor, etc. Only I do not want to say what is incorrect, and for this I address myself to your goodness and learning...*<sup>98</sup>

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**2.1.2.5**      **HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH HER SISTER LUISA**

Her sister, Luisa, shared with Leopoldina the educational formation of their youth, as well as those spiritual and religious experiences of the *Beloved of Jesus*, but, she never entered the Sisters of the Holy Family. She lived in Rome from 1825 on. Hers was a very engaging spirit, and she made the acquaintance and acquired the esteem of a number of Prelates. She exercised the role of

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<sup>96</sup> **Ib.**

<sup>97</sup> **NB:** St. Gaspar BERTONI, cf. *APPENDIX n. 7.*

<sup>98</sup> *Letters*, p. 68.

intermediary for Leopoldina, with the Roman Congregations, in order to obtain indulgences, to reach the much desired Approbation of the Institute of the Holy Family and to bring clarifications in the tormented journey of the examination of the proposed Constitutions.

After the death of the Servant of God, the Sisters of the Holy Family insisted on having from Luisa the letters she had received from her deceased sister, but Luisa rather than sending the entire folder of the correspondence, re-copied faithfully those paragraphs which would have been of interest to the Institute, leaving out personal news and sent these to Verona, while she kept for herself, as a remembrance, the hand-written letters. Of this entire correspondence, the Sisters of the Holy Family have only one hand-written letter of Leopoldina to her sister, Luisa. The theme treated were relative to the content of the Constitutions which were under examination in Rome, and they show that Mother Leopoldina made known the motives for her choices so that her sister might be able to explain in an opportune manner to the Roman Cardinals her genuine intentions.

**LETTER 64:** this was written in 1829, from St. Teresa's Convent in Verona. She confides to her sister that she 'desires only to be holy.'

*[L.24]: ...They speak very well of this Bishop<sup>99</sup>. I was not lacking in respect in having the Marquis di Canossa present to him my best wishes. The Bishop said to him: 'I have heard others speaking much in behalf of this very fine lady...' I repeat this only because I can give pleasure to you. But, I tell the truth, as for me, I would like no other epithet than that of a saint. And this no one has ever been able to give this to me, nor do they give me this now. Rather, I have put down impediments to the mercies of God in this work with my own inactivity and miseries, and still this seems to be a bit bold! I think often that the Lord does this in order to sustain me regarding my reputation, in so far as this serves to His glory. I am content with this, that I already feel that which I am, and I see that which I do, that serves only to bring me greater confusion...<sup>100</sup>*

**LETTER 74:** this, too, was written from St. Teresa's Convent, in Verona, and, treats of her 'desire to go into Paradise.'

*[L. 25]: ... This is a reflection that I make often: I want to go to heaven, like so many others who do so much to reach this goal, while I seem to be doing nothing. What to do? Great confusion!<sup>101</sup>*

**LETTER 92:** this is a scrap written following the reception of the Brief of Approbation, in 1834, from St. Teresa's Verona. In it, Mother Leopoldina

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<sup>99</sup> Bishop Joseph Grasser.

<sup>100</sup> *Letters*, p. 71

<sup>101</sup> *ib.*

emphasizes in humility that the genuine founders of the Sisters of the Holy Family are Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and not her.

[L. 27]: *...The words that are on the Cross that we wear signify: Let us run onward in proposing to ourselves that track, looking toward our Holy Founders* <sup>102</sup>. I have wished that there should remain forever this idea in the Institute, that the Holy Family is the one that founded this Community <sup>103</sup>.

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#### 2.1.2.6 HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH VARIOUS PERSONALITIES:

There have been conserved some fragments, or copies of letters that Leopoldina wrote to different people, such as: ecclesiastical dignitaries, procurators, advocates, functionaries and influential individuals. These treat of counsels on how to conduct oneself through bureaucracy, along with explanations of certain problems – and all with the avowed purpose of rendering possible the official approval of the Institute on the part of the religious and civil authorities. In all these, there may be seen manifested a humble attitude on the part of Leopoldina.

**LETTER 29:** this is one addressed to His Holiness, Pope Pius VII, in Rome. In it, Mother Naudet, while recognizing herself as a ‘weak and lowly instrument’, asks humbly for his blessing for her Institute. It was written on April 1, 1815, from St. Joseph’s Convent, Verona.

[L. 28]: *...Since I have remained without all human support at the death of the Archduchess, I have taken on a greater confidence in God, Who in His works is pleased to choose the most weak and lowly instruments, in order to bring His glory to the fore. And I also recognize that what you keep me from presumption in this confidence of mine, would be the apostolic Benediction of His Vicar on earth, and I so have hastened to beg this, humbling myself at the feet of Your Holiness for our small union of Sisters. And there was a two-fold consolation in having obtained this from Your Holiness, in that time in which he found himself in glorious captivity in Savoy...* <sup>104</sup>

[L. 29] *...Now, once more, I place before you this small union of ours, begging Your Holiness to bless it anew, so that by this means all might be carried through on our part, and with ever great assurance, according to the will of the Lord and for His pure glory...* <sup>105</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> cf, Heb 12:1, ff.

<sup>103</sup> *Letters*, p. 95.

<sup>104</sup> *Letters*, p. 39.

<sup>105</sup> ib.

**LETTER 79:** this was written on June 15, 1833, from St. Teresa's Convent, in Verona, and is addressed to His Excellency, Bishop Grasser, the Bishop of Verona. In this, she asks for the diocesan approbation of the Institute and of its Constitutions:

*[L. 30]...all of these matters make me supplicate most humbly, and infuse in me the hope of obtaining from Your most illustrious and Reverend Lordship, following the careful examination of the Constitutions which I have the honor of submitting to you, and the approbation of the Institute itself which, recommended by the most valid sponsorship of your most illustrious and Reverend Lordship, I would supplicate you to place these at the feet of the reigning Supreme Pontiff, if you might deign in a provisory manner to approve them.*

*The most singular favor was granted to me very recently by His Imperial, Apostolic Majesty, Francis I, who sanctioned this Institute with his much sought after Decree on May 5<sup>th</sup>, recently passed. Hence, now that it stands under the auspices of such a religious and powerful Monarch, these events do not permit me to delay any further to beg of Your most illustrious and Reverend Lordship, that grace which humbly I humbly ask, so that with divine assistance, for the greater glory of God and the greater advantage of our neighbor, there might seen the fruits of all this which are being proposed...*<sup>106</sup>

**LETTER 80:** this was written to His Eminence, Cardinal Odescalchi<sup>107</sup>, the Prefect of the Congregation of Regulars, in Rome. Mother Naudet wrote to thank him for the benefits already received, and to recommend herself to his authority and wisdom. The Letter was dated Sunday, August 4, 1833, from St. Teresa's in Verona. This Letter was also accompanied by some notes, in which Leopoldina clarified with careful precision a few points in the Constitutions, with a view to obtaining their approbation:

*[L. 31]: ...In placing before Your Eminence this supplication for the present favor, being mindful of those already received from your goodness and kindness, I beg you to receive my most humble and due thanksgiving...*<sup>108</sup>

*[L. 32]: ...In the instance that I humbly present to the Holy See the new Institute and the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Holy Family, and which I hope in the most powerful patronage of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, to obtain from the Holy Father the canonical approbation, I see all too well how for the realization of this my desire, there will be need to remove not a few difficulties, since our rules may be found in many different parts of those Institutes and religious communities approved already thus far. ... Our purpose is two fold. We propose not only the sanctification of ourselves: but also that of others, in so essential a manner, that almost in everything we make our own sanctification depend on our procuring that of others...*<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *Letters*, p. 80.

<sup>107</sup> **NB:** for this Charles ODESCALCHI, cf. *APPENDIX*, n. 8

<sup>108</sup> *Letters*, p. 81.

<sup>109</sup> *Letters*, p. 81.

**[L. 33]:** ... As I now recall the dispositions of the sacred canons and the pontifical decrees, from which it is prescribed that no religious order of women should be introduced new into the Church of the Lord, unless it should profess some one of those Rules which may already have been approved by the Holy Apostolic See. So I have always feared that this new Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family which the Lord has deigned to raise up in these times, beseeching the canonical approbation, would have to be subject to this same law, common to all the others.

I say I had feared, not because I do not nurture a most sublime esteem for all these other institutions of nuns, who profess one, or other of these above-mentioned rules; rather, I and our Sisters, we venerate them as something truly holy. But, I would have been happy if it had pleased the Lord to give to this very small Institute of ours a different end, shows that He also would want a diversity of rules to be observed...<sup>110</sup>.

**LETTER 82:** this one was written September 3, 1833, and was also addressed to Cardinal Odesclachi. This letter treats of further clarifications concerning the notes found in her Letter of August 4, 1833, and recognizes that which the Lord had accomplished in her and in her Institute, already for so many years. Mother Naudet wrote this Letter from St. Teresa's Convent, in Verona:

**[L. 34]:** ...I never ceased wanting to be a religious, and to desire that the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family, should also be religious. In the course of so many years I worked for this end, which I knew that I could never achieve, if I did not find the support of some powerful patronage.

And the Lord therefore, inspired me to take as our Founders Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and with their assistance there were overcome all the greater difficulties, without my hardly even having noticed that I was meeting them: I would like to say without any merit in that which I was doing, because they accomplished everything, and I was not helped by anyone else...<sup>111</sup>.

**[L. 35]:**...So, I repeat that in exposing my reasons, I did not intend not being a religious, but I was hoping to be able to be one in all of its extension, without any Rule which for formality is needed, with all that submission that this demanded, by means of the most valid patronage of Your Most Reverend Eminence, before the Holy Father, for a supplication for a Pontifical Bull that is required for new Religious Institutes, to make use of one of the four approved Rules. I had read that such a petition had been granted to other religious institutes, even those of women. Most humbly, I sought, as I was saying that those constitutions and rules that the Sisters of the Holy Family observed, which are nothing other than those drawn from the Saints. I believed that I would be able to ask [please pardon me, Your Eminence, Most Reverend, if I expose to you so clearly my state of mine], for an Institute which being diversified clearly from others among the ancient Nuns, which does not have as its object only its own sanctification, but demanding, on all levels also that of our neighbors...<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Letters, p. 82.

<sup>111</sup> Letters, p. 84.

<sup>112</sup> Letters, p. 85.

**LETTER 86:** this one is addressed to the Congregation of Regulars in Rome, written on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1833. from St. Teresa's Convent, Verona. It includes several responses to observations made known to her, regarding her Constitutions by the Congregation.

[L. 36] ... *In the instance which out of my just duty I have taken upon myself to come to grips with the clarifications asked for by the most eminent examiners of the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Holy Family, I note that I have been excessively vague in my writing, and for this reason, or for others, the work remains obscure, I offer this premise: that in order to handle both of these defects, I may now be excessively abundant in putting down my motives and reasons that moved me to draw up these Rules, which were the object of the kind remarks that have been received by me. It will not have escaped the most eminent Cardinals that in the Institute that is totally new, even though it does reunite the branches of the active life of some other Institutes, this one has almost totally depended on the active life of a few other Institutes, this is totally dependent on an internal spirit, as there has been hinted in the Plan, 3<sup>rd</sup> Paragraph, 'which is essentially founded on the mortification themselves, in prayer and in internal recollection, from which proceeds good and fruitful activity'. And the continual assistance helps this, self-denial, detachment from family and from every other thing, that this praying often, that I place in the Rule with all discretion, is being practiced with greater frequency to the one indicated. And in brief, all the exercises proposed for this need, makes it happen that there is a frequent coming and going to prayer and retiring from activity, and then from this, once more back to prayer and recollection.*

*The Lord, wanting to establish an Institute dedicated to the Holy Family, and to make use of me, no matter how unworthy I may be, to serve Him in this enterprise, has brought it about that I would have occasion to see many monasteries, and to study their Rules, to be privy to the confidence of many superiors, and to come to know what was it that brought about their initial spirit.*

*Among other realities, I saw that not having the superiors really knowing their Sisters, was harmful and also for the superior, not knowing what burdens this or that religious might have been carrying – and, from the other side as well, upon whom some burden was thrust, and they were found not to be with sufficient strength...* <sup>113</sup>

[L. 37] ...*manifesting one's interior life to the Superior... I have found from this Rule a great advantage, both on the part of the Sisters themselves who are called to obey this, as well as for the Superior, who having to assign her Sisters to this or that task, has a need of knowing them deeply...* <sup>114</sup>.

[L. 38] ... *After having adopted this experience which proves the necessity of this Rule in the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family, I tried humbly to expose that which is found already approved by the Holy See...* <sup>115</sup>.

[L. 39] ... *In the Constitutions of the Sisters of the Holy Family, Second Part, Chapter 7, Paragraph 2, it is read: 'They will have a great openness of heart with*

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<sup>113</sup> *Letters*, p. 88.

<sup>114</sup> *Letters*, p. 89.

<sup>115</sup> *Letters*, p. 89.

*the Superior, making known to her,... etc. [here the entire paragraph was copied].*

*And yet, comparing the article of St. Francis <sup>116</sup> with this, I found that I have rather sweetened the matter, with having let fall this manifestation of rendering an account only regarding that which it is 'necessary to direct them in the path taken up by them.'*

*Without this Rule, the entire machinery would be through into disorder, and it would seem that there would be lacking to this Institute of the Holy Family that*

*simplicity of sacred spiritual childhood, as the already quoted St. Francis calls it, which ought to be so esteemed by the Sisters of the Holy Family... <sup>117</sup>.*

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<sup>116</sup> **NB:** this is St. Francis de Sales.

<sup>117</sup> *Letters*, p. 89.