

# **St. Magdalene of Canossa**

## **MEMOIRS**

### **A contemplative in action**

Commentary by ELDA POLLONARA F.d.C.C. ROME 1988

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## INTRODUCTION

The pages of the note-books in which Magdalene of Canossa jotted down her interior experiences form a precious document, even if they do not have style, depth of theological doctrine and refined analysis. However they reveal one of the greatest spiritual adventures of the first half of the 19th century.

The work completed by Mother Elda Pollonara is one that has entailed considerable effort, difficult research and is important and worthy of merit.

The Memoirs, title given to the note-books, do not have precise references to the events of her life, but often in an elliptical, composed and generalized language they give us testimony of an exceptional spiritual life.

The work of the Commentator recaptures in its totality the dynamic and often dramatic life of the Foundress and her profound inner nature. Magdalene's spiritual life, inseparable from her activities, is the stimulus for an apostolic zeal which grows with the years and continues to act as deep inspiration and a concrete commitment to action.

This is the first aspect of her sanctity. The mystical experience which she reveals to us in the Memoirs neither contradicts nor hinders, but nourishes an extraordinarily active and fruitful life. Her activity is dependent on the Spirit.

From prayer she receives the strength required to undertake exhausting journeys and establish foundations which intensify the physical strain, anxieties and difficulties to which she is subjected.

A subtle reference to this is always present and can be identified in the Memoirs, but the merit of this work is that it draws attention to the unity of a life constantly reaching out towards divine union, but at the same time, attentive to and regularly engaged in action.

Magdalene appears, like Teresa of Avila, to be a woman endowed with great natural and spiritual gifts bestowed on her with such a profusion that could well seem to disturb the equilibrium of her life. On the contrary they enhance a wonderful unity in her life.

The Memoirs end in 1827. Magdalene will live for another nine years and they will be again years of travel and toil for the expansion and consolidation of the Institute but by then her spiritual life is marked by interior peace. This is confirmed in 1824 when her apostolic zeal is more evident (cf. Ch. XIV) which indicates that she already attained the perfect unity of her apostolic and interior life. After that year we are not to believe that she was preserved from temptations and sufferings but from then on, there is no need for Magdalene to blame herself of infidelity. By now she lives the perfection of love in her identification with Christ and can say with the Apostle: "It is not I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me".

It is necessary to emphasize that her mystical experiences have a genuine touch of originality. It is evident that human nature is the same but God does not communicate to every soul in the same way. In Magdalene, violent temptations against faith persist; more unexpected and without any special reason is the transition from deepest intimacy to desolation, anguish and a sense of uselessness regarding her work. Long has been the journey to reach a state of constant peace; but she was never freed however, from periods of fatigue and suffering.

Precisely for this reason, the mystery of the Cross is dominant in her mystical experiences. Jesus Crucified is the source of all her contemplation and inspiration.

From the imitation and union with Jesus Crucified she passes on to identification with Him. The significance given to this mystery in her writings is not in any way, inferior to that found in the writings of St. Paul of the Cross, the greatest mystic of the 17th century. To the very end, at least in the Memoirs, her mystical experiences appear to be related to the imaginative and intellectual visions. Magdalene rejects them, but it is these visions that operate in her. Her life of intimacy with Christ is dependent upon them.

Magdalene's constant reference to "God alone" is never meant to overlook Christ and His humanity. Mystical and wholly evangelical, she lives with an ever increasing dependence upon the Word of God that always resounds within her.



Her experience becomes increasingly more dependent on the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Her interior life is nourished also by popular piety. Certainly she knows of St. Teresa, St. Francis of Sales but in her humility, she seems to prefer pious practices and devotion to the Most Sorrowful Mary and Christ Crucified, to advanced spiritual doctrines.

In her love for simplicity and concrete reality she does not speculate about doctrine, nor analyse her feelings, but candidly expresses open-heartedly but in poor language what seems to confirm the authenticity of her experience.

Mother Elda Pollonara who writes with filial devotion this work on the Memoirs of Magdalene frequently compares the text with the writings of St. Teresa of Avila. Magdalene has already been referred to as the St. Teresa of the 19th century. Certainly there are points of resemblance between these two “great women”; however there are perhaps more points on which they differ.

Though she descends from a noble House, Magdalene does not associate herself with high-ranking people. Rather, she lived with simple women and chose to conceal herself in utmost simplicity and obscurity. Her numerous letters, that are not easy to read, reveal her ability to cope with everyday realities. Magdalene used to dictate her letters to her secretaries who certainly did not have a flair for writing. But also when she herself was writing, her prose does not flow smoothly. Her compositions disclose her attention to the most minute things but they are not outstanding for literary elegance; they do not reveal the magnitude and freedom of spirit found in the writings of St. Teresa. Their mystical experiences seem to differ too. The Cross does not hold the central place in Teresa’s experience as with Magdalene. The great Spanish mystic is drawn to the Risen Christ rather than to Christ Crucified.

In the initial phase of her spiritual journey, Magdalene receives considerable help from her Director but later on it appears that she made it on her own: “Torcular calcavi solus”.

Except for Countess Durini, it does not seem that she had other friends. Elisabeth Mezzaroli was one of her first companions who also had extraordinary gifts but was more of a daughter than a friend. The Directors who came after Don Libera perhaps did not play as important a role in her life as those who directed the spiritual life of St. Teresa.

Even if Magdalene’s Directors had commanded her to write the *Memoirs* it does not seem as though serious consideration had been given to them. In fact, the *Memoirs* had remained practically unknown for many years even to Sisters of the Institute and it cannot be said that to date, there has been a serious or systematic study of them. This happens to be the first study by one of her daughters. She expects others to follow up the study of this difficult but most significant text, because it will reveal the spirit which must animate the Institute.

The text will not only clearly disclose the spiritual journey of a great soul but perhaps it is one of the most important writings in the history of Christian spirituality of the 19th century.

Therefore it is of interest to those who want to know more about Magdalene of Canossa. It is of interest to her Daughters and her Sons who should know her, so as to merit their name. It is of interest to all the scholars of spirituality.

In the hope that this first study will receive the wide acclaim that it deserves, we trust that the Commentator’s familiarity with the writings of her Mother Foundress will encourage her in her aspiration to be a worthy daughter.

Fr. DIVO BARSOTTI

Florence, February 2, 1988



## PREFACE

This work does not pretend to be a scientific study. The reading of the *Memoirs* written by St. Magdalene of Canossa under obedience to her Spiritual Directors aims only to highlight the profound spirituality which is hidden behind a life of intense human relations and prodigious activity.

This autobiography was published for the first time by Tarcisio M. Piccari in his study of Magdalene entitled: *Sola con Dio solo*, (Alone with God alone) printed by Ancora, Milan, 1966.

A second edition issued under the title *Annotazioni autobiografiche spirituali* (Autobiographical spiritual notes) has been compiled in the work *Regole e scritti spirituali di Maddalena di Canossa*, (Rules and spiritual writings of Magdalene of Canossa) edited by Emilia Dossi, vol. I, published by Pisani, Isola del Liri, 1984.

This third edition appears for the first time as a separate work, more up-to-date and flowing, without distorting the original ideas of Magdalene.

The revised edition by Adele Cattari has been intentionally written in the first person to enable the reader to feel the Saint spiritually closer and personally more alive.

The contents have been subdivided into fifteen chapters, with subtitles indicating the significant moments in the life and activity of the Saint. For practical purposes every chapter is subdivided into short verses and numbered progressively.

The comment on the text is of an historical and spiritual nature.

Since chronology is almost non-existent in the *Memoirs*, the historical comment puts all that Magdalene narrates in a reserved, discrete and intentionally concise style, in its proper context of time and place.

Her other writings, but above all the *Epistolario* (Letters), offer references to persons about whom she has intentionally kept silent, her numerous journeys from city to city, the precise dates on which these travels were made, the accompanying states of mind, and the highly mystical experiences having a background of sufferings and ineffable spiritual joys. The inner promptings of grace predominate over everything else; they are the deep-seated roots of her apostolic zeal, of her untiring work for "God's glory, and the salvation of souls". God and His Most Holy Mother are the true protagonists and founders of her Institute. To Magdalene can be attributed only her continuous "suffering" and "working" in harmony with God's will, which was always laboriously but also very lovingly sought after and accepted.

The writings of St. Teresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross enlighten and often affirm the spiritual commentary of this great mystic of the 16th century.

The *Memoirs* do not describe the entire life of the Foundress. From 1816 to 1824 they are discontinued and are taken up again after the death of Msgr. Pacetti only because the new director whom Providence appoints obliges her to reveal herself.

In 1827 the *Memoirs* end, but the life of this tireless apostle will continue. She was to live another eight years of intense interior life, more and more a docile instrument in the hands of God who, through her, took various creative forms to meet the needs of the society of her time. The story of her life and her Institution re-proposes to the modern man, the ideal of a unity of life which can be reached only in Christ.

E.P.



## E X P L A N A T O R Y   N O T E

*Memoirs* is not the title given by Magdalene of Canossa.

The Author had no intention of handing down to posterity or even to her own daughters what she wrote about herself and her Institute.

She wrote in obedience to her spiritual directors who, for various circumstances alternated in her life. Don Federico Bonlini in some of his notes on Magdalene of Canossa, writes of having had ‘the good chance of being allowed the access to a spiritual secret by the pious Lady. She was obliged to reveal it by the person who was directing her spiritual life’<sup>1</sup>.

In the tradition of the Institute, these private writings of the Foundress, that were saved from the flames by one of her daughters<sup>2</sup>, are usually termed *Papers* and at other times as *Memoirs*.

Thus in 1840 Anna Rizzi writes to Msgr. Antonio Turri who had made a pressing request to obtain the Memoirs of the Foundress with the aim of writing her biography. In the same letter A. Rizzi continues: “You had written to me asking when I could obtain the Memoirs. On my Superior’s behalf I herewith send them to you”<sup>3</sup>.

In the unpublished work of the life of Magdalene, Giuseppe Stofella also frequently refers to the term *Memorie (Memoirs)*<sup>4</sup>.

In the introductory notes on the writings of the Foundress, T.M. Piccari too, entitles them as Memoirs and gives his reasons for doing so<sup>5</sup>.

For the first time this knowledgeable biographer of Magdalene of Canossa prints in two parallel columns a copy of the two versions of the manuscript, one known as the “Veronese Copy” and the other as the “Venetian Copy” thus indicating the places where they were found.

Given the very slight differences between the two texts, it seemed opportune to choose the “Veronese Copy”, authenticated by the Curia for the purpose of this work<sup>6</sup>.

The given title, *Memoirs* is not only encouraged by tradition but is also clearly deduced from the text. It is characterized by the historical situations and the spiritual experiences of the Author, described later on as the recollections of one who lived through them.

E. P.

<sup>1</sup> *Miscellaneous notes* by F. Bonlini, in T. M. PICCARI, *Sola con Dio Solo*, Ancora, Milano, 1966, p. 857.

<sup>2</sup> Margherita Crespi (1808-1876) testifies: A little before her death she ordered one of the Sisters to burn some papers which concerned her spiritual life, which were in a certain drawer... another Sister saw her, reproved her and snatched from her hands some sheets of those papers. Some were really burnt but on those snatched sheets the Sisters found written something of an extraordinary spiritual nature” (*Positio super virtutibus Magdalenae Marchionissae de Canossa*, tip. Pallotta, Roma 1905. p. 292).

<sup>3</sup> Anna Rizzi, to Msgr. Antonio Turri, January 1840. C3, III, A.C. R..

<sup>4</sup> G. STOFELLA, *Vita di Maddalena di Canossa*, Typed manuscript. Unpublished, 1934, pp. 241, 288, 294, 310, 317, 326, 332, 342.

<sup>5</sup> T.M. PICCARI, o.c., pp. 309-316.

<sup>6</sup> Quattro sono i quaderni che si conservano nell’A.C.R. (4 manuscripts are preserved in the A.C.R.) with: “Authentic copy of the writings of the Venerable Magdalene of Canossa, and at the end of all four: ‘Concordat cum originali existente in hac Curia Ep. In quar. fid. Datum Veronae ex Curia Episcopali die XXX Aprile 1888. Sac. Baptista Peloso Pro Vie. Gen. Episcopalis (+) Curia Episcopalis Veronensis’”. The term “authentic copy” indicates that the originals were available in 1888. Today they are still to be found.



## NOTES

The text of the *Memoirs* subdivided into verses is printed in different type from that of the commentary.

This is to facilitate a continuous reading of what the saint has written about herself. The commentary that follows has the same progressive enumeration; it attempts to clarify the historical period and events which Magdalene lived and allows us to perceive the mystery of her relationship with God.

In order to give a certain order and fluency to the text and the commentary, it was seen necessary to insert the biographical notes on the people mentioned or omitted by Magdalene, in the appendix of this volume. Those mentioned, are placed in alphabetical order.

In order to illustrate the location of the many places visited by Magdalene of Canossa on her frequent journeys, a topographical sketch also has been added after the biographical notes in the appendix. In this index an alphabetical order of the various places mentioned in the text or in the commentary has also been included.

## ABBREVIATIONS

### SACRED SCRIPTURE:

Sg.	Song of Songs
1 Cor.	First Epistle to the Corinthians
Dt.	Deuteronomy
Eph.	Epistle to the Ephesians
Ex.	Exodus
Ez.	Ezekiel
Jn.	Gospel according to St. John
1 Jn.	First Epistle of John
Is.	Isaiah
Mk.	Gospel according to St. Mark
Mt.	Gospel according to St. Matthew
1 Pt.	First Epistle of St. Peter
Rom.	Epistle to the Romans
Ps.	Psalms
Tb.	Tobit

### DOCUMENTS OF THE INSTITUTE:

A.C.R Canossian Archives, Rome

Ep. Maddalena di Canossa, *Epistolario*

M.d.C. Maddalena di Canossa

U.R. Rules of the Institute of the Daughters of Charity, Milan 1820 Unabridged Text, English Translation. Rome 1981

R.s.s. Maddalena di Canossa, *Regole e scritti spirituali*

### VARIOUS OTHERS:

cf. Compare

ms./mss. manuscript/manuscripts p./pp. page/pages

P. part

Q. quaderno

w.d. without date v./vv. verse/verses





## CHAPTER I

### THE WAYS OF GOD

#### “AS MUCH AS I REMEMBER”

1. I have never kept any record of how God had acted in me for the realization of this work.
1. Magdalene wrote neither an account of her own life nor all she did in the past to start her Institute but how God had prepared her for the realization of this Work. God alone is the only performer of the events she narrates. She indicates simply “by what ways God deigned” to lead her.
2. However, now being compelled by obedience to reveal by what means and ways He deigned to begin the Institute of the Daughters of Charity, I will write to the best of my ability all I can remember, although I will not be able to state precisely the various dates.
2. We are in the year 1814. Msgr. Luigi Pacetti has been following Magdalene’s Work for approximately ten years. He has the specific task of acting as liaison between the Holy See and the new Institute. He had already discussed the Marchioness’ accomplishment with Pius VII and had obtained verbal promise for written approval.<sup>1</sup> The obedience under which Magdalene is placed to write down details of the initial development of her Institute is justified by the fact that Msgr. Pacetti was directly involved in furthering her cause with the Vatican. More than a historical source, the Memoirs intend to offer the reader an account of a profound mystical spirituality.

#### DISCALCED

3. The first thing I remember is that when I was about fifteen, having recovered from a very serious illness, and feeling totally strengthened in my resolution to remain in the virginal state, I tried to practise charity in all possible ways.
3. The first recollection is what followed “a malignant fever which lasted for seven days and threatened to bury me”<sup>2</sup>, thus she will write later to Fr. Federici. Magdalene is fourteen years old. During that period “the world was alluring me” but once she had recovered from that serious sickness, the desire to remain in the virginal state and to consecrate herself definitely to the Lord re-emerged.
4. I thought I had to become a cloistered nun, but then, afraid that I might repent later, I kept this desire hidden from everybody else except my Confessor.
4. We read in the letter addressed to Fr. Domenico Federici: “... ever since I was 5 years old I have had the vocation to become a nun... but between fourteen and fifteen I thought of changing my idea... having somewhat recovered from the sickness, the early desires and the old resolutions came back to my mind. At that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Msgr. LUIGI PACIFICO PACETTI, to M.d.C., 18 May 1814. Ep. II/I, p. 711.

<sup>2</sup> M.d.C., to Fr. Domenico Maria Federici, 5 Novembre 1791, Ep. I, p. 2.



time I was silent about them and after a year I confided them to a religious who was my brother's teacher. Then again, for more than six months I remained silent and only after a few more months did I tell my confessor."<sup>3</sup> The first person to be confided with the secret is Fr. Pietro Rossi. Who then was her confessor? From June of 1787 to April 25, 1790 Fr. Stefano of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, a Carmelite, who was the prior of the Monastery of the Annunciation was Magdalene's confessor.<sup>4</sup>

5. Two years later I decided to withdraw to a Monastery where I experienced a special attraction towards nursing the sick but it was a matter of purely human inclination.

5. We are in the year 1791. Magdalene decides to withdraw to the Monastery of St. Teresa, outside Porta Romana in Verona on May 12.<sup>5</sup> What made her decide to speak with her relatives who were definitely against the idea was "a compliment a gallant escort made me in the theatre"<sup>6</sup> Also the rhythm of life in the Canossa Palace following the engagement of her sister Laura, contributed to her decision, she wanted to flee "from gossip and the occasions".<sup>7</sup> Her "intention was also to remain in the virginal state" therefore the amusements, the friendships and worldly interests attracted her less and less. The marriage of Laura was celebrated in the Villa Canossa at Grezzano on October 3, 1791.<sup>8</sup> Magdalene remained in her retreat until the first months of 1792. She came to know Sr. Maria Luigia of the Cross, Directress of the boarders and a deep bond of friendship remained between them even after her return to the family.

6. In the end I withdrew to the above-mentioned monastery fully resolved to become a Discalced Carmelite. Although mine was only just a brief visit, I thought I was entering Heaven itself.

7. However, there were two difficulties: apart from the aversion I had always felt for the cloister, (an aversion which I was willing to overcome even at the cost of my life).

8. During the three days I spent there I felt unceasingly repeated within myself, that in such a place I would no doubt sanctify myself, but I would never be in a position to prevent sin nor to work for the salvation of souls.

9. I tried to dismiss this thought as if it were a temptation even though I was well aware I had never done anything good in my whole life.

6-9. Magdalene made a second attempt among the Discalced Carmelites of Conegliano (Treviso). The monastery was suggested by Fr. Stefano but she was accompanied by "Marquis Gerolamo and Fr. Ildefonso. It must have been June or

<sup>3</sup> ib pp. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. GIUSEPPE STOFELLA, Vita di Maddalena di Canossa, opera in completa, medita, dattiloscritto, 1934, A8, A.C.R., pp. 22-23.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to Countess Matilde di Canossa in D'Arco, 4 May 1791. Ep. 111/5, p. 3885.

<sup>6</sup> M.d.C., to Fr. Domenico M. Federici, 18 November 1791, Ep. I. p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> ibid

<sup>8</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 33.





the beginning of July 1792".<sup>9</sup> After spending only three days in the monastery Magdalene describes it "as a simple visit", and returned again to her family. The two main difficulties were caused from within herself: the persistent aversion for the cloister and the impossibility of "preventing sin" and of "helping in the salvation of souls." It was not a temptation but a mysterious prompting of God who wanted to place her on different paths.

**10.** I left the Monastery though very resolved to return to be clothed with the Carmelite habit.

**11.** But God, through an unforeseen means, changed my plan and I was compelled to abandon this vocation.

**10-11.** God does not always make known His Will clearly: the interior urge to become a religious was evident "from the age of five", but the way to do it had not been made clear. Magdalene leaves Conegliano "very resolved to return to be clothed " and God too resolutely decides otherwise. "With an unforeseen means", which Magdalene does not reveal, He "blocks the road". God remains the supreme guide of her life. In a letter dated August 20, 1792 Sr. Luigia of the Cross consoles Magdalene: "The fact that God has shown you clearly that He does not want you as a discalced nun does not mean He refuses you as His spouse... be of good cheer in God and with God, resigned and contented with everything He may do with you".<sup>10</sup>

## SEARCHING FOR A NEW PATH

**12.** I placed myself under the direction of a holy priest who had a great spirit of prayer. He advised me to remain for a year without taking any decision.

**12.** The priest is Don Luigi Libera whom Magdalene knew through Sr. Luigia of the Cross. In this particularly delicate moment in the life of Magdalene he is the most suitable person. He invites the young Marchioness to wait in prayer to discover the will of God. He places himself at her disposal guiding her for the sole purpose of discerning the plan God has reserved for her. For a year both remain open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit<sup>11</sup>, but even after waiting for a year, the Lord revealed nothing to either of them. Outlining the figure of an ideal spiritual director in a letter to Magdalene, he indirectly reveals himself: "The Director has no right to decide whether his spiritual daughter should assume one state of life rather than another. He can only counsel her on one way being more suitable than the other, taking into consideration what her heart is inclined to by the Lord's grace and inspiration".<sup>12</sup>

**13.** During this time he made me lead a very withdrawn life within my own home. In the meantime, both he and I

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<sup>9</sup> G. STOFELLA o.c. p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Sr. Luigia della Croce, to M.d.C., 20 August 1792. in A. C. TARI, Maddalena Gabriella di Canossa, I.P.L., Milano, 1984. p. 405.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Libera don Luigi, to M.d.C., 12 August 1792, Ep. 111/5, p. 4160.

<sup>12</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.C., 26 November 1792, Ep. 111 p. 4166.



prayed fervently to know God's will and I continued to rely totally on his guidance.

**13.** The "most secluded" life which the director recommends aims at making the young girl more open to the voice of the Lord. In the measure that Magdalene remains "completely abandoned to his directions" Don Libera undertakes to keep a careful watch for the least sign from God.

**14.** Finally, when the year was over, he suggested I continue to remain with my family. He said that God unmistakably wanted something from me but for the time being he was unable to discern what it was.

**14.** Even after waiting for a year in prayer, heaven still remained closed. For the time being, the Lord wants her to live "in the world with the heart of a disalced "<sup>13</sup> And again: "...Let us leave aside now every thought about vocation... can you doubt that at the right time He will not reveal the loving plans He has for you from all eternity?"<sup>14</sup>. In June 1793 he urges her: "... let us take the road which will not shut the doors to whatever plans the Lord may have for you".<sup>15</sup> Such patient waiting, advised by this wise director, will lead Magdalene to fulfill God's plan.

**15.** With his permission I tried to withdraw to a Monastery without seclusion to wait there for God's Will to be made known to me.

**16.** My relatives, however, pointed out that it would be better for me to stay at home with my younger sister Rose until she would get married.

**17.** I was very reluctant to do so but my Director asked me to obey.

**15-17.** A further invitation was extended to Magdalene by the Dean Bartolomeo Neola to retire to the Dimesse of Cittadella, Verona but Don Libera suspects a double intention in this. After having discussed the matter with her uncle Gerolamo he convinced Magdalene to stay at home and look after her sister Rosa who was only six teen years old. He writes to Magdalene: "...I cannot agree with the Dean insisting that you should go to the Dimesse as a boarder. I will speak to him before coming to see you and I will find the hour and the time to meet him at his house... The insistence of the Dean is very suspicious... On the other hand, my daughter, be calm... when we have your uncle's consent everything will turn out well".<sup>16</sup> The Lord puts another red light on her path.

**18.** For a while after that, though I was drawn to a special method of prayer, I resisted the Lord thinking I was wasting time;

**19.** But in the end I abandoned myself to the advice of my Director who was encouraging me to follow my inclination.

<sup>13</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.C., 19 November 1792, Ep. 111 5, p. 4165.

<sup>14</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.C., December 1792, Ep. 111 5, p. 4169.

<sup>15</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.C., 16 June 1793, Ep. 111 5, p. 4175.

<sup>16</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.C., 27 June 1793. Ep. I 5, p. 4176.



**18-19.** The Lord draws her to a “special method of prayer”. Possibly it is an interior action of the Lord that urges her to maintain a passive attitude which she had initially resisted. The Director’s advice to abandon herself to such a divine initiative gave rise to her compliance “to His Divine Will” and a deep inner peace. “Prayer will be our nourishment”, writes Don Libera. “And to do it well”, he continues, “one needs more heart than head... I wish that you cultivate the presence of God very much and do not expect to have heaven always open”.<sup>17</sup>

**20.** In the great interior peace I experienced, it seemed to me that God’s Will for me was to seek nothing but Him and ask nothing else except a life of total abandonment to His Divine will.

**21.** This I did for several days but my Spiritual Director did not allow me to continue in this way. He told me that perhaps a day would come when God would ask this of me but not as yet.

**20-21.** The abandonment to the Divine Will and the peace of heart are the best interior dispositions to love the Lord concretely. Her Director thus encourages her: “... offer all your actions every morning to the Lord. Tell Him that you do not want any other except Him and that you will live and die for Him only”.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the fear of a too premature passivity in prayer leads the Director to advise her not to continue along these lines, even if he feels she is drawn to it.

**22.** Actually, God has now made this come true in this new Work, as far as its external affairs are concerned. Little by little He has put me in a situation of total detachment from everything, though the desire for Him alone has never left me.

**22.** Magdalene records these reflections in 1814, the year in which Don Lorenzo Piazza dies. He is the priest who in agreement with Msgr. Pacetti had called her to Venice to organise the charitable Work of the Cavanis brothers. In the same year Verona urgently needs her presence in the Monastery of San Giuseppe where the superior, Leopoldina Naudet is preparing to leave the Institute to start her new foundation. Moreover Msgr. Pacetti is absent from Venice due to illness. Thus the Lord strips her of all that is external and she experiences “total detachment...”. The day has arrived when the Lord wants her “completely abandoned to His Divine Will”. From that distant 1793 in which Don Libera encouraged her to abandon herself in prayer in “the loving arms” of the Lord and to respond to His mercies,<sup>19</sup> more than twenty years had passed and now “the desire for God alone” has become a more vibrant reality lived through suffering.

**23.** Anyway, neither then nor now am I able to profit from this; also I do not want anyone to believe that I would have acted thus without having first received a precise order.

<sup>17</sup> Libera don Luigi, 29 July 1793, Ep. III/5, p. 4177.

<sup>18</sup> Libera don Luigi, (between July and September 1793). Ep. III/5. p. 4179.

<sup>19</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.C., 5 April 1793, Ep. III/5, p. 4174.



**23.** Magdalene writes that if there had been any progress in the ways of the Spirit it was to be attributed to the wise and enlightened guidance of Don Libera.

**24.** For the time being I remained at home but the bond with my family became so strong that, for many years to come, I could not even think of leaving the family circle.

**24.** The historical period which Magdalene covers in a few lines stretches from 1793 to 1799. Numerous interlacing historical and family events compelled Magdalene to postpone every personal project. The death of the great uncle, Marquis Francesco Canossa, occurred towards the end of 1793, the unforeseen consequences of the French political situation,<sup>20</sup> the unrealized wedding of her sister Rosa,<sup>21</sup> the arrival of the French troops in Verona<sup>22</sup> and the subsequent departure of Magdalene with her brother and sisters to Venice, the "Pasque Veronesi"<sup>23</sup> and the complete exodus of the Canossa family re-united finally in Venice, the birth of Carlino and the unexpected death of his young mother, Maria Claudia Buri who on her deathbed entrusted her child to Magdalene: all these events led up, gradually year after year, to strengthening the "bonds". Meanwhile the directions given by Don Libera and the frequent correspondence which Magdalene maintains with him, sustain her spiritually: "My daughter, in order to become saints, much has to be endured. Console yourself that you are on the road to sanctity. Ask the Most Holy Virgin Mary for strength and help".<sup>24</sup>

## INSIGHTS

**25.** Meanwhile during one of those first years, while attending Holy Mass, as the priest read some Scriptural text taken from the book of Tobit, I felt a strong inner impulse to dedicate myself to works of Charity and I resolved to do so. It was not because I already had a clear idea of what this Work would be but I was thinking of the good I would be able to perform at that time.

**26.** So I did, for I also had a natural inclination towards assisting the sick whom God never failed to put along my way throughout the period I stayed with my family.

**25-26.** It was 20 July 1795, the feast of St. Jerome Emiliani. At the Eucharistic Celebration, in those days, the Priest read the following offertory verse: "When you were praying in tears and did not hesitate to leave your dinner in order to hide the dead in your house by day and bury them by night, I offered your prayer to the Lord"<sup>25</sup> Listening to this Biblical verse, Magdalene was stirred to practise those works of charity which her status then permitted her, spiritual assistance to the sick will become one of the five branches of the works of charity of her Institute.

<sup>20</sup> Termidoro: July 1794.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Libera don Luigi. tu M.d 26 Janwir 795. E.p. I 5. p. 4186.

<sup>22</sup> I June 1796.

<sup>23</sup> 17-23 April 1797.

<sup>24</sup> Libera Don Luigi. tu M.d.C.. 2 October 1796, Ep. III 5, p. 4209.

<sup>25</sup> Tb. 12, 12.



27. On another occasion, as I recited the Miserere, on reaching the verse: “Docebo iniquos...” I felt urged to teach Christian Doctrine to my fellowmen and thus I began to explain it every Sunday to our maidservants whom I could not send to Church.

27. “*Docebo iniquos vias tuas et impii ad te convertentur*”<sup>26</sup> While she listens to this psalm, the Lord inspires Magdalene to decide to make Jesus Christ and His teachings known to the maid servants of Canossa palace. This impetus of grace will later become the fundamental apostolic charism of the Daughters of Charity, dedicated essentially to the teaching of Catechism in the house and in the parishes.

28. Almost every time I heard, during Mass, the Gospel text which reads: “Euntes in universum mundum”, without knowing why, I was deeply moved and filled with consolation. Although I do not cry easily, my eyes would fill with tears.

28. Each time Magdalene listens to the verse: “Go into the whole world”<sup>27</sup> she is deeply touched and consoled. This missionary impulse ad gentes that she kept in her heart throughout her life will become a charismatic reality for the Daughters of Charity only in 1860. Mother Luigia Grassi, in fact, on being requested by the Church and being prompted by apostolic zeal, will send the first group of Canossian Missionary Sisters from Pavia to Hong Kong. From there they will spread first to the whole of Asia and later, to the rest of the world.

29. The same happened when I attended those Masses having the Divine Glory as theme and for which I had since then always a great attraction. The very mention of “Divine Glory” would suffice to touch my heart deeply.

30. Especially, during these years, I had such a strong desire to prevent sins that, besides spending all I could possibly dispose of on various occasions, I would have turned my blood into gold if I could, thus facing death many a time.

29-30. Throughout her life Magdalene ardently sought the glory of God. Glorifying God means revealing His goodness, charity and holiness above all in her own life. It means spending herself to prevent sin, shedding her blood like Christ for the salvation of the entire world and reconciling all men to the one Lord and Redeemer, Christ Jesus.

31. Above all, I had very much at heart the reunion of the Greek and Latin Churches.

31. Magdalene’s zeal for the unity of the Greek with the Latin Church stems from, and is nurtured by a family event,<sup>28</sup> but this ecumenical concern will stay with her

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<sup>26</sup> Ps. 50, 15.

<sup>27</sup> Mk. 16, 15

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Libera don Luigi, to M.d.C., 2 October 1796, Ep. 111 5. p. 4208.



all her life. She will thus write to the seminarian Antonio Schiavoni who was called to the apostolic field in the near East: "... I too have always harboured a special concern for the Greeks, as I see a whole population separating themselves for false and unconvincing reasons".<sup>29</sup>

### CHARISMATIC INTUITION

**32.** During Holy Week while reading in a small meditation book the verse "Inspice et fac secundum exemplar", I experienced an inner stirring, so strong that it remained with me for several days. I felt urged to follow the Crucified Christ but without understanding anything in particular.

**32.** The lack of dating with precision this period prompts us to place this important mystical experience of her life between the Holy Week of 1795, and that of 1799 (\*). During both periods Magdalene was making her Spiritual Exercises. At this time she was between 21 and 25 years of age. The inner stirring aroused in her by the Biblical verse: "Inspice et fac secundum exemplar"<sup>30</sup> is part of that first personal charismatic intuition which will lead her to centre all her life in Christ Crucified In Him she will discover the "God alone", in Him, the unity of her contemplative life immersed in action.

**33.** Six or seven months before going to Venice to start this Foundation, in prayer, I had a similar experience. It was an intellectual enlightenment and it was neither as intense nor as deep as before.

**34.** I believe that it was then that I looked to the virtues of Christ Crucified for inspiration to write the Rules of the Daughters of Charity, that is, of the Institute.

**33-34.** In 1811, after a lapse of many years from the first experience and always while at prayer, Magdalene has the clear perception that Jesus Christ Crucified ought to become the Exemplar not only of her own life, but also of that of the Daughters of Charity. The contemplation contained in the command "inspice", which means "look inwardly", must prompt every Daughter of Charity, to strive to imitate His virtues which are the fruit and expression of an infinite Charity.

### PERSISTENT AVERSION FOR THE CLOISTER

**35.** As time progressed neither my Spiritual Director nor I still had discerned what the Lord was asking of me. With

<sup>29</sup> M.d.C., to A. Schiavoni, 21 May 1821, Ep. 11 2. p. 1325.

<sup>30</sup> Ex. 25, 40. This Biblical verse is found in a book of Spiritual Exercises, leather-bound, dating back to 18th Century. It is a collection of meditations on the Passion of Jesus Christ, ascribed to a preacher from Veneto (cf. p. 250). The last meditation (p. 397) starts with the Biblical verse "Inspice et fac secundum Exemplar quod tibi in monte monstratum est" (cf. A3, III a, A.C.R.). In all probability it is the same booklet which Magdalene mentions and which serves as the means used by God to enlighten her on the spirit of the Institute.

(\*) In the former Easter falls on April 5, in the latter on March 24.





the approval of the same Director, I began to negotiate a foundation of Discalced Carmelites in my town.

**36.** However I always felt the usual aversion for the cloister but greatly inclined towards hospital work especially since an Institution, known as the “Pia Unione” had already started in Verona, for the purpose of assisting the sick hospitalized there.

**35-36.** In 1798, after seven long years of seeking, God still had not made clear His will to Magdalene and her Director: “My Daughter, I have not yet made a decision about your future state, but it has never occurred to me that God wants you in the married state. No, my Daughter, God wants you all for Himself: of this I am certain”<sup>31</sup> While waiting for God to manifest His will, Magdalene is considering the idea of founding a monastery for Discalced Carmelites in Verona. The desire which remained dormant since January 1795<sup>32</sup> re-emerges when the occasion of acquiring suitable premises arises for which Don Libera gives precise indications for the eventual transactions. But the deal cannot proceed, because Magdalene cannot dispose of her own inheritance which is tied up in the estate of the Canossa Family.<sup>33</sup> While she proceeds with this initiative she still feels “the usual aversion for the cloister” and “a certain inner bitterness” (v. 39). Even this path will not reveal itself to be the will of God (v. 40). But the Institute which she will eventually establish will have its apostolic roots in her heart drawn to the cloister.

**37.** It was a long time since I was devising to establish an Institute with the purpose of gathering some girls and, at the same time, of visiting the hospital.

**38.** My idea was that the persons involved would be interested above all in seeking personal sanctification;

**39.** But since all this seemed to be only a dream, I did not disclose it for a long time to anybody, not even to my Director. However, I continued to look into the transaction of the foundation of the Monastery of the Discalced, in spite of feeling a certain inner bitterness if I remember properly.

**40.** The very morning the project was to be finalized I was feeling restless and made known this idea to my Director. Without further ado, he ordered me to immediately desist from any further dealings with the foundation and dedicate myself to the new project.

**37-40.** God’s plan was buried for a long time in Magdalene’s heart. The project which she defines then “as only a dream” had already been announced in July 1799 for Don Libera speaks of it as a “Plan” that should be managed with

<sup>31</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.c., 4 May 1798. Ep. III/ 5. p. 4220.

<sup>32</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.c., 26 January 1795, Ep. III/5. pp. 4186-4187.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Libera don Luigi, to M.d.c., 4 September 1798, Ep. III/5, p. 4227.



prudence and discretion.<sup>34</sup> The plan, in fact, will! never be realized in all its entirety because it was too extensive. However, from it will emerge the charismatic promptings for the future works of charity to meet the three perennial needs of our fellowmen: education, evangelization, and assistance to the suffering. This is a decisive and meaningful turning point in Magdalene's life. Don Libera, on the eve of his death, sees his daughter well on the road willed by God. From here comes the command "immediately to desist from any further dealings with the foundation" of the Discalced Carmelite Monastery in order to attend to "the new project".

## PROVIDENTIAL ENCOUNTERS

**41.** I was advised to speak to the Vicar General of the Diocese for an eventual project of my plans (24.11.1799).

**42.** He advised me to speak with the Bishop (Msgr. Avogadro), who gave me only a partial approval. He advised me to move independently, for I had planned to work with a holy priest (Don Leonardi).

**43.** He was against my visiting the sick in the hospitals and suggested instead, that I open schools of charity for which I was then experiencing a deep aversion.

**41-43.** In November 1799, always advised by Don Libera, there appears a possibility for Magdalene to concretely start her project of charitable activity. This precise date, November 24, proves to be an important mile-stone on the difficult road which will lead her to realize her dream. First of all, she reveals her plan to the Vicar General of the diocese, Msgr. Gualfardo Ridolfi, who invites her to deal directly with the Bishop, Msgr. Giovanni Andrea Avogadro. Magdalene is more inclined by nature to assist the sick. She is already involved in the work of the "Evangelical brotherhood of priests and lay hospital workers" founded in 1796 by Don Pietro Leonardi. The Bishop advises Magdalene "to move independently" and to orientate herself especially towards "schools of charity". The great "dream" laid out in Plan B 6-6<sup>35</sup> vanished as if after an awakening from sleep. In spite of the "deep aversion" Magdalene feels for the school, she dedicates herself in this work of charity. "Certainly, my daughter, for those who do not see with the eye of divine faith, your vast project cannot be carried out without meeting great difficulties".<sup>36</sup>

**44.** During the Vicar General's visit he inquired who was directing me. On being informed he expressed his approval.

**45.** However, he suggested that if he was going to die I should put myself under the guidance of another priest,

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Libera don Luigi, to M.d.C., 5 July 1799, Ep. III/5, p. 4231.

<sup>35</sup> M.d.C. Ep. II/2. p. 1415

<sup>36</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.C., 14 December 1799, Ep. III 5, p. 4234.



whose name he mentioned. In fact, this priest (Don Galvani) became my Director.

46. This conversation annoyed me for I found that he guided me well and furthermore he was still healthy and relatively young.

47. However, a few days later he was struck down by apoplexy and died. Convinced that God had wanted to manifest His Will to me through my Superior, I entrusted myself to the person suggested by him.

**44-47.** In all probability the visit of the Vicar General Msgr. Ridolfi takes place at Canossa Villa at Grezzano in November 1799. During the conversation, Monsignor suggests that Magdalene place herself under the direction of Don Galvani. Magdalene is taken aback and troubled by the advice because for many years now, she has been guided wisely by Don Libera. But after "a few days" Magdalene will recognize in that suggestion, a sign of God's providence. On January 22, 1800 Don Libera will die unexpectedly and will leave others to direct this daughter whom he had guided so paternally and prudently. The last letter of Don Libera addressed to Magdalene sounds as if he is handing over his direction to the new Veronese priest: "Do talk with Dean Galvani for he is a sincere man and can be of great help in this project".<sup>36</sup>

48. Regarding the Work, therefore, not only did I abandon my collaboration with that good religious hut also the assistance to the hospital which was a branch of our activity.

**48.** Obedience to God, through the mediation of His representative in the diocese, has always been interpreted by Magdalene as a sure sign from heaven. She abandons her collaboration in the works of charity in favour of hospitals initiated by Don Pietro Leonardi, and begins to work in the field of the charity school. In his last letter to Magdalene, Don Libera thus interprets the command she had received to work by herself: "I believe that the Vicar General might well have different aspirations from yours. We can well understand from his suggestions that he wants to limit your broad plans. As he is not hand in glove with the religious, he might try to separate you from them".<sup>37</sup> For the time being, assistance to the sick will not be considered a branch of the work of the Institute. God will give more light in the future. Meanwhile she will continue to assist them as a "Dama ospedaliera" (Hospital visitor).

49. I began instead to gather some abandoned girls, who were in moral danger and placed them under the care of a teacher in a rented house.

50. Unfortunately it was quite far from my house and since my commitment to my family was quite pressing, my visits to these girls were rare.

<sup>36</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.c., 14 December 1799. Ep. III 5. p. 4234.

<sup>37</sup> Libera don Luigi, to M.d.c., 14 December 1799. Ep. III 5. p. 4234.



**49-50.** The new beginning, small as a mustard seed, is showing characteristics of concreteness, prudence and patient confidence. Before dying, Don Libera had offered this encouragement: "The Plan must be supported but it is better to adapt oneself to the circumstances and promote it gradually because all things at first have small beginnings".<sup>38</sup>

The first rented house in which Magdalene started the education of the abandoned girls was to be found in Via Filippini. A certain lady named Christina, helped by her mother, temporarily accommodated two such girls in her house, but on March 3, 1801 they moved into the new house with others.<sup>39</sup> On March 10, the number of girls had increased to three<sup>40</sup> but the house, writes Magdalene, could accommodate "thirty comfortably"<sup>41</sup>. The only difficulty was its distance from Canossa Palace which hindered her from visiting them often as her "commitment to her family was quite pressing". The house was rented for a period of seven years, but already in July, prospective buyers presented themselves and in August it was already sold.<sup>42</sup> A new house was urgently sought for the girls, whose number had increased to five, and a sixth one was about to be accepted. The house was quickly found, together with "two truly suitable teachers"<sup>43</sup> as Christina and her mother had decided to withdraw since they were unable to "bear a responsibility which seemed too heavy for them".<sup>44</sup> On September 6, 1801 Magdalene informs her friend "that the house, thanks be to God, has been found just two steps from my house"<sup>45</sup> near the church of San Lorenzo. The small group of girls was transferred on October 5,<sup>46</sup> with the two new teachers Metilde Bunioli "the most faithful helper" of the new Institute, and Matilde Giarola who will work alongside Magdalene until her death. This house too was rented. The growing number of boarders and Magdalene's intention to open a school of charity also for the day pupils, prompted her to search for a bigger house. She writes to her friend C. Durini: "I am in the act of buying a house for my girls. For this I need the Lord's favour to find the person who would be ready to donate this property"<sup>47</sup>. After about a month, the Lord inspired Don Carlo Franceschini to donate the house in the zone of San Zeno, Via Regaste n. 5. The contract was stipulated on September 21, 1802.<sup>48</sup> The move will take place at the end of November. She writes to C. Durini: "I am very busy because within a few days my girls will be transferred to the house we have bought".<sup>49</sup>

**51.** However, I used to visit the sick in the hospital as a Lady of the League of Friends, member of the charitable organization afore-mentioned, without worrying, how all this would end. I could not see any way of separating

<sup>38</sup> Libera don Luigi. to M.d.C., 14 December 1799, Ep. 1115, p. 4234.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Durini, 1 March 1801. Ep. I. p. 29.

<sup>40</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 10 March 1801, Ep. I, p. 32.

<sup>41</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 6 May 1801, Ep. I, p. 32.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Durini, 22 August 1801, Ep. I. p. 77.

<sup>43</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 6 September 1801, Ep. I, p. 80.

<sup>44</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 22 August 1801, Ep. I, p. 77.

<sup>45</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 6 September 1801, Ep. I. p. 80

<sup>46</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Durini, 10 October 1801, Ep. I. p. 86

<sup>47</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 25 July 1802, Ep. I, p. 43.

<sup>48</sup> CL Contract of the House in San Zeno, A3. XVIII. A.C.R..

<sup>49</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 19 November 1802, Ep. I p. 160.



myself from my family within a short period owing to my responsibilities at home being what they were.

**51.** Even though Magdalene had, under obedience, renounced carrying out that part of her extensive plan which provides assistance to the sick, she had not given up her voluntary service as a Lady of the League to visit the hospitals to comfort the sick. She writes to Durini on January 20, 1801: "Since Don Pietro Leonardi's return to good health the Congregation of the Religious of the Hospital has been enlivened, has grown in number and has been re-established. If you are of the same opinion as before, I will get the rules for you. I will copy them and send them to you"<sup>50</sup>

**52.** When it pleased the Lord to loosen my bonds, then my earlier desires re-emerged.

**52.** From 1803 to 1804, a series of events makes it quite clear to Magdalene that a separation from her family would soon be possible. Three family ties detained her at Canossa Palace: her duty as administrator of a patrimony which had to be handed down entire to posterity, the illness of her uncle Francesco Borgia and the promise made to her dying aunt, who had entrusted her son Carlino to her care. The first commitment dissolved with the marriage of her brother Bonifacio, which occurred in December 1803. The second disappeared with the death of Marquis Francesco Borgia on February 15, 1804. Magdalene had assisted him lovingly for two long years. She writes to C. Durini during her uncle's sickness: "The main reason for my silence is the continuous illness of my uncle Borgia, who wants me to be always with him".<sup>51</sup> And after five months "... my uncle's health remains poor and he does not leave me free even for a moment".<sup>52</sup> The third bond, which Magdalene considers to be "the greatest, is that of my little Carlino, and it does not yet seem to me as though it will be loosened".<sup>53</sup> In the month of November, even this bond which Magdalene placed in the hands of the Most Holy Virgin Mary<sup>54</sup> was resolved positively: "My dear, I want you to know that the Lord has inspired my uncle (Gerolamo) to decide that he would take a tutor for my Carlino. This is likely to free me in the near future".<sup>55</sup>

**53.** As the project I had in mind was truly grand and, on the other hand, I was fully aware that I had never really served the Lord, it seemed to me that it was total madness.

**53.** Magdalene asks herself if the "revival of her old dreams" is only the result of her human initiative or is due to the inner promptings of the Spirit. She writes to C. Durini: "Please intensify your prayers for me so that God may enlighten me to pursue faithfully what He desires. You could not give me a greater proof of friendship than this, as you can well see, my dearest Carolina, how much this undertaking can influence my eternal salvation".<sup>56</sup> The awareness of the grand project compared with her own incapacity to serve God faithfully, makes her think that the undertaking is true madness. For no reason would she want to willingly

<sup>50</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 20 January 1801, Ep. 1, p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 3 July 1803, Ep. 1, p. 92.

<sup>52</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 4 December 1803, Ep. I. p. 210.

<sup>53</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 9 March 1804, Ep. I, p. 219.

<sup>54</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 23 August 1804, Ep. 1, p. 237.

<sup>55</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 27 November 1804. Ep. 1. p. 242

<sup>56</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 27 November 1804. Ep. 1. p. 242.





alienate herself from God's Will. At the end of the year she writes thus to her Milanese friend: "... Happy New Year, my dearest friend... I am certain that you too wish me the same. Desire and obtain for me with your prayer, the recognition and the fulfilment of the Divine Will"<sup>57</sup>

54. It was at this time, that a Barnabite Priest (F. De Vecchi), noted for his piety and learning, came to Verona.

55. As he stayed in our house, I had the opportunity of telling him something of my project. I asked him if he would be willing to give me a companion who was under his direction. This person was a professed member of the Institute of the Ladies of 'Faith, a branch of the Sisters of Charity, founded by St. Vincent de Paul.

56. He neither refused nor made a promise but he was uncertain of what he should do.

**54-56.** The Lord put a Religious, Fr. Felice De Vecchi on her path. He was the director of her friend Carolina Durini and a famous preacher. The first meeting took place at Canossa Palace on February 24, 1802. "Yesterday I had the pleasure of speaking to him for two hours and truly I have found him just as you have described him".<sup>58</sup> In 1803 a second meeting takes place at Canossa Palace with Fr. De Vecchi, Don Pietro Leonardi and Magdalene. She writes about this to C. Durini: "... I have always been very satisfied and full of admiration for the most worthy Fr. De Vecchi. He would have told you that Don Pietro Leonardi spoke to him in my house and for your consolation let me tell you that I certainly believe in the happy outcome of this meeting for the Divine Glory and you my dear, are the cause of it all".<sup>59</sup> What exactly was exchanged in the course of the two meetings? From the letter Magdalene writes to Countess Cavriani we can deduce the subject of the conversation: "The Lord calls me to serve him in His poor... in an institution where one can instil the true spirit of union with God and at the same time detachment from everything while engaging in all those works of charity suitable in the present circumstances, with a companion endowed with holiness, vocation and experience... Through Fr. De Vecchi, the Lord has made known to me both the institution and the companion or the 'Lady of Faith'.<sup>60</sup> This "companion" will be the instrument through whom Magdalene can secure the *Rules of the Sisters of Charity* inspired by the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul. This manuscript copy is still preserved in the Canossian Archives in Rome.<sup>61</sup> Magdalene bases her *Reflections* on these Rules.

57. At last, another Priest of outstanding personality visited Verona and happened to stay at my house. He was a man of deep spirituality and experience. To him I opened my heart, clearly revealing my plans, since he suggested that I work with him on a charity project he was planning.

<sup>57</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 26 December 1804, Ep. 1, p. 244.

<sup>58</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 25 February 1802, Ep. 1, p. 115.

<sup>59</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 17 January 1803, Ep. I, p. 172.

<sup>60</sup> M.d.C., to Countess Cavriani, 18 February 1805, Ep. I, p. 589.

<sup>61</sup> E. III, A.C.R..





**57.** The adverb “at last” used by Magdalene in this providential meeting reveals a breath of relief for having reached a goal. This meeting, in fact, proved to be a decisive one for the realization of her Work. The priest, “a man of deep spirituality and experience” is Msgr. Luigi Pacifico Pacetti who had been invited to Verona for the liturgical celebration of Corpus Christi in 1804 and meets Magdalene in the Canossa Palace itself. Recognising the exceptional personality of the Marchioness, the Monsignor at first invites her to co-operate with him in one of his institutions where, with Leopoldina Naudet, he had brought in some young girls eager to serve the Lord. Magdalene on her part, was taken up with her own vision and reveals to the man of God her plans, marvelling at her unusual openness with a person she meets for the first time.

**58.** Msgr. Pacetti however, no longer spoke about his project but encouraged me to pursue my own. It was then that I began to reflect on it more seriously.

**59.** Even now I am surprised that I confided in one who was not my Director for I was then, as now, most reluctant to ask counsel from one who did not direct me.

**58-59.** Msgr. Pacetti understands at once that Magdalene is not destined by God to take up the work he had at heart but that she has to fulfil her own specific mission. Magdalene writes: “He no longer made mention of his project but encouraged me to pursue mine”. He is precisely the one who will encourage and guide the Marchioness up to the final ecclesiastical approval of her institution.

**60.** Moreover, I knew I was incapable of carrying out this work, and as I still lacked trust in the Lord, it seemed to me that I could not do anything if I did not have a companion.

**61.** After great difficulty I was finally granted one who had already been professed in the afore-mentioned Institute of the Ladies of Faith and I was even able to exchange ideas with her.

**60-61.** Help comes to Magdalene contemporaneously from two persons: Msgr. Pacetti in Venice and Fr. De Vecchi in Milan. In the autumn of 1804, Fr. De Vecchi is again in Verona and with “great difficulty” grants Magdalene the “companion” she desires but on one condition. Magdalene writes about this to Countess Cavriani: “The companion God sent me and without whom as you can see, I cannot do anything, is a German lady. She had to abandon the religious order of which she was a member, as it was suppressed for political reasons. I believe she had been directed for nearly ten years by Fr. De Vecchi whom she obeys blindly. She is supported by a respectable family to whom she renders numerous services of all types and is appreciated very much by them. Fr. De Vecchi does not want her to join me as I have no funds to assure her an annual income in the eventuality of my death, or if our Work should fail. The sum he requested is 22,000 Venetian liras. I do not possess any funds as I have not even been given my dowry in trust”.<sup>62</sup> It is uncertain whether, in the meantime, the ex-religious would await in Milan the outcome of the negotiations or if “on coming to Verona,

<sup>62</sup> M.d.C., to Co. Cavriani, 18 February 1805, Ep. I, p. 590.



would spend some days at the Retreat".<sup>63</sup> This second supposition seems more probable as Magdalene herself expressed: "I was granted one... I was able to exchange ideas with her".

**62.** She gave me a wide description of the former Congregation of the Sisters of Charity. The description of this former Plan, however, did not arouse in me that full agreement producing inner peace, or sense of serenity or satisfaction that, in my opinion, accompany the matters of God, especially when those same initiatives are God-inspired.

**63.** It seemed to me that it was the case of a purely intellectual conviction. So I had no difficulty, even though for justified motives, in omitting some things which were already set down in the Plan my companion had procured for me, and replacing them with others having a similar meaning.

**62-63.** Magdalene, who for many years, had dreamt of a charitable institution without cloister, found in the ex-Vincentian Religious, Lady of Faith, a good collaborator for the realization of her Work. This "companion" related to her in detail the original Plan of the Congregation of St. Vincent de Paul, its historical development after the death of the saint and the essential lines pursued in the works of charity directed towards the poorest social classes of France of that time.<sup>64</sup> Magdalene feels that for the main part the Plan is in harmony with her own, but when the time comes to set down the Rules, it will be necessary to discern, examine, adapt but above all to follow the inspiration of those "initiatives" requested by the Lord. The expression "for justified motives" betrays the pressing request from Msgr. Pacetti that she should have a Rule for her own Institute. The inner peace that she will experience following the modifications to be made in the Rules of the Sisters of Charity, and the confirmation she will receive from Msgr. Pacetti, will be the sign that the Spirit of the Lord is moving and guiding her. Msgr. Pacetti, who had taken up the direction of the Institute since 1805 at the suggestion of Dean Galvani and of Magdalene, writes to dispel all her doubts: "Your Work is certainly from God!"<sup>65</sup> It seems that here Magdalene refers to some Reflections which she will write on some articles of the Rules of the Sisters of Charity and to which Msgr. Pacetti will add his own observations. It is interesting to note how all the modified articles correspond exactly to those Rules dated 1801.<sup>66</sup>

**64.** All this was done with great peace, even when some things were denied me. Anyway, whenever it was possible for me to do so, I insisted on having them.

<sup>63</sup> G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 93.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. M.d.C., io Co. Cavriani, 18 February 1805, Ep. 1, pp. 589-590.

<sup>65</sup> Msgr. LUIGI PACETTI, to M.d.c., 5 September 1806, ms. A2, XXXI, A.C.R..

<sup>66</sup> Cf. A3, IIIb, A.C.R..



65. 1 was deeply and fully contented, in observing that finally I had found what I had long been searching for.

**64-65.** The spirit of the Rules of the Sisters of Charity answers “deeply and fully” to what Magdalene had always wanted. It was important to adapt the means necessary for the spiritual needs of the people to the historical and social situation of Italy at that time. Thus Magdalene herself writes in Plan B 6 -6, which is believed to be dated 1799: “if it will please the Lord to establish this Work I have the intention to draw from various institutions and in particular, from the first rules given by St. Francis of Sales to the Salesians and from those of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul for women”.<sup>67</sup> A “great peace” follows the laborious initial stages of the Work also when “some initiatives are denied”. In all probability Magdalene refers to the partial approval which the Bishop of Verona, Msgr. Avogadro, had given to the broad Plan she had presented him. The Prelate discouraged her from collaborating with Fr. Leonardi in his work of assistance to the sick and directed her towards the schools of charity for which Magdalene says she feels a great aversion. (v. 43).

Magdalene obeys him but later the Lord will open the way for the establishment of the third branch of charity directed towards the sick. In the meantime she cherishes in her heart the joy of having found an institution very similar to that she had dreamt of.

66. The thought of accomplishing this plan by myself continued to seem madness to me. So I agreed with this companion to start the Institute with three of us.

67. As God had finally loosened most of my ties with the family, I began to contemplate the way of detaching myself completely from it.

**66-67.** The outline of the Work is already clear in Magdalene’s mind and heart. However in the act of parting, the shadow of doubt rises. Might not this undertaking, cherished for so long, happen to be a fantasy caused by the air of Monte Baldo?<sup>68</sup> Dean Galvani, now and then, would tighten up the reins while Msgr. Pacetti encouraged her to speed the pace. God was more on the side of the latter for “He had finally loosened most of her ties with her family”. Magdalene thus writes about her state of mind: “I see only too well what needs to be done and I myself, for all my desires, would remain terrified if I were not reassured by one who is God’s representative for me. He has assured me that God wants this Work and He wants it through my unworthy self ”.<sup>69</sup> Magdalene collaborates with God and His representative and “with this companion decides to start the Institute with three of them”. On April 28, Magdalene writes to C. Durini: If the Most Holy Virgin wants this work to be started and even if they want me to return home in the evening to sleep, still it is something and we are taking the first steps”.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> M.d.c., Ep. 11/2, p. 1416.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, oc., p. 198.

<sup>69</sup> M.d.C., to Co. Cavriani. 18 February 1805, Ep. 1. p. 590.

<sup>70</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 28 April 1806, Ep. 1, p. 277.



## Chapter II

### FIRST FOUNDATION: VERONA

#### FREED FROM FAMILY TIES

1. I attempted to take the step which cost me very much but at that time it proved to be useless.
2. I obtained only a promise to be allowed to follow my vocation when I could find better premises than the ones I was in.

**1-2.** Magdalene attempts to detach herself from her family on an occasion she thought opportune: "... The Emperor, Napoleon was to come to Verona and was to lodge in our house. I asked Fr. De Vecchi and the Dean whether they thought it better that I wait to reveal my vocation to the family then, as I had already obtained permission from my brother to go and stay with my girls as it was necessary to vacate the house for the Emperor. Now that the move had been made, I wanted to make an attempt to remain with the girls, for then I could begin... our Work".<sup>71</sup>

The Emperor arrived at Verona on June 15, 1805. After his departure Magdalene made known to the Canossa family that she did not want to return home. "This message was received with great displeasure and they sent word to the effect that by no means they would permit me to take such a step in that manner. They also said that... until I have suitable premises... my family would never give permission and above all else, they wanted me to return home at once".<sup>72</sup>

She was the daughter of the Marquis Canossa whose noble lineage was related to the most illustrious families of the cities in Italy. For this reason the eight days spent near her girls were days of tension and deep suffering. She returned to the family and once more the attempt had failed.

3. However, I obtained greater freedom to stay with my girls, especially during the holiday season.

**3.** Before returning to her Palace and also after, Magdalene showed "herself to be very determined to continue along her way".<sup>73</sup> Her uncle Gerolamo, who nurtured great affection for his niece, had already realized the irrevocable nature of her decision. He assures her that from now on, she would be completely free, but in the house.<sup>74</sup> Above all she was free to do what she wanted during the periods the members of the Canossa family stayed at Villa Grezzano. The holiday season appears to be rather long, for on April 28, 1806 Magdalene writes to her friend C. Durini: "... my family is prepared to spend a few months in the summer residence and to leave me to stay in town and also with my girls".<sup>75</sup>

4. I had to suffer much on this occasion; it seemed even more than my health could bear had not God sustained me in my great affliction through prayer.

<sup>71</sup> M.d.C., to Msgr. Pacetti, 19 August 1805, Ep. 11 I. p. 9.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> 1 M.d.C., to Msgr. Pacetti, 19 August 1805, Ep. 11/1, p. 10.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 28 April 1806, Ep. 1, p. 277.



5. In it He not only made me perceive that He deserved all but He also consoled me with a special concern and tender love. So, even though I felt totally isolated, I remained strong in my resolution.

6. For the time being I had to return home and postpone starting the Work.

**4-6.** Through prayer, the Lord sustains Magdalene's health and consoles her in her "great affliction". To family opposition Don Galvani added his reproach. He tells her "... that she had precipitated the events too quickly. For the time being he does not want her to proceed with the transaction for the house or take any further steps but only pray and wait for the means and the right time, as and when God will indicate".<sup>76</sup> Under the weight of "this new command" Magdalene fears "not being able to prevent many sins" as she could do by starting the Work and thus suffers. "The greatest sorrow is the fear of not doing God's Will".<sup>77</sup> In this state of isolation and deep suffering, God consoles her with "concern and tender love" and sustains her in her resolution which is also His.

7. In the meantime, God allowed a person to be recommended to me. She seemed to have all the necessary requirements for collaborating but when it came to the internal organisation of the Work, her opinion clashed with the other person's and the project was hampered even more.

8. So much so that the first companion turned to another solution. I, for my part, was advised to abandon the second person and again I found myself alone.

**7-8.** Magdalene does not mention names. The German companion, the Lady of Faith, given by Fr. De Vecchi and the other one whom "God allowed" to be recommended by Don Galvani, will always remain anonymous; both of them were destined to disappear as collaborators. "The two heads", comments T.M. Piccari, did not agree on the internal organisation of the Retreat. "The new corner had persona! ideas... and an authoritative character".<sup>78</sup>

Magdalene could not reconcile the two personalities as she was complied by her family to "return to the house twice a day... this delay is a continual distraction... also for my personal sanctification I long to see an end to this affair".<sup>79</sup>

"The project was hampered even more" so much so that the Lady of Faith "turned to another solution" and the second was dismissed on the recommendation of Msgr. Pacetti.<sup>80</sup> Magdalene is alone again.

9. This time it was not too difficult for me to obey, not only because I had some doubts about her vocation, but also because I could foresee that innumerable difficulties and

<sup>76</sup> M.d.C.. to Msgr. Pacetti, 19 August 1805. Ep. II /I, p. II.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 193.

<sup>79</sup> M.d.C.. to Msgr. Pacetti, 19 August 1805. Ep. II /I, p. II.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Msgr. Luigi Pacetti. to M.d.C., 5 September 1806, ms. A2., XXXI, A.C.R..



mortifications of all sorts would have to be met in order to agree with her.

10. Therefore, as I am not a lover of suffering, it did not cost me too much to let her go.

**9-10.** The advice to dismiss the second companion coincides with her doubt about the authenticity of God's call. Furthermore, she foresees insurmountable difficulties and humiliations of all sorts by the one who had been made "in effect superior of the Retreat".<sup>81</sup>

Magdalene's confession of not being "a lover of suffering" reveals her charity in covering-up the reality of her companions' difficult characters and jealousy and that she was "not allowed but rare and fleeting visits"<sup>82</sup> to the house where she had placed all her hopes for the future.

### **"MY HOLY PROTECTORS"**

11. It was precisely at this time that I began to honour the Most Holy Virgin under the title of the "Sorrowful Virgin". In fact, since I was a child I always had a great love and devotion to Our Lady.

12. I believe that the devotion to Mary, under this title, was inspired by my second companion.

**11-12.** Magdalene does not indicate any negative trait of "her second companion" but emphasises that she had re-awakened in her a special love for the Sorrowful Virgin, for whom she had a "great love and devotion" from her childhood. In the Preface to the Unabridged Rules which, according to the testimony written by Angela Bragato, Magdalene will dictate "shortly before her death",<sup>83</sup> she presents the Virgin under the title of "Mother of Charity at the foot of the Cross". For Magdalene the aspect of Mary's love for the dying Christ and for sinners goes far beyond the aspect of sorrow. The charity that Christ pours into the heart of Mary is all-embracing and overcomes the anguish of seeing Him in agony.

13. My devotion to the Holy Protectors of our Work, that is, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Michael the Archangel and St. Cajetan can also be traced back to this period.

14. As I found myself, unwillingly, in great suffering caused by my vain attempts to respond to my vocation, and not having any other consolation except prayer, I often visited the Church of St. Francis for it was quite near.

**13-14.** In this period Magdalene discovers the power of the saints in her own life. It is one of the most critical periods of her spiritual life and she finds comfort only in prayer. She frequents the Church of St. Francis of Assisi which no longer exists. As it was close to the Canossa Palace, one can presume that it may have been situated along a road which was once called "the Corso".

<sup>81</sup> STOFELLA, o.c., p. 193.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Angela Bragato, Rules, Archives, Milan I E, fasc. 9.





15. One day while in prayer, I felt moved to take this Saint as my advocate and I prayed to him to be my father.

16. I did not speak about this to anyone; however, some days later, I think during confession, my Confessor told me to recommend myself to St. Francis and to take him as a father.

17. Later, when I spoke again with my Director who knew nothing of my previous inspirations, we both agreed that I should take this Saint as my advocate and father; however not as one who would guide me in drawing up the Rules.

**15-17.** The inner urge to take St. Francis as father and advocate who will plead her cause with God, was confirmed by Don Nicola Galvani, her confessor, soon after. Magdalene had not revealed any of these inspirations to anyone but the Holy Spirit who is guiding both, gives her confirmation and spiritual consolation. St. Francis will be the father of her soul but not the one who inspires the Rules. She will be his spiritual daughter because of her love for Christ Crucified but not for his form of poverty which in her Institute will be interpreted not only as sobriety but also as a spiritual journey towards inner detachment, as a constant awareness of the transitory nature of life and as a vital deep union with God alone.

18. The same happened to me regarding St. Michael. While in prayer I took him as the defender of the Institute. As far as I remember, the first time I went to my Director, he asked me if I had devotion to the great Archangel Michael and told me to take him as my protector.

**18.** Also the choice of St. Michael the Archangel as defender of the Institute finds confirmation in the perfect consent between her own impulse and her Director's advice which followed soon after. She was to take the saint as protector of the budding Institute. In the Rule that she will write in 1812 in Venice, the Foundress will define St. Michael the Archangel as the "Protector of the Universal Church and of the Institute".<sup>84</sup> In the first formula of the vows every sister will "make her own consecration to God in the presence of the Most Holy Virgin and of St. Michael the Archangel...".<sup>85</sup>

19. After having read St. Cajetan's life when I was young I developed a devotion to him. I desired to imitate him, to spread the love of God and to work for the good of souls. Therefore, I always cherished a great affection for him.

**19.** The life of St. Cajetan of Thiene which she had read as a young girl was to strongly influence Magdalene's spirit and her Institute. The saint had done much for the good of souls: he opened a hospital for Incurables in the Giudecca at Venice and a second one in Rome. He aided and assisted orphans. When sent as a missionary to Naples, he organised hospitals, opened hospices and died

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<sup>84</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, p. 63.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 170.



venerated by all for his exquisite goodness and charity. The devotion Magdalene cherished for this saint may be derived from the fact that he was honoured as an adopted Veronese saint. In fact, during one of his three sojourns to Verona he started a hospital for the poor. He is especially venerated in the Church of St. Nicholas. Magdalene intends especially to imitate his zeal for "spreading the love of God" and for the work of mercy in favour of the most needy.

## THE LONGED-FOR RETREAT

**20.** Overcoming therefore many contradictions, I obtained a suitable place after nearly two years.

**20.** After the unsuccessful attempt to detach herself from the family in June 1805, Magdalene casts her eye on a monastery that the Napoleonic Decree, dated July 28, 1806 will close, compelling the enclosed nuns of St. Augustine, founded two centuries before, to unite with those of Porta San Giorgio. It is the monastery of San Giuseppe and San Fidenzio, situated in the district of San Zeno near the Basilica bearing the same name. It is a place decent enough for the Marquis of Canossa to give Magdalene the final consent. As far back as June 1805, Magdalene wrote to her friend C. Durini: "I tell you my dear, that I do have a suitable place, but there is much talk here about the restrictions of monasteries so I do not want to take advantage of the situation... I sincerely hope they would leave the poor convents in peace. In any case, if it comes to the worst, rather than letting them get into the hands of ungodly people, I think that it would be better to take one over for a worthy cause, and I have always had such a fear of causing damage to the nuns..."<sup>86</sup> In 1806, referring to the Monastery, Msgr. Pacetti writes: "In the purchase of the Monastery be sure that you do the best that can be done..."<sup>87</sup> But how to meet the cost that even with a reduction, would still be so high? "I would have liked, my dear, to... purchase the convent but the scarcity of my means makes it impossible for me to do so now".<sup>88</sup> Again in 1807: "The extreme needs of the poor district of San Zeno presses me to make an attempt to purchase that Monastery, now that my brother seems to be disposed to help in some way".<sup>89</sup> When the possibility arises to rent the Monastery, the State Property Office refuses to give permission.<sup>90</sup> The difficulties seem overwhelming but Magdalene, as always, has recourse to prayer and trust in the intercession of her Advocate, Mary Most Holy: "... your Magdalene finds herself in extreme need of prayer... please pray and get others to pray for me".<sup>91</sup> "How many bonds, my dear, keep me away from my poor Institution. Pray to the Lord to hasten His mercies over me so that He may break all the bonds in one blow".<sup>92</sup> Again she writes: "... please my dear, pray very much to the Most Holy Virgin for me";<sup>93</sup> "... pray and get others to pray for your Magdalene and for the

<sup>86</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Durini, 26 June 1805, Ep. I. p. 256.

<sup>87</sup> Msgr. PACETTI. to M.d.C., 5 September 1806, ms. Autografo, A2. XXXI, A.C.R.

<sup>88</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 13 January 1807. Ep. 1. p. 286.

<sup>89</sup> Md.C., to C. Durini, 6 February 1807, Ep. E. p. 288.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Durini, 5 March 1807, Ep. 1, p. 292.

<sup>91</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 16 May 1806, Ep. I, p. 278.

<sup>92</sup> M.d.C., Lo C. Durini, w.d., Ep. I, p. 301.

<sup>93</sup> Md.C, to C. Durini, 29 March 1807, Ep. 1, pp. 293-294.



settlement of this affair”<sup>94</sup> Our Lady, to whom Magdalene will attribute the outcome of all her affairs, the birth and development of the Institute, responds from heaven favourably on two occasions. The Emperor Napoleon and Prince Eugenio Beauharnais, who had been named Viceroy of Italy in 1805, are guests at Canossa Palace twice in less than a month: on November 27 and December 13, 1806. The first time Magdalene was hurriedly presented to them within the space of two minutes”, but “as far as our plans are concerned” she will write to C. Durini “I knew and could do nothing”.<sup>95</sup> The Marchioness made a second attempt. This time she did it in writing to Marquis Carlotti: “... I was resolved to present a petition to the Prince (Eugenio Beauharnais) in which I requested the favour of being allowed to make the purchase at a lowered cost... My brother presented it at the moment of his departure. His Highness hurriedly passed it to his secretary, without reading it”.<sup>96</sup> On December 13, Magdalene was offered a second opportunity of meeting Napoleon. She herself describes it: “... the Viceroy presented me to the Emperor... but in great haste. He took but a minute to speak to all and departed as a consequence I could do nothing”.<sup>97</sup> After further transactions, apprehensions and difficulties, the longed for Decree of Assignment, thanks to Eugenio Beauharnais, Viceroy of Italy, finally reached Magdalene on April 1, 1808.<sup>98</sup>

**21.** Later my Director provided me with a companion who was endowed with every good quality. After obtaining permission from my family and together with some of her companions, I went to live in the afore-mentioned premises.

**21.** Magdalene entered the much longed-for Monastery on May 8, 1808. The memorable day is communicated to her Milanese friend some days later: “Already twelve days have passed since I am here... in the new premises where I had the first Mass offered on the feast of St. Joseph after whom the convent is named. Believe me, there is more than enough to do and being in the centre of the district there is always a crowd”.<sup>99</sup> Msgr. Pacetti presented Leopoldina Naudet and her other companions to Magdalene to assist in the work of the new Institute. It was he himself who had accompanied them from Venice having received “enlightenment from heaven” during the Eucharistic Celebration, to the effect that Leopoldina would have been “destined to form in Verona a new religious institute”.<sup>100</sup> Perhaps, he thought that it would be possible for the two women to come to some agreement for the good of a common ideal. Magdalene received the newcomers as though

<sup>94</sup> Md.C., Lo C. Durini, 1807, Ep. E, p. 305.

<sup>95</sup> Md.C., to C. Durini, 22 February 1806, Ep. I, p. 266.

<sup>96</sup> Md.C., to Marquis A. Canotti, 6 June 1807, Ep. II/I, p. 15.

<sup>97</sup> Md.C., to Marquis A. Carlotti, 22 December 1807, Ep. I p. 32.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Ep. II/1, p. 189.

<sup>99</sup> Md.C., to C. Durini, 19 May 1808, Ep. I, p. 309.

<sup>100</sup> G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 212.



she "was receiving angels from heaven".<sup>101</sup> Thus the Institute could be started without further preoccupations. On May 30, she writes to her brother Bonifacio who invited her to Villa Grezzano: "I thank you for your kind gesture of inviting me to visit Grezzano... but the work grows every day and it is not possible to move from San Giuseppe's. I am keeping very well".<sup>102</sup> The separation from the family now appears to be definite.

**22.** This latest companion was not obtained by my ordinary Director but by a priest who came from another town. My Director had commanded me to obey him and also allowed me to seek his advice freely.

**23.** Even though my Director encouraged me to obey him, he was of the opinion that God wanted another kind of work from me and not that which had already been started.

**22-23.** The two directors that Magdalene refers to, are kept nameless. The "ordinary" is Don Nicola Galvani and the one "who came from another town" is Msgr. Luigi Pacifico Pacetti. The Dean Galvani had taken the place of Don Libera in giving Magdalene ordinary spiritual direction. Nevertheless he did not have "sufficient light" regarding her vocation, "as to the time and method of carrying it out".<sup>103</sup> He leaves the direction of the Institute to Msgr. Pacetti: "The Dean tells me... he is certain there is a vocation and is of the same opinion as myself but what it is for certain he is unable to discern. He desires therefore your decision".<sup>104</sup> Obedience to Msgr. Pacetti in things concerning the running of the Institute is a command of the Dean Galvani. The latter's position is a little like one who waits aside to see whether the work will develop successfully.

**24.** I was convinced about the true discernment of that priest (Msgr. Pacetti) and at the same time I was desirous of separating myself from the world to start the Work I had taken on very willingly.

**24.** Magdalene feels that the directions given by Msgr. Pacetti are right for her "true discernment" and that they furthermore coincide with the Will of God. She is now determined to start her Work notwithstanding the evident uncertainties of Don Galvani. Thus she writes to Msgr. Pacetti when the Institute was still in Via Regaste: "By obeying the Dean and keeping the matter thus in abeyance, I fear that many sins could not be prevented. If only I were able to start this work even in a private capacity, for we are unable to accept a large number of girls to educate and train owing to the lack of space and personnel. We cannot remedy this situation yet for many reasons. The fact is that we must teach them that God exists because so many of them do not even know this. They should be taken away from the schools they are now frequenting for in them, I would say, they

<sup>101</sup> G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 212.

<sup>102</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 30 May 1808, Ep. III5, p. 3907.

<sup>103</sup> M.d.C., to Msgr. Pacetti, 19 August 1805. Ep. II/I, p. 12.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.



lose their innocence and purity even before reaching the age of reason".<sup>105</sup> The boarders, willing to receive education and religious instruction were growing in numbers. In 1802 there were eight.<sup>106</sup> In 1807 they increased to eleven. In 1809 they will be sixteen. On the day of inauguration, May 8, 1808, "after Mass and breakfast they opened the doors of the convent and there was a true invasion of women and children, It was enough for them to present themselves as being poor, materially or spiritually, to be immediately received and showered with attention".<sup>107</sup>

25. When I was there, as it is my nature, I became very attached to my companion who had been given to me for a temporary period.

26. She deserved all my affection in every way; but as her vocation differed from mine I hindered the work of God by my affection for her.

**25-26.** There was a good relationship between Magdalene and Leopoldina and a mutual understanding regarding work. Many letters written in Leopoldina's hand writing and signed by Magdalene are to be found during this first period of life spent together in the new convent.<sup>108</sup> Leopoldina's companions also seemed to fit in very well with regard to the apostolic work. The Gagnère sisters worked briskly to help the Marchioness. Maria Sofia was considered an able catechist for the girls of San Zeno who flocked to San Giuseppe's Convent in ever greater numbers. She is to be acknowledged for the drawing-up of a concise, analytic Catechism.<sup>109</sup> Canon Pacetti's suggestion to unite the two groups seemed at the time to be a wise move. Even though she was "very attached" to her companion, Magdalene knew that Leopoldina was there on a "temporary" basis. "Leopoldina Naudet in fact had agreed to enter San Giuseppe's on two specific conditions: to take with her, her companions, live always in community with them, helping Magdalene in her work but at the same time not forgetting that the Lord had chosen her to establish the Institute He had in mind for her".<sup>110</sup> Magdalene blames herself for having become too affectionate with the new and much appreciated companion and having thus hindered the work of God in both their lives.

27. I had received an order from the one who was directing me in this work to write the Rules of the new Institute. More than convinced that my companion was more enlightened than myself regarding internal organization, I adapted myself for the main part to her way

<sup>105</sup> M.d.C., to Msgr. Pacetti, 19 August 1805, Ep. II/I, p. 11.

<sup>106</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 25 July 1802, Ep. 1, p. 143.

<sup>107</sup> NELLO DALLE VEDOVE, *Dalla Corte al Chiostro*, Scuola Tip. MK sioni Padri Stimmatini, Verona, January 1954, p. 187.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. M.d.C. Ep. 1, p. 304, NB.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA. o.c., pp. 230-231.

<sup>110</sup> NELLO DALLE VEDOVE, *Vita e Pensiero del B. Gaspare Bertoni*, Postulazione Generale Stimmatini, P.I., Roma, 1975, p. 610.





of thinking, remaining firm however in many essential things.

**27.** "The order to write the Rules of the new Institution" is given by Msgr. Pacetti to Magdalene since the definite move to San Giuseppe's. However Magdalene's innate modesty, her high consideration of Leopoldina's natural and spiritual gifts and fondness for her person. lead her to adjust herself to her companion's way of thinking. At the very beginning, Leopoldina was made the Superior of the House, and she structures its internal life according to a draft statute which, except for "essential things", is more in keeping with her own spirit than that of Magdalene's. The attempt to unite the two groups was more in the secret mind of Canon Pacetti than in the spirit of the two future foundresses. Time will indicate more clearly the Will of God. In the meantime, the two groups are thus formed: with Magdalene of Canossa, in alphabetical order, are: Angela Bragato, Stella Caccia, Domenica Faccioli, Matilde Giarola, Elisabetta Mezzaroli, Ottavia Simoncelli, Maria Tomba, Angela Traccagnini. With L. Naudet are Maria Bussetto, Chiara Canton, Maria Sofia Gagnère, Adelaide Gagnère, Anna Sacchetti, Geltrude Vichi.

**28.** On the basis of the said plan I wrote a small set of rules;

**29.** But before going any further I want to clarify a point.

**28-29.** Magdalene states she has written "a small set of rules". It could well be the *Plan of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity for the city N.N.* which in the Canossian Archives of Rome, is immediately followed by the *Big Plan* (1799) and bears the seal and signature of the Public Notary of Verona, a Sig. Albasini who with his own hand writing, adds: "*Concordat' cum originali*". It is seemingly a rough draft of the Institution. That will be followed in 1812 by *the Reflections* and the first draft of the *Rules* Magdalene dictated to the priest Bonlini in Venice. Despite the differences at operative level between the two future foundresses, life continued serenely and peace fully. Magdalene writes to her Milanese friend: "I am more and more contented with my stay here and my situation".<sup>111</sup> The intense apostolic activity absorbs the two groups in the only aim which unites them: education of the boarders and school for all the girls of San Zeno who literally invade the house. Leopoldina has organized the domestic life of the two groups "with a practical sense and refined tact".<sup>112</sup> Spiritual direction for all comes from the thirty year-old Fr. Gaspare Bertoni, man of prayer and deep interior life, a beloved disciple of Don Galvani".<sup>113</sup>

**30.** As soon as this companion of mine came to Verona (in my opinion - to establish herself) and on hearing what was said about her, a doubt that our ways of thinking would not coincide, arose within me. I suffered greatly and

<sup>111</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 13 July 1808, Ep. 1, p. 310.

<sup>112</sup> G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 224.

<sup>113</sup> G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 225.





rebuked myself for my little trust in God: and precisely for that reason I had greatly desired that companion.

**31.** As usual, I went to the Church of St. Francis to pray to the Most Holy Virgin and it became very clear that this companion would not remain with me and this was the cause of my frequent sadness.

**30-31.** Here Magdalene clarifies a point which can be traced back to her initial meeting with Leopoldina Naudet. What she had heard about Leopoldina's companions makes her doubt that the understanding between them would prove to be as happy as desired. On the strength of the gift of clear-sightedness which she herself admits to receive often from the Lord, also in prayer, she is positive that Leopoldina will not remain in the Institute. This thought often brought her suffering and sadness.

**32.** Later on, with the permission of the one who was directing me, I tried so hard to agree with her but when the time came to conclude, I do not know whether my self-love was making it difficult for me to subject myself, or whether it was God who did not really want me to. I experienced the same inner conflict as on other occasions when God wanted to manifest His Will for me.

**32.** The constant respect and deep affection she cherishes for Leopoldina Naudet and the desire to conform with her methods of directing her own daughters, always with the approval of the Canon who indirectly favours such a union, are not enough to suffocate the strong "inner conflict" she often experiences when God wants to manifest His Will to her. In every event of her life that Magdalene goes through, God remains the hidden but active director of her Institute. The way God operates is now understood. Magdalene always looks to the Will of God which she places above every personal interest. "The most important thing consists in truly knowing the Will of God and where a greater good can be done".<sup>114</sup>

## INVITATION TO VENICE

**33.** I spent two years in my Retreat in serenity, very happy to be there. Sometime after, while at prayer, the Lord, prepared me for my first mission to Venice, with extraordinary consolations and a lively desire to work for souls.

**33.** Two years of serenity, of incomparable happiness. two years of daily fidelity to the Lord in prayer, proceed into an experience of "extraordinary consolations" as a gift from above and a growing "desire to work for souls". It is the beginning of a new spiritual journey in which God Himself takes possession of Magdalene's spirit and guides her without opposition towards goals that will increasingly become more obvious, more luminous and unequalled as time goes on. 1810 is

<sup>114</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 12 June 1804, Ep. I, p. 228.



the year in which the noble Cavanis Brothers invite Magdalene to Venice to start a school of charity for poor girls similar to the one for boys, started not long before.<sup>115</sup> Notwithstanding confirmation by the Canon, Magdalene becomes aware that God Himself is calling her. He "prepared me for my first mission to Venice". She informs Carolina Durini that Canon Pacetti had "written to her saying that it is necessary to see her there (Venice) at the end of this month".<sup>116</sup>

**34.** However when the time for departure arrived, not having the courage to leave my companion, I did not correspond at all to the mercies of the Lord.

**35.** Nevertheless I left but with great anxiety, always wishing to return as early as possible to my Retreat.

**34-35.** In spite of the suffering caused by detaching herself from her beloved Retreat of Verona and her companion to whom, as she wrote, she was greatly attached, she leaves for Venice on May 11, 1810: "I am writing as I am about to leave.. Friday evening, God willing, I will be in Venice and Saturday, being the day when some good will be done, please pray for me and get others to pray to the Lord for me, so that everything may turn out well".<sup>117</sup> Magdalene is a guest at Venice of Madame Priuli, who will collaborate later in her numerous charitable activities. Her thoughts often return to the House she left behind in Verona: " it is already five days since the school started. When this matter has been settled I will then return home if God so desires".<sup>118</sup>

**36.** I did in fact return after two months and it needed all the strength of obedience to put me at peace. For it seemed as though I had neglected the good of souls and had given in to my own inclination though I had done nothing according to my own will.

**37.** Again and again I was resolved that if God should give me the opportunity to work once more I would let obedience have its way.

**36.** Magdalene had already returned to Verona on July 10, 1810: "I am finally back at Verona my dear Carolina, after a journey in very good health".<sup>119</sup> However she harbours a doubt of having neglected doing greater good at Venice by dwelling on nostalgic thoughts about Verona while she was there. She also feels remorse for having followed her own "inclination" of organizing assistance to the sick in the Hospital together with a group of Venetian Ladies.<sup>120</sup>

**37.** After close examination of the deep motives that prompted her decisions, she sees in them her own desires and judgements surfacing and decides to yield to obedience alone, in the future. Mostly through the mediation of her Superiors, obedience to God will be the beacon that will illuminate her life.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Durini, 5 June 1810, Ep. 1, p. 341.

<sup>116</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 7 April 1810, Ep. 1, p. 335.

<sup>117</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 8 May 1810, Ep. 1, pp. 339-340.

<sup>118</sup> M.d.c., to C. Durini, 5 June 1810, Ep. I, p. 341.

<sup>119</sup> M.d.C., Durini, 10 July 1810, Ep. I, p. 342.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. M.d.c., to C. Durini, 5 June 1810, Ep. I, p. 341.



**38.** Another year passed by, during which I remained willingly in my Retreat where, it seemed to me, my presence was needed for its smooth running. However I never forgot the Institute of the Daughters of Charity.

**38.** Magdalene remained still another year “willingly” at San Giuseppe’s. This is the peaceful resting place of her heart but also one of extensive apostolic activity. The journey to Venice has rekindled her interest for assistance to hospitals and the desire to help “those Venetian Ladies” who have for some years, made attempts to organize the financial means so as “to sustain the work which is pressing them”. For this “they had decided first to start a fund and then start their visits to the hospital, they wanted it to be done the way all of you do it”.<sup>121</sup> In the meantime she requests the same Milanese friend to send to Venice the booklet which is used to instruct the sick.<sup>122</sup> Magdalene will send to Milan “a short summary of doctrine which is used by another hospital for those who are seriously ill... if ever you are interested... a more widely circulated one for those who are not seriously ill; I can also send you that one... if they die without knowing what is to be known, how can they be saved?”.<sup>123</sup> In the meantime at Venice, the Cavanis Institute is transferred from what was previously the Monastery of the Holy Spirit alle Zattere, to the Monastery of the Enclosed Nuns in San Trovaso. Magdalene’s sincere concern for the interest of the Institute, authorizes her to offer advice which she considers indispensable for the internal discipline of the Boarding School.<sup>124</sup> An important meeting takes place on June 18, 1811 between the Vicar, Msgr: Carlo Dionisi, the Dean Don Galvani and Magdalene: “.. I am greatly concerned about informing you once again of my feelings regarding the well-known affair”.<sup>125</sup> The affair is without doubt, the new Institute, which was deprived of breathing space by the presence of another Institute in its early stage, which is that of Leopoldina Naudet. “The two Institutes were similar in appearance but different in nature”.<sup>126</sup> The differences could be seen in the practical ways of educating the girls. To Magdalene it seemed that the education imparted by Leopoldina aimed at a quality of education that was far higher than the cultural level of the girls of San Zeno. In any case, Leopoldina Naudet had her eyes fixed on the future and, in reply to her request, had already received a document from the Pope dated August 10, 1810 imparting the apostolic blessing on her small group.

## IN PRAYER

**39.** After this year had passed, the Lord began to draw me closer than ever in prayer. As I cannot remember things clearly, I will write only those that come to my mind.

<sup>121</sup> M.d.c., to C. Durini. IO July 1810, p. 342.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Durini. II January 1811, Ep. 1, p. 352.

<sup>123</sup> M.d.C. to C. Durini, 20 December 1811, Ep. 1, p. 361.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to Antonio Cavanis. 19 June 1811, Ep. II/I pp. 55-57.

<sup>125</sup> M.d.C., to Don Galvani, 18 June 1811, Ep. 111, p. 59.

<sup>126</sup> G. STOFELLA, *o.c.*, p. 238.



**39.** At this point of the Memoirs the transition from an account dominated by historical events and external circumstances in Magdalene's life to a description of spiritual phenomena and mysticism, is significant. It is the year in which the Lord "began to draw her closer than ever in prayer". Of these facts, usually withheld, Magdalene will write only what she can remember.

**40.** At one time, I found myself united to God so intensely, with a feeling of love so strong that I was almost unaware of what was happening around me.

**41.** The outcome was that I felt compelled to seek nothing else but God alone and to commit myself in serving the others.

**42.** The intensity of that feeling lasted for one or two days: all the world seemed but dust and I even found it difficult to eat.

**40-42.** "At one time": the date of this spiritual experience is not precisely stated. It seems that it can be placed in the period between July 1811 and April 1812. The time seems to eclipse into eternity. The love of God breaks into Magdalene's life with such intensity as to give her the impression of being uprooted from this world: "I was almost unaware of what was happening around me... the world seemed but dust". Magdalene is not new to these phenomena. Already around 1795, she had experienced something similar on reading a verse from Scripture: "Inspice et fac secundum exemplar", when she felt drawn to follow the Crucified Christ and "though she did not understand anything, the inner consciousness of God was so strong that it lasted for several days". God is faithful to Himself and returns to offer His gifts of grace to accomplish His plans of love and mercy, God prepares the Foundress gradually and strengthens her desire to seek Him alone and to dedicate herself to others; these two poles become united in the Divine Love which burns within her.

**43.** At other times, during prayer, whether out of love for God or the ardent desire for the salvation of souls, I offered myself to the Lord, with a hint of presumption perhaps, to go anywhere, promising not to act in the usual way.

**43.** "At other times": Magdalene's chronology is often a little vague but always precise and constant is the direction of her love: God and souls. At this point, the missionary spirit in her is revealed: "I offered myself to the Lord to go anywhere". In her habitual analysing of her own feelings, she believes that this unconditional offering may be contaminated by presumption. One can read between the lines the resolution to detach herself not only from places, but above all from herself, with the same growing intensity as her love for the Lord.

**44.** As my Director exhorted me to do the Will of God, I felt ever willing to do so, with the only desire that God should be glorified.



45. I felt so pressed to seek the salvation of souls, that I offered myself to the Lord to remain in Purgatory until the day of Judgement so that all may be saved. I would be satisfied, if once in a while, He would let me know that He was being glorified and served and that souls were being saved.

46. I furthermore added that I would offer to stay at the gates of Hell on condition that as long as I remained there, no one should enter.

**44-46.** The strong desire that God be glorified through the salvation of all men prompts Magdalene to make a gesture similar to that of many saints such as Moses, Francis, Ignatius of Loyola, Don Orione and others, in offering herself to the Lord, to remain in Purgatory and even at the gates of Hell, on condition "that all men may be saved". She stipulates a condition: once in a while He would let her know that He is being served and glorified. Magdalene's heart has already taken on the dimension of the heart of God. Beyond this offering, which is quite absurd, what comes through is the power of love that can be found in God alone.

47. In the course of that same year, when I was at prayer, I frequently felt moved and drawn to imitate Jesus Christ. These moments were anticipated at times by that intense spiritual union with God and accompanied by strong feelings of love.

**47.** The imitation of Jesus Christ is the dominant motive for Magdalene's spirituality. It is not the kind of imitation that looks to a model for an external expression but rather an entering into the deep motives which animate the life of Christ from within. Magdalene's foremost intention is to relive the burning love that prompted the Word to become flesh and live among men as one of them, and die on the cross for their salvation. The inner thrust towards this type of imitation is in fact preceded by an "intense spiritual union with God", which Christ reveals to her and is accompanied by ardent feelings of love. This is the fire of love which Magdalene would like to spread throughout the whole world and into all hearts.

48. The wish to imitate Jesus Christ was accompanied by the desire to leave everything, especially my Retreat and all that I possessed.

49. It seemed to me that because of my weakness and the great affection for my companions, it was not possible for me to serve God with the perfection He asked of me by remaining where I was.

**48-49.** The spiritual struggle which can be found in the life of every person who is dazzled by the light of God and enkindled by His love, springs from their inability to respond adequately to His goodness and mercy. Magdalene thinks she has to "leave everything" in order to give a concrete response to the love of Jesus Christ. She had already left her home and the aristocratic background. Even so, in



the measure love grows, its demands also grow. She even thinks of leaving her Retreat, where she was beginning to enjoy consolations of deep friendship with her God-given companions and to taste spiritual delights from Jesus, her Spouse. Christ is evermore binding her to Himself and Magdalene in return, intends to be detached from all that is not Himself.

**50.** I also felt compelled not to entertain any thought for temporal things: but away from everything and everyone, to be concerned only with the Glory of God and the salvation of souls, abandoning the thought of everything else to Him.

**50.** "The glory of God and the salvation of souls" is the ardent flame that burns in her heart. Magdalene's own life and the Rule she will give her Daughters will be marked and motivated by this passion. The preoccupation for "temporal things" weakens, "everything and everyone" neither attract her gaze nor above all, her heart. To God, whom she loves first and foremost, she abandons "the thought of everything else". Is not God omnipotent? Is He not our Father? Is He not our Friend? Is He not our Spouse? He will think of and will provide for everything.

**51.** I promised Him then, that if He granted me this blissful state, I would accept or even seek humiliations on my part.

**51.** To be able to accept humiliations reveals strength of soul, but going out to seek it cannot but come from a "state" of total abandonment into the hands of God in which the soul feels it has discovered its highest good. Magdalene asks God to grant her a state of perfect abandonment in Him because, if it will only bring about an inner tendency towards this, then even mortifications can be considered as "straw".

**52.** I desired to deprive myself of everything I owned, to live on charity thus procuring more opportunities to practise detachment and humiliation.

**53.** The interior strength I had from this prayer was so effective that it was enough to sustain me — as it still does today — in the midst of the trials and difficulties which the Lord has allowed me to experience in the Work from the beginning up to the present moment.

**52-53.** It is the love of God that initially helps her to choose a radical poverty, to deprive herself of everything she owns, to live on charity. But God does ask a Franciscan type of poverty neither for herself nor for her Institute. He will request her and her Daughters to totally divest themselves of all that is not God for He can be reached only by interior detachment and by the emptying of oneself in order that He alone may be the centre of their life and happiness. The kind of infused prayer described up to now by Magdalene, produces the fortitude which sustains her "in the midst of trials and difficulties" which have always accompanied, and still accompany the new Institute at the time of her writing the Memoirs.





## CHAPTER III OPEN HORIZONS

### RETURN TO VENICE

1. In the meantime, the Lord presented me with the opportunity of returning to Venice where He had inspired a good Religious and some other persons with the desire to establish the Daughters of Charity in that city.

2. Great was my surprise and my consolation when, on receiving a letter from this priest, I discovered that his project was similar to the one I had cherished for a long time and had never discussed with him.

**1-2.** Once again, God takes the initiative to direct Magdalene's life. Through her friend Carolina, who often spent the winter in Venice to be with her sister Paola, ' was married to Count Taverna, she was offered "the opportunity of returning to Venice". On her return to Milan, Carolina Durini stops at Verona and gives Magdalene a letter from Don Lorenzo Piazza inviting her to Venice to start an institution similar to the one in Verona. Magdalene writes, after a few months at Venice: "... I was made to believe that the Lord wanted me to devote myself for a time to this new undertaking"<sup>1</sup>. There is an interplay of surprise and consolation in Magdalene. Without ever having spoken to that "good Religious" she is invited by him to take on "a project similar to the one she had cherished for a long time". Msgr. Pacetti together with Signor Domenico Guizzetti. his host during his frequent sojourns in Venice, are not strangers to this request.

3. The day before leaving my town I passed by the Church of St. Cajetan to seek his intercession in this matter, and there I met with a funeral.

4. I felt newly encouraged and reflecting on the fact that everything ends with death, I felt the urgency to work and toil.

**3-4.** Magdalene writes that she will leave Venice, if there were no obstacles, the week after the Easter Octave"<sup>2</sup>. The funeral which she unexpectedly attended in the Church of St. Cajetan, does not arouse any disheartening feelings. In fact the thought that death breaks every possibility of working for the extension of Christ's Kingdom in the world "encourages her... to work and toil" for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

5. This time it was not possible for me to feel sad at leaving my companions; even though I could foresee a long absence and though my companions cried much I could not feel any sadness in departing from them.

<sup>1</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 4 August 1812, Ep. I, p.367.

<sup>2</sup> M.d.C. to C. Durini, 20 March 1812, Ep., I, p. 363. In 1812, this particular week fell from the 5th to the 12th April.

Stofella writes that if Magdalene was at the Cavanis Institute on Saturday April 11, the departure took place as planned.



**5.** The second departure for Venice did not produce the same sorrow in having to leave her companions as it did the first time, even though Magdalene foresaw that her absence would be prolonged. She was accompanied by Elisabetta Mezzaroli, whom she chose after considerable prayer and after receiving from God some clear signs that He wanted her to be the companion for that journey<sup>3</sup>. With her went the two teachers who had been prepared for the Cavanis Institute which had been transferred to the former Convent of the Augustinian Enclosed Nuns of San Trovaso in September, 1811. Magdalene had worked there where she was a much-appreciated guest until August 1, 1812. Don Bonlini gives an account of this period: "She occupied herself in giving spiritual formation to the teachers; she lived a common life of poverty and privation like all the others: in food and in the observance of the other rules. She herself conducted with great fervour, ten days of Spiritual Exercises to those teachers, taking them two by two, and imparting sound doctrine to them"<sup>4</sup>. At all times she maintained an excellent rapport of collaboration and friendship with the Cavanis Brothers. "She brought maximum organization to the work"<sup>5</sup> as Father Marcantonio will note in his Diary with reference to those days.

### **"ENCOURAGED TO START THE WORK"**

**6.** As soon as I arrived at Venice, that very evening I was told about the Work and I again spoke to the Lord about it.

**7.** Once again, and perhaps more than ever, I began to feel myself closely united with God: that feeling of love continued to grow in me, although in my opinion, it was not possible to increase any further.

**8.** Sometimes the inner feeling was so intense that it exhausted me so much that I was not able even to eat.

**9.** I remained ever more encouraged to undertake the Work as I had up to then desired.

**10.** I felt strengthened to the point that I would have had sufficient courage to even start on my own, if no other means were available.

**6-10.** Magdalene is at Venice on April 10, 1812. She is a guest of Madame Priuli<sup>6</sup>, but she spends most of the time and even some nights in the Retreat of San Trovaso as a helper at the Cavanis Institute. She remains there for nearly three and a half months. She assists in the education of the girls, just as any other teacher she takes turns to supervise the dormitory even every week. She enlivens their recreation with games and singing, and in the meantime she studies the temperament and inclinations of each one to be able to intervene discreetly

<sup>3</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, o.c., p.247.

<sup>4</sup> Notes by Don F. Bonlini, in T. M. PICCARI, o.c., p.852.

<sup>5</sup> ANTONIO ANGELO and MARCO ANTONIO CAVANIS, *Epistolario e Memorie*, a cura di A. Servini, vol. I, Roma 1985, p. 658.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 9 May 1812, Ep. III/5, p. 3916.



and persuasively at the right time with suitable suggestions and advice<sup>7</sup>. On Saturday April 18, at her suggestion, the Holy Eucharist was solemnly brought to the tabernacle in the Chapel. Now the Institute houses the most important Guest for the students and teachers. Magdalene rejoices more than anyone for she "begins to feel more closely united to the Lord than ever". While rendering this service of charity Magdalene is thinking about the setting up of her own Institute for which Fr. Piazza had invited her to Venice. It had been discussed the very evening she arrived and she turns to the Lord in prayer. The strength that God instils in her is so strong that, compared with some years earlier, she "would have had sufficient courage to even start the Institute on her own".

11. And notwithstanding this, I was later assailed by fears and lack of trust on several occasions and only the patience of the Lord could have borne it all.

11. In Magdalene's eyes the Lord's patience is incredible. He allows consolations and courage, hopes and fears to alternate in her spirit. The negotiations for the new foundation are prolonged far beyond expectation and consequently so is her stay in Venice. Towards the end of April, Leopoldina shows impatience with Magdalene's silence and writes: "Do wake up a little from sleep and write", but later, rather repentant of her crisp outburst, she continues: "May the Lord bless all you undertake for Him, help and console you in everything you do for His Glory. These are my desires"<sup>8</sup>. In June Magdalene informs Carolina Durini of the reasons for her stay in Venice: "Finally my dear Carolina, I write from Venice where I have been... for nearly one and a half months and I do not know for how much longer"<sup>9</sup>. There were various reasons. First of all the search for a place to start the Work "for which she first wished to acquire a convent; but then it was thought better to start, on a trial basis, in a private house"<sup>10</sup>. A second reason was the need to consolidate the juridical position of the Work itself; that is the need for a Rule that will include the internal and apostolic organization of the Institute. The third reason was the desire for ecclesiastical recognition for which Msgr. Pacetti was secretly working in accord with the Holy Father. In the meantime, Magdalene began to see the profile of the three apostolic options of the future Daughters of Charity: "Note that these sisters... will operate in three directions: schools of charity, visiting and assisting the sick in hospitals wherever they find the need, and devoting themselves especially to religious instruction"<sup>11</sup>. Evangelization, through which Christ may be made known, was the key motive for all her works of charity.

12. In the meantime, the negotiations were well under way. Finally the day arrived in which they were to be finalised. While I was praying fervently for a happy outcome of the same I had an inner certainty that they had been concluded precisely according to my desires.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, o.c., pp. 248-249.

<sup>8</sup> L.NAUDET, to M.d.C., 30 April 1812, ms., A2, XXII, A.C.R.

<sup>9</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 2 June 1812, Ep. I, p. 364.

<sup>10</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 9 August 1812, Ep. I, p. 367.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 368.



13. I said this to the one who was directing me when he came to inform me about the outcome of the transactions.

14. As soon as they were definitely finalised, the Lord led me not only to dedicate myself to this Work but also to carry it out without any support just as He had given me this desire, many times before.

15. Before anything else could happen, He allowed the one who was directing me to leave suddenly. Because of this and the general situation in Venice, I felt greatly disappointed, but did not show it so as not to cause suffering to others.

**12-15.** The negotiations take place from the end of April to the end of July, 1812. Those interested are Msgr. Pacetti, Don Piazza and Sig. Guizzetti who will work together with other benefactors to sustain the cost of the annual rent. During prayer, Magdalene experienced the "inner certainty" that everything is going "according to her desires" and so it comes to pass. However the transfer from San Trovaso, location of the hospice of the Anchoresses to the first modest house which will accommodate her, will take place without the presence of Msgr. Pacetti, who has to leave for the Marches because of poor health. The Lord made Magdalene understand that her Institute does not need any human support to establish itself. "God led me... without any support" she writes. The suffering which comes from this is carefully hidden from the gaze of others.

16. I was tempted to delay the beginning of the Work which was just starting, but obedience did not allow that; neither deep down did I feel like doing so, for I was assisted by the graces I have described up to now.

17. After the priest who directed me had left, there was still someone who was interested in the Work so I was able to continue until the matter was settled.

**16-17.** Temptation is always at the threshold of Magdalene's heart. Feeling more than ever the lack of support, she would have wanted to delay "beginning the Work. Other than Msgr. Pacetti, who is already far away, Don Lorenzo Piazza also disappears, perhaps due to government prohibition of his charitable work in favour of wounded soldiers in the Military Hospital of Venice<sup>12</sup>. **Humanly** speaking, she is still alone. But the inner desire, as a consequence of special graces received from the Lord, and obedience to the priests who support and show interest in her Work, convince her to continue "until the matter was settled".

18. However, at the moment I was about to begin, I found myself oppressed and tempted, possibly because of this initiative. So I prayed to the Lord to enlighten my

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. ANTONIO ANGELO AND MARCO ANTONIO CAVANIS, o.c., p.401.



companion to whom He had already, at other times, communicated very consoling things.

19. I received Holy Communion, after which I felt, as though newly strengthened to undertake the Work.

**18-19.** We are at the end of July 1812 and the “tempted and oppressed” Magdalene prays to the Lord to “enlighten her companion” Elisabetta Mezzaroli, who is endowed with extraordinary gifts by God. After Holy Communion God Himself fortifies her spirit and encourages her to “undertake the Work”.

20. In the depth of my being, I understood without seeing and always in the usual way the Lord speaks to me, that He wanted to use me in many places to establish this Work.

21. After such experiences of prayer, as usual I was left very happy and on many occasions so indifferent to the things of this world that, for a few hours, even if some misfortune had befallen me, nothing would have troubled me.

**20-21.** Magdalene often has gifts of seeing into the future, not only her own, but also that of persons with whom she lives. Many people gave testimonies of this gift of prophecy during the Process on the heroicity of her virtues. This time the Lord gave her to understand “in His usual way” that she might have to engage herself in many places in order to start her Work. During her prolonged stay in Venice she was occupied in dictating to Fr. Federico Bonlini the *Rules* of her own Institute. The priest refers: “... the undersigned...had the undeserved pleasure of becoming the useful instrument... of those Rules which are the basis of her Institute... She dictated the Rules on the spirit and discipline of the Institute as though she were reading a moral treatise... so great was the concentration of her spirit, the clarity of her ideas, the grace with which she spoke ... the order and I would say, the easy manner with which she dealt with things of such importance that had to be regarded as the guiding norms in an approved Institute of Charity... It seemed as if they were drawn out from her by the Spirit of the Lord”<sup>13</sup>.

### “HEAVEN AS THE GOAL”

22. On one of these occasions I felt in a special way, on the one hand, the power of the Lord drawing my soul to unite itself with Him and on the other, His amiability and the force of His love against the inability of my spirit to unite itself to Him as it yearned to do because it was imprisoned in the body.

23. A great desire came upon me for Heaven where that union, which is not possible to realize on earth, would be perfected.

<sup>13</sup> Notes by F. Bonlini, in T.M. PICCARI, *Sola con Dio Solo*, Ed. Ancora Milano, 1966, p. 856.



24. It seemed as though my very soul was attempting every way to leave the prison of the body, but on the other hand, the desire to work for God and the fear that obedience would not permit me to die, cut short my request for Heaven. The effort that this entailed caused me great distress even in the body.

25. In fact, I was not allowed to desire death nor was I to request it from the Lord.

**22-25.** Magdalene attempts to describe two moments when God makes her experience the impotence of such an union due to the human condition, still “imprisoned in the body”, while drawing her to Himself with the force of irresistible love. Then a lively desire for Heaven is ablaze in her, the desire for Heaven not as a place or a state of delight but fulfilment of union which cannot be achieved on earth. She feels “like a slave in a foreign land”<sup>14</sup>. It seemed to me as though the soul was attempting every way to leave the prison of the body”. Two reasons however keep her here: “the desire to work for God” and obedience to her Director.

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**26-28.** “At another time”... The moments of these phenomena precede the date when the Work was initiated. Again she feels a lively desire for Heaven. “In prayer before the Blessed Sacrament”, she is fascinated by the spiritual representation of Heaven in all its beauty and by God Himself, and in contrast once again she has an acute awareness of the sad plight of wayfarers and prisoners of time and space. Magdalene is capable of analysing such a

<sup>14</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU’, Opere, Postulazione Generale, O.C.D., Roma 1977, p. 206.





phenomenon with the eyes of faith. In fact she writes that “this is not a simple thought but an experience that the Lord Himself stirred up in the depth of my soul”. It was intended to prepare her not to give absolute value to the happenings here below and in every situation “to fix her gaze on Heaven”. In this state of mind she can find her desired Institute without preoccupations of any sort. God sustains her from within.

### THE BEGINNING AT SANT’ANDREA

**29.** In the meantime, the day arrives when the Work is to be started: Saturday August 1, and also the first of the seven Saturdays dedicated to the veneration of Our Lady of Sorrows in this Diocese.

**30.** The Lord at once started to make me savour poverty, even though He always provided sufficiently for the needs of the Institute.

**31.** He put my first two companions and myself in the situation where we had to begin detaching ourselves from spiritual assistance, for He did not allow us to continue with the same confessor.

**32.** It was necessary to put us at once under the guidance of a superior and another confessor who were holy and worthy persons.

**29-32.** On August 1, 1812 Magdalene moves from the hospice of the Cavanis to a small rented house in the parish of Tolentini, in Campo Sant’Andrea in the district of Santa Croce. Two coincidences link these modest beginnings to the patronage of Our Lady: it was the first Saturday of the month and also the first of the seven Saturdays dedicated to the veneration of her real Foundress and Mother, the Sorrowful Virgin Mary. Magdalene informs C. Durini of this: “... I am in a private house... for eight days now with two other companions...”<sup>15</sup>. The two companions are Elisabetta Mezzaroli and Francesca Maria Ghezzi, ex-superior of the Convent of the Dimesse of Murano. Detachment from everything and everyone is the constant situation in which the Lord wants to keep Magdalene. She and her companions will have to detach themselves from their normal confessor and put themselves “under the guidance... of another confessor”. Even for the direction of the institute, in the absence of Msgr. Pacetti, Magdalene will turn to the one who will replace him. Fr. Marino da Cadore is the assistant director and also the Provincial of the Capuchin Fathers<sup>16</sup>. Many are the confessors and directors who alternate in her life but only one is her Supreme Guide: the Spirit of God. The text from Isaiah confirms this: “All your builders will be instructed by the Lord”<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> M.d.C., to Durini, 9 August 1812, Ep. I, p.367.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. T.M. PICCARI, o.c., pp. XXXVII; 433, n. 142.

<sup>17</sup> Is. 54, 13.



33. On the day when the first Mass was celebrated in the new House, during the blessing of the Orator I heard that this new place had been consecrated for the veneration of the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

34. I was extremely happy and I began to feel a great joy. After Communion I ended up in that state of union with God which I have already mentioned; in experiencing such great love, I tried to repress it to avoid being noticed, without interrupting God's work. In spite of that, something became evident.

**33-34.** Church authorities grant permission for the Institute in its initial stages, to use a small chapel dedicated "to the veneration of the Most Holy Virgin Mary". The interior happiness of Magdalene during the inaugural Eucharistic Celebration is transformed into joy and after receiving Jesus in Holy Communion, the love of God can be seen even outwardly and in vain she tries to hide it.

35. Unfortunately, I was compelled against my will to busy myself with the affairs of the day; but the spiritual experience had been so strong that even though I had to deal with matters and engage in conversation, everything led me back to God, as I could not do otherwise because of the immensity of affection I felt.

36. I continued like this for some hours and as I had to attend to other matters, the sensibility to the state of union ended.

37. On that day I felt greatly rewarded for the little I had suffered for this Work.

**35-37.** The mystical state lasts "some hours" even though that day she had to busy herself with daily affairs, conversing with various people who had come for the inauguration. God and His love attract her like a magnet and only the necessity of having to lead a normal life gradually dissolves "the spiritual experience... so strong" that morning. The consolation she feels repays her abundantly for the past sufferings endured in connection with her Work. Father Piccari thus comments on this experience: "The violence done to herself to cope with the circumstances shows the effectiveness of that divine power, which moves her to direct everything to God. Overwhelmed by this experience she is incapable of acting otherwise"<sup>18</sup>.

### **SPIRITUAL PREPARATION**

38. After this initial stage and because there were only three of us, I had been instructed not to take up any particular work except visits to hospital and to prepare ourselves for the near future. This lasted for two months.

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<sup>18</sup> T.M. PICCARI, o.c., p.365.



39. During that period we also followed a course of Spiritual Exercises.

**38-39.** These are two months of intense interior life and spiritual preparation for the apostolate. There is no hurry to do anything but a great concern "for the near future". They had been ordered to do so. All three of them, Magdalene, Betta and Francesca spend this period making ten days of Spiritual Exercises, probably from August 16 to 26<sup>19</sup>. She communicates to C. Durini in early September: "...the business for which I had to remain, thanks be to God, is going well. It is only that we are progressing very slowly, not because of what there is to be done but because until now, the number of those who have to work in such a vast field has not increased"<sup>20</sup>.

40. During prayer, I was overcome by a surge of love towards God, so strong that the soul, being imprisoned in the body, was prevented from uniting itself with Him and would have tried, if given the chance, to release itself.

41. I could not do it as I was under obedience and because it was also my desire to make Him, the object of my affection, loved; this was what I felt strongly inclined to do.

**40-41.** The above-described phenomenon can be dated August 24, 1812. Magdalene and her two companions are about to finish the Spiritual Exercises. These are days of prolonged prayer in which the Lord pours into her spirit special Divine gifts. The tense of the verb "was overcome by a surge of love towards God" clearly indicates the passive attitude of the soul to the Lord's activity. Magdalene becomes aware that if her spirit had not been prevented by her body it would have taken flight towards her God whom she loves intensely. But two reasons keep her within the prison of her body: obedience received from her Director not to desire Heaven for the moment, and her desire to make "the object of her affection" known to and loved by as many people as possible here on earth.

42. This provoked within me a certain breathlessness, which did not help to relieve the power of love and so the trouble spread all over the body and perhaps that was the first time when my inner experience became visible.

43. Within me it seemed as if the soul was trying to flee from the body like a little bird, to explain it better, as though attempting to flee from the cage.

**42-43.** Magdalene would like to hide physically what God is doing in her, but she is unsuccessful. For the first time, there are visible signs such as breathlessness which quickly affects the whole person. The spirit inflamed with love tries, like a bird in a cage, to fly towards her Lord but it cannot. With another image but with

<sup>19</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 259.

<sup>20</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 12 September 1812, Ep. I, p.369.



the same incisiveness, St. Teresa of Avila expresses herself: "Oh, poor little butterfly, bound with many chains which do not allow you to fly as you wish!"<sup>21</sup>

**44.** After this last experience, which was not new, I would say that I seem to understand a little, the pain that the souls in Purgatory must feel, being so strongly attracted towards God and yet unable to go to Him.

**45.** This event lasted for about an hour and a half, with brief intervals, after which I was left with immense peace, joy and longing for Heaven but also with a desire to work hard.

**44-45.** The reflection which follows such a powerful experience gives Magdalene an understanding by analogy of the suffering of the souls in Purgatory. They are drawn by the power of love towards God yet, at the same time, are impeded by the need of purification. This type of prayer always results in an "immense peace", great joy and a lively desire for Heaven but ever present is the yearning to work for the glory of God. The yearning to work for the glory of God is the enduring passion of her life: "... I desire the Glory of God more than any other thing. For this, every sacrifice would be. worthy"<sup>22</sup>.

**46.** What set this experience in motion was the fact that I had read something about the Last Supper and especially of Jesus' love for mankind which was manifested in the act of instituting the Holy Eucharist.

**47.** This reflection made me enter within myself to the point that I became recollected and experienced a taste of what I savoured later in prayer, soon after Communion.

**46-47.** Magdalene traces the cause of the mystical experience previously described. She had read, perhaps at the beginning of her prayer, a commentary connected with the institution of the Eucharist. This is the "supreme sign" of the love of Jesus Christ for men of all times. Magdalene begins to recollect, enter into herself, and what she perceives in prayer after receiving Holy Communion, can only be imagined. Perhaps not even she, is able to describe what the Lord is performing in the depth of her spirit.

**48.** As I was in Church, I tried not to let my feelings get the upper hand for fear of being seen. However, later on, when I was alone I was able to do so freely during prayer.

**48.** Magdalene's uneasiness at finding herself in church, exposed to the gaze of others, makes her watchful for a greater restraint over her own emotions concerning divine activity in her. St. Teresa of Jesus confirms this: "The spirit is more appreciative of this grace when it is received in secret, because when it is given in the presence of others, the confusion and great shame it produces makes

<sup>21</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 895.

<sup>22</sup> M. d. C., to E. Bernardi, 19 March 1818, Ep. III/I, p. 167.



it almost impossible to remember what it had hitherto enjoyed, owing to the distress and anxiety caused by the chatter of those who have seen it"<sup>23</sup>.

**49.** This view of Christ's love for men not only grieved me, for I saw that He is not loved, but it also gave me a great longing to make Him known and loved; so much so that nothing else mattered, not even my country nor my relatives.

**50.** In fact, I wished I could be reduced to dust if, in that way, I could be scattered to all parts of the world so that God would be known and loved.

**49-50.** Magdalene's love for Jesus Christ grows in the same measure as her sorrow in "seeing Him not loved" and "the longing to make Him known and loved" also increases. "The glory of these souls", writes St. Teresa, "is in their desire to help their Crucified God especially when they see to what extent He is offended and how very few seek His love by putting aside all else"<sup>24</sup>. The love of God dominates Magdalene's soul to the extent of making her desire to become "dust" in order to be present all over the world with the aim of making her Lord known and loved. Is this not the same sentiment of love that dominated Christ's heart at the Last Supper: to become bread so as to make Himself present in the Eucharist throughout the world to be consumed by all men?

### THE NEW LANGUAGE OF THE LORD

**51.** After this happening I could not continue the prayer; perhaps I was physically exhausted by the power of the experience and even more because I did not know how to disengage myself from my usual duties, which later had to be done and this made me long for Heaven more than ever.

**51.** Returning to normal life after such mystical experiences is like feeling oneself being wrenched away from a world where Heaven and God are so close as to leave her with a definitive longing for Heaven. "Oh", exclaims Teresa, "the confusion of the soul in returning to itself... the will remains so absorbed and the intellect so removed that for days it is not able to engage in anything that does not move the will to love... one needs to have thousands of lives to employ them all for God and wishes that all the things of the earth should have as many tongues to praise Him on our behalf"<sup>25</sup>.

**52.** Notice that at present, the Lord seems to have changed His "language" with me. While seven or eight months or more perhaps, before initiating our new Work, I felt called to imitate Jesus Christ more closely, especially His poverty, humility and ways of operating.

<sup>23</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o. C., p. 885.

<sup>24</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 950.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 884-885.



53. Now I do not feel urged to do other than what I have in hand with perfection. It seems as though the Lord is content that, at present, I find myself in the situation in which He wanted me.

**52-53.** Looking back on her own spiritual progress, Magdalene observes that something has changed in the "language" of God. While at one time, to give expression to her love for Christ, she used to plan her own life with a view to practising some particular virtue, now she allows the Lord Himself to plan day by day what He wants for her and perceives that this availability of hers is the goal He intended her to reach.

54. As regards to the method of prayer during this spiritual union, I seem to understand how it would be impossible to sin in Heaven while enjoying the beatific vision for I had already found it impossible to sin, while the intensity of the union with God lasts.

55. In fact, the effects continue as they did on other occasions, according to the power, duration and intensity of the same.

56. Obviously I do not mean that it is absolutely impossible to sin even after receiving the grace of union with the Lord, but I speak only of the power which continues to pervade the spirit.

**54-56.** Magdalene in some way learns, while at prayer, of the impossibility of the saints in Heaven to sin. In fact while the state of spiritual union with the Lord lasts, even on this earth, it is not possible to sin. She makes it quite clear that this inability to sin does not depend on the human will but rather on the power of God's love which is bestowed on the spirit during and after prayer.

## APOSTOLIC INTUITION

57. At the beginning of my stay in Venice, when the Work had already been suggested to me, I went by chance to the Church of Tolentini, where Mass was being celebrated in honour of an Apostle or an Evangelist.

58. At the Gospel, I heard about the apostolic life and it seemed clear to me, that this life in a manner suitable to women would be the one that God wanted for this Institute. This left me very satisfied, fully determined and eager for the Institute. I spoke of it to my companion (Betta Mezzaroli), in whom that Gospel had stirred up the same feeling. However it was not a very deep experience.

**57-58.** Magdalene allows her memory to go back to the previous April when she had just arrived at Venice. In the Church of Tolentini which was to be her future parish, with her companion Betta, she took part in the Mass in honour of an





Apostle or an Evangelist. It is almost certain that the feast was that of St. Mark, on April 25. There is no other feast of the Apostles in the month of April. The Gospel<sup>26</sup> of that day has apostolic overtones. Even the antiphon to the Gospel must have made the heart of Magdalene vibrate: "We preach Christ Crucified, the power and wisdom of God"<sup>27</sup>. The Lord gave her to understand that the spirit of the budding Institute should be orientated towards apostolic life "in a manner suitable to women". Her companion also shared the same feelings.

## CHAPTER IV

### NEW APOSTLES FOR THE KINGDOM

#### WHAT FORM OF POVERTY?

1. We were somewhat preoccupied, finding ourselves without companions and in a situation where it was impossible to receive those who would have desired to come but were without means.
2. Due to pride, I always found it difficult to ask. Thinking that perhaps the Lord wanted this humiliation of me, I tried to ask.
3. Though I approached persons who manifested a certain concern for me, I received nothing or very little.

**1-3.** "The harvest is great but the workers are few"<sup>1</sup>. How to increase the workers if there are no means of subsistence? To ask for help from those who are sympathetic to the developing Institute? Magdalene attempts to overcome her own pride in the doubt that the Lord is perhaps asking this of her. However she gets nothing or very little. This is not the way the Lord will eventually show her. Later, she will in fact, write in one of the Plans sent to Countess Durini to be forwarded to Rome: "The Institute does not need to have a stable financial income but only proper premises. The Daughters of Charity have always supported themselves, without being a public or private liability; they will continue to do so... content with employing themselves and whatever they have for the benefit of the poor"<sup>2</sup>. In the meantime two young girls ask to share the life of the small community of Venice but they lack the means of subsistence. Magdalene must have asked Msgr. Pacetti's advice, for on September 30 he replies: "May God be blessed for allowing me to see your writing and hear from you again. You can imagine how I longed to... I am satisfied with everything... May God allow you to have the two girls about whom you write. They should try to prepare themselves according to the spirit of the Institute of Charity which, if not sustained by recollection and interior mortification, will be but a mask of charity"<sup>3</sup>. The answer does not resolve the way to conduct the financial affairs but stresses the responsibility of formation in charity.

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<sup>26</sup> Mk. 16, 15-20.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor. 1, 23-24.

<sup>1</sup> Mt. 9,37.

<sup>2</sup> M.d.C., Piano dell'Istituto delle Figlie della Carità, w.d., Ep. I, pp. 550-551.

<sup>3</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., ms., 30 September 1812, A2, XXXI, A.C.R.



4. I then strongly requested my first companion to pray to the Lord to reveal His Will regarding the subsistence of the Institution. After much prayer, He gave her a clear insight.

5. She learned how much it pleases the Lord to be served, hoping against hope.

6. This companion of mine continued to pray that God would grant me, her Superior, the same light but she did not receive any other answer.

**4-6.** To resolve the problem concerning poverty Magdalene “strongly requests” her companion Betta Mezzaroli to pray to the Lord so that He may reveal what He wanted from the Institute with reference to poverty. “Hoping against hope”: this is the light received from the Lord and communicated to Magdalene. For the time being nothing more.

7. In the meantime, I found consolation only in prayer. One day, it seemed as though Christ Crucified showed Himself to me — in His usual way without really my seeing anything. I think I understood that I had to be deprived of the sensible presence of the Lord. This was then something to which I did not know how to adapt myself.

8. I remained, in fact, for many days without feeling any affection towards God, with various temptations, depressed by my misery to the point of having an overall feeling of being incapable of doing anything in a definite way. I had a fear that the Institute would not be established well because of my presence.

9. For the first time then came the desire to return to my Retreat for all the past events seemed follies to me.

**7-9.** Days of sunshine alternate with days of mist and darkness. Comfort comes to Magdalene only through prayer. The above-mentioned phenomena can be traced between July and September of 1812. Father Piccari thus summarizes this period: “...a period of graces and special light for Magdalene, as well as for Betta: mental illustrations during liturgy, interior reminders about the spirit of poverty, impetuous surges of the love of God with external vibrations, deep peace, joy, desire for Heaven, zeal for the good of souls, interior union, foretaste of Heaven, yearning to be renewed in the spirit of Christ for the realization of the Institute; all of which led to the understanding of ‘Seek truly God alone and Christ Crucified’ which was becoming the main rule in their apostolic life”<sup>4</sup>. In fact, the Crucified Christ appears to her, as at other times, only on an intellectual level and prepares her to bear the sorrows which detach her spiritually from everything and everyone. The fact that she has to remain deprived of the sensible presence of

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<sup>4</sup> T.M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 379.



the Lord, throws Magdalene into a state of aridity and impotence in her fear that the Institute will not be established because of her unworthiness. It is the night of the senses and of the spirit. All that had happened in the past is seen as madness, a dream that can never come true. Therefore the desire to return to San Zeno, to her Verona, where something had been started and perhaps it is the only place for her apostolate.

**10.** During this time, there were two days when, during prayer, I found myself so distracted that I did not know what to do. So much so that I was inclined to envy those who had never had any experience of God.

**10.** One who had enjoyed God for a long time, has the feeling of a paradise lost when deprived of Him. He lives as in a desert, in a strange land, uprooted from a world which, until the day before, was his delight. This is God's school for Magdalene so that she may learn the reality of His absence. In such a situation, as never before, God is omnipresent and operating in the person who loves Him. The Song of Songs has taught this to the saints of all generations.

### **STRONG MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE**

**11.** While assisting at Holy Mass in the same state of mind, at the moment of Holy Communion, as soon as I had received the sacred Host, I found myself charged with strong feelings of love towards God and was moved to unite myself spiritually with Him whom I had just received. The power was so intense that it seemed my breast could not bear it and would burst open.

**12.** I felt physical pain, which passed as usual when I sought for breath. All this was visibly apparent and even though I tried hard, I could not hide it because my breathing was affected.

**11-12.** A sacramental touch of Christ in the mystery of the Eucharist is sufficient to rekindle in Magdalene's heart such "strong feelings of love towards God" which her human condition is unable to bear. The spiritual union with Him produces in the body a real pain accompanied by a visible effect which it is not possible to hide. "It is a matter of feelings", writes St. Teresa, "which cannot be feigned. Those who assist are unable to know what transpires in the spirit"<sup>5</sup>.

**13.** With that, my fears were allayed and also the anxiety and agitations of the previous days passed, and I remained at peace with the intention of seeking nothing but God. I was grieved only by the thought that I had to continue to live.

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<sup>5</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 933.



14. In terms of intensity, I think this experience was stronger than any of the previous ones. It lasted for the space of my thanksgiving after Communion because soon after that I was constrained to attend to my duties.

15. However, the effects of the calm remained, the recollection, the desire to seek God alone and to ensure that He be loved and that He be served by all.

**13-15.** The effects of God operating in the spirit are similar to those which St. Teresa of Jesus again describes: "It is a very painful state but the effects it leaves on the soul are considerable... without any fear of possible sufferings... having understood that only the Creator can console and satiate her soul she emerges with greater detachment from creatures"<sup>6</sup>. As always on such occasions, it produces in Magdalene a "lively desire to employ herself in His service"<sup>7</sup>.

16. In the meantime, two companions had come to join us. For these, the Lord provided directly even though for only a year.

**16.** The two companions are those indicated in verses 1-3. Magdalene experiences that God will directly provide for those whom He calls into His service. For a whole year they lacked nothing.

### TRAVEL TO PADUA

17. Meanwhile, I was preparing to go to Padua for matters concerning the Institute. When they had arrived, during dinner of the first evening, my first companion, knowing that they were without means of subsistence, thought that I, her Superior, had been foolish in receiving them without any dowry. She also asked me what I would do when there was no longer anything more for anyone.

18. While she was thinking in this way, she received a strong push and heard the Lord say: "Do you believe that I cannot maintain them?" This incident consoled me greatly.

**17-18.** She had just received the two young girls who lacked absolutely everything. In the beginning Elisabetta was happy about this but when she learnt that the two had brought nothing, she began to judge Magdalene's decision as real foolishness. However, the Lord Himself intervenes to correct such a prejudgement. In the section of the Memoirs, in which Magdalene's actions weave in with that of Elisabetta, the latter thus concludes: "From that moment on, not only all fears were removed but she asked her Superior if she would be willing to

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid. P. 933.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 911.



take others even if they had nothing"<sup>8</sup>. On October 1, Magdalene decides to leave for Padua "for some small matter"<sup>9</sup>.

19. On the next day, while assisting at Holy Mass the impression persisted. I found myself before the presence of God in Heaven, without seeing anything as usual and not in the usual way of spiritual union. In fact, I was missing the presence of the Lord spiritually precisely because of the effect left on me the previous day when I experienced an ardent longing for Heaven.

20. I found myself therefore, in the presence of God in Heaven but not in Him.

21. At the moment of consecration I found myself brought back again to the sacramental presence; not however with mental understanding. Having received Communion, I began to be aware of the interior presence, in the usual way, and the old desires for the good of souls were renewed within me.

**19-21.** "The next day" could have been October 8, always in 1812, when Magdalene was still at the point of leaving for Padua. During the Eucharistic Celebration she remembers three distinct moments of the Lord's intervention. **At** the beginning she finds herself "in the presence of God in Heaven". The usual spiritual union is lacking. It is like being a spectator of a phenomenon in which the spirit is not involved. Only the "longing for Heaven" she experienced the day before, is alive. She finds herself in Heaven but not in God. These are expressions which not even Magdalene knows how to explain. The second moment is characterized by an awareness of the sacramental presence of the Lord. He is the Presence; the real Presence that only a heart full of faith can experience. In the third moment, she is aware of "the usual interior presence" and "the old desires" to spend herself for the salvation of others are renewed. It is a crescendo of intimacy with God which invisibly overflows as apostolic zeal.

22. I felt encouraged to work in Padua, as I planned to do. I also offered myself to suffer any pain or contempt as long as God be glorified and souls saved.

23. I considered myself as someone without any companions and I surrendered everything to the Lord, except His presence and His help.

**22-23.** The total abandonment into the hands of the Lord precedes her departure for Padua. She gives Him everything, every type of suffering, of contempt she might face. However, one thing she does not intend to give up: the presence of the Lord and His Help. Everything is directed to the Divine Glory and the salvation of souls.

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<sup>8</sup> T.M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 378.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Durini, 28 October 1812, Ep. I, p. 372.



24. So I went to Padua and during the journey I had the opportunity of experiencing God's help in a special way in a danger from which He saved me.

24. Magdalene informs her brother the reason for the journey to Padua in these terms: "I have come to Padua with Madame Priuli to fetch a young girl who will come to Venice to engage herself in the work of charity"<sup>10</sup>. Presumably she left on Saturday, October 10, 1812. God follows this pilgrim in search of workers with special signs of help. From what danger she was saved, is not mentioned. Instead from one of her coachmen, Antonio D'Andrea, we are told how these journeys proceeded: "All the journeys up to Mestre by boat, and from Mestre to Padua by carriage... was a continuous praying or discussion of things that were edifying or holy... from that time onwards it seemed to me as though I was travelling with a saint... She would then give me small coins to throw to the poor from the carriage, for on the way they would ask for alms"<sup>11</sup>.

25. When I was in Padua, as I had very little to do, I made myself available for services whenever possible precisely as I had intended doing.

26. Since some good persons had started and brought everything to completion, the Lord established the assistance in that Hospital.

25-26. Magdalene could have finished her affairs in four or five days, but "the same day when I arrived", she writes to her brother, "the floods were so high that it was not possible, and it is not possible even now, to return to Venice... and it is already twelve days that I am here with the afore-mentioned Madame Priuli"<sup>12</sup>. The tireless apostle does not lose time. On the days when she is forced to wait in Padua, she organizes, with the ladies in her group and with the help of the zealous Mme. Priuli, the work of hospital assistance after the example of Milan, Verona and Venice, even though it seems that once she left, the work dissolved like a bubble of soap.

### MORE THAN THREE

27. In the meantime, I was dealing with a companion whom I had gone to meet but, she did not seem very suitable.

28. On the other hand, seeing that she was good and able, I feared that by refusing her I would deprive the house of a member who could prove very useful.

29. Nonetheless, after having made a novena together, we mutually agreed that she should enter another Institute.

<sup>10</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 24 October 1812, Ep. III/5, p. 3917.

<sup>11</sup> S. TRAMONTIN – G. FEDALTO, *Santi e Beati vissuti a Venezia*, Studium Cattolico Veneziano, Venezia 1971, pp. 159-160.

<sup>12</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 24 October 1812, Ep. III/5, p. 3917.





30. However, I was always beset by that same concern so I felt inspired to ask the Lord for her, through the intercession of the Most Sorrowful Virgin Mary.

**27-30.** The meeting with the young girl for whom she had made that journey left Magdalene very perplexed. She observed that the Lord had endowed her with excellent qualities of goodness and great ability for work but according to her standard of selection, which was very demanding, she did not consider the girl to be suitable.<sup>13</sup> Magdalene does not specify here the reasons for the unsuitability but, "May God free us" she will write later to one of her daughters, "from keeping even only one who is not suitable for the Institute"<sup>14</sup>. After making a novena together it was agreed that she would accompany the girl to Venice but she should enter the Retreat of the Anchoresses at San Trovaso. After such a decision, Magdalene continued to pray secretly to the Most Sorrowful Virgin Mary so that the Lord may clearly reveal His Will for that excellent girl.

31. Without speaking with the person involved, I recited the chaplet of the Sorrows of Mary. When I had finished, as far as I can remember, my companion who had by this time decided to go elsewhere, (actually the letter had already been sent out) brought up the subject again and asked to remain a little longer in the Institute.

32. After having asked advice from those who directed us, she remained with us definitely.

**31-32.** The prayer to the Holy Virgin resulted in a change of direction for the young aspirant. Even if the letter requesting admission to the Cavanis Institute had been despatched, she asks Magdalene to allow her to spend a trial period in her Institute. She remained until her death in Venice in 1849. She was Margherita Colpi of Asiago.

33. On that same occasion I received another companion; but I was too hasty, for I did not respect the method which had been suggested to me by obedience.

34. This young girl was very good but she did not have the spirit of the Institute. Already while in Padua, I was aware that I had made a mistake in receiving her but I was not in time to retract my decision. The postulant stayed in the House five or six months after which she returned home.

**33-34.** She took along another young girl with her to Venice without respecting her Director's judgement. Msgr. Pacetti thus insisted in his letters: "...if you believe they are very good, keep them in consideration. If in the near future you find financial help, then you can take some of these, but do not stray from the rules..." » And in another letter a month later: "... for goodness sake, examine and sift them and if it is possible test them to see if they are suitable... above all, you

<sup>13</sup> Cf. E. POLLANARA, *Magdalene of Canossa and the First Formation*, tip. S. G. S., Roma 1987, pp. 55-57.

<sup>14</sup> M.d.C., to E. Benardi, 4 March 1820, Ep. III/I, p. 349.



should decide after considerable prayer”<sup>16</sup>. Even before bringing this second girl to Venice Magdalene is aware that though she is “very good, she did not have the spirit of the Institute”. “Discover truly in the aspirant”, writes the Foundress in the instructions to the Mistress of Novices, “the desire to give all of oneself to the Lord in the service of one’s neighbours”<sup>17</sup> The spirit of charity, in fact is the most precious gift that young women should bring into the Institute.

### FEARS FOR THE INSTITUTE

**35.** When I returned from Padua with these two companions I made them follow a course of Spiritual Exercises;

**36.** I then started with the school trying to establish the most suitable system for that foundation.

**35-36.** If, as she writes to her friend C. Durini, Magdalene is forced to stay in Padua “for about a fortnight” she probably returned at the end of October 1812. The first thing she does is to conduct a course of Spiritual Exercises for the two young girls as she had set down in the Rules of the Novitiate to which she often referred in the Unabridged Rule which had already been drafted. Towards mid-November she was able to start, in the district of Santa Croce, a school of charity for needy and abandoned girls. By now the community was composed of seven members, the number advised by Msgr. Pacetti, who writes thus: “For the time being seven are enough for you”<sup>18</sup>. In a letter that follows: “The rule for the good of the people is this: that there should be seven teachers... complete this number. If you have any more and you are sure you will work in other districts, take these also and keep them with you to be instructed. Then pass them on to another house... keeping with you the complete number of seven”<sup>19</sup>. The Rules of the Schools composed of 35 articles reveal her capacity for organization and the ability to adapt the rules to concrete situations. The school must be organized well but also according to the spirit of the Institute<sup>20</sup>.

**37.** In the meantime I was very occupied in the duties of the Institute, and in order to carry out these tasks befittingly, I was ordered, under obedience, not to pray.

**38.** However, finding that besides my own troubles and ingratitude to the Lord, the Institute was not being instilled with the spirit He wanted, I lost completely the feeling of the presence of God.

**39.** I only felt the desire for Holy Communion and the consolation it brought me but without any of the previous experiences.

<sup>16</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 18 November 1812, ms., A2, XXXI, A.C.R.

<sup>17</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P.I., p. 69.

<sup>18</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, M.d.C., 20 October 1812, ms., A2, XXXI, A.C.R.

<sup>19</sup> Mons. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 18 November 1812, ms., A2, XXXI, A.C.R.

<sup>20</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P.I., pp. 179-199.



**37-39.** Magdalene returns from Padua and finds herself burdened with many responsibilities: in fact she was Superior of the House, organiser of internal and external apostolic activities and in charge of the formation of young recruits. To these duties she personally added the usual visits to the sick in the hospital. She thus writes to her brother on the birth of his second son, Francesco Stefano: "Only a line written hurriedly from the Hospital where I am for our usual visits"<sup>21</sup>. She is dispensed from her prayer temporarily so that she may attend to her tasks but she is very soon aware of having lost "the feeling of the presence of God". She accuses herself of ingratitude to the Lord and of not establishing the Institute according to His spirit. Added to the many preoccupations is a letter from Don Luigi Trevisani who reminds her of her duties in Verona: "I am very happy that God is working for the good of Venice, using your Ladyship as His instrument. May Your Ladyship seek nothing else but the Will of the Lord: this is how it should be; and I have always seen this to be the goal of all your actions. But that Venice, or any other town, should steal from Verona our Marchioness, I do not like it. I believe God also does not like it. The Retreat of San Giuseppe belongs, and will always belong, to the Marchioness of Canossa and all the children of San Zeno are daughters of the Marchioness of Canossa..."<sup>22</sup>. The Eucharistic Communion with Christ was her only consolation.

**40.** On a feast day during the Christmas Season of that year, while I was in Church praying for the Institute, at the altar of the Holy Virgin, contemplating the Crucified Christ, I cannot remember whether it was before or after Communion, I had a mental picture of a plain cross and I had an inner perception that it was I who should prepare myself for suffering. Actually, the cross was meant for me personally.

**41.** I was very much afraid and dreaded suffering, fearing also that such a cross would signify possible outside opposition regarding the Institute.

**42.** Then I had the feeling that it was an internal cross which concerned me personally.

**40-42.** Christmas of 1812 arrived. On the feast of St. John, Magdalene was praying for the Institute when the Crucified Christ she was contemplating disappeared and only the bare cross appeared before her. An inner prompting made her understand that the cross did not refer to difficulties outside the Institute but to something very personal.

**43.** In fact, the usual temptations against faith started again. I realized that I was being tempted to regret having taken up the work of this Institute. To this was also added the anxieties of my companions, some of them, I understood, were also likewise tempted.

<sup>21</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 30 December 1812, Ep. III/5, p. 3920.

<sup>22</sup> DON L. TREVISANI, to M.d.C., 4 November 1812, Ep. II/1, p. 191.



44. Every time (but they were few) I saw that cross in the church, my fears returned. My greatest suffering was to see myself incapable of doing good.

45. It seemed that the fears I had experienced before starting this work were coming to pass, for I did not see how it could be possible to begin an Institute with me as leader.

**43-45.** The vision of the cross announced the “usual temptations against faith”. Every time Magdalene sees that cross she fears. Her whole life and apostolic activity lean on the pillar of faith. “When the pillars are overthrown, what can the just man do?”<sup>23</sup> Without faith everything seems to crumble. The fears for the Institute revive; her companions are also beset by anxiety and temptation, especially Elisabetta Mezzaroli<sup>24</sup>. How can the Institute begin to establish itself with Magdalene at its head? It is a purifying action of the Lord who is leading her into new acts of abandonment to the Divine Help. The cross is the sure seal in the Works of God.

46. I was in such a state of confusion that not remembering what my obedience was, I missed receiving Holy Communion twice.

47. In addition to all this nearly all my companions became sick.

**46-47.** The mental confusion is the result of a disturbed state of mind due to a series of personal and work problems. Uncertainty prevails; darkness descends, and twice she misses receiving Communion. Added to the troubles of the spirit is the fact that “nearly all” her companions are sick. Perhaps a simple winter influenza but put together they provoke discouragement and indescribable anxiety in Magdalene.

## Chapter V

### GOD ALONE AND THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN

#### LOVE OVERCOMES FEAR

1. In the meantime, as my Director had allowed me to resume prayer, I felt the Lord’s strong reproach for not having responded to His grace, for my infidelity in maintaining my resolutions and, even more, for not having started the Work befittingly.

2. More than ever, I believed I was the cause of this bad start.

1-2. We are at the end of December 1812. With the permission of her Director, Magdalene resumes her normal prayer life. The Lord waits for this new meeting

<sup>23</sup> Ps. 11, 3.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. T.M. PICCARI, o.c., pp. 422-425.



to enlighten her on her lack of response and infidelity to resolutions. However, her deepest suffering always stems from the belief that she herself is the sole obstacle to the satisfactory running of the Work. The Lord is a jealous God and asks of His saints strong interior purifications to bring them to the shores of a love that is free and liberating.

3. Also my poor state of health greatly afflicted me for I was aware that it was not due to any toil or suffering I might have endured for the good of our Work.

4. If death had come to me as a consequence of over work in the fulfilment of my duties, it would have indeed been an immense consolation for me. This had always been the desire, that I had repeatedly put forward to my Director from the beginning!

5. I spent all my prayer-time in this sad disposition and only later I felt strengthened and relieved for it was not the fear of suffering that caused this pain but the awareness of always doing everything badly.

**3-5.** Even health, feeble and unsteady as it was is the cause of spiritual suffering. Being able to analyse herself well, she realizes that her poor state of health is not because she consumes her own energy for the good of the Institute. There was a time when she had desired to give her life for this new creation of hers but now, she is aware of "always doing everything badly". She spends the entire Octave of Christmas 1812 in this state of mind. Only at the dawn of 1813, Magdalene emerges from prayer more strengthened and comforted.

6. The following morning I was in doubt as to whether I should receive Communion. I finally decided I would receive it out of obedience. After Communion, calm returned within me even though the Lord, without strong reproaches this time, continued to make the same demands, and I understood that I lacked confidence in Him.

**6.** Magdalene receives the Holy Eucharist spurred on more by obedience than by a feeling of love. During that encounter, calm returns to her but the Lord continues to make demands on matters well-known to her. They are urgent demands of love. She is aware that the Lord reproaches her above all, for the lack of confidence in Him.

## REMEMBERING

7. I also remember that once, just before leaving for Padua, on a feast dedicated to Our Lady, I found myself greatly troubled and tempted against my vocation. I felt myself both rebuked and reminded of the promises I had



made many times to obtain a vocation that would require imitation of the life of Jesus Christ. Even though I had not at all responded to Him, I was touched by the loving sweetness with which He was reprimanding me.

**7.** Magdalene begins to recall some vivid memories. She remembers how gently the Lord reproached her on a feast day dedicated to Mary. Perhaps it was the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin on September 8. Even then she was “greatly troubled and tempted against her vocation”. The Lord’s reproach reminds her of the promise she had made of wanting to follow and imitate Him, but His kind and gentle way of doing it moved her so profoundly that, after a space of many months, she still had vivid memories of it.

**8.** I protested to the Lord that I did not want to ask Him anything anymore, not even for companions; henceforward I would do only what I could, not seeking anything but my own sanctification, without fretting about the companions I had at the time, except for the duties of charity I had towards them.

**8.** Her heart is softened with love, and she protests that she wants Him alone, her own sanctification and to fully abandon herself into His hands. She will not even worry about increasing the number of her companions but she will take care of those the Lord had given her, in so far as charity is concerned. She will endeavour to do all she can and nothing more. He alone is the Lord of her life, of her companions and of their Institute. This is the journey towards universal detachment which will eventually merge into “God alone”.

**9.** I had an inner enlightenment on the significance of seeking God alone and Christ Crucified as stated in our Rule always in the same manner of the first intuitions, that is with the sweetness and gentleness of the language of God.

**9.** As Foundress, Magdalene is spiritually enlightened on the significance of the first charismatic insights she had in 1795 and in 1811. “God alone” sought for and contemplated in Christ Crucified is that model of unity of love directed simultaneously to the Father and to her fellowmen. This is the specific charism of the Daughters of Charity. The Holy Spirit explains without words “with sweetness and gentleness” in the very language of God what has already been written in the Rule. It is interesting to emphasise this point: “as stated in our Rule”, a sure sign that when Magdalene wrote this part of the Memoirs (1814) the Rule had already been written in the light of the charism. Her personal secretary, Don Bonlini testifies: “Returning from Verona... she stopped four months in the Cavanis Hospice... On that occasion the writer came to know the spirit of that wise person... she would dictate the Rules in an orderly way, with clarity, with the Spirit of the Lord like a Seraph of the Carmel”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Notes by F. Bonlini, in T. M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 857.





10. Furthermore, I felt that if I really sought God alone and the most Holy Virgin, in the way the Lord wanted, I could always count on their help in this life and they would not abandon me at the hour of death.

10. Other than receiving renewed enlightenment on the charism, Magdalene receives the conviction from Above that if “she will seek God alone and the Most Holy Virgin” she will always be helped during her lifetime and also at the point of death, by the Lord and His Mother.

11. God also gave me to understand in what way I should seek Him alone and the Most Holy Virgin, namely by suffering willingly, without looking for comforts, by loving and accepting poverty, without busying myself about people, just as if they did not exist save that they are led to God and His Glory and not seeking their approval either in words or in deeds.

11. God had also instructed her in the Spirit on the concrete method of seeking Him alone and the Most Holy Virgin. The sure way is that of accepting from the hands of the Lord every type of suffering life presents, not seeking one’s own interests, to be and to remain detached from everything and from all, to seek only the glory of God and the good of one’s neighbours. This last expression: “Glory of God and salvation of souls” will be repeated in the Unabridged Rules about twenty times. It is the final goal in the life of Magdalene who desires the same for all her daughters.

12. I remained in great peace and joy, prepared to do all that I have already mentioned but regretting not having done it till now.

13. Indeed I started to conduct myself in this way but as it was not a matter of very deep interior feeling, the strong impression did not last long.

12-13. The gifts of the spirit are joy, peace, and openness to the action of God: Magdalene experiences these revealing signs after each encounter with her Lord. Everything is gift: a new heart, a new spirit which results in being able to observe and put into practice His laws<sup>2</sup>. With every new ray of light and with every new increase of Divine Charity in Magdalene’s heart, the past represents a time of wasted love and arouses remorse within her.

### “TORCULAR CALCAVI SOLUS”

14. The following day, during Holy Communion, I found myself desirous of carrying out what has been said before. As it seemed to me that I could give all of myself to the Lord, just as He was giving Himself to me, I felt very closely united with Him. This lasted for some time and this

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ez. 36, 26-27.



experience made me more determined to keep the resolutions I had made.

**14.** On the trail of grace-filled memories, “The following day” can be traced to September 10, 1812. The sacramental Communion sealed the resolutions of total donation to Christ who, as the Faithful Spouse, gave all of Himself to her. How could she not repay with all of herself for His gift of love? The expression “I felt very closely united with Him” allows us to perceive the bride surrendering to the demands of a God who is always desirous of bestowing His gift on those who love Him.

**15.** The text, “Torcular calcavi solus et de gente mea unus non est mecum”<sup>3</sup>, came up before me, whether it was through my imagination or in the usual way, I do not know.

**16.** I must add that never before had I realised, as in that moment, the significance of that part of the Rule which states not to seek anything but God alone and how to do it.

**15-16.** The attempt to analyse this feeling, whether it is imagined or comes from God in the usual way, leaves the reader ever more convinced that it is a matter of clear mystical phenomena. Often the Biblical verse comes to Magdalene’s mind: “Torcular calcavi solus”. In the past, she frequently found herself deprived of human support and will experience solitude again in the future. As Foundress and Mother, she will experience in her own life what she had written in the Unabridged Rule for her daughters. She came to understand as never before the true significance of this particular point of the Rule: to seek God alone and the way to live it.

**17.** So, on recalling these things, I reflected that to obtain them I had to empty myself of everything and to cling to Him alone, Him alone, alone. This with regard to my affections, my desire to please Him and my activity. I also had the impression that, as far as the duties of my vocation are concerned, the Lord wanted me to be in continual suffering.

**17.** Once more, Magdalene’s memory goes back to the months of September and August of 1812. There is an alternation of inner promptings and their related emotions, but they now dissolve, to bring the reader into the reality of that time. The memory of all this renews in her the resolution to remain detached from everything and to rely on God, absolutely on “God alone”. Furthermore she has a clear presentiment that her life would continue to be under the seal of suffering. This not only because tribulation is reserved for the faithful follower of Christ but above all because Magdalene is the future Mother of many daughters and sons who will have her same desire to consecrate themselves to the Lord.

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<sup>3</sup> Is. 63,3.



**18.** At other times, also during prayer, I had the impression that the Lord was not satisfied with my kind of poverty and wanted more austerity in my personal life and in our Work.

**19.** At other times, without seeing anything with my bodily eyes nor with any strong interior impulse, the Crucified Christ was often shown to me as He really is, stripped of everything.

**18-19.** Magdalene recalls that already back in August 1812, she was questioning the style of poverty for herself and for her daughters. At that time, the Crucified Christ stripped of everything frequently presented Himself before her spiritual eyes. Was it an invitation to a greater austerity of life? What was the Lord really asking of her?

**20.** This surprised me because it seemed to me that our Institute was very steeped in poverty. I once asked the Lord what He wanted and I seemed to understand that perhaps I was meant to go on to a more poverty-stricken city, in one of our other Houses.

**20.** The house in which the apostolic activity was started is very poor. The life-style of the community is cause for serious financial preoccupation. Is the Lord calling her to "a more poverty-stricken city?" The question regarding the spirit of poverty will be clarified in the Unabridged Rule, when she writes: "Even the desire and affection for earthly things is a great obstacle to the perfection of Divine Charity..."<sup>4</sup>. Christ Crucified, stripped of everything "except of His love" becomes the final destiny for which we must gradually prepare ourselves to come into ultimate possession of the Beloved.

**21.** All the same, I was still not sure whether with all this, God wanted greater poverty from the Institute or if He was asking me to take a vow of poverty something which I until then, had not done and neither did I do afterwards. In fact, I did not know how to resolve this. Since I was the superior at that time, I was afraid of finding myself worrying about it. Apart from this, the vow always has and still does, arouse the fear of my not knowing how to observe it properly.

**21.** The doubt about the style of poverty shifts spontaneously from the Institute to her own life. Was it the Lord's will that she should decide to take the vow of poverty? It was clear how chastity and obedience should be lived as was the interior and universal detachment from everything that is not of God. But, it was not equally clear how to live poverty in a concrete way. The fear of not knowing how to observe that vow curbed every personal decision. As she grows in love, every anxiety and fear will fade and even if she will never formally pronounce this vow it will be lived to a heroic degree.

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<sup>4</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s. P. I, p. 34.



## BY THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

22. Meanwhile I continued to live in poverty, though not in extreme poverty, as our Work was gradually taking shape while several months passed by.

22. The virtue of poverty in Magdalene is never an end in itself but the result of and the need for a Presence, that of Christ Crucified, stripped of all except love. Love, the highest good of human and Divine Life, implies the affective and effective detachment from all that is not God. Magdalene confesses to "live in poverty always, however not in extreme poverty". Personally she had abandoned her palatial home, renounced all rights to her inheritance but the style of poverty of the Institute will not be Franciscan. "The Rule does not demand any austerity"<sup>5</sup> she will write to an aspirant, but she will ask of the Daughters of Charity "a perfect common life... not loving, wanting nor seeking anything but God alone, stripped of every affection and care for earthly things"<sup>6</sup>.

23. One day, during that winter, while I was making my monthly retreat, in prayer I happened to perceive an object in church which had always been there but it had never made any special impact on me. As I did so, I saw a cross appear.

24. I would not say that this vision was of great inner strength as did the afore-mentioned previous experience: it was a very big cross, yet not very heavy.

23-24. The date of the monthly retreat is January 13, 1813, octave of the feast of Epiphany. Magdalene is in church praying and while she looks at an object which at other times was present and given little importance, now she sees "a very big cross". It is a vision of a lesser degree of intensity than the one described before. In fact she does not see Christ Crucified but only a bare cross.

25. This time I do not think that I resisted nor did it arouse within me the repugnance as on the previous occasion, so that I found myself with my old desire to seek God alone in the above-mentioned way.

26. After the prayer was over, that feeling stayed with me and every time I returned to church, I again saw that same cross.

25-26. Magdalene describes her personal reactions on seeing that cross. It does not repulse her as the one she had seen earlier, also because she is sustained by the comfort that God Himself instills in her to seek Him alone. Nevertheless every time she enters the church, the cross is persistently present. A presentiment is also persistent.

27. Two days later the Lord sent a cross to our Work, by the passing away of the person who had been

<sup>5</sup> M.d.C., to Anna, 1826, Ep.III/2, p. 1566.

<sup>6</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, p. 57.



recommended by my Director before he left and who was our only human support.

**27.** It is January 15, 1813. The cross-presentiment comes to pass. The cross refers to their Work. Sig. Domenico Guizzetti, the one who sustains the Institute, and the one whom Msgr. Pacetti had recommended before leaving for the Marche, dies unexpectedly. Magdalene sends out the news about the fatal illness of Guizzetti on the 15th, the very day in which the Lord will call him to Himself. Msgr. Pacetti will receive it on the 25th. On the 27th he sends Magdalene this reply: "The unexpected illness of Sig. Domenico has been a shock for me... I feel it more than as if he were my brother... The other night... your letter did not let me sleep... do not fail to keep me informed as to how the patient is when you see him and if he is better, congratulate him on my behalf and convey to him my warm greetings"<sup>7</sup>. The greetings did not reach the friend on earth; while Magdalene has lost "the only human support who was left to her".

**28.** In the beginning the event touched me very little for I had been forewarned and prepared for it, but later on, as I was negligent in my prayers and lacked trust in God, I felt it very much. The Lord, however continued to help our Work.

**28.** Magdalene does not feel the sorrow of that loss very much. All the time she is being strengthened and prepared by that ever-present cross and her prayer life. She will feel it more when she slackens in her duties of prayer and trust in her Lord. More than men, God Himself is the security of the future Institute's survival and development.

**29.** As for me, I was full of joy during prayer. Whether it was because I was bewildered in considering God's help or if it was because I saw myself deprived of every human support, I do not know. My only sorrow was that even this time, I had responded to the mercies of the Lord with much ingratitude and fear.

**29.** The result of unusual joy is more the fruit of deep communion with God in prayer than any other cause. The certainty of being "deprived of every human support" cannot by itself produce joy. This state can derive instead from the fact that "God's help" is obvious in an activity which she feels is becoming less her own. What is hers in this Work is only "much ingratitude" and the fear of responding badly to the abundant goodness of the Lord.

**30.** These fears were caused not because I did not believe that the Institute belonged to God, in fact the crosses sent by Him confirmed this belief. They stemmed from a suspicion that the Director might have given in to my natural inclination for this Work, and might believe all that has been written here. Even so, for me everything seems

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<sup>7</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 27 January 1813, ms., A2, XXXXI, A. C. R.



madness except these last mentioned things, which appear to me to be absolutely true.

**30.** Magdalene has no doubts that the new Institute belongs to God. Instead she is troubled by a suspicion of having deceived Msgr. Pacetti, making him believe to be true all she has written about herself and the Work. Once again there is the strong temptation to consider all that has happened as madness. Is her ingratitude to a God of mercy, genuine? What stands out in Magdalene's life is her feeling of lowliness before a God who continues to reveal His greatness and His wonders<sup>8</sup>.

### **"EVEN WITHOUT ME"**

**31.** Later, some health problems were the cause of certain apprehension and given the nature of my ailment, it seemed I was nearing the end of my life.

**32.** I felt some regret, but only for the Institute which I would have to leave without any support and as yet, not completely established.

**31-32.** It is February 1813. If Magdalene wrote to her brother Bonifacio that she is keeping very well on January 9<sup>9</sup>, and leaves for Verona towards the end of February, the said illness might have occurred between mid January and mid February. It appears that the "health problem" is rather serious if it seems to her that she is "nearing the end of her life". Her only worry is one of having to leave the Work "without any support and as yet, not completely established.

**33.** The Lord however, in His usual way, made me understand that if He Himself was its support, there would be no doubt that He would always allow the Institute to survive without me and maintain the spirit which should animate it.

**33.** Even illness is a trial through which the Lord makes her understand that He alone is the Author of their Work, that He alone can direct it and make it grow even without her, and that He is concerned not only with the material but also with the spiritual aspect of the Work.

**34.** I was so convinced of this that I was able to claim to be solely relying upon God and I recovered my peace regarding the Work and I began to prepare myself for death. I was surprised at the very thought of being able to do some good to the Institute since I was doing nothing to help in giving it a sound foundation, I realized that I was actually an obstacle in its way.

**34.** The Lord convinces her deeply from within, that the Work is His "alone" and that Magdalene is not only useless in directing the Work but she is also an

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ex., 15, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 9 January 1813, Ep. III/5, p. 3921.





obstacle. This is the way saints feel. The more he becomes aware of the greatness, omnipotence and goodness of God, the more the saint experiences his own powerlessness and feels an increase of trust in the Lord's mercy. A present day theologian confirms: "An increasingly pure faith implies a more authentic knowledge of God who is the Absolute, the Creator, the All and before whom, man is naught and can do nothing"<sup>10</sup>. Magdalene is filled with wonder as she sees before her eyes the beginnings, the growth and the establishment of the Work. She knows that "its foundation is upon the holy mountains... and He who keeps it firm is the Most High"<sup>11</sup>.

**35.** For some time now, both my companions and myself had desired to move to another house, preferably to a monastery. For, it seemed obvious that in such a place we would be helped towards real observance.

**36.** I longed for this change also, for then we could live under the same roof with the Blessed Sacrament whose absence was hard for me to bear.

**35-36.** The desire of moving from the rented house to a monastery, convinced that a greater observance would be easier not only for herself but also for her companions, was kept hidden for a long time. The absence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament "seemed hard for her to bear". The contract for the private house in Sant'Andrea would expire on August 1, 1813. It was necessary to look for other possible purchases.

**37.** Since more than once I had offered to sacrifice everything to the Lord to see Him glorified, I tried not to show displeasure about this privation.

**37.** The unconditional abandonment into the hands of the Lord to whom she had offered everything, even her own life should He desire it, did not let this project of hers come out into the open.

**38.** So, I began to work for the transfer to another site, also because the Lord has removed what was the biggest obstacle, calling to Himself the first benefactor of our Work.

**38.** Domenico Guizzetti, the first benefactor of this Foundation in Venice was against Magdalene's transfer to another house, but now that the Lord had called him to Himself, new paths and new possibilities are opening up with the State Property Offices of Milan and of the Venetian area. In Milan, another famous benefactor will take an interest in the matter as if it were his own affair.

<sup>10</sup> D. BARSOTTI, *Fede speranza e carita` nella vita cristiana*, ed.O. R., Milano, 1979, p.22.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. 87, 1, 5.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE INSTITUTE BELONGS TO GOD

#### GOD ALONE WITH THE SOUL ALONE

1. In the meantime I had to remain at my first Retreat in Verona; but only for a short time.

1. The return to Verona had been planned by Magdalene back in January 1813. She was to write to her brother: "...at the end of this month, from what I believe, Carolina Durini has to come here (Venice), I wish to join her on the return journey and come to greet you all... but I have to return after fifteen or twenty days to complete here what still remains to be done"<sup>1</sup>. The following month she informs her brother: "... profiting by the company of my dear friend C. Durini... if it pleases God on Wednesday, February 24, or at the most on Thursday, I will be in Verona and I will be happy to see all of you again"<sup>2</sup>. The joy of embracing her dear ones is dimmed by the fact that the Institute in Verona is not proceeding according to her desires.

2. When I returned (to Venice), I did not feel the consolation as on the previous occasion when I had found it very difficult to stay away from the Work in Verona even though I had suffered greatly leaving Venice.

2. Within a month Magdalene had terminated her affairs in Verona but now she condenses the experience of that period in just one line. From her correspondence nothing is revealed about the impression she received on returning to San Giuseppe's, her first Retreat. She simply writes to her friend Carolina Durini: "Dear friend, I shall always remember the pleasure I felt during our journey I am planning, not next week but the following, to return to Venice. However I will write to you as we have agreed"<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless she is not able to maintain the promise of writing again before she leaves and excuses herself saying: "It was not possible for me to write to you before leaving Verona as you had wanted and I had also wished. As soon as I arrived in Venice I am writing to tell you that I made a very good journey... thanks to the Lord"<sup>4</sup>.

3. One day after my return, I was very much distressed at observing that our Work was lacking the internal spirit I had intended for it. Casually I fixed my eyes on a cross, and experienced the same deep impression as at other times.

4. It appeared to me very great and it also seemed as if it were connected with the internal organization of our Work. I kept this to myself and was very surprised to hear that my first companion had seen that very morning, the same cross.

<sup>1</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 9 January 1813, Ep. III/5, p. 3921.

<sup>2</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 20 February 1813, Ep. III/5, p. 3923.

<sup>3</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 3 March 1813, Ep. I, p. 374.

<sup>4</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 27 March 1813, Ep. I, p. 375.



5. This time it was only a brief experience and the vision of the cross did not have the same effect on me as the one I had at Christmastide.

**3-5.** On her return to Venice, greatly distressed over the critical and delicate situation that was developing in the community of Verona, while at prayer she sees a large cross which she, as Foundress, interprets as a sign that the Work is moving along the lines of two different charisms. She is surprised that even her companion, Betta Mezzaroli, had seen the same cross that very morning. She hides her sorrow in silence and remains with the impression that the great cross concerns "the internal spirit" of the Work. For Magdalene of Canossa this is the cross of all crosses<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless she does have the certainty that no opposition can destroy a Work which belongs to God alone.

6. Following this, I began to feel more and more the weight of our internal state of affairs and, at times, I was greatly afflicted for the loss of every person who was really concerned with our apostolic activity.

7. The Lord allowed me to remain isolated from all with the deep consolation however of clinging to Him alone for support.

8. And yet during prayer time I felt arid and bereft of those consolations which come from inner union with God.

**6-8.** Magdalene's greatest affliction is not so much the many external matters to be attended to but a deep seated doubt that "the internal state of affairs" does not correspond to the spirit that should animate the Houses of Verona and Venice, as she had originally intended. For the latter House even her companion E. Mezzaroli is worried. We read in the Memoirs these words which refer to her: "...finding myself distressed at the convulsions of my companions, I prayed to the Lord for this and He answered me: Does not your Superior (Magdalene) say that the House is mine? I want to do as I please"<sup>6</sup>. Another reason for suffering is "the loss of every person who was truly concerned" for the consolidation of the Work. The Biblical verse "Torcular calcavi solus" for some time now, has already become a reality of life. Magdalene accepts this accumulated suffering in the light of a faith that is heroic. In spite of everything, she is conscious of the strength that springs from within: "The Lord allowed me to remain isolated from all with the deep consolation however of clinging to Him alone for support".

9. In the meantime I continued to seek suitable premises and managed to enter into a contract for a very small place.

**9.** As soon as she arrived in Venice, Magdalene set about finding a place where to transfer the growing community. A "very small place", but suitable for her purpose and means. It was situated in a poor district with an adjoining church "..."

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<sup>5</sup> G.STOFELLA, o.c., p. 277.

<sup>6</sup> T.M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 400.



Christ in the poor and in the tabernacle”<sup>7</sup>. It was the Monastery of Santa Lucia of Canal Regio adjoined to the Church with the same name.

10. After this, I enjoyed great recollection in prayer I had done at the very beginning of the Work.

11. My old desires returned, though not as forcefully as before, and in the brief moments in which I found myself united with the Lord, I was strengthened in my resolution to suffer. It seemed to me then that God wanted me to practise in faith Alone with God alone, which I already greatly desired.

12. I was comforted by alternating thoughts of Heaven, and the brevity of life and what joy for me it was in the evening to realize that another day had gone! Of course, this was only when I had lived it well.

**10-12.** Two thoughts on faith comfort Magdalene: the thought of Paradise and the briefness of life which for her had become a journey towards the longed-for goal. The joy she experiences every evening, after having spent the day in doing good, is lived with the certainty that the Homeland for which she yearns is drawing nearer and nearer. This is a period in which prayer brings her the gift of recollection and union with her Lord similar to the one she experienced before embarking on her Work. Her old desire to live in faith the maxim “Alone with God alone” has been fulfilled and is a source of great comfort, especially in the dark moments of sorrow.

13. When, after Communion, temptations assailed me about my vocation, the Lord made me realize that even He had spent His life on earth going in search of sinners.

14. This understanding put an end to the temptation which stems from not having time to pray, since I had to move about continuously in connection with our Work.

**13-14.** The continuous tension caused by her desire to live a closer union with God and the pressing demands of her Work that oblige her to undertake frequent journeys, negotiations and concerns of all kinds, throw her into great spiritual distress. Prayer time has often to be sacrificed. However, after Holy Communion the Lord reassures her by giving her an understanding of the many journeys He Himself had to undertake “in search of sinners”, while He was here on earth. This enlightenment puts an end to the temptation against her personal vocation.

15. At another time, also during Holy Communion, finding myself shaken by fear that some foreseen problems could cause our Work to collapse, the Lord made quite clear to me that a work beset by tribulation is the biggest proof that it belongs to Him; so I should not fear because absolutely nothing could make God’s work collapse. I lived

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<sup>7</sup> G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 278.



like this for a long time, except on those occasions about which I will now narrate.

**15.** An added worry results from the heaping up of “some foreseen problems”. Magdalene fears that the Institute will not only suffer hindrance but might also be made to collapse. After receiving Holy Communion, the Lord enlightens her spirit assuring her that every work of God cannot be firmly established but in tribulations, and that nothing can make His Work collapse. Fears are always lurking around but the Consoler enters through the closed door and sets her heart at peace.

## HEAVENLY PEACE

**16.** Once, feeling myself strongly united to God in prayer, I felt an irresistible urge to cast myself, into the Heart of Jesus and this is what I actually did. It seemed as though I had been immersed more deeply into God than I had ever experienced in the past on those rare occasions of spiritual union.

**17.** I also experienced a heavenly peace and such a deep yearning to be in Paradise, that I even wished to be struck by lightning, in order to die.

**16-17.** Magdalene attempts to describe the more important moment of this period of spiritual graces. Prayer is always for her the time and place of more significant and closer encounters with God. The urge to cast oneself upon the Heart of Jesus can only be a prompting of the Holy Spirit. The effect of this is the feeling of being buried deep in God, and finds fulfilment in the Lord’s words: “I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be safe. He will go in and out and find pasture” <sup>8</sup>. Magdalene enters into the Heart of Christ and finds herself immersed deeply into the Heart of the Father, where she will experience “a heavenly peace”. Whatever adversity, even if it is a streak of lightning, cannot remove the joy that such mystical experiences bring.

**18.** For the rest of the day I was full of joy notwithstanding this longing. It lasted for several days and each burden, each cross appeared to be no more significant than a straw. I am sure that any kind of adversity during those days would have left me absolutely indifferent.

**18.** The inner joy which the Lord pours into her heart overflows also in her countenance in an elated manner. All the possible sufferings, worse mishaps, all the crosses that could fall heavily on her shoulders are likened to “straw”, meaning “nothing”. An exalted peace dominates Magdalene’s heart and spirit and God alone is the source of it.

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<sup>8</sup> Jn. 10,9. The Trinitarian experience which Magdalene undergoes in prayer is made evident in this description.



19. On another occasion, during meditation, the urge to be united to God was such that it seemed that the soul sought to flee from the extreme ends of the body:

20. I felt a violent sensation in my hands and feet; it was due to the tension produced by concentrating myself in God in the interior of my heart, but I failed to do it in the way I desired because of the weariness, heaviness and opposition of my body. The persisting effect was an enduring desire to seek God alone.

21. But every time I committed some faults the thread of prayer was interrupted and I became very uneasy.

**19-21.** "On another occasion...": A following on of mystical experiences one after another cannot but involve her body. God draws her in the "interior of her heart" with such strength and violence that the soul struggles to loosen itself by fleeing in opposite directions. The body becomes a burden, a hindrance to her desire of seeking and wanting God alone. At this point Magdalene, touchingly modest about her experience which can only come from the Lord, counterbalances the negative side of her life, her faults and failings, which, in her opinion, obstruct the work of grace and renew her anxiety.

22. Yet another time, I decided to spend a day in recollection. I was alone and therefore free from any anxiety of having to contain and repress myself so as not to be noticed. I began to reflect on my nothingness.

23. Then I found myself united with God and the problem of the limited space of the place meant nothing because nothing at all could disturb me.

24. As I was alone, I abandoned myself totally to God remaining quietly absorbed in Him even though, I felt physically weak, and all my faults passed before my eyes.

**22-24.** This new mystical phenomenon can be traced to the middle of the month of May, 1813. Magdalene has planned her own day of monthly retreat. She is all alone at prayer, out of sight and, not bothered about having to restrain from the interior emotions produced by the divine interventions. The advantage of solitude puts her in a condition where she can abandon herself "totally to God" and be almost rapt in ecstasy. What was initially a simple reflection on her nothingness before the reality of God, becomes pure contemplation. Comparing her own smallness with the greatness and love of the Lord which fills her with indescribable joy, even the very small place which she and her companions are forced to occupy is no longer a problem: "it meant nothing".

25. On another occasion while I was on my way to the hospital to visit the infirm, being very distracted, I went to hear Mass in the church of the Dominican Fathers.

**25.** May 21, 1813 is another memorable day for Magdalene. She makes one of her usual visits to the infirm in the Hospital for the Incurables, situated near the





Giudecca Canal, Along the way she stops at the Church of the Gesuati, the Dominican Fathers being officially in charge of it, to assist in the Eucharistic Celebration.

**26.** On entering I thought, at first, I had seen with my own eyes a radiant light which I attributed to the fact that I had come in from the glare of the street into the darkness of the church. Though I had been here at other times, even on sunny days, I had never noticed such brilliance.

**27.** Then I felt my soul drawn to unite itself exteriorly with God as God, that is as Spirit. A great interior peace swept over me. It seemed that if the strong swift impulse that was drawing me to unite with God had been more powerful, even my body would have been carried away with my soul.

**28.** I remember trying all I could to resist to this attraction so as not to be seen.

**29.** After this experience I had such a longing for death and Heaven that I did not know how not to request it. I was granted permission to desire it but nothing more.

**26-29.** It was a bright sunny day. On entering the semi-dark church Magdalene is confronted with an unusual brightness which she had never noticed at other times. The light she had left behind on entering is enhanced by the inner rays of another sun that illuminates her from within. The spirit of Magdalene unites itself with the Spirit of God with such vehemence that a little more would have provoked the flight of the body with the soul. She is conscious enough of this experience that she is able to make the effort to hide it from being seen. The effects which follow are "a great interior peace" and an unrestrainable desire to die in order to reach Heaven. From then on, it was not forbidden her to desire it.

**30.** During that day I felt so light-hearted in everything I had to do, notwithstanding that there were occasions of suffering; in fact I was smiling at everything because nothing seemed to matter.

**30.** The brightness of the Divine Sun that was flooding her soul was so inebriating that she felt alleviated of any prospective suffering. She was smiling at life and at her God who was filling her with Himself.

**31.** The Mass lasted just for an instant, at least so I thought. I remained however drained of physical strength and had difficulty in gathering myself up to go to the hospital.

**32.** One thing only I wanted, to detach my soul from everything so as to be united with God.

**31-32.** The Eucharistic Celebration "lasted just for an instant". Once again her body paid for the elevation of the spirit and is somewhat weakened physically.



With some effort she makes her way towards the hospital where she was originally supposed to go. God was her centre of attraction more than the infirm in whom she would meet and serve Him, and give Him to them.

### TRUST IN MARY

**33.** At that time I had a companion who had been ill for some time. I had brought some flowers which had been placed before a miraculous picture of Our Blessed Lady.

**34.** Without any thought, I went to where these flowers were placed to pick up a book and smelt a certain perfume. I recalled having done so on another occasion in a place where a relic once rested from which, it was said, emanated such perfume. I found nothing extraordinary in this for I believed that it came from fresh flowers.

**35.** This fragrance resembled an aroma but was only a fleeting experience. When I smelt the flowers, there was but the scent of dry flowers.

**33-35.** The episode described here brings to light the filial trust she had in the Holy Virgin. This incident can be placed at Venice as between June and July of 1813. A companion suffered for some time from convulsions<sup>9</sup>. Magdalene has been praying and requests prayers for the grace of healing and the Most Holy Virgin Mary wants to offer a sign of maternal help. She has constant recourse to the Most Holy Virgin Mary especially in difficulties of every nature. She will confide to C. Durini: "... I abandon everything in the loving Heart of our Most Holy Mother Mary"<sup>10</sup>.

**36.** Everyone had been praying for the ailing companion, before the miraculous image and for a long time we had hoped to receive the grace of healing. Another companion of mine, on that very morning, gave the patient some of the flowers dissolved in holy water, without having heard about my experience. Indeed, I had not given it any thought as I had no special confidence in the matter.

**37.** Nevertheless considering the many prayers we had raised and the miracles God had deigned to work through that image, I asked my companion to give some of the flowers to the sick sister who happened to be in great pain that morning.

**38.** As soon as she had swallowed them she became instantly well, even though she was yet to be completely cured.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, O.c., p. 281.

<sup>10</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 11 December 1825, Ep. I, p. 528.



39. In fact, she suffered a new attack but not with the same violence as before; the ailment slowly decreased until it finally disappeared.

**36-39.** On that day the sick companion experiences a temporary relief from her ailment, which had manifested itself more seriously than usual. The insistent prayer before the miraculous image and the act of faith of giving the flowers crushed in Holy Water, all work to bring this temporary cure. Yet, Magdalene had not revealed anything about the particular fragrance of those flowers to anyone. Following this, the illness strikes again but with lesser intensity, up to complete recovery. Her trust in Mary whom she regarded as Advocate and Mother of the incipient Institute is rewarded.

### **WEARINESS, BOREDOM, TEMPTATION**

40. Later on I gradually lost the feeling of the Lord's presence and I found myself in a state of temptation, weariness and distraction, until one day I recalled the mercies the Lord had bestowed on me during my life.

41. A desire to abandon myself and all things totally to Him was reawakened in me. This again brought great peace and recollection.

**40-41.** God allows periods of ineffable consolation and prolonged periods of temptations, weariness and distraction to alternate in Magdalene's life. Being the irreplaceable maker of saints, God knows how to measure the spiritual trials in order to bring about a purification that will transform the person into the likeness of Christ. This state of consolation is prolonged until July 18, 1813. Magdalene's memory of the Lord's gifts to her and of His mercies, bring to mind the desire to totally surrender her own life and all other interests which, at one time, were a source of intense worries. The consequences? A spirit of deep recollection and an immense, undisturbed peace.

42. During this time, with regard to the spirit, as I was not able to pray, I went through a period of spiritual boredom, weariness and temptation especially against faith. I could not find relief in anything nor did anything interest me, be it temporal or spiritual. In the midst of weariness and boredom I knew that I could rise above it only when I found the Lord.

**42.** Prayer is spiritual nourishment for Magdalene. For a long time she has experienced the efficacy of this "most essential means"<sup>11</sup>. Whenever special occasions deprive her of prayer she feels like a fish out of water. Weariness, boredom and temptations against faith fill her spirit with anguish. No work can succeed in distracting her nor give her relief. There is only one remedy for her

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<sup>11</sup> M.d.C. R.s.s., P. 2, p. 185.



suffering: to re-discover the Lord. It is the sigh of the spouse: "I sought him but I did not find him; I called to him and he did not answer me"<sup>12</sup>.

43. After several days I began to find Him in Holy Communion, after which, at times it did not seem as if I could contain Him, not even in my bosom.

43. "After several days" of this dark night of the soul, Magdalene sees again the light. "In Holy Communion" God reveals Himself so great and luminous to her as if she could not contain, not even Him in her bosom". The God who cannot be contained is again with her and continues the process of a more obvious purification in her.

44. It was during one of these days after my monthly retreat when, for obvious reasons, I had more time to dedicate to prayer, that I felt disposed to unite myself to God, not in spirit but rather in a deep sentiment of affection.

45. My old feelings were re-awakened with a great desire to unite myself to God if only for one hour, and even though I suffered physical effort, it was not possible for me.

44-45. The day of retreat which Magdalene indicates can be placed as early August 1813. Prolonged prayer inflames her heart with a burning desire to unite herself to her God "if only for one hour". She recognises in herself "the old feelings", but the close interior union with God does not occur.

46. I feared it was because I had displeased the Lord by my unfaithfulness and by my failure to do what He had so often shown He expected of me: that is, to seek Him only in humiliation and suffering.

47. It is true that He often put me in the dire necessity to seek Him alone by depriving me of nearly everything but this I had done out of necessity and not out of free choice.

48. Besides I am keenly aware of the faults I commit in connection with my vocation, especially in my duty as Superior. This however did not disturb me exceedingly and I was left in peace with a determination to do better.

46-48. The fear of having offended the Lord reappears; of not having sought Him along the path He had many times indicated to her, the way of humiliations and suffering. God Himself, jealous of His love, had detached her of nearly everything so that she may seek Him alone. Magdalene therefore feels almost forced to love, while she desires to love Him out of "free choice". This examination of conscience calls for a strong urge to strive to love more. The

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<sup>12</sup> Song of Songs 5, 6.



peace which invades the spirit in spite of her failures, is the most obvious sign that love overcomes fear<sup>13</sup>.

### **“IF THE GRAIN OF WHEAT DOES NOT DIE...”**

**49.** In the meantime, my spiritual life continued to change.

At times I felt closely united to God and at other times I had the impression of never having known Him at all.

**49.** Magdalene's spirit is at times flooded with light and at times immersed in great anguish and darkness. St. John of the Cross thinks that this alternating pattern is inevitable for the gradual purification of the soul: "... after having gone through some time or days of affliction the soul at once regains its usual serenity. In this way God purifies certain souls"<sup>14</sup>. Dark is the night in which the Lord makes her fall again, that she "had the impression of never having known Him at all".

**50.** God allowed me to suffer a humiliation through which He would be glorified. I experienced a most wonderful delight, and because of it I did not know how to contain my tears. I offered myself to the Lord for any kind of humiliation provided it contributes to His glory.

**51.** In fact it seemed to me that He wanted to be glorified in the various works of my vocation, through my humiliation.

**50-51.** God led Magdalene along unknown paths but she knows with certainty that through spiritual suffering and humiliations her Lord is glorified. The thought of being able to glorify Him at her own expense is so elating that it moves her to the point of tears. All of her person is pervaded by "a most wonderful delight". The humiliation is not specified but during that period it is known that she was negotiating for a permanent leasehold of the monastery of Santa Lucia, the property of the ex-Augustinians who were expropriated following the Napoleonic Decree of 1805. Perhaps it could be a matter of government decision regarding herself an enterprising and bothersome Marchioness<sup>15</sup>.

**52.** After some days I had to suffer a very heavy humiliation which at first was very painful. It was not only because of the humiliation but also because it was becoming clearer to me that God wanted to be the only One for me personally, as well as for the Work.

**52.** God using men as instruments allows a second and more deeply-felt humiliation to touch Magdalene. Expecting this to happen, she had already made the offering of herself but when it befalls she feels acutely all the bitterness. She

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. 1 Jn. 4, 18.

<sup>14</sup> SAN GIOVANNI DELLA CROCE, Opere, Postulazione Generale Carmelitani Scalzi, Roma 1959, p. 428.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 282.



comes to understand more clearly that the Lord “wants to be the only One” in the accomplishment of the Work.

**53.** When the first blow had passed I sincerely thanked the Lord. During prayer the next day it cost me no effort at all to become closely united to Him.

**54.** Apart from the intimate joy, these last mentioned experiences also left in me a very special desire to prevent offence to the Lord. I also felt a deep sorrow for any fault which I might have committed. There was a fear, prompted by love, of offending Him again, and because of all these, I felt an ardent desire for Heaven.

**53-54.** The love of the suffered humiliation becomes the object of sincere thanksgiving to the Lord and as a result Magdalene enjoys an intimate communion with God the following day. Various sentiments alternate in her spirit: tender affection, desire that neither she nor others should offend the Lord, a fear stirred by great love and an irresistible longing for Heaven.

**55.** While continuing prayer and asking the Lord for strength to overcome every difficulty, I went to seek comfort, as I usually do, from a page of Thomas a Kempis which I opened at random. The reading encouraged me to undergo suffering and to expose even my life for God’s service and provoked such a heartfelt sweetness that I could not restrain my weeping, while I remembered the text I had cited at other times: “Torcular calcavi solus”.

**56.** The old desires to spread the Glory of God and to save souls were revived and I offered myself to the Lord also for the salvation of the whole world if it were possible.

**55-56.** “The glory of God and the salvation of souls” incite her to offer herself to the Lord for all the people of the world. Magdalene’s heart opens up to the dimensions of the Heart of Christ.

## Chapter VII

### SECOND FOUNDATION: VENICE

#### NEGOTIATIONS FOR A MONASTERY IN VENICE

**1.** Meanwhile since the Lord had sent me a new benefactor, who was unknown to me, I continued the negotiations to obtain a monastery for living quarters. The benefactor had wanted of his own desire to make acquaintance with me. Later he involved himself wholeheartedly in the Work.

**1.** Since March 1813, Magdalene had started negotiations to obtain from the State Property Offices of Milan and Venice, a monastery to which the new Institute could be transferred. The two years spent at San Giuseppe in Verona has





convinced her more than ever that only within the structure of a convent could she achieve true religious observance. One of the strongest obstacles to the transfer of the House at Sant'Andrea to a monastery, had been removed with the death of the benefactor of the Institute, Domenico Guizzetti, in January of that year. He was definitely opposed to the idea, but the meeting with her friend Carolina Durini which took place in February 1813, at Venice, opens new unexpected hopes. On returning to Milan, her dear friend will consign a letter from Magdalene to the "unknown benefactor", Marquis Francesco Casati, who will become one of the most generous and worthy promoters of the matter in question. The following June, Magdalene presses Carolina for a prompt reply: "...if you know something about that affair for which I had inconvenienced Marquis Casati, please let me know, because I need to know before the expiry date of the lease of this house I am living in"<sup>1</sup>. The contract for the rental of the small house in Sant'Andrea would expire in August. For matters pertaining to State Property, time is very limited. There were less than two months to go.

2. With regard to the place where we hope to move to, I was personally convinced that I would soon receive a favourable reply though I could not be absolutely sure.

3. I received instead a negative reply and every negotiation seemed to collapse.

4. Even though I did not show it, the realization that I had deceived myself procured greater suffering than the negative answer, for I feared that I could have well deceived myself at other times.

**2-4.** If in Milan she had found an excellent benefactor in the person of Marquis Casati, another support none the less valid, had been offered her at Venice in the person of Sig. Giuseppe Alessandri, "a very upright person and a Christian of sterling character".<sup>2</sup> The two benefactors were interested in obtaining the monastery of Santa Lucia for Magdalene's Work. They meet in Venice in the first week of August (1813) to deal with bureaucratic matters in connection with this affair. Magdalene hopes for a favourable solution but remains disappointed. She writes to Carolina Durini: "I had the happiness of seeing the good Marquis Casati in Venice... I have all the reasons to hope for the best because I am in a position where none of us can help and I hope the Lord will now see it fit to do everything Himself. Please say for this purpose, some Hail Marys so that the Lord may do His Most Holy Will"<sup>3</sup>. The bureaucracy controlling this affair did not give her any hope. "Certain dishonest people" had in fact obtained from Milan the permission to sell the monastery of Santa Lucia. In the meantime hope had given way to strong disappointment.

5. I took all the necessary steps as if the move would never materialise, but even though everything seemed to

<sup>1</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 12 June 1813, Ep. I, p. 379.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 7 August 1813, Ep. I, p. 382.



indicate that the transactions were already being abandoned, I knew in the depth of my soul that everything would turn out successfully. I felt strongly urged to pray confident of being heard.

6. I was inspired especially to make a novena to Jesus the Nazarene and had intended to start when a few hours later I received news that the situation had changed and that it was almost certain that the matter would be concluded favourably. That is what actually happened. As I said before, I did not have an absolute assurance but mine was only an inner conviction.

**5-6.** God's will prevails over every desire of hers. The intercession of the Most Holy Virgin Mary and the novena to Jesus the Nazarene were not meant to bend Heaven to do her will but simply to remove the obstacles to make way for the Will of God in the midst of human intrigue. On August 18, while at prayer, she has an inner conviction that "the matter would be concluded" positively, and so it came to pass. The following August 25, 1813 Sig. Alessandri signs for the lease of the monastery of Santa Lucia on her behalf. It is the last but one phase of a long bureaucratic process. The final approval must be issued by the Central State Property Office in Milan.

7. In the meantime, while the negotiations were being transacted, I went to assist at Holy Mass in the church situated in the locality where I wanted so much to work.

8. Before the body of St. Lucy, Virgin and Martyr, I placed the Work which I intended to establish here, under the protection of the Saint.

9. I pointed out that it concerned a community of virgins, whose purpose was to preserve young girls from moral dangers. She, who had given her life to safeguard her virginity, was bound to consent.

10. From the feeling of trust, the tenderness and the consolation that followed, I believed that the Saint herself had taken up the Work under her protection.

**7-10.** On August 26, 1813 while the documents are on the way to Milan for final approval, Magdalene goes to assist at Holy Mass in the Church of St. Lucy, where the body of the Holy Virgin and Martyr is venerated. She asks the saint to intercede for the Community and their work of charity and for all the girls she hopes to rescue from the very dangers for which the Saint herself had courageously faced martyrdom. While she is praying she feels within her heart a consoling trust and an intimate certainty that the Saint "would take up the Work under her protection". Magdalene lives in this world her earthly dimension which is made up of many and various relationships with the different social classes but



her conversation is with those in Heaven<sup>4</sup>. To the Lord, to the Virgin Mary and to all the saints in Heaven she entrusts her own life and the Institute.

**11.** Yet, I had a vague idea that in time, it would become an Institution where a more restricted life-style would be led, that is to say, a community of virgins living completely withdrawn from the world.

**12.** In the usual way, I felt reassured that, though circumstances might change, through the intercession of the Holy Martyr, our Work would never cease to function in that locality.

**11-12.** "In the usual way..." is the refrain which often runs in these Memoirs. From such expressions we can understand that God had a special way of anticipating Magdalene with the events that were about to take place or situations which will be fulfilled at a time not specified. The internal life of her Institute will have soon a communitarian structure of its own and it will also be true that the Daughters of Charity will not leave the city of Venice.

**13.** On that day, by coincidence, I was concerned and worried about some outside matters connected with the Institute.

**14.** I had also been very distracted that morning at Holy Communion and during that time I found it impossible to pray for any material thing, although certain needs came to mind. I could only pray to obtain a spiritual grace, that of the interior spirit, for myself and for the others.

**15.** I was left with much joy, affection and a special trust in the Saint, something rather unusual for me as I did not have any particular affection for any saint after God except the Blessed Virgin.

**13-15.** Magdalene is surprised at herself for having entrusted to St. Lucy with particular "affection and special trust", the interests of the Work. Her usual loves are God and the Most Holy Virgin Mary. Although on that day, due to the affairs at the monastery, she was so spiritually anxious as to be distracted even during Holy Communion. She does not ask for any material grace but pleads only that she may obtain for herself and for all her companions, a deep interior life. This prayer fills her heart with happiness. St. Lucy was already sending down her protection from Heaven.

**16.** Another time, while I was on my way to the hospital, I stopped at a church to assist at Holy Mass. With the thought of the delight of living in a place where the Most Holy Sacrament would be preserved, I prayed intensely to

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Phil. 3, 20.



the Lord to obtain the convent for which negotiations were still in course.

17. Once again I felt inwardly reassured that it would be granted to me, but at a later date. Then I felt urged to pray to the Holy Virgin Mary to hasten such a favour as she had done at the wedding at Cana when she anticipated God's mercies.

18. From the impulse I felt to pray, I knew that God had already granted my wish. As a matter of fact, it came to pass a few days later while I persevered praying to Mary through a novena to her Immaculate Heart.

**16-18.** It is September 7, 1813. Along the road which leads to the Hospital of the Incurables, Magdalene stops for Holy Mass at the Church of St. Barnabas. While she prays "intensely to the Lord to obtain the convent" she lives in anticipation the joy of permanently sheltering the Blessed Sacrament at last, in that much longed-for monastery. She does not fail to call upon the Most Holy Virgin to solicit the grace from her Son as she did at Cana. A few days later and precisely the day after the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary, Milan grants permission to rent the Monastery of Santa Lucia. Truly the Mother of God repeated the same gesture she accomplished at the wedding of Cana. On September 17, 1813 Sig. Giuseppe Alessandri, Magdalene's agent in Venice signs the contract to rent the Monastery of Santa Lucia to start a school for the education of girls<sup>5</sup>.

19. At the time the Work was in a state of dire poverty and I could not see how I could meet the necessary expenditures in the new place.

20. On my day of recollection, as I was asking myself before God, whether He wanted me to rely on others, or rather seek their support, I felt inspired to do just this in the belief that, in any case, it would be a good occasion to humble myself.

21. Later on I was reassured, but without any further explanation, that the Work would be provided for.

**19-21.** The Monastery of Santa Lucia was already a concluded matter. The worry about a monthly rent of 420 lire began. Where to find what was needed? Magdalene was ready to face the humiliation of asking help from persons known to her. During the day of retreat, while in prayer, she asks the Lord if this interior urge was in conformity with His designs. She felt reassured that "the Work would be provided for". How it would come about was not at all clear. It was an invitation to simply trust Him.

22. I remained with great trust and hope even when my companions wearied me when at times, they spoke of the need for financial support.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. M.d.C., Ep. II/I, 17 September 1813, pp. 194-195.



**23.** This time I was not sufficiently alert in hiding from them the certainty received from the Lord that we would be assisted. However by means of facetious remarks I managed to cover up the truth.

**22-23.** Her confidence and trust in the Lord was in evident contrast with the justified preoccupation of her daughters. As Magdalene did not want to publicise the assurance received from above she covered up with a playful remark.

**24.** I spoke to the person whom I had been advised to approach, with the usual difficulty I experience when I have to ask or receive, due to my pride.

**25.** The expected help came after all. Having received much confirmation, past and present, I realised that if, in future, I should find myself in similar straits I should never worry or doubt about temporal things.

**24-25.** Magdalene overcomes her “pride” and turns to the person whom she “had been advised to approach” but does not mention the name. The person is Sig. Alessandri who will not only pay the rent of the Monastery but will also provide during the blockade, for the survival of the entire community<sup>6</sup>.

### **IN THE MIDST OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY**

**26-27.** Dark clouds appear over Europe which is shaken by the events of the Napoleonic Empire. In October 1813, the Emperor is defeated at Leipzig. It is the moment for Austria to win back also her possessions in Italy and therefore decides to besiege Venice. The blockade will begin in November and will be prolonged until April 1814. In that imminent danger Magdalene questions herself on the decisions to take: what does the Lord want? Still uncertain of what she should do, she writes to her brother: “...I have a great longing to see Verona again, as much as you have the goodness to await my return... but it is better for me to do things in a way that does not jeopardize the interests of my great and dear Master (God). Do not doubt that He will know well how to help me in everything and in every situation”<sup>7</sup>.

**28-30.** The purpose behind every decision is Magdalene’s commitment to service and the glory of God. For this aim she is ready to sacrifice her own comforts and even her own life. After much anguish she thinks of consulting her Director to discern God’s Will more clearly. When she is told that her place is in Venice, she feels relieved because in the depth of her being, this advice corresponds to her innermost feeling.

**31-33.** Magdalene’s love for the Lord is so intense that it dissolves every fear of sacrifice. In time of trial, God grants her such strength that she is able to write to her brother: “Sad to say, I do not have enough virtue to overcome great trials,

<sup>6</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio Canossa, 20 April 1814, Ep. III/5, p. 3945.

<sup>7</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 2 October 1813, Ep. III/5, p. 3939.



but certainly with God's help I could surely face even a battery of artillery, if it were for Him"<sup>8</sup>.

### IN THE MONASTERY OF SANTA LUCIA

**34.** Before moving to the above-mentioned monastery, I had another day of recollection. In the beginning, perhaps due to the fact that I had not prayed for a long time, I was quite unable to recollect myself.

**34.** The day of monthly recollection is the time set aside for her appointment with God and it is the best spiritual preparation for the transfer to the Monastery of Santa Lucia. The many duties which had recently taken her away from her Lord, prevent her initially from returning to her habitual recollection.

**35.** Then having tried to put myself in God's presence in the centre of my soul, He revealed Himself to me as the Sun, but as usual, without my seeing anything.

**36.** I felt the power of the Divine Presence so overwhelmingly that it was necessary for me to look for support as I was unable to endure it.

**37.** But, no matter how hard I tried to unite myself with Him, and no matter how fervently I prayed, He did not allow me to succeed.

**35-37.** The Lord comes to meet her in an unexpected way: "... He revealed Himself to me as the Sun". God is so resplendent with His "Divine presence" as to paralyse the body in its usual movements. The God-Sun, presents Himself not to the eyes of the body but to those of the spirit. It is not the intimate, profound union that she has been already experiencing on other occasions which she now so intensely desires. "But God", she writes almost with regret, "did not allow it".

**38.** I understood the uselessness of my whole life up to that instant, and I also perceived that the Lord was truly displeased with me for my lack of faithfulness.

**39.** However neither through resolutions nor through any other means, could I persuade the Lord. I remained only with my fear and the pain of my sufferings. I was resolved, on the other hand, to do better and to respond to the Lord especially by embracing all humiliations connected with poverty and by seeking Him alone.

**38-39.** Magdalene has knowledge that all human initiatives, even the best, are useless compared to the dispositions of God: "...nor through any other means, could I persuade the Lord" to grant the desire of intimate communion with Him. "The irresistible attraction of God on the one hand and the incapacity to unite herself to Him on the other, lead her to confirm the futility of her own existence"<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 28 April 1814, Ep. III/5, p. 3945.

<sup>9</sup> T.M. PICCARI,o.c., p. 415.





Magdalene concludes her day of retreat regretfully but not in disappointment; she is in fact more resolved than ever to respond to the Lord and to seek Him alone in future. St. Teresa comments that this type of grace “brings to the soul a great confusion and humility... accompanied by lively desires to engage oneself in His service with a purity of conscience”<sup>10</sup>.

**40.** It seemed to me that God’s displeasure persisted not for my lack of poverty but for two other reasons. I perceived that this time my repentance was caused by fear, which was not usual. It took me some effort to add to it the motivation of perfect love.

**41.** My desire and my will to practise the abovementioned were firmer than ever before. However it was not possible to unite myself to the Lord.

**40-41.** The revelation of God-Sun has thrown beams of light into Magdalene’s spirit. It is clear to her that the Lord’s displeasure is due not so much to her failings against poverty, but to her excessive fear and lack of response to His love. In the presence of the infinite charity and mercy of God she knows herself more and more and there kindles in her a desire to respond more generously. St. Teresa’s words come true in her: “...God manifests Himself to the soul in a light that is brighter than the sun. However one does not see the sun, neither the brightness, because it is a light that illuminates the intellect without being seen, bathing the soul in the joy of so great a good and brings with it many other benefits”<sup>11</sup>. There remains a lively, burning desire to unite herself to her

**42.** The negotiations for the new place were finally concluded. On the vigil of the feast of Mary’s Divine Motherhood, the move took place. We had purposely chosen a Saturday for this.

**42.** After the necessary works of restoration have been completed in September 1813, Magdalene can “finally” decide the date to move from the private house of Sant’Andrea to the Monastery of Santa Lucia. She chooses a Saturday: October 9, vigil of the feast of the Divine Motherhood of Mary. The more important stages of the Work often coincide with the feasts dedicated to the Mother of God.

**43.** My companions were rather unhappy about the change while I myself was full of joy at the thought of being close to the Blessed Sacrament.

**43.** The joy of moving to Santa Lucia’s is not shared by her companions. The rented part was limited to the central building, excluding the garden and three small houses communicating with the inside of the monastery. The companions were perhaps feeling a little disappointed for the limited space but Magdalene rejoices because finally she can live with Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament.

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<sup>10</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU`, o.c., p. 911.

<sup>11</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU`, o.c., p. 258.



44. Due to the great amount of work I was dispensed by obedience, as usual, from my prayer time so that I could attend to my other duties.

44. We are at the end of October and the beginning of November 1813. Magdalene is burdened with all kinds of work in the new house during these first months such as arranging space for community life and for the apostolate. A school of charity for the poor girls of that district was to be opened. Besides having the task of Superior she was also responsible for the formation of the novices to the religious life. "I am full of work", she writes to her friend C. Durini, "remember, I commend myself to your prayers so that the Lord... may put the Original... in my heart"<sup>12</sup>. In the meantime political and military events hang over Venice which will soon be isolated from every part of the mainland and she will be locked in the grip of hunger and deadly epidemics. However at Santa Lucia's everything is moving with beginner's enthusiasm. Magdalene's spirit of charity helps her to face up to events with the courage and the ardour of the saints. The hunger that grips the city will not be felt in Santa Lucia's owing to the generosity of benefactors. She will write to her brother at the end of the blockade: "Let me tell you, I cannot imagine ways of explaining to you how the Lord helped and extended His charity to me in every circumstance... I always lived in great tranquillity and if it had not been for the many needs of the poor, for it was impossible to meet them all, I would say my companions and I have been of good cheer. In spite of all, during the periods when the girls were away we had many a laugh over our meals for I had become a perfect cook"<sup>13</sup>. The human means God uses to meet the needs of the new Institute are noteworthy: "The Lord...has placed such exquisite concern in Sig. Alessandri for, as you know, he rented this convent for me. He was attentive to purchase the necessary items at the opportune moments with great saving, even more than he would have done for himself. Signora Teresa Guizzetti also had the same concern for me as one would have for a sister and if I had taken advantage of her kindness I do not know what more she would have done"<sup>14</sup>. All the provisions necessary for the House came in through these benefactors: "...I always had rice, legumes, good wine, and bread, except for about two weeks. At all times there was broth for myself and for those among my companions who were weak. So you see, I have been keeping very well. Over and above these, fish and vegetables were never lacking; especially there was nearly always fish in abundance"<sup>15</sup>. In the meantime, the three "permanent and continuous" works of charity of the Institute had already started<sup>16</sup>. These were the school of charity, religious instruction and spiritual assistance in the hospitals.

<sup>12</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 7 October 1813, Ep. I, pp. 384-385. With the word "Original" Magdalene refers to Christ Crucified.

<sup>13</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 28 April 1814, Ep. III/5, p. 3945.

<sup>14</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 28 April 1814, Ep. III/5, p. 3945.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 3946.

<sup>16</sup> Regola, 1828, ms. P.5, A3, VII, A.C.R.



## THE PRICE OF THE NEW FOUNDATION

45. The anguish caused by temptations against faith returned. In fact it lasted until I could once again find time for prayer.

46. The following morning while I was in chapel, after Holy Communion, my eyesight began to blur, as it usually does before a strong experience of interior union, and I found myself united with God as at other times.

**45-46.** In Magdalene, temptations against faith alternate with experiences of intimate union with the Lord. St. John of the Cross thus explains the phenomenon: "To reach divine union with God it is necessary for the soul to pass through the dark night"<sup>17</sup>. Magdalene mentions a point that until now had been overlooked but what "usually" happens to her before a strong experience of interior union with God, that is a blurring of her vision. It is as if the outward sense have been suspended to allow a greater concentration of the spirit.

47. After returning to the house I resumed prayer. During this time I had an image, though not so marked as at other times, that it was to live exclusively for the Lord. I was profoundly struck by the verse of the psalm which reads: "De torrente in via bibet". (From the brook by the wayside he will drink).

48. I then understood and resolved to make use of the things of this world as transitory even with regard to my companions. I would have sought only their spiritual good, regardless of their personal pleasure.

**47-48.** Meditating on the Biblical verse (psalm 110): "De torrente in via bibet" Magdalene adapts it to her disposition of "living exclusively for the Lord". According to the psalm the water to be drunk does not come from the Spirit of the Most High, but is of earthly origin and flows without satisfying the soul that thirsts for the eternal. She will drink of this water like a pilgrim bound for her destination. She will not care to be gratified, not even by her companions, for whom she will labour keeping in mind only "their spiritual good".

49. If I had to judge from the consolations deriving from my sense of well-being, it seemed to me that it was really the Lord reassuring me that, for all I was to suffer, He would always be mine, and that one day, I would gain the sweet possession of God.

**49.** Magdalene consoled by God Himself lives with the certainty that even though she has to go through the stormy waters of life, she will not lack His help in securing a place in His Kingdom.

50. Owing to my unworthiness, I fear that it might have been an illusion, though the infinite mercy of the Lord has

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<sup>17</sup> S. GIOVANNI DELLA CROCE, o.c., p. 20.



always assisted me even when I had not really done anything good. This is something that will not be believed by those who do not know my intimate self.

**51.** Thus I remained ready to suffer, even to the point of expecting suffering in joy and peace.

**50-51.** When God's action is over, Magdalene sees only her own unworthiness and fears to be a deluded person with regard to her innermost self, and also to the good which is always too limited and totally insignificant in her own eyes. Only "the infinite mercy of the Lord" sustains, comforts and calms her to the point of making her desire what in the past she used to fear: suffering. She herself is able to observe that this is spiritual growth.

**52.** In fact that very same evening, the health of my companions caused me anguish but because of the grace of that morning, it had little effect on me even though I was continually afflicted.

**52.** Suffering lies in wait and the cause is the delicate health of her companions. However she can happily verify that notwithstanding other numerous afflictions God sustains her with the comfort of His intimate presence.

**53.** I offered my Holy Communion, but without recollection, for one of these intentions.

**54.** What I longed for was only to suffer, even though I still have a fear for it. I believe that when I desire it, it may not be for God's service only but more for the desire of the delight that comes from finding myself united to Him.

**53-54.** It is this close union with God that gives her courage in His service and allows her to overcome the inevitable sufferings that accompany it.

### **"FOR THE WORLD"**

**55.** For quite some time I found myself not only in anguish for fear of not being saved, but also very distracted. For a long time I had lost the desire to go to any place to spread the Glory of God as in the past I was urged to do.

**55.** We are at the end of 1813. Magdalene has seen a very troubled year. The historical background is full of unforeseen events: Austria's decision to besiege Venice, the very intricate bureaucratic dealings to obtain a monastery, the laborious removal of the Institute to Santa Lucia's, the sickness of her companions. It is a succession of worries which could have bent a character less strong than hers. All this is happening around her. Within herself she feels afflicted, distracted and tempted to the point of fearing that she will not be saved. Even the desire for the Glory of God which acted as a powerful stimulus in the past to spread His Kingdom, has vanished. Her health fortunately held on. She gives news of this period to her brother: "I am in very good health, I assure you,



and have always been well". And a postscript: "...I confirm that today, December 27, I am feeling very well"<sup>18</sup>.

56. To recollect during prayer time I read a meditation by St. Francis Xavier. During the reading I seemed to understand in the usual way, however neither deeply nor strongly, that I would have to leave Venice, and with Christ Crucified alone, to go I know not where, for the Lord's love.

57. Feeling my old desires reawakening within me, this interior language gave me great comfort.

**56-57.** During prayer time St. Francis Xavier, the most courageous missionary of all times, rekindles the dormant apostolic zeal in her heart: that of going out to unknown territories with Christ Crucified alone. It is an "interior language" and a reawakening of "old aspirations" God had inspired years before, while she was assisting Holy Mass and heard the Bible verse "Euntes in universum mundum". She had felt deeply moved without knowing the motive. The Lord's discreet inner prompting and His loving and faithful insistence, will lead Magdalene to open her heart to embrace the world.

58. I offered myself to the Lord to do His Most Holy Will but I was a little curious to know where I would have to go.

59. I did not speak of it to anyone but to my great surprise I heard my companions, especially Betta Mezzaroli, say that I would leave. Playfully I asked her: "Where to?" "Into the world" she answered.

**58-59.** The Will of God is always at the height of every desire, and her heart is stretched forth towards "the beyond" of geographical boundaries. She will confess some years later to one of her daughters: "... I would travel thousands of miles for the internal and external benefit of the Institute"<sup>19</sup>. When Betta Mezzaroli, almost suspects her innermost feelings and tells her that she would be leaving, she is greatly surprised for she had not mentioned it to anyone. When Magdalene puts the question to her jokingly, the other replies: "Into the world"!

60. During a day of recollection, while at prayer, and thinking about what I have just mentioned, I suddenly noticed the letters R and O written on the bench. I understood it in the way I have already described that soon I would have to go to Rome and then into the countryside of Rome.

61. Again I was started and began to ask myself: "To do what?" This would not be possible so soon since Venice was still under military siege and who knows for how long more.

<sup>18</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 18 December 1813, Ep. III/5, pp. 3942-3943.

<sup>19</sup> M.d.C., to F.M. Ghezzi, 2 May 1817, Ep. III/1, p. 82.



62. All the same I learned that soon, and very soon, they will raise the blockade and Venice will be liberated, but I knew nothing of what I would have to do in Rome.

**60-62.** In the retreat made by Magdalene in the last month of 1813, there is another surprise. In a strange and sudden way she suspects that soon she will have to go to Rome and the outskirts. But the intuition is grounded on reality. After some months, in fact precisely in June 1814, news will reach Magdalene from Msgr. Pacetti that the Holy Father in a recent meeting with him, had stated that a House of the Daughters of Charity could be opened in Rome<sup>20</sup>. Political and personal circumstances like the military siege of Venice and the new foundations of Milan and Bergamo will delay her journey considerably. God's time cannot be measured with human measure and it will lead her to Rome after fifteen years. Only from heaven will see her daughters open a House in Rome and in the outskirts... Thus confirms the Scripture: "For a thousand years in your sight are a yesterday, now that it is past, or as a watch of the night"<sup>21</sup>.

63. Using very tender expressions I offered myself with all my heart and affection to the Lord to do His Will in everything.

64. I had the impression of being here in transit, as I am at present and I was thinking of quietly attending to matters as though in fact I had to depart.

**63-64.** Magdalene's unconditional offering of herself to the Lord is the result of His own previous promptings of the Spirit. It is the more authentic sign of a love which detaches her from herself in order to be possessed by God. Detached from all and everything, she gently prepares her spirit as though, in actual fact, God has called her elsewhere.

## Chapter VIII THE WAY OF CALVARY

### IN THE FOOT-STEPS OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED

1. It was one of the feasts of Christmastide when, for the first time and to my great surprise, I saw, but not with my bodily eyes, the Holy Infant. This vision left me with a strong feeling of love. What I saw, though not distinctly, remained always impressed in my soul.

**1.** It is the beginning of 1814. Magdalene recalls the days which have just gone by: "During one of the feasts of Christmastide". The described phenomenon apparently precedes the feast of the Epiphany. She sees "the Holy Infant" for the first time, hence the surprise. In Manuscript C of the Memoirs, as a note added to the text, the author herself comments thus: "For a clear and sincere statement of things I want to say that I did not see the Holy Child in a distinct manner, neither interiorly nor with the eyes of the body. It was only an image of a baby of natural

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 14 June 1814, Ep. II/1, p. 196.

<sup>21</sup> Ps. 90,4.





size engraved on copper; the love that I felt then, as far as I remember was not very deep"<sup>1</sup>. The incident remained "always impressed in her soul", even if in the comment she recalls that the feelings of love were quite superficial.

2. Soon after, the moment approached when God thought fit to visit me with a cross. Given my weakness, it did not appear small.

3. While I was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, suddenly and without previous awareness, I saw in the same way Jesus Christ Crucified covered with wounds and blood.

4. But at the time I did not comprehend, as I am not used to seeing anything and have no knowledge of the overwhelming interior power of the experience already described; therefore I did not pay much attention to it.

5. When, however, I was faced with the actual Cross sent to me by the Lord, I understood, or I thought I understood the significance of that vision.

**2-5.** The expression "soon after" precedes the date January 18, 1814, the day when Don Lorenzo Piazza departed from this life. A few days before the event, Magdalene while at prayer, has a vision of Jesus Christ Crucified. She saw Him "in the same way" in which she saw the Holy Infant some days before. Thus in note 2, and appended in Manuscript C of the Memoirs we read: "The same thing occurred a few days after when I saw Christ Crucified. He too was quite large, but as if engraved on red copper. I consider these two visions as superficial and imaginative... the memory of these helped me to bear this cross with true virtue"<sup>2</sup>. Magdalene does not give too much importance to this experience at the time but only some time afterwards when she is enlightened on the meaning of the vision. The cross that had been forewarned was not small. One of her most faithful supporters of the Venice Foundation was dying. Magdalene laments to her friend in Milan: "You can understand how much I feel about the good Don Lorenzo. The Lord had wanted to crown him quickly for his charity. Please pray for him to the Lord though I believe that he is praying for us"<sup>3</sup>.

6. I greatly feared that the war would cause the death of my brother so much so that I spent a day and night in great anguish; on the morrow, however, during Holy Communion the Lord restored my peace and I was no longer disturbed by this threat.

**6.** Magdalene is greatly worried for the safety of her brother who is serving his country and military action is always becoming more unrestrained and dangerous. In the last letter written before the end of the siege one reads: "... I desire very much to receive your news and to be informed about everyone's health. I am full

<sup>1</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P. 1, p. 351.

<sup>2</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 17 May 1814, Ep. I, p. 389.

<sup>3</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 17 May 1814, Ep. I, p. 389.



of affection”<sup>4</sup>. She would not receive news until the following April. However all the letters were censored by the Austrian Government and news was received with considerable delay. Only after the siege ended Magdalene “can send and receive sealed letters because”, she writes to her brother, “before, as you might have imagined, they were posted and delivered opened”<sup>5</sup>. The reply comes from Heaven. After spending a day in deep anguish and a sleepless night for the plight of her brother, the Lord “in Holy Communion”, calms her and removes every anxiety.

## **MOURNING AT CANOSSA PALACE**

7. My uncle became gravely ill and while in prayer, I understood that he was already dead and that the Lord had shown him mercy and that his little son for whom I was anxious, would be provided for and helped.

8. In fact, a few days later I received the news of my uncle’s Christian death.

9. This surprised me for now, when I am given these enlightenments they are not as profound and interior as they once were. I had also received instructions not to pay any attention to them, neither did I make much of them.

7-9. For already some time now Magdalene is experiencing phenomena of exceptional insight. In recent periods however they have toned down. Even her Director instructs her “not to pay any attention to them”. But until news arrives, the Lord lavishes her with the gift of supernatural insight. It is during prayer that she is informed about the death of her uncle Gerolamo, of his eternal salvation, and that the Lord would “provide for and help” her cousin Carlino who is already seventeen years old. The news by post reaches her only some days later. Her uncle had died on July 5, 1814.

10. On returning to my town, awaiting me were many crosses related to my duties. One day, as I was praying, I experienced one of my usual transports of love. It was from here that I drew the strength to overcome every difficulty.

10. On July 12, 1814 Magdalene writes to C. Durini that she is on the point of leaving for Verona<sup>6</sup> which she undertakes not only to comfort the family after the demise of Marquis Gerolamo, but also for other serious motives. She writes to her Milanese friend: “...I had planned this trip a long time ago but could not make it earlier for many reasons and the Lord has allowed me to do it at a time when it will cost me much for it pleased Him to take my uncle”<sup>7</sup>. The reasons that bring her to Verona are also the appeals made in writing by Msgr. Pacetti who is still residing with his family in Petritoli. He had written in June: “ For San Giuseppe’s,

<sup>4</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 26 January 1814, Ep. III/5, p. 3944.

<sup>5</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 29 April 1814, Ep. III/5, p. 3947.

<sup>6</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 12 July 1814, Ep. I, p. 391.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



the convent at Verona, do whatever you can and want to do. I would like you to remember that I am giving you absolute liberty but you have to keep this from Leopoldina<sup>8</sup>. In July he insists: "Do go to Verona... remain there as long as you think necessary but also remember Santa Lucia's (Venice)... God wants to greatly expand the Work... Spend time on drawing up the Rules... pray much and also get everyone to pray so as to have inspiration for completing the Rules but do not tell your companions"<sup>9</sup>. In the many anxieties and delicate affairs connected with the Institute it is always prayer that gives her strength and courage.

**11.** Before leaving and feeling grieved at having to depart from my companions, I entrusted all my worries to God. I understood that I would not have an early return but that everything would go well because God would always watch over us; and so indeed it happened.

**11.** Magdalene had planned to leave for Venice after about a month<sup>10</sup> but the situation in Verona retained her for more than two months. "She found there many crosses: above all the void left by uncle Gerolamo. She had foreseen the imminent separation from Leopoldina Naudet who was called by the Lord to become the foundress of another Institute for which she was preparing secretly"<sup>11</sup> the group of her companions who were to be transferred to other premises. Magdalene will even keep from Msgr. Pacetti what she clearly suspects is happening in San Giuseppe's<sup>12</sup>. Another cross which she had personally taken on was to settle the agreement for the inheritance of Angioletta Guarnieri. She also had to find new vocations for the growing responsibilities which had to be met in the two new Houses. Msgr. Pacetti had suggested to her: "... if the Sisters of Charity of Don Pietro Leonardi cease to exist as a group, give some attention to those from Brescia and also to some others but do not decide anything. As for other companions do what you think best in the Lord's sight"<sup>13</sup>.

## AGAIN AT VENICE

**12.** I returned to Venice bringing with me two new Sisters. As we approached the city I invited them to invoke St. Lawrence Giustiniani, Patron of the city, to obtain from the Lord the grace to work much and well, and for Him alone.

**13.** While I was praying, in the usual way I was given the assurance that I was doing the correct thing to place them under the Saint's protection because I was to remain with them only for a while as I had to leave for Rome.

<sup>8</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 14 June 1814, Ep. II/1, p. 196.

<sup>9</sup> Msgr. Pacetti, TO m.D.c., 9 July 1814, Ep. II/1, p. 197.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Durini, 12 July 1814, Ep. I, p. 392.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, Epistolario di Gaspare Bertoni, tip. Missioni Padri Stimmatini, Verona, 1954, pp. 104-105.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 21 October 1814, Ep. II/1, p. 198.

<sup>13</sup> Msgr. PACETTI to M.d.C., 9 July 1814, Ep. II/1, p. 197.



**12-13.** Magdalene informs her brother of the date of her return to Venice: "After a very good journey I was back here at Venice last Tuesday"<sup>14</sup>. The preceding Tuesday was September 13. Magdalene returns to Venice with two new companions: Arcangela Rizzini, Betta Mezzaroli cousin, and Elena Bernardi, niece of Cristina Scalfo, who will join the group of Leopoldina Naudet. Magdalene usually prays during the journey. This time they turn to St. Lawrence Giustiniani, the first Patriarch of Venice, whose feast had been celebrated on September 5. She has the inner confirmation that it was good to entrust her two companions to the protection of the Saint. Though he had lived in a very different period he had similar experiences. The presentiment that she will have to leave Venice for Rome, returns.

**14.** When I returned, due to my usual ingratitude, I allowed myself to be overcome with nostalgia for my home town which I had left. All this concerned my personal interests: fear of suffering, want of better comforts and such like.

**15.** The material situation of the Work added to my anxiety while, from the spiritual point of view, things were going well. The thought that I might have been deceived in starting the Institute here, came to my mind but I kept this to myself.

**14-15.** Magdalene had left the community of San Giuseppe in a precarious situation and the return to Venice could seem to her and others, an escape from the responsibility of facing heavy and delicate problems. Fr. Trevisani who had helped her, among other things, to settle the inheritance of Angioletta Guarnieri, in a tone veiled with reproach will write: "It has consoled me to know that Verona and San Giuseppe's live in your heart and if you wish to perform some other good in your home town in which I can help, I would thank the Lord for it"<sup>15</sup>. Even the Venice foundation was causing Magdalene problems but she revealed her anxiety to no one.

## TREADING THE WAY OF LOVE

**16.** My Director had encouraged me to tread the path of love, a motivation which more than any other sustains me. One day, I believe it was after Holy Communion, while reciting a verse regarding the love of Jesus, the Lord sweetly reproached me by more or less asking me if that was the right way of responding to His great love for me, after all that He had done for me.

**16.** A determined will to "tread the path of love" is what sustains Magdalene in all her sufferings. Father Marino da Cadore who then was directing her in her Work, had given this instruction and after sacramental Communion the Lord had

<sup>14</sup> M.d.C. to Marquis Bonifacio, 17 September 1814, Ep. III/5, p. 3955.

<sup>15</sup> Don TREVISANI, to M.d.C., 30 October 1814, ms., XXXV, A.C.R.



"sweetly reproached" her and enlightened her on the disproportion between His great and impartial love and hers. To the extent that God-Love is revealing Himself through Jesus Christ to Magdalene's spirit, humility and the capacity to return that love to her Lord, will increase. Love will become the unique purpose of her life. In the conclusion of the Unabridged Rules she will thus write to her daughters: "Love the Lord very very much... love with a generous spirit. love

17. This rebuke left me sad, but at peace. As it is my nature to respond to all those who are good to me, I came to understand a little through the grace of prayer, about the exquisite charity of the Heart of the Lord and afflicted after so many proofs of love, on the spur of the moment I replied: "If then I am so ungrateful, which is true, will I be saved?"

18. To which the Lord replied that these are scruples and that my way of proceeding is not one of love.

19. For two days I remained sad for my lack of response and in my eagerness to do well I nearly forgot everything about my home town. embraces all things"<sup>16</sup>.

**17-19.** The pain that followed the reprimand of the Lord for her lack of love is borne in peace but it is so intense that it endures for two days, so much so that Magdalene forgets her homesickness and the problems at Verona. In her fear of whether she will be saved the Lord gives her an inner understanding that eternal salvation is one thing and the generosity of her love is another.

20. Some days later, while I was receiving the sacred Host, I was unexpectedly seized by such an impulse of love - I cannot express in words - something like love towards God. Due to its force I could hardly breathe and I found myself very embarrassed fearing that it might be noticed by others as I was then in a public church.

21. I had to muster up all my strength but such was the vehemence of my sentiments that I thought my bosom would burst.

**20-21.** Magdalene experiences more frequently manifestations of union with God after sacramental Communion. Jesus in the Eucharist waits for His spouse to pour out His love. "Inherent in man's nature" writes D. Barsotti, "is the desire for God but in the Eucharist, it is God Himself who becomes the desire of man and the hunger of man becomes so inextinguishable because it has the measure of God Himself"<sup>17</sup>. The phenomenon described here has all the savour of a rapture from which Magdalene cannot free herself. She finds herself "very embarrassed" because it occurs in a public church. She is able to control herself barely enough to endure the "vehemence" of that Divine love which leaves her breathless and removes her natural strength.

<sup>16</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, p. 165.

<sup>17</sup> D. BARSOTTI, *La Vita in Cristo*, Morcelliana, Brescia, p. 147.



**22.** After that impulse had subsided a little, I fully realized that something could have been manifested outwardly and it seemed to me right and almost necessary to recover from my initial bewilderment.

**23.** As I recall, I did not have any physical strength to unite myself interiorly to the Lord so I abandoned my soul into the hands of God that He might do with it whatever He pleased. I then remained very recollected and still which is unlike my habitual self, that tends to be very distracted; but this recollection helped me to rest for I found myself greatly weakened.

**22-23.** The effect of that sudden impulse of love, is her total abandonment into the hands of the Lord and a deep and unusual recollection of the spirit and an interior union with God, always more intimate and restful.

**24.** As soon as I returned home I was surprised at a fault I committed. I had become impatient in having to correct a companion. I recomposed myself immediately by the grace of the divine mercy, nevertheless I was in future, more careful than before.

**24.** The fault of impatience which Magdalene commits on her return home, in correcting one of her companions, shows that when Divine favours cease, the person can at once experience her own fragility. Thus comments St. Teresa: "Whether we like it or not, we should recognise that the Master is someone else, that these graces come from Him and that we can do nothing. In this way the soul continues to root itself all the more in deep humility"<sup>18</sup>.

**25.** The following day, while at prayer, I was overcome again by feelings of love, but not so intensely as on the previous day. Even though I am being tempted strongly against faith, it seems to me that I love the Lord with great tenderness. In spite of the fact that I love Him with all my heart, when it comes to reality, my actions are incoherent; neither do I practise humility nor am I strong in suffering.

**25.** Less violently than the day before, her feelings of love towards God continue and are alternated by "strong temptations against faith" and the awareness of the incoherence between the lively desire of loving God and the concrete practice of virtue such as humility and fortitude in suffering. This is the anguish of the saints who feel themselves all the more powerless to live according to the demands of a love that transcends every human goal and can only be realized in a gradual conformity with the sentiments of Christ, who alone is able to return God's love with the heart of man.

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<sup>18</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., pp. 190-191.





## INCREASE OF FAITH

26. Because I have not written for more than a year, I do not recall things clearly except for what I have outlined above. Anyway it seems that my method of prayer is more or less the same as it used to be. Normally, I behave with the Lord in a familiar way, so as to say, but without any particular feelings. In fact, rather frequently I find myself cold and distracted.

26. Magdalene started writing the Memoirs in obedience to Msgr. Pacetti who instructed her to do so, in 1814. The facts of the period that had to be recalled were quite distant. Magdalene focuses the Memoirs on the development of the Work and not on her own life and commences from the year 1788-89. While she is writing her Memoirs, she tends to describe the more recent facts but never assumes the style of a diary. Even now events are faint in her memory because she has not written "for more than a year". "Here Magdalene re-examines the feelings of love as they repeat themselves more or less frequently and in relation to the before and to the after of the peak experience of union she had in the past. We are in the full bloom of the interior life where everything is renewed without repetition just as the lustre and hues differ at dawn and sunset on the horizon. Magdalene's interior world rotates around God who is Sun and the centre of attraction: and while in this orbit she must experience the darkness of night and the light of day. A description follows of certain sentiments of affections, which alternate with painful temptations of faith that are associated with a re-awakening of memories and of the resolution of "Alone with God alone"<sup>19</sup>.

27. The past experiences were different and they lasted more or less according to my various duties or perhaps in proportion to the faults which I committed.

28. I do not even remember of having had great interior urges either regarding the Institute or myself.

29. My temptations against faith, so frequent in the past have somewhat subsided, and they return only occasionally, but as compared to the past they are of short duration.

27-29. With the alternation of days with phenomena more or less already described, the novelty that Magdalene experiences now is that her temptations against faith are less frequent and of shorter duration. It is an evident sign that her faith is growing. After such personal experiences, like a true spiritual mistress, she could thus exhort her daughters: "... God puts you in the sweet necessity to seek Him alone and to seek Him in the dark night of faith which is also the most reliable way"<sup>20</sup>. And to another: "The Lord has declared that He wants to wed His spouses in faith"<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> T. M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 437.

<sup>20</sup> M.d.C., to C. Carminati, 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1175.

<sup>21</sup> M.d.C., to R. Polli, 1 September 1827, Ep. III/5, 4094.



30. However in spite of their brevity they are very intense, especially the last one; I cannot say whether this is due to the fact that I had accustomed myself to do without them or whether they are really stronger now than before for I seem to be unable to bear them.

30. She specifies, however, that such temptations against faith are and seem to be very strong compared with those of the past. Thus comments T.M. Piccari: "The temptations against faith, after the previous consolations make her feel greatly the sudden change between the suffering of "the night" and the comfort of "the day" passed in close union with God. What suffering it must be to think of her own life as madness and at the same time pray to a Being who, in reality, seemed non-existent"<sup>22</sup>.

31. With regard to my vocation I am always very happy though I am not quite responding to it as I should; the office of the Superior is a heavy one for me and I see myself performing poorly in it.

32. Concerning my vocation, after having embraced this one I do not have the least desire for any other, as it used to happen at San Giuseppe's. I am convinced that it is in this that I have to sanctify myself, even though I must admit that I have failed to do so up to now.

31-32. Even her vocation is now steadier compared with the period when she was in the Retreat of San Giuseppe's. It is a statement worth noting because even though the Work in the two cities of Verona and Venice has not yet been consolidated, Magdalene feels strongly that she and her companions must strive for sanctification which is the primary aim of her Institute. She had written repeatedly in the Rules: "The primary aim of the Institute is to work at one's own sanctification in fulfilling the two precepts of charity and in the imitation of our Divine Saviour"<sup>23</sup>.

## PHENOMENA OF SUPERNATURAL INSIGHT

33. At present, if I have any enlightenment concerning future events, they are superficial and fleeting, even though frequent.

34. Once they were rarer but so precise as to leave me without any shadow of a doubt. Now I experience them more often, but they are superficial and other than paying little attention to them, or discussing them as I used to do, because of obedience, I do not even bother about them.

<sup>22</sup> T. M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 441, n. 160.

<sup>23</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, pp. 106-107.



At one time these presentiments were so clear that I could not in any way have doubted about them.

**33-34.** "At present...": Magdalene is covering the same period of what she lives and what she writes. We are at the end of 1814. She describes how the phenomena of supernatural insight come true in her: "... they are superficial and fleeting even though frequent". She recognises that the past experiences were rarer but more intense, clearer and indubitable. She concludes with an interior attitude of absolute indifference: "... at present I do not even bother about them". Numerous were the testimonies given by various persons at the beginning of the process of beatification and canonization of Magdalene in regard to her gift of clairvoyance<sup>24</sup>.

**35.** Nevertheless some days ago, as I attended Mass and after receiving Holy Communion, I was rather apprehensive as one of my companions had developed a fever and for this I prayed to the Lord. I had a slight urge to give her some relics of the Holy Father.

**36.** I was doubtful whether to do it, knowing that if she recovered my companions would comment on it. Still I thought it best to do so and I gave her a small piece of paper belonging to the Holy Father, soaked in water and I told her to get up because it was a feast day.

**35-36.** A profoundly convinced faith is always expressed in concrete gestures. Three events prepare Magdalene's gesture: the already publicly-acclaimed fame of the sanctity of Pope Pius VII<sup>25</sup>, the sickness of one of her companions and her personal experience of having obtained some graces through the merits of the Holy Father. In the beginning she is somewhat hesitant but after Holy Communion she is more determined and, trusting in Divine goodness, she makes the patient drink the unusual "medicine" and commands her to get up from bed. Msgr. Pacetti had sent her a piece of paper used by Pius VII, with these words: "This piece of paper belonged to the Holy Father. Preserve it until I can give you something else of his. He is a great saint. He has performed a miracle on a mute from birth who now hears and speaks. I am a witness of it"<sup>26</sup>.

**38.** Meanwhile my cherished desire to go to Rome kept on recurring and during prayer I thought I understood only superficially, that I would have something similar to do also in Florence.

**39.** On another occasion, I believe still during prayer, Our Lord made me understand that I should no longer be concerned about Rome. He would provide for everything without my help. With this He removed from my mind the

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Positio super virtutibus*, pp. 297-299, tip. Pallotta, Roma, 1905.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Msgr. PACETTI, M.d.C., 9 July 1814, Ep. II/1, p. 197.

<sup>26</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 18 May 1814, Ep. II/1, p. 710.



idea, the longing, the desire and almost the very memory of Rome.

**38-39.** The frequent desire to go to Rome was conditioned by the re-entry of Pope Pius VII from exile. The meeting of Msgr. Pacetti with the Holy Father at Loreto (May 1814) raised her hopes<sup>27</sup> but nothing was concluded at that time or later. Even the idea of a foundation at Florence came to nothing owing to various circumstances<sup>28</sup>.

Later, always in prayer, the Lord made her understand that it was not Magdalene, but He alone who would accomplish whatever was to be done in Rome. From that very moment it was the Lord Himself who "removed the idea, the longing, the desire and almost the very memory of Rome". Half a century after her death and precisely in the year 1885 the Daughters of Charity will open a house in Rome and eventually establish many others in the outskirts.

**40.** When I heard about the departure of the Apostolic Administrator of Venice I was saddened, and while praying, I seemed to understand by means of a shallow, fleeting image that the pending matter would be favourably concluded: I referred it to the one who was directing me, informing him of the superficiality of my present enlightenment.

**40.** The point refers to an incident which precedes May 4, 1814, when the Apostolic Administrator Msgr. Stefano Bonsignori, a supporter of her Work, leaves Venice. Always during prayer, Magdalene is assured by the Lord that "the pending matter", that is, the approval of the Institute would be happily resolved notwithstanding contrary opinions.

**41.** At the same time and in the same way, I was reassured that a question concerning a companion of mine which threatened to end in a lawsuit would conclude with a settlement. This too, I confided to the one who directed me.

**41.** Another light came to Magdalene even before leaving for Verona to finalize the affairs pertaining to the inheritance of Angioletta Guarnieri, which had been unsettled since 1812. She will write to C. Durini in August, 1815: "... at last back in Venice... The Lord gave me the grace to finalize the affairs of Angioletta in Verona, something very much needed for her tranquillity"<sup>29</sup>.

**42.** But these are experiences of a lesser degree. They are not as profound as they were in the past and to which, not even now, do I give much attention. However with regard to the first time about which I had prayed much, I felt inwardly reassured notwithstanding the contrary things which were said to me.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Msgr. PACETTI, o.c., M.d.C., 14 June 1814, Ep. II/1, p. 196.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. T. M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 436.

<sup>29</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 1 August 1815, Ep. I, p. 413.



**42.** Magdalene returns to examine and compare the present phenomena of clairvoyance with the past ones based on her personal experience. The deep or shallow insights of “before” could be said to be gifts from above only when events confirmed them. And these events came to pass. It is a Biblical principle: “How can we recognise an oracle which the Lord has spoken? Know that even though a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord if his oracle has not been fulfilled or verified, it is an oracle which the Lord did not speak”<sup>30</sup>.

Thus confirms St. Ignatius regarding prophecies: “Spiritual and prudent persons suspend their judgement and without condemnation, wait for them to be fulfilled before considering them as certain”<sup>31</sup>. But Magdalene reacts with holy indifference to all these insights: “not even now do I give much attention”. This expression implies her detachment from the gifts, even if they are extraordinary and from the Lord. Her heart and her spirit are turned towards the living God and to Him alone.

## Chapter IX LIVING ONLY FOR HIM

### IN THE MIDST OF INTERIOR TRIALS

**1.** Three or four times or even more, during these past days after my last Communion, I was overcome by tender sentiments of love for God while I was praying. I do not remember however, if these were bringing me each time, to interior union with God, as usual. I think that in the past such sentiments, almost always, were preceded or followed by it.

**2.** On one of these occasions, even though an intimate union did not take place, the strength of the affection was so overpowering that soon after, when I went to have my meal in the dining room, I found it difficult to eat. However to avoid drawing attention, I ate what I could.

**1-2.** Very seldom Magdalene pin-points the periods when these interior experiences she described take place. G. Stofella indicates that they occurred in October 1814, after she had returned from Verona to Santa Lucia<sup>1</sup>. Here the Saint re-examines her feelings of love which precede or follow “the interior union” and describes how at times they are so intense that eating becomes difficult. When one is sated with the abundance of spiritual gifts, the body too, greatly benefits.

**3.** Following that day, typical on similar occasions, I felt myself relieved of crosses of every kind. Other days passed by in great peace and tranquillity both in prayer and in everything else though I was constantly aware of my misery and nothingness.

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<sup>30</sup> Deut. 18, 21-22.

<sup>31</sup> S. IGNAZIO DI LOYOLA, *Esercizi Spirituali*, Ed. Paoline, Roma 1980, p. 283, n. 3.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 296.



4. And I wondered how it could be possible for a man to be proud. If I had the opportunity, I would always choose to be in this frame of mind during prayer, because it leads to humility.

**3-4.** Before the ever-more luminous greatness of God Magdalene's spiritual progress is a journey of descent into her nothingness. While God fills her with His love, He lightens her of "crosses of every kind", gives her a sense of humility that is rooted in love and instils calm and a profound peace in her prayer time as well as in her everyday life.

5. After these days I was harassed by violent temptations against faith, their intensity was so acute that I was incapable of making one single act of faith. Everything in fact, including what I have just said about my prayer, appeared to me but an illusion and madness.

6. All this vexed me and I had no desire to see nor deal with any person, not even with my confessor so great was my dejection.

7. Given my temperament, and having to live with my companions and others, I took care not to let anything be noticed outwardly. I was aware however that in correcting my companions I became easily annoyed and impatient.

**5-7.** Another dark night descends painfully into Magdalene's spirit. Violent temptations against faith immerse her in total darkness. All the past radiant experiences of God and the joy they induced seem to her to be fruit of "illusion and madness". Vexation, disgust and a feeling of depression influence the relationship with her companions with whom she must needs remain. Nothing of this hurricane against her faith is outwardly revealed. St. John of the Cross comments: "...the soul is deprived of natural and reasonable light to climb the divine ladder of faith which ascends and penetrates even to the depth of God"<sup>2</sup>.

8. A few days later while praying after Holy Communion, I felt myself gradually becoming united with our Lord. On this and other occasions, He made me recall many past events.

9. I was also dejected to see how the Lord had not allowed the material needs of our Work to be met. In this state of complete isolation, the verse "*Torcular calcavi solus*" kept coming back to me with insistence.

**8-9.** The Bible verse: "*Torcular calcavi solus*" surfaces in Magdalene's memory every time the interior and exterior trials leave her isolated, and she suffers more intensely from the solitude the Lord has allowed. All the same a hint of dawn lights up the horizon in the expression "gradually becoming united with the Lord".

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<sup>2</sup> S. GIOVANNI DELLA CROCE, o.c., p. 69.





10. As on other occasions, He made me understand that He wanted to be for me the Absolute One in my life, and that I should not rely on anybody else, but my companions and myself ought to seek Him alone. At the same time, I was also reminded of the other text: "*De torrente in via bibet*"<sup>3</sup>.

11. All this meant that I have to bear in mind that nothing in life is permanent and moreover I must cling to God alone, loving and wanting no other but Him.

**10-11.** Another Bible verse that keeps coming back to her is: "*De torrente in via bibet*"<sup>3</sup>. Like a pilgrim in a star-less desert, Magdalene makes for the murmuring sound of the water she can hear at a distance but not see. Christ is expecting her on the other side of the desert giving her inner strength and the knowledge that He wants to be her one and only support.

### IN THE MIDST OF DIVINE CONSOLATIONS

12. During the last of these experiences of prayer, I found myself interiorly united to the Lord, though not in any way being prevented from activity, as it nearly always was in the past. At the moment prayer was about to end or before leaving the Church, I felt compelled to rouse myself as though awakening from sleep.

13. This time the Lord confirmed to me what I have already said above. In addition He made me realise how everything in this world is of relative importance and when death comes, all will be over and I shall at last be united with Him.

14. My old yearning for Heaven returned. I do not remember having asked for it, afraid as I was to fail in obedience. I was determined not to worry about anything and abandon myself totally to the Lord.

**12-14.** Magdalene is in church immersed in prayer. "Towards the end" she writes, "I felt compelled to rouse myself as though awakening from sleep". From which world is she awakening? The Lord, in prayer, confirms and assures her that the dawn of eternity is not far away and that soon she will be joined to Him forever. The desire for Heaven is rekindled in her heart and she decides to abandon herself "totally" to Him.

15. As far as I can remember I begged Him to grant me several graces but almost all of them spiritual. With deep feeling then I asked Him for Himself, not knowing well how

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<sup>3</sup> Ps. 110, 7.



to explain with words what I intended as it was the result of a certain feeling which now I am at a loss to explain.

16. I only remember reading in the life of Blessed Veronica Giuliani, the reply she gave our Lord when He offered her something: "It is You I want". I think it was only then that I had a better understanding of what the Saint really meant when she uttered these words.

17. I remained utterly indifferent, and still am, about everything that is not "*seeking and doing only for the Lord*".

**15-17.** She asks the Lord for "several spiritual graces" and imitates St. Veronica Giuliani, whose life she had read, in asking for "Himself", above all else. In effect, she wanted to seek and do everything for the Lord on this earth, but always with Him present in her heart. The cry of the holy Capuchin nun: "It is You I want!" resounded within her because it was also hers.

18. On the strength of this prayer I find it easier now to dictate the meditations to my companions who are doing the Spiritual Exercises.

19. This feeling is so deeply ingrained in me that I almost fear the possibility, so to say, of having some other attachment other than God.

**18-19.** There arises the fear that something could come between her and the Lord that would prevent this exclusivity. "God alone is Magdalene's heritage, testament, wealth, and wisdom. It also is the ideal and the motto of her Institute"<sup>4</sup>.

20. I spent a few days in this frame of mind and then, no doubt because of my faults, I reverted to my previous state. Gradually the intensity of my feelings wore off, and for several days I felt so deserted and in such great temptation against faith that I no longer knew what to do neither in prayer nor in dealing with people.

21. Had I followed my inclination I would have refused to see anyone, though, apart from some moments of annoyance with my companions, I managed not to show any thing outwardly.

**20-21.** Darkness returns. Once more there are temptations, weariness and difficulties in dealing with affairs outside the Institute. St. John of the Cross thus explains this alternation of light and darkness, of Divine consolations and interior trials: "It is clear that Faith is the dark night for the soul and as night it illuminates it. And the more it obscures the soul, the more it infuses its light, so that by

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<sup>4</sup> T.M. PICCARI, o.c., p.13.



blinding it gives light, according to the saying of Isaiah: If you do not believe, you will not have light”<sup>5</sup>.

## ONE OF THE MONTHLY RETREATS

**22.** I decided to make the usual day of recollection for a special purpose even though I knew it would be boring. However as it concerned our Work I decided to do it all the same.

**22.** We are in mid January 1815. Magdalene decides to make the monthly day of recollection for the sake of her Work rather than for personal spiritual benefit. What was her problem? She was concerned with the outcome of the monasteries that were suppressed by Napoleon after the Congress of Vienna (June 9, 1815) and what would become of the Monasteries of Santa Lucia in Venice and San Giuseppe in Verona. So on January 7, 1815 she wrote to her brother asking for advice: “You already know that I rented this monastery of Santa Lucia with the hope... to be able to obtain it gratuitously and permanently from the present government... I am under pressure, almost constrained, to take steps so that this place will not be assigned to the religious at the end of the Congress”. Nine nuns, from the greater number that was expelled from Santa Lucia’s were awaiting to return. Magdalene thus continues: “I would like you to advise me as to what you think I should do”. She concludes with: “...let me confide in your friendship and goodness. As the Lord alone has done everything in this Work, using me as His instrument, so be it in His plan, God alone will do everything to bring it to completion if He so desires, ... I am so accustomed to see everything done by the Lord alone that I always fear on my part to ruin His designs”<sup>6</sup>.

**23.** I received Holy Communion with the same disposition of the preceding days, but as soon as I began to pray I was seized by one of my customary transports of love towards God.

**24.** At first, I was still immersed in sadness and I failed in obedience by longing for death and Heaven. But I soon regained myself and spent the whole period of prayer crying, initially in sorrow for my past defects and then the impetus of love was such that it robbed me of all my strength. For the next two days I felt as if I had developed a high fever.

**23-24.** She begins the day of recollection with the idea that she would be very annoyed at the thought of all that was preoccupying her regarding their Work. During prayer Magdalene is overcome “by one of her customary transports of love towards God”. The Lord was waiting to dissipate her gloominess, and dissolve her

<sup>5</sup> S. GIOVANNI DELLA CROCE, o.c., p. 75.

<sup>6</sup> M.d.C., to Marquis Bonifacio, 7 January 1815, Ep. I, pp. 553-555.



into tears of repentance in answer to His love so great, that she had to remain for two days as though she had a high fever.

25. My past desires to work for the Glory of God and to desire nothing but Him alone, were renewed. It was a considerable effort for me not to yearn for Paradise, having had a presentiment that a long time would pass before I would reach it.

26. The intensity of my feelings was so great - I think I was really sincere at the time - that I offered myself to the Lord to suffer in whatever way and for any length of time He might want, and even to bear alone, the pains of hell, provided He delivered me from falling into any fault, however small, and on condition that He be always served.

**25-26.** In this renewed desire for Heaven, which she perceives to be still very far away, one can see an obvious sign of spiritual progress in her interior life. The repeated purifying and uplifting visits of the Lord have matured in her an unusual readiness to suffer. She offers herself in fact "to suffer anything in whatever way and for any length of time He might want". It is astonishing to read "to suffer alone" knowing that she has always abhorred suffering. Then, in a crescendo of intensity of love common to a few saints only she offers to suffer "all the pains of hell provided He... be served". And for herself what does she ask? To be delivered "from falling into any fault". It is a journey of purification, of an inner transparency through which can easily be seen the profile of the Spouse with whom she often longs to identify.

27. The difference between this experience and the previous ones lies in their duration. Normally they last no more than twenty minutes, and if after that the intensity of my affection did come back, it was only for a very short spell.

28. But this time it lasted for one hour and a half, and as usual, I was left relieved of every cross and ready to work for God and to wish for nothing but Him alone.

29. At mealtime I experienced much distaste at the thought of having to sustain my body which, like a wall, separates us from God.

**27-29.** Magdalene verifies an evolving progress in her prayer. If in the past her experiences of intimacy with God lasted about twenty minutes, now they last about "one hour and a half". The effects which follow are great fortitude in bearing any type of cross, the desire to work, but above all the desire for "God alone". The body acts as an obstacle, a kind of wall between her and the lasting vision of God.



## HAS ALL THAT HAPPENED BEEN MADNESS?

**30.** Though I was extremely weak after this and it seemed to me that I would never again be able to unite myself to God, I spent a few blissful days. But I might have committed some faults.

**31.** Considering the abundance of graces received in these days, I have the impression of being worse than before because I am suffering such temptations against faith all day long that I doubt of God's existence.

**30-31.** After the above-described feelings of her offering to God and the ineffable transports of love, it seems to Magdalene as though she has reached the culmination of interior union with God and she spends days as if in Heaven. But comparing those days with the actual state of affairs she discovers herself to be "worse than before". The light in which God had immersed her and favoured her, has shown up her normal human fragility and the dark night that is awaiting her.

**32.** All that pertains to faith seems to me to have the fragile reality of a dream; all the same I continue to work as though nothing had happened.

**32.** The temptations against faith re-emerge and are pursuing her. Her faith appears to "have the fragile reality of a dream". The characteristic note of this renewed experience is an increase of inner strength. On the surface Magdalene lets nothing out and continues "to work as if nothing had happened". The presence-absence of God, unknown to her, sustains her with His grace.

**33.** Though I had very little time for prayer, it seems to me I am nearly always praying and loving a God who does not exist; and all the past events also seem like madness to me.

**33.** If God is the "nothing" of all that exists and His reality escapes the understanding of all our natural capacities<sup>7</sup>, faith cannot be sustained unless the soul agrees with what it hears<sup>8</sup>. Nothing is more frightful for Magdalene than praying to a God who "seems" to be non-existent. She lives this horrible experience feeling that everything is collapsing within her, God included. In the description of these states of mind a point to be emphasised is the frequent repetition of the verb "it seems to me". In effect, she only "seems" to pray and love a God who is non-existent. A sacramental Communion or a prolonged period of prayer is enough to open up unexpected horizons of light and to kindle a fire of love to the highest temperature. But, in the meantime looking back on the past (the verb "seems" is repeated), everything "seems like madness". Thus in similar states, St. Teresa expresses herself: "The intelligence is dimmed; I was debating with myself with a thousand doubts and anxiety till it seemed I did not know or

<sup>7</sup> Cf. S. GIOVANNI DELLA CROCE, o.c., p. 73.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Rm. 10, 17.



understand what was happening in me and perhaps everything was an illusion"<sup>9</sup>. And Teresa was not lagging behind in the ways of the spirit!

**34.** There is only one thing I perceive, understand and feel with pleasure in this frame of mind and that is to be completely isolated, for both my interior and exterior life. It seems to me as though I have reached that point where God has so many times indicated that He wants me: alone, with Him alone.

**34.** In these moments of darkness there was only one consolation: solitude. Again Teresa writes: "When I was in this state... I desired neither to see nor to speak to anyone but to be alone with my torment which seemed to me the greatest joy that could be found in all creation"<sup>10</sup>. "Alone with Him alone" is for Magdalene the light in which the Lord Himself had steeped her heart and the oasis which she sometimes arrives at, in the desert of life.

**35.** The verse: "*Torcular calcavi solus*" continually comes to mind.

**36.** Occasionally I am very sad but always because I have given the Lord motives to treat me like this and also because I realize that I never serve Him in the way He would want me to.

**35-36.** In her examination of conscience Magdalene attributes the periods of loneliness and darkness not to a mysterious and transforming action of God, but to "motives" which she herself has given the Lord by not serving Him as He would like. "The examination of conscience regarding her relationship with God", T.M. Piccari writes, "reveals in the most simple and pointed way the typical qualities of the soul of this humble and zealous Mother"<sup>11</sup>.

## THE RULES FOR THE INSTITUTE

**37.** As I was bound by obedience during this period to write the Rules of the Institute, for a long time I did not have the opportunity to pray as I also had to attend to the affairs of our Work.

**37.** The first draft of the Rules were dictated to Don Federico Bonlini from April to August 1812, during her second stay at Venice<sup>12</sup>. In this period, which stretches from the end of 1814 to September 1815, in obedience to Msgr. Pacetti, Magdalene finishes writing the *Rules* without the knowledge of her companions<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 293.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ibid, p. 287.

<sup>11</sup> T. M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 442.

<sup>12</sup> T. M. PICCARI, o.c., pp. 856-857.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 9 July 1814, Ep. II/1, p. 197.





The revision and final draft of the *Rules* is confirmed by two of her contemporaries, Betta Mezzaroli<sup>14</sup> and Anna Rizzi. The latter says: "...she (Magdalene) was in Venice at that period... she composed the *Rules* and specified the works of the Institute"<sup>15</sup>. In September 1815, the *Rules* were already in the hands of Msgr. Pacetti who writes to Magdalene: "I am going through your papers. There are only two very small points but I shall leave them as they are for I feel that God may want them so. However He will let them be known through His Vicar. For the rest I am content that everything is fine and it has given me a true spiritual satisfaction"<sup>16</sup>. The secretaries can be identified from a letter Magdalene writes to E. Bernardi some years later: "Even today I cannot write... as I am always busy to put in order these Papers which Don Bonlini, you and I have written"<sup>17</sup>.

**38.** Moreover during this same period my health was rather poor. This practically compelled me to remain without Holy Communion.

**39.** I nearly lost the thought of prayer itself and wrote everything as it came to my mind. I remained in doubt as to whether it was really the Lord who wanted the things as I had written them or whether they were the result of my imagination.

**40.** Regarding these fears, I consulted the person who is directing me now and to whom I had submitted a great part of what I had written. I was assured that it was in accordance with the Will of the Lord.

**38-40.** In the same period she is completing the *Rules*, she is suffering from bad health. Her prayer-time is discontinued so much so that, she herself confirms that she is losing "the thought of prayer". Regarding the completion of the *Rules* of the Institute, Magdalene modestly declares of having written every thing "as it came to her mind", while F. Bonlini, the secretary, relates that she had dictated the *Rules* as if "they were drawn from the spirit of the Lord"<sup>18</sup>. To her friend C. Durini she will write later: "...I confess that I found it extraordinary when I was told that the Papers were alright. I wrote down the few things that came to my mind and I wrote them only after a few years of experience in this vocation, without any particular skill and without much peace around me. I then sent everything to the person whom you know, for him to read and correct"<sup>19</sup>. Doubting whether what she had dictated was really the Will of God or the result of her own thoughts, she consults Fr. Marino da Cadore who assures her that they correspond with God's Will. Msgr. Pacetti also confirms: "I have finished seeing the Papers (*Rules*). They are very good except for two small points which I have indicated to you; however I think they should be left as they are, so as to

<sup>14</sup> Cf. T.M. PICCARI, o.c., P. 376.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ibid, p. 847.

<sup>16</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 21 September 1815, ms. A2, XXXI, A.C.R.

<sup>17</sup> M.d.C., to E. Bernardi, 30 January 1819, Ep. III/1, p. 242.

<sup>18</sup> F. Bonlini, in T>M> PICCARI, O.C., P. 857.

<sup>19</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 19 November 1816, Ep. I, p. 458



know better the Will of the Lord... I am pleased that nothing has been omitted. Let us bless the Lord for having given you light"<sup>20</sup>.

41. After completing the draft, it was the beginning of Holy Week and I could not regain a prayerful disposition.

42. On Good Friday or perhaps Maundy Thursday, I felt the desire to pray for the needs of the Church. I was illuminated on the sins committed by mankind and the offence God receives from such sins.

43. I was greatly afflicted by perplexity because I longed for mercy for the sinners but dared not ask for it, seeing that the outraged one is God Himself. If it had been possible, I would have hidden myself from my companions to weep freely.

**41-43.** Magdalene "completes" the Rules on Palm Sunday. It was March 19, 1815. She could now draw a long sigh of relief not only because she could send the already completed work to Msgr. Pacetti in good time, but above all, she could resume her "prayerful disposition". During the three days preceding Easter (26 March) she immerses herself in prayer; full of anguish and moved to pity she pleads with the Lord to show His infinite mercy on the many and serious sins that are committed in the world. In the historical background, Napoleon with his hundred days of triumph is preparing destruction and bloodshed.

44. Continuing in this frame of mind I thought of attempting a way to procure the conversion of sinners, that of writing two letters to a person whom I judged suited to cooperate in this matter.

45. I hesitated to do so, fearing that both the writer and the addressee might think that the letters had been written for supernatural motives. On the other hand, if I omitted to write, I would have failed to respond to an impulse which seemed to me as God-inspired.

46. I continued to pray, wrote the letters and asked for my confessor's advice. I read out the contents giving him a simple explanation of the matter. He told me to post them which I did.

**44-46.** The letter which Magdalene writes after consulting with her confessor from whom she seeks confirmation regarding her inspiration, is dated March 25, 1815, Easter Vigil and is addressed to Count Giacomo Mellerio, Head of the Moravian Chancery, who is in direct contact with the Emperor, Francis I. Many of the thoughts expressed in the following letter are the object of her prayers during that Holy Week. She writes: "... as I know you as a person of piety... moved by an urgency for a special prayer... which was warmly recommended by our Sovereign Majesty (Francis I), I have determined to write... I confess that I am

<sup>20</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, TO m. D. C., 1 October 1815, ms. A2, XXXI, A.C.R.



only fearful of the just disdain of God, who must be very irritated with our common sins. There is no doubt that prayer... has at all times disarmed the hand of God... it is a great suffering to see many souls on the way to eternal perdition, filling the Chalice of Divine justice with their sins and with their damnation they bring down fresh punishments"<sup>21</sup>.

47. I was still feeling dejected, until Easter Sunday when, to console myself I began to think of God's perfect happiness, which nothing could disturb or diminish.

48. I was again reminded of Heaven, as on other occasions, though it was not a deep impression, and I recalled some passages.

**47-48.** The grief which afflicted Magdalene throughout Holy Week while reflecting on the offences God receives from the sins of men, does not abate with the pealing bells of Easter. Not even the thought of the everlasting joy of God and eternity succeeds in changing her sadness. "The offence God receives from sin" (n. 42) grips her spirit as a wrench and if it were not for the fear of being noticed, she would have wept for the deep sorrow she felt.

49. Those had been holy but superficial thoughts. Even my desires for Heaven had not been all that intense; they were stirred up more by pious reflections at prayer rather than infused into the soul by God, as on other occasions.

50. Here are some: "*Quemadmodum desidera etc.*"; "*Videbitur Deus deorum in Sion*". Once again I was pained at the idea of being separated from Paradise and fearing that my life would be prolonged, I shifted to the other psalm: "*Heu mihi quia incolatus meus, etc.*".

51. Then, lowering my eyes I saw myself enveloped in great darkness; all that was on earth seemed plunged in darkness and only the usual longings remained; and when in prayer I reflected on this darkness, I used to repeat: "*Multum incola fuit mea*".

**49-51.** Magdalene compares the "holy but superficial" thoughts about Heaven, on this Easter Sunday with the previous ones "infused into the soul by God" and remains like a thirsty person before a painting of water. God, Heaven and Paradise are all still far away and she cries out with the psalmist: "Like the deer that yearns for running streams..."<sup>22</sup>. "They are happy, whose strength is in you, in whose hearts are the roads to Sion. As they go through the bitter valley they make it a place of springs. They walk with ever growing strength, they will see the God of gods"<sup>23</sup>. And again: "Alas, I abide as a stranger"<sup>24</sup>! Heaven is desirable

<sup>21</sup> M.d.C., to Count Giacomo Mellerio, 25 March 1815, Ep. II/2, pp. 1317-1318.

<sup>22</sup> Ps. 42,1.

<sup>23</sup> Ps. 84, 6-8.

<sup>24</sup> Ps. 120, 5.



but for the moment unattainable, the earth is encompassed "in great darkness". It is the song of the exile in a foreign land.

## Chapter X

### THIRD FOUNDATION: MILAN

#### IS IT THE WILL OF GOD?

1. During the days that followed, I was reflecting on my duty to seek God alone and seek Him in humiliation, a duty which I do not really fulfill and I recommended to Him our new project - or so I thought - of a foundation in Milan.

1. Magdalene questions herself whether her friend Carolina's proposal to open a house in Milan, when they last met in Venice (January 1815), was really the Will of God. "If I were free as when we first met I would be of help in everyway"<sup>1</sup>, she writes to her as a friend. But the Foundress is now carrying the weight of two houses, in two different cities, not yet firmly established. How can she think about another in Milan? It might have been a good opportunity to "seek God alone and seek Him in humiliation" but prudence did not suggest such a hasty undertaking. And again in a following letter: "I do not desire anything but to do the Will of God and to see Him glorified. To be truthful, I believe that it would not be practicable for me to come for your school... at this moment I cannot think of doing it"<sup>2</sup>. A foundation by all means, but when to start and how to do it, must be worked out with the Lord. Magdalene is not only a Foundress but the spouse of the Crucified Christ and only with Him can the joy of a new spiritual maternity be realised.

2. Right from the start I was of the idea that the new foundation from its very beginning would be one that promised much poverty, humiliation and great sufferings. So for the first time I felt a certain liking for it.

2. "A certain liking" for the foundation in Milan was cherished by Magdalene and her friend Carolina. Whether it was also in God's plan was a point to be clarified. The time and manner were still hidden. In the meantime Magdalene prepares her spirit to receive new humiliations and "great sufferings".

3. I was resolved more than ever, to remain in obscurity and try to capture that proper spirit which I had never had the courage to make my own and which the Lord had long been asking me.

3. The first and foremost aim of the Foundress is to make sure that the right spirit will animate the new Institute, as desired by the Lord. From the start she had written to her friend, C. Durini along those lines: "The infinite charity of the Lord... will give me the grace to lend myself to all that is possible for the service

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<sup>1</sup> M. d. C., to C. Durini, 4 March, 1815, Ep. I, p. 396.

<sup>2</sup> M. d. C., to C. Durini, 18 March 1815, Ep. I, p. 397.



and for the good of people. I would not know how to do it nor could I, if not according to the appropriate spirit and the perfect system of this Institute”<sup>3</sup>.

4. In the meantime I was praying hard to be able to do this according to the Divine Will. At the same time I lived in fear lest the devil might try to remove me from this place, where it appears that the Lord is being served more than before. As we become better known in our vocation, we are more in demand by Priests of the neighbouring churches for the instruction of the poor.

4. Magdalene’s fear is that the invitation to set up a foundation in Milan could be a trick thought up by the common enemy to remove her from Venice where the Government was taking serious interest in her Work and where the school, religious instruction and assistance to the infirm was very much appreciated and in great demand. To ward off such fear, Magdalene intensified prayer in her own communities. To Carolina she also writes: “... pray for your Magdalene and get prayers said so that we can do the Will of God and do it well”<sup>4</sup>.

5. Another day, while absorbed in prayer, I was drawn into an intimate union with God, not however in the customary manner. I was united to Him as spirit, in the usual form of the Sun. Let me explain it this way. It is as when a person brings an iron object to a fire. The iron becomes incandescent and yet it does not become one with the fire.

6. This prayer was not accompanied by my usual impulses and transports of love but it left my soul peaceful, filled with consolation and strengthened for the rest of the day.

5-6. The type of prayer Magdalene mentions here, could have occurred towards the end of April 1815. She describes a form of interior union with God that differs from those of the past. She unites herself to God “as spirit in the usual form of the Sun”. It is the theological truth described by St. Paul: “Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him”<sup>5</sup>. And St. John of the Cross thus comments: “It is not different from the light of a star or a candle which unites itself to that of the sun. Then neither the star nor the candle shines but it is the sun that absorbs in itself every other light”<sup>6</sup>. To this image of the sun, Magdalene superimposes that of iron, when in contact with the flame, takes on all the characteristics of fire without being fused into it. Mystics use comparisons to give an approximate explanation of their mystical experiences. Peace, consolation, strength are the effects of this prayer.

7. After awhile I had to return to my town for some matters pertaining to the Institute. Once I was there, I received another small proof of God’s ever present care.

<sup>3</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 4 March 1815, Ep. I, p. 395.

<sup>4</sup> M.d.C., to Durini, 8 April 1815, Ep. I, p. 399.

<sup>5</sup> I Cor. 6, 17.

<sup>6</sup> S. GIOVANNI DELLA CROCE, o.c., p. 671.



**7.** It is the month of May 1815. Magdalene returns to Verona for some “matters pertaining to the Institute”. It is the first time she uses the term “Institute”. Until now she had always expressed herself with a more modest and less engaging term “Work”. She writes to her friend Durini on May 6: “I leave Venice today, or at the most tomorrow, for Verona”<sup>7</sup>. A happy coincidence awaits her in Verona. From May 10th-12th, His Imperial Highness, the Archduke Giovanni d’Asburgo will be a guest at Canossa Palace. On that occasion it might be possible for her to make the request for the free use of the monasteries of Santa Lucia in Venice and San Giuseppe in Verona.

**8.** I had been advised to speak with His Imperial Highness (Prince Giovanni d’Asburgo) who was then a guest of my brother’s but I met with insurmountable obstacles from the very person who should have given me his full support.

**8.** Magdalene was perhaps “advised to speak with the Prince” by Msgr. Pacetti or by the Provincial Marino da Cadore but probably found an unexpected obstacle in her brother Bonifacio, who thought his sister’s request indiscreet.

**9.** Leaving everything in God’s hands I kept my peace, confident that if it were for my good, He would have managed the matter Himself. And so He did. I could thus proceed to act as I had been encouraged to do.

**9.** Her brother’s veto does not disarm Magdalene. She simply entrusts the problem to the Lord and waits. Some hours later she was admitted to the presence of the Archduke. Thus she will relate to Count Mellerio: “When His Imperial Highness, the Archduke came to Italy, I presented him with my first appeal, at Verona in the house of my brother which he deigned to honour with his presence, ... to obtain for me from His Majesty the exemption of the rents of the two buildings... I believed, that it would suffice to request him to grant them gratuitously to the Institute of the Daughters of Charity”<sup>8</sup>.

It will be the first hopeful, but not conclusive attempt. She will come across other bureaucratic stumbling blocks.

**10.** So I continued my journey to Milan, where I felt it my responsibility to personally verify the work that had been proposed to me in this city.

**10.** On May 12, 1815 Magdalene makes the journey to Milan as planned. She writes to C. Durini through a secretary: “As our friend is unable to write, she has requested me to write on her behalf to say that she will be leaving Verona tomorrow morning and will arrive in Milan on Sunday”<sup>9</sup>. The aim of the journey is twofold, that of a possible foundation in Milan and if the political situation permitted, to go with Carolina to Genova to meet Card. Francesco Fontana and deliver to him a copy of the *Rules* that had been completed that year.

<sup>7</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 6 May 1815, Ep. I, p. 404.

<sup>8</sup> M.d.C., to Count G. Mellerio, 25 March 1818, Ep. II/1, p. 106.

<sup>9</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 11 May 1815, Ep. I, p. 405.





11. It was also my intention to go to the Holy Father and seek his opinion on some points concerning the Rules which I could not show to my Director for he was not at hand.

11. Magdalene was fostering another desire that she will clearly express a year later: "Incapacitated by serious political circumstances to communicate liberally with Canon Msgr. Pacetti, I came to Milan last May to be able to journey with you to Genoa. My hope was, that through your mediation, the Very Reverend Father Fontana would have kindly done me the favour of reviewing the Rules and of recommending me to the Holy Father. I also wanted to express to His Holiness the assurance of my unlimited obedience, likewise my humble petition on this subject"<sup>10</sup>. Pius VII had taken refuge in Genoa after the invasion of the Pontifical States by Gioacchino Murat. Only on May 22 did the Holy Father leave Genoa to return to Rome.

12. The journey to Milan was necessary indeed. Had I not gone, the premises proposed for the foundation, would have been taken and they were very unsuitable indeed.

13. I succeeded in finding a suitable one and at the same time to settle the matters concerning the Institution.

14. For the period I remained in that city and, contrary to my custom, I was prey to melancholy. I was depressed, a feeling that was already known to me and which I managed to hide from all.

12-14. The presence of Magdalene in Milan was providential. It was possible for her to find a more suitable house than the one Carolina Durini had previously found near the parish of St. Stephen. It was also possible for her to meet with the parish priest Don Francesco Zoppi, who would later become Superior and Confessor of the future Milanese community. She emphasises her profound state of "melancholy" which she experienced during her stay in Milan and seeks to hide from everybody.

15. On this occasion I hesitated to give an affirmative answer and commit myself with my friends and with that worthy parish priest who would probably be the Superior and Confessor of the new community, though my Director had instructed me to do so.

15. Notwithstanding her Director, Msgr. Pacetti's encouragement, the negotiations concerning the foundation were not finalized.

16. This depression surprised me because, humanly speaking, I could wish for nothing better as my friends had provided me with everything.

<sup>10</sup> M.d.C., Detailed Report on the Institute's origins up to 1816, to C. Durini 30 January 1816, Ep. I, p. 436.



17. It was unusual for me to have so much time for prayer and I used to stay for hours in church, but instead of praying, I felt inclined to sleep all the time.

18. Several new companions were introduced to me, and I felt especially endeared to one of them.

**16-18.** Matters in Milan could not have proceeded better; she had much more time for prayer and some young aspirants to religious life had been presented to her. Why then that deep unjustified melancholy?

19. I did not commit myself to any of them as yet, though keeping them all in consideration. I could see that, humanly speaking, Milan would afford a unique opportunity to establish the Institute in all its branches and vastness.

**19.** Faithful to the advice of Canon Pacetti: "... if you believe they are excellent, keep them in consideration"<sup>11</sup> Magdalene does not commit herself with any of the aspirants she met, even if in no city other than in Milan could she foresee a complete and wide realization of the three branches of works of charity proper to the Institute

20. The only moment of tranquillity I enjoyed was when I went with my friend to visit the shrine of Our Lady in St. Celsus' but it was not to last long.

21. I cannot really fathom the motives of my melancholy; the fact that I had to dwell among the upper class might have contributed.

**20-21.** A pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Miracles in St. Celsus' is "the only moment of tranquillity". The meeting with her beloved Mother is like reaching an oasis of peace. She tries to understand the reason for the depression which persists even after the visit. She interprets it thus: she the Marchioness, is forced to resume contact with the upper classes. The fact was that the life of the Convent had alienated her from the ways of high society.

## MEETING WITH PIUS VII

22. I then departed with the intention of meeting the Holy Father for which I had prayed much, but my first attempt was destined to fail.

23. I kept up the prayers and knowing how the Lord normally deals with me, I was confident that the next opportunity would not come amiss. This is what happened.

24. After much prolonged prayer, God granted me my desire but I had to pay dearly for such a grace.

<sup>11</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 24 October 1812, ms. A2, XXXI, A. C. R.



**22-24.** Acting upon their plan, Magdalene and Carolina Durini left for Genoa to meet Pius VII, but the journey proved fruitless because the Holy Father had suddenly left for Savona and subsequently for Turin. During prayer Magdalene is given knowledge that in spite of all, the meeting would take place. And so it did. Pope Pius VII would have left Genoa for Rome on May 22, 1815 and on the 23rd, the two friends would have met him at Piacenza. It was a meeting for which she had to pay a heavy price.

**25.** When I appeared before the Holy Father, towards whom I had always felt great respect, veneration and attachment, I was overcome by considerable weariness and indifference.

**26.** Though I was in deep confusion at finding myself at his feet I respectfully requested, after he had kindly given the formal approval for the Institute, that the Rules be examined by a single commission as I feared that if they went through the Sacred Congregation of Bishops, it would entail a long delay.

**25-26.** Weariness, confusion and indifference were the feelings which accompanied her during the meeting. It was that same Pius VII who had been informed of the Institute in its early stages, by Msgr. Pacetti. Magdalene herself recalls it one year later: "In those brief moments I could tell him that I was Magdalene of Canossa, of the Daughters of Charity, of whom Canon Pacetti had spoken about"<sup>12</sup>.

Magdalene had no doubts about receiving the formal approval of the Institute. She only requests that the *Rules*, instead of passing through the ordinary channels, be examined by a special Commission of Cardinals. Her hope was to shorten the procedure. "In that first reorganization of the Roman Congregations after the Napoleonic storm, the entire bureaucratic procedure could not but take a long time"<sup>13</sup>.

**27.** The Holy Father replied that he wished to have the documents in Rome. I deduced that he was not fully persuaded about the person who had acted as liaison between him and myself and through whom I had tried to learn the Holy Father's intention.

**28.** Due to the brevity of time and unable to discern the Pope's decisions, I stood up to let other people pass, but I was so upset that I scarcely knew what I was doing.

**27-28.** As an immediate reply to Magdalene's request the Holy Father replied twice: "Send it to Rome, send it to Rome and we will see". Since other persons who were present at the audience were waiting to greet the Holy Father, and because this reply indicated that nothing more could be said Magdalene was left

<sup>12</sup> M.d.C., Detailed report on the Institutes origins upto 1816, Ep. I, p. 436.

<sup>13</sup> G, STOFELLA, o.c., p. 413.



in great distress. She had the doubt that the Holy Father was not convinced about sending the Rules to Msgr. Pacetti for revision.

29. I proceeded to the Cathedral for the Apostolic blessing, but my state of mind remained the same and with such inner distress that my friend guessed from my ashen face that something was amiss, although she could not know the reason as I had uttered no word.

30. When she learnt of this, she tried to convince me to return to the Holy Father. I was against such a decision, fearing to inconvenience him. I was finally persuaded by that parish priest who, as I already mentioned, would become the Superior of the Institute, and who by chance happened to be there.

29-30. Her friend Carolina Durini, who had read the disappointment of the meeting on Magdalene's face and later had the confirmation of it, suggested and sought to convince her friend to present herself again to the Holy Father. Don Francesco Zoppi who happened to be in Piacenza at that time also persuaded her.

31. I saw His Holiness again some hours later and spoke with him for the second time. As a result my anxiety subsided, though not altogether. However, I made an effort to hide it from my friend to avoid afflicting her, but I feared that the situation would make me ill.

31. The second audience, only a few hours later, will be recalled by Magdalene and related to C. Durini a year later: "Later after lunch, when you saw me so distressed, you persuaded me to return to him, to ask about the two monasteries, and the Holy Father said to me: "If the nuns do not return, you stay, you stay. If they return, the property belongs to others"<sup>14</sup>.

32. I had the impression of having compromised the Work. My despondency, so I thought, was due to pride because I had presumed a better reception.

33. I kept on recommending the whole matter and the Institute to Our Lady. After a day or two I grew calmer. On reflecting upon it I can see now that there was no real motive to be upset.

32-33. Magdalene attributes her despondency to her "pride" following the double meeting with the Pope. After a day or two, reflecting on what had happened and praying to Our Lady for her troubled Institution, she regains her calm. She thought that she had really compromised the Work.

### **"IN VERONA I FOUND MANY CROSSES"**

34. When I returned to Milan, after everything had been concluded though without committing myself, I decided to

<sup>14</sup> M.d.C., Detailed report on the Institute's origins upto 1816, Ep. I., p. 437.



return to Verona. There I found as many crosses as I could wish to have. They concerned temporal matters pertaining to one of my companions, as well as the companions themselves who belonged to the first Retreat.

**35.** Not only many of them could not resign themselves to be separated from me, but above all, they were upset at not having a Superior of their own.

**34-35.** On May 31, 1815 Magdalene arrives at Verona in good spirits. She writes to her Milanese friend whom she had just left: "I arrived happily at Verona at 6 o'clock after a very good journey"<sup>15</sup>. And after ten days, from Verona she writes: "... I have Milan very much at heart; I pray and have prayers offered to be able to accomplish the Will of God. I have good news about Venice, something that consoles me for two reasons"<sup>16</sup>. She cannot "fly to Venice" because the situation in Verona is becoming increasingly critical. Her daughters of the community of San Giuseppe demand a Superior of their own as Leopoldina Naudet, who was made Superior of the house since 1808, was about to leave with a group of her followers.

**36.** God granted me the grace to calm them by making them understand that it was for the good of the Institute. I also tried to convince them that my absence would not be unduly prolonged.

**36.** The Lord is always the sole builder of her life. It is He who calms her companions who are upset by her long absence from Verona. It is He who suggests suitable words to make them accept another short absence for the general good of the Institute. She hopes to leave by the middle of June. She writes to C. Durini: "I have not yet left for Venice, but dear Carolina, I hope to be able to do it in three or four days time... That blessed dispute of Angioletta's that always seems to be on the verge of concluding keeps me here these days; but whether it is finished or not I shall leave in a few days time"<sup>17</sup>. Another more serious obstacle will keep Magdalene in Verona more than she expected and that is: the situation of the Community of San Giuseppe. Leopoldina Naudet, in fact, is preparing to leave San Giuseppe's for another place. She writes again to C. Durini: "I tell you, that Verona is giving me more worry than Venice, as it seems to me that my friend (Leopoldina) here, is wavering; it does not seem to me however that it is possible for any resolution to be taken in a short time... I ask you as a favour to give me new proof of our friendship with renewed prayer as never before; especially I ask you to have prayers offered up to Our Lady for it is she who has guided this small Work up to now"<sup>18</sup>.

**37.** After the affairs had been settled and I had accepted two new companions, one destined for Verona, the other

<sup>15</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 31 May 1815, Ep. I, p. 406.

<sup>16</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 10 June 1815, Ep. I, p. 408.

<sup>17</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 10 June 1815, Ep. I. P.408.

<sup>18</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 17 June 1815, pp. 409-410.



who was endowed with special aptitudes, for Milan, I had to return to Venice. I felt more recollected in my innermost self, this being the effect of my visit to Verona.

**37.** Magdalene could have been in Venice only on August 1, 1815. She writes to her friend: "... finally here I am in Venice... the Lord has given me the grace to bring to conclusion the affairs of Angioletta... it was a very useful thing... because without concluding these matters... I would be worried twice as much in having to come to Milan<sup>19</sup>. As soon as she returns to Venice, she finds that her head and heart are in Milan: "... you ask me information of what is needed to prepare the new House of the Daughters of Charity... let us wait a little so that if I can bring what, I desire to a happy conclusion here, that will also serve for our benefit there"<sup>20</sup>. She has already accepted two postulants in Verona, one of whom is destined for the future house in Milan.

**38.** During my stay there, sometimes in prayer, the Lord had encouraged me with the usual thoughts of Paradise and I found myself united to Him in the habitual way without as far as I remember, anything of special note.

**38.** She recalls, with a hint of nostalgia, the prolonged time for prayer and the deep recollection, even if she had not experienced anything special apart from the usual thoughts about Heaven, during her stay in Verona. The time given to prayer is the most precious time in her life. It is a rendezvous with her God; an encounter with her Beloved, her Spouse, with her All. For the Sons of Charity she will write this maxim on prayer: "... understand and value prayer more than study, the efficacy of prayer more than toil, the power of prayer more than any eloquence and the knowledge of prayer over any other knowledge"<sup>21</sup>.

## AGAIN IN VENICE

**39.** On returning to Venice, for a while I was overwhelmed with many matters and could not find time to dedicate myself to prayer. In the first few days when I was free to stay with the Lord, I was overcome with considerable annoyance as I felt everything to be a burden and having to be the Superior was distressing me. I thought of what was expected of me because of it, before God.

**39.** In Venice too, after an absence of nearly three months, the affairs had accumulated and Magdalene found herself over-burdened with work to the point of not finding "time to dedicate to prayer", which she considered her most important duty in life. Prayer is defined as being "free to stay with the Lord". But

<sup>19</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 1 August 1815, Ep. I, p. 413.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, p. 414.

<sup>21</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P.2, p. 184.





even this much longed for time is spent initially with a sense of annoyance and oppression. Her main anguish is the responsibility of "being the Superior".

40. Things happened in such a way that I could not discuss matters with anyone. The Lord had masterfully planned everything so that I lacked the opportunity to speak to my Confessor. If it had been possible I would have wanted to be always left alone.

41. Several days passed in this state and then followed health problems. I moved from one duty to another without finding time to breathe.

**40-41.** The work is incessant and her health is delicate. The request for the free use of the two monasteries, that of Verona and Venice is still pending. In the mean time, she receives the visit of Count Goèss, the new Governor of Venice, and the Ecclesiastical Councillor, a certain Don Lystal with a view to resolving the problem. On that occasion Magdalene added the condition to her request "that both places... should be given without detriment to the nuns who had lived there..." and that she desired "the favour of His Majesty (Francis I of Austria)". Later, "honoured by the visit of the same Emperor, I requested both sites, including the gardens, and he willingly gave them to me. He accepted to take the Institute under his protection giving me permission to expand it as much as I could"<sup>22</sup>. In the meantime approval arrives from Msgr. Pacetti: "I am relieved that you have returned to Verona and that you have finalized the matter of your companion (Angioletta) and that in Milan you have settled everything"<sup>23</sup>. She was "always left alone" in attending to these matters. From within she was sustained by her two loves: God and His Most Holy Mother.

42. On one occasion, only because a very serious need for others had emerged, I besought Our Lord for a special grace out of love for Our Blessed Mother and through the merits of our reigning Pope, Pius VII.

**42.** On one occasion she committed herself to pray for a very serious need. Magdalene does not mention the names of the beneficiaries of her prayer. It is only known that she turned to Mary and asked to be heard through the merits of Pius VII, the reigning Pope who is already well known for his sanctity... Msgr. Pacetti writes in one of his letters: "The Lord continues to work great miracles through the Holy Father so much so that in Rome, not one day passes that one does not hear of clamorous happenings"<sup>24</sup>.

43. The grace came soon after. I was aware that God had heard His Mother's prayer of intercession and had looked kindly upon the merits of His Vicar on earth. I was also

<sup>22</sup> M.d.C., Detailed Report on the Institute's origins upto 1816, to C. Durini, 30 January 1816, Ep. I, p. 437.

<sup>23</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, TO m.D.c., 5 August 1815, ms. A2, XXXI, A.C.R.

<sup>24</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, TO m.D.c., 9 July 1814, Ep. II/1, p. 197.



conscious of my own unworthiness and knew that various persons had prayed for the same reason. Though I feared offending the Lord by not recognising the grace obtained from Him, twice I doubted whether the favour had been granted through my prayers.

44. Both times the Lord began to withdraw the grace and the second time the matter was very clear, in fact it was impossible to doubt. I then asked pardon of the Lord and promised Him not to do it anymore though I am still assailed by some doubts.

45. I lacked the courage to mention this even to my Spiritual Director. There was so much contradiction in my way of serving the Lord, notwithstanding His unfailing mercies.

**43-45.** In this episode Magdalene emphasizes the greatness of the mercy of God compared with her little trust. Twice she doubts that she had been heard and twice the Lord withdraws the grace which He was about to give.

46. While praying for this grace I heard the people say that, because of the punishment inflicted on men, there would be less offence against God.

47. I was torn between the consideration of just punishment for sin and compassion for the sufferings of the poor. I am afraid that the latter weighed more heavily on me than the former.

**46-47.** Magdalene's heart has been moulded by God in charity and goodness and cannot bear to think that God is pacified by punishment inflicted on men for their sins. It is true, according to St. Paul, that man who is not reconciled, is subject to God's wrath, but it is also true that punishment, as a sign and consequence of sin, is a warning from the God of mercy to bring about conversion and salvation. Magdalene knows that God's last word is one of love, which saves man in Christ Jesus. Compassion for the sufferings of the poor greatly overcomes the demands of a presumed justice.

48. As soon as my health permitted, I could again receive Holy Communion frequently. The Lord allowed many crosses with regard to the external affairs of the Institute. I reacted very badly at the beginning because of my lack of trust in the Lord.

49. Later on, as it seemed clear to me that the Lord alone wanted to act in me and in the Institute, I found Him again in prayer.



**48-49.** "Alone with God alone" is the course that the real Director of her personal life and of the Institute, wants her to follow in the midst of numerous crosses. "The secret societies were establishing themselves in the nerve centre of public life"<sup>26</sup> but Magdalene will be increasingly convinced that the Institute will not only survive but will be reinforced despite all the problems, only because God wants it.

**50.** During all this time, whenever I read something about the love of God I felt great tenderness in my heart, but usually it was just a fleeting matter.

**51.** One day, after Communion, if I remember well, I was so closely united to God that I thought that nothing could separate me from Him.

**50-51.** Sacramental Communion is the source of Magdalene's mystical life. The gift that Christ gives of Himself transforms everyday more the believer who receives Him with faith. Magdalene is in direct contact with this mystery of intimate and profound communion with a Lord who loves her and gently requests His faithful spouse to respond to Him<sup>27</sup>.

## Chapter XI

### THE SPIRIT OF THE INSTITUTE ACCORDING TO THE HEART OF GOD

#### THE DESIRE FOR PURIFICATION

**1.** A verse of a spiritual hymn of praise came to my mind. It ran more or less like this: "The Lord will unite the soul to Himself to make it become one with His heart." For the rest of the day I remained with such a vivid feeling that I found it difficult to engage myself in external things; because of the intensity of the affection nothing seemed to matter.

**1.** In this chapter Magdalene takes up the narration of her spiritual experiences which occurred around August and September 1815. It is not known exactly which verse left an impression on her spirit. Perhaps a thought of St. Paul: "Whoever is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with Him"<sup>1</sup>, or even the recollection of a recent spiritual reading. The "vivid feeling" of a heart united with God, fills the whole day even in the midst of her numerous engagements.

**2.** When I received my next Communion, or it could have been ones that followed, (I cannot say for sure) I was immersed in thoughts which made me believe that the Lord was mine, I had the sensation that I could not contain Him in my bosom with physical energy, but the experience was of a short duration.

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<sup>26</sup> T. M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 450.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Jn. 21, 15-17.

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. 6, 17.



**2.** In the sacramental Communion that followed, God immerses Magdalene into thoughts of Heaven. It is the infinite love of God in the human heart! Magdalene is struck by the thought that the Lord be all hers, deep within her, and she has the impression of not being able to hold Him in her bosom. The Eucharistic Mystery has dominated her life but now it becomes even more so the place of her nuptial union with the Word made man and bread for her. She is fully aware of what Jesus Himself said: "The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him"<sup>2</sup>.

**3.** Later on, during prayer, I felt myself drawn towards the Lord. As usual I saw Him under no visible form but it was like a Sun in the midst of my soul.

**4.** This time my soul was immersed in God, though not entirely so, because I saw some darkness and some flaws in myself. This induced me to beg the Lord that our union would serve to purify me from all my faults. I remained in great peace and joy.

**3-4.** In prayer the Lord returns to present Himself "like a Sun in the midst of my soul". The expression "as usual under no visible form" is also repeated. She is not so immersed in God as not to be conscious of her blemishes and darkness that can be removed only if exposed to and united with the God-Sun. Peace and happiness are the evident manifestations of the authentic action of the Holy Spirit of God. Even St. Teresa had a similar experience. She writes: "... the Sun is so clear that the soul not only sees the cobwebs of the great sins but also the tiniest particles of dust"<sup>3</sup>.

**5.** When I am in this state of grace, it is usually somewhat evident to my companions even though the reasons are not obvious to them.

**5.** The companions with whom she lives recognise that something extraordinary is happening to her even though they do not know the reason. Luigia Navoni, an indirect witness of this period says: "... I remember a certain Elisabetta Olivo, still living in Sant'Antonio's, who was an eye witness of this incident which she related to me. While the Marchioness was praying before Jesus Crucified and the Most Sorrowful Virgin in the house of Santa Lucia in Venice, she saw her kneeling on the floor immobile with eyes fixed on the Crucifix. She passed by her many times and was not noticed. She therefore maintained that such concentration meant that Magdalene could only be in rapture and. ecstasy with God"<sup>4</sup>. Another eye-witness, Anna Rizzi, relates: "One day, prior to my entering the Institute I found myself before the image of Mary in the Convent of Santa Lucia in Venice. There I saw the Marchioness with her face completely radiant and with her eyes fixed on that image. I called her and I shook her to see if she could hear me but all was in

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<sup>2</sup> Jn 6, 56.

<sup>3</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> Processus ordinarius Veronensis super virtutibus, 1870, vol. I; pp. 278-279; A 4, A.C.R.



vain because she could not hear anything. When she came to, she started to laugh. I wanted to question her on what I had seen but I could get nothing out of her because she led me away and changed the subject so many times regarding what I had seen that I lacked courage to ask her about it"<sup>5</sup>.

6. The next day, during prayer, it seemed to me that my soul was again drawn into God's presence.

7. But instead of an inner presence, always without any visible form, as already described, God revealed Himself not in the form of Sun, but as Spirit.

8. I was struck by His greatness, goodness and other attributes. Above all, however, I was impressed with the first two, especially His greatness, before which I acknowledge my utter nothingness as I did on that occasion. In the same way, all of mankind, all created things, all the grandeur, esteem and everything on the face of the earth seemed nothing to me.

**6-8.** The rapturous experiences towards God follow one another with insistence. This time, always invisible, God presents Himself not as sun but as spirit. It is a pure intellectual vision. The Saint is amazed at some of the attributes of God, especially His goodness and even more of His greatness. "Magdalene suffers a near 'shipwreck' in the Divine Ocean... as she is confronted with God within her, and everything around her acquires the dimension of nothingness"<sup>6</sup>.

9. By the grace of these experiences, and the degree of intensity of these special and varied feelings of that moment, I was now overcome with transports of love and as a result I was uttering expressions which in normal circumstances I would consider unfitting before the Lord.

**9.** The feelings which accompany these mystical moments vary with the different experiences. She is at times as though she was beside herself with love and utters strange things to the Lord. The same thing occurred to St. Teresa while she was in prayer: "... in prayer I entered into deep recollection and I started to talk with God addressing to Him words like a person who does not know what she is saying... often it happened so as to make me talk to God like this. The soul is so out of itself that it does not think even of the distance which separates it from Him. So it is love that speaks because the soul feels itself loved by Him, forgets itself of everything and seems to immerse itself in Him as His possession without any division and does nothing but speak incoherently"<sup>7</sup>.

10. Then followed another moment in which I understood how a soul is willing to throw itself into Purgatory, to

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<sup>5</sup> T. M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 847.

<sup>6</sup> T. M. PICCARI, o.c., pp. 451-452.

<sup>7</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU, o.c., pp. 345-346.



undergo purification and appear unblemished before the Lord in order to be finally united with Him. No soul bearing the least imperfection may consider itself worthy to enjoy such a union.

**10.** At other times, when faced with the radiance of God, Magdalene is given a clear understanding of how a soul, on discovering itself blemished and impure, would desire to throw itself into Purgatory for a complete purification.

**11.** During these occasions the desire to die becomes stronger though, in my fear of disobeying, I never pray for this wish to materialise. In fact, at times I do not even desire it.

**11.** Two contrasting desires spring up in Magdalene's heart on these occasions: the desire to die so as to establish herself eternally in what the soul has seen, and the desire to live as instructed by obedience. Outside these mystical experiences the first desire disappears completely.

**12.** While these experiences continue, except on the last few occasions when I felt the presence of God outside of myself, I almost did not know where I was. When they happen and my companions are present, I have to control my feelings. The result is that I often remain bereft of all my strength. The deeper the union, the weaker I feel.

**12.** The interior union with God often leaves her greatly weakened in physical strength and is worsened during the struggle to restrain herself so as to avoid attention.

**13.** Also about this time, while praying for a sick priest, the same for whom my companion was also praying, I was certain that he would recover, even before she told me so. I used to receive such insights though now they are not as clear, or frequent as in the past.

**14.** Obviously I kept talking about the priest as if his illness was fatal, but my companions observed my indifference which was due to this presentiment, though to them I gave other reasons for it.

**13-14.** The priest who Magdalene refers to, is Msgr. Pacetti who, on September 3, writes: "A different writing means another relapse. I am bedridden due to an inflammation of the throat... with fever which keeps me in danger of losing my life"<sup>8</sup>. Magdalene prays and feels that her Director will not die, in fact he will recover. In his own handwriting eighteen days later, Msgr. Pacetti thus writes: "I wanted to write you a few lines now that I am beginning to get out of bed. On

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<sup>8</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 3 September 1815, ms. A2, XXXI, A.C.R.





the other hand, though I am on my feet, I have not yet fully recovered"<sup>9</sup>. In his letter of October 1, he has decided to leave for Grezzano for a period of rest<sup>10</sup>. Though the occurrences of supernatural insight are less "clear" and less "frequent" than before, once again, her intuition has proven true.

15. A little later I was privileged to occupy myself with some poor girls who had to be prepared to receive their First Holy Communion.

16. God arranged that I should be much more occupied in this matter than I expected.

17. To my great joy I felt my old enthusiasm for souls renewed within me. Even though my health had deteriorated as a consequence of my commitments, I did not mind falling ill, or even dying, if it were required of me and if obedience would have allowed it.

18. Still during this period I could find no time for prayer and yet I was extremely happy. I was surprised to be overflowing with a greater joy than I experience during my ordinary way of life.

**15-18.** The zealous apostle takes upon herself the task of preparing some girls to receive Jesus in the Eucharist for the first time and she remains immersed in this work more than she had foreseen. The good of the souls is linked to the aim of giving glory to God and stirs up a renewed zeal within Magdalene. Notwithstanding her continuous poor health, she involves herself unsparingly in imparting religious instruction. She feels herself over laden with spiritual consolations that she is ready not only to sacrifice her health for that work, but also her own life.

19. Many times, even before this last occurrence, I was equally surprised to notice that also during my prayer I felt more inclined to do this type of work rather than exert myself for the good and the internal organisation of the Retreat.

20. I kept on bringing before the Lord the needs of the same, but above all for the grace to do His Will. I also entreated Him to grant to this Institute that inner spirit and way of life which may please Him.

**19-20.** If she had the option of either engaging in religious instruction or dedicating herself to the consolidation of the Institute, to her own great surprise, Magdalene would have chosen the first one. In prayer it seemed to her that even the Lord desired the same thing. If this is His Will, He will take upon Himself to give the Institute "that inner spirit and that way of life which may please Him". It

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.



is as if she were saying to the Lord: "You look after my Institute while I think of your souls".

### SPIRITUAL GUIDE

**21.** Later on, my apostolic commitment brought me to advise a young woman who seemed to be called by the Lord in a way altogether extraordinary.

**22.** I questioned her concerning the gifts the Lord apparently bestowed on her and I also spoke about union and of intimate relationship with Him.

**23.** I discovered from her replies that her method of prayer was different from mine. Thus I had the impression that she was not at all familiar with this sort of prayer and I went so far as to think that, although highly favoured, she had achieved a degree of prayer which was lower than mine.

**24.** Perhaps I did not really give in to such thoughts but what I know is this, that when the moment came for prayer, God was no longer to be found within me. I felt that my soul had to seek Him in Heaven.

**25.** Yet I had found Him, for both in my body and my soul there were the same effects I had described earlier. Only that, previously the experience of God was more intimate and deep.

**21-25.** It is neither possible to identify the young girl referred to here nor how they both met. In the dialogue interwoven with deep spirituality, Magdalene perceives in the young girl a degree of prayer inferior to her own. Following the interview and the judgement passed on the young girl, Magdalene examines herself to discover if she has sinned through pride. The doubt remains, but at the same time she observes that, while in prayer, her God is to be sought and found "in Heaven" rather than in the usual interior union. She notices however, that the same effects are being produced in the body and soul as during the previous experience of prayer. What differed was the intensity of the power of the Divine Presence. These words: "God is the Lord of His souls and wants to lead them as He likes"<sup>11</sup> that Magdalene will later write in the Rules for her Daughters, demonstrate to what extent they were the fruit of her experience both as a person and as a spiritual guide.

**26.** On one of these occasions, after having read a passage which dealt with Heaven, I had the same feeling as when I was working with the girls, with the same transport of love towards God.

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<sup>11</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, p. 138.



27. He presented Himself to me not in the mind but in the usual way as it happens in prayer, that is as in Heaven.

28. Wherever I turned, wherever I looked I would find nothing but God.

**26-28.** Even spiritual reading is enough to lead Magdalene on to a high level of prayer. While she is reading a text which refers to Heaven, God is present to her "as in Heaven". God's presence is dominant. Wherever she would turn her eyes she would meet with the Object of her love.

29. I knew that He alone was the object of my love and there was an ineffable joy in me at the thought that the moment would come for my encounter with Him. Everything that is said or written about Heaven leaves me totally indifferent, except for the Blessed Virgin.

**29.** God and the Most Holy Virgin Mary are the only two realities who make up Magdalene's Paradise. She experiences a great joy at the thought that death will release her in time to immerse her forever in her One and Only Beloved.

## **GOD ALONE**

30. Later, when I re-read the same verse, and came across: "Deus omnia in omnibus", it became very clear to me. Pondering over the fact that the poor in spirit shall possess the Lord, I understood that those who in this world can pronounce these words "Deus meus et omnia" in utter truth, can truly expect God to be their "Omnia in omnibus" one day. It was not a very deep experience however.

31. It is obvious to me that I am again called to seek GOD ALONE, despite my ingratitude and infidelity.

**30-31.** If Heaven is the vision and the possession of God, only the poor in spirit are capable of discovering Him and contemplating Him in all things even while on this earth. St. Francis' "My God and my All" will become in Heaven the "All" in everything. Magdalene emphasises that this reflection was not "a very deep experience", perhaps for her lack of response to the Lord, but it was made so clear to her that she felt "called to seek God alone".

32. As a matter of fact, I became very distressed about some matters. Humanly speaking, there was some justified motive for this. As a result I wrote to my Confessor in Verona after which, owing to my numerous tasks, I forgot about them.

33. Later on, however, I understood that it was unbecoming of me to show my distress to the Lord.



**32-33.** It is September 1815. The affairs that have to be managed are not a few. Magdalene could have been reasonably worried about the situation at San Giuseppe's in Verona or for the juridical situation of Santa Lucia's in Venice, or even for the requested future foundation in Milan. She writes to her friend C. Durini: "I want you to know that for the affairs, here, as well as in Verona, ... prepare myself... to be free, but everything does not depend on me... the decisions of our Government about the place where we are living keep me in suspense. As you already know, the administration of such a vast Empire does not facilitate a speedy conclusion of matters especially when they are so small, and you see my impossibility to move from here without leaving my companions well settled and serene"<sup>12</sup>. The fourth worry was "the threat of a chronic and fatal illness"<sup>13</sup> of Francesca Ghezzi, who was destined to replace her as Superior of Venice. Only later does she understand that when it concerns God's works, it is not right to give in to distress because God is Omnipotent and will provide for everything.

**34.** Quite sometime elapsed before the holy priest replied and when he finally did, he apologized for the delay explaining that, contrary to his wish, he had been unable to acknowledge it earlier.

**35.** He added that he had been much afflicted because of his inability to help me in my difficulty. Not knowing why he was unable to write, he had fallen on his knees before Our Lady of Sorrows and begged her to reveal to him the motive of such impotence, and also what he was to reply to me.

**36.** Our Lady made known to him that the Lord was displeased with my cares, anxiety and my lack of trust in God.

**37.** Gradually, my peace returned and I begged the Lord's pardon, promising to abandon myself to Him.

**34-37.** Magdalene awaits Don Galvani's reply with a certain anxiety. He was her Confessor in Verona and had been informed about her worry for the void that would be left by Don Matteo Farinati, as Confessor of the Community of San Giuseppe's. He had replaced Don Gaspare Bertoni for the last two years. To this and other worries, Don Galvani replies after a justified delay: "Many times I wondered why I could not write. I read your letter many times and I understood very well your great concern and I was sure you were in no small suffering because of it and yet I could not bring myself to reply... Finally on October 2, to remove this weight from my heart, I knelt before the Most Sorrowful Virgin Mary and prayed more with the heart than with the lips, to show me if it was God's Will that I should reply to you, to enlighten me as to the reason for the long

<sup>12</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 9 September 1815, Ep. I, p. 416.

<sup>13</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 9 September 1815, Ep. I, p. 416.



delay, and counsel me what to write. Lady Marchioness, the Lord does not want too many reasonings, interior discourses and anxieties. He wants us to put aside our worries and abandon ourselves to His Providence which will never be wanting, especially to those who peacefully rest in Him"<sup>14</sup>.

### THE DIVINE GLORY

**38.** For a long time after, I remained without uniting myself to God in prayer as it used to happen in the past. I was tempted against Him and against faith, fearful of my salvation, doubtful of my vocation and conscious of my nothingness, poverty and incapability. And as I always do, I felt the heavy responsibility of my duty as Superior.

**38.** Magdalene's spirit is overtaken by pitch darkness. For a long time she has not experienced union with God in prayer. In fact, she has temptations against Him, against faith, against her vocation and the fear of not saving herself. It is the darkest of nights accompanied by a deep sense of her own nothingness, incapacity and weakness. St. John of the Cross thus explains this spiritual experience: "The more the soul nears God, the more it finds itself in deep darkness... like whoever nears the sun would be blinded by the great radiance and will experience only greater darkness"<sup>15</sup>.

**39.** In spite of this frame of mind I never lost my love for God then or now.

**40.** Even if oppressed by temptations, it springs up on each occasion so much so, that at times, it seems to me that I cannot love Him more than I actually do in this life.

**41.** Similarly, I am conscious at times of having so much at heart all that pertains to God and His Glory which I consider and value by far, more than everything I own, life included.

**39-41.** The trials which the Lord periodically subjects His chosen souls to, are always accompanied by a growing "love for God". Even though Magdalene is suffocated by temptation and is immersed in darkness she feels that she cannot love the Lord more than she actually does. The concern for the glory of God is so alive and considered so significant that she is ready to sacrifice everything, "life included".

**42.** One morning, after receiving Holy Communion, I was praying for a young woman who wished to join the Institute and whom I was willing to welcome because I was convinced of the authenticity of her vocation.

<sup>14</sup> Don N. GALVANI, to M.d.C., 2 October 1815, Ep. II/1, p. 201.

<sup>15</sup> S. GIOVANNI DELLA CROCE, o.c., pp. 485-486.



43. I was then clearly enlightened on how to help her realize her call. And it seemed to me as though her vocation was inspired by Our Lady.

44. I was enjoying deep peace. By adopting the measures which I had suggested to her, this young woman could at last enter the Institute.

**42-44.** The Eucharistic Christ and the Most Holy Virgin Mary enlighten her about the method to follow to enable a young aspirant to enter religious life. Magdalene adopts the principles of discernment, prudence and prayer in the selection of the new recruits. From a distance Msgr. Pacetti thus advises her: "I am pleased that you have gained persons. Let me advise you to keep your eyes open. Just one person without the right spirit can cause a lot of trouble"<sup>16</sup>. The young girl mentioned by Magdalene can be identified as Cristina Pilotti<sup>17</sup> who entered the House in Venice on February 2, 1816, and was to become the right hand of the Foundress from the very beginning.

45. Similarly I was also dealing with another very virtuous person on the ground of her joining us. For sometime I had been interceding the Lord for her, always however, with the intention of adhering to His Will.

46. One day, after Communion, as I prayed, I presented the Lord with the needs of the Institute and offered myself to suffer all that He wanted, in any place He wanted, even if it were at Milan despite a strong repugnance I felt for this city.

47. I had the convent of Santa Lucia especially at heart and I prayed that it would not suffer any setback due to my absence. And it appeared that I was given assurance about that.

48. I also felt interiority reassured that the companion I had desired, would come precisely for that purpose, as it did in fact, come to pass about a month later.

**45-48.** The Foundress asks the Lord in prayer for another "very virtuous person", but she is always ready to conform to His Will. After Holy Communion she offers herself to the Lord to go anywhere, even to Milan, a place for which she feels a great repugnance. She raises one condition: that the House of Santa Lucia should not suffer spiritually because of her absence. The Lord gives her inner assurance and the person for whom she prayed, will enter the Institute a month later, but only for six months after which she goes to Heaven. There, near God, she will intercede for the Milanese foundation for which she had been destined.

<sup>16</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 11 December 1815, Ep. I, p. 198.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 327.





## OVERBURDENED BY WORRIES

49. Even after I had received the gift of the monastery from His Majesty I still remained in the same frame of mind. I experienced no sentiment of relief and even if there was any consolation it did not help me.

50. Thus to my usual worries were added specific preoccupations for the house in Verona. One day, feeling dejected and utterly desolate, and not even in the position to ask for advice, I again let myself be overcome by melancholy.

51. I was tempted more than ever even about my vocation and became very distressed.

**49-51.** The visit of the Emperor Francis I to Santa Lucia which occurred on November 9, 1815 marks an important date for the Institute. She relates to her Milanese friend: "When His Majesty entered, I thanked him for deigning to visit such a poor place. And he replied thanking me for the good that he believed I was doing. He added that the Public Administration could not shoulder everything. I requested him to enter into the room where I usually receive people and he replied: 'Do with me all that you wish to do'. I led him to that room, gave him an idea of this Institute and pleaded with him to grant me the two premises including the vegetable garden lying between the two. I also asked him to take the Institute under his protection, allowing me to expand it as much as I am able to. I led him into the school and then to see the rest of the Convent where he spoke about everything with such appreciation and kindness that it is difficult to explain. Before he left, I asked him if he thought that we should be uniformly dressed and he advised me to do it so as to avoid problems. He repeated twice that when he comes to Verona, he will come to see San Giuseppe's"<sup>18</sup>.

52. Reflecting on it all a few hours later, I was reminded of how the Lord had already reproached me for the way I had handled my past anxieties, as aforementioned. I gave careful consideration to my ingratitude in responding that way to Divine Mercy.

53. I begged the Lord in tears during all the time I was left alone and finally I recovered my peace.

**52-53.** Peace returns to Magdalene after considerable weeping and she confronts her own ingratitude with a God of infinite mercy. She also ponders on the recent rebukes received from Don Galvani: "God does not want a lot of reasonings, interior discourses, anxieties and fears... let us be clear about this once and for all"<sup>19</sup>. The weeping and the pardon implored from the Lord calm her spirit and give her inner peace.

<sup>18</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 11 November 1815, Ep. I, pp. 425-426.

<sup>19</sup> DON N. GALVANI, to M.d.C., 2 October 1815, Ep. II/1, p. 201.



54. On that same day, as I was in the church before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, I was again filled with love. All suffering seemed to vanish and it dawned on me that when God's service is at stake, nothing should become a hardship.

55. I wept for several hours. As evening drew near I recollected myself and remained peaceful throughout the night and part of the following morning with the desire to suffer even more. This was something unusual for me.

**54-55.** Magdalene ends the day in distress before the Most Blessed Sacrament with intense and prolonged prayer. Love for the Lord was renewed in her heart and to her surprise, in a most "unusual" way, she feels the desire to suffer more than she had suffered up to then. The thought of God's glory and His service fortifies her to the point of making her feel capable of enduring any suffering.

56. I returned again to the previous mood, feeling that God wants to be the only protagonist in all and that, for the present, He wants me to abide in pure faith, sustained by the now familiar verse: "Torcular calcavi solus..." and with the thought or rather a sentiment, of how Jesus had entered into the world only to suffer.

**56.** The reflection on the mystery of the Incarnation, in particular, the Word made flesh "only to suffer"<sup>20</sup> raises her spirits and sustains her in her solitude. And while she recalls "the now familiar verse: Torcular calcavi solus", she has a greater realization that "God wants to be the only protagonist" in her life and is expecting her "to abide in pure faith".

57. When I am back to feeling my usual nothingness, weakness and wretchedness (a frame of mind that I prefer to be in), I sink down into the "dust" of my being and I am fearful of my salvation.

58. However, what afflict and oppress me most are the temptations against faith.

**57-58.** The more she feels her knowledge of God's greatness increasing, the more Magdalene feels herself diminishing before Him. Her own nothingness, incapability and misery are the feelings she prefers to any other. The God whom she does not see but whose infinite majesty she is conscious of, leads her to sink into her own dust. St. Teresa explains this state of soul thus: "True humility that the Lord grants is full of light and with it comes a confusion that reduces the person to his nothingness. In a very clear and deep manner the Lord wants us to know that no good can come out of ourselves and that this is shown very clearly in proportion to the graces He bestows"<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. 1 Pt. 2, 21-24.

<sup>21</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 156.



59. At times I feel so downcast that it seems impossible for me to bear it. Furthermore because of my health, I am deprived of Holy Communion, and matters concerning my companions and other questions are giving me great anxiety.

59. The delicate state of her physical health, deprivation of Holy Communion which nourishes her spirit, and worries of every kind, oppress Magdalene so much that it seems impossible for her to be on her feet and carry on.

60. One morning, feeling more dejected than ever I told the Lord that if He did not help me I would be crushed under the weight. I made an effort to receive Holy Communion.

61. And after that, I felt strengthened and continued daily to communicate. I do not know how to explain the inner physical sensation which I experienced on receiving the Sacred Host.

60-61. One morning in the month of December 1815, she is at the end of her physical and spiritual tether, Magdalene experiences the physical effect of sacramental Communion.. After receiving Jesus in the Eucharist she feels an inexplicable strength enter within her. "On receiving Communion great mysteries occur in our innermost being"<sup>22</sup>.

62. During my last Communion, the effect was so violent that it was as if I had the sun within my breast. I did not experience the joy and sweetness of other times. In fact it resembled something much more obscure but the force of it was such, that I feared I could no longer contain neither the Lord nor my soul.

62. Magdalene again describes the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist, in her chest as a "sun". At other times, the God-Sun was brighter, if now she describes Him as "something much more obscure". The presence came with such force that it seemed that she would not be able to contain neither the Lord nor her soul within her bosom. The psalmist confirms: "A sun and the shield is the Lord God"<sup>23</sup>. He "like a sun will come to visit us from on high"<sup>24</sup>.

63. I tried to rouse myself in order to regain my breath.

64. For the rest of the day I was at peace and prolonged my prayer of union. This weakened me so much that the following day I did not know how to resume my prayer; my

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 521.

<sup>23</sup> Ps. 83, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Lk. 1, 78.



physical strength had deteriorated and I was not able even to start praying.

**63-64.** The peace which Magdalene experiences after the splendour of God has illumined and strengthened her spirit, is prolonged throughout the day, it is marked by a communion of love so intense that it rebounds considerably upon her physique.

**65.** After that, due to my poor health, obedience for bade me to receive Holy Communion. I was back where I was before. Sorrows were plentiful, but they were sorrows which opened up the path to prayer. Unfortunately, I still continue to commit very many faults.

**65.** The privation of sacramental Communion and Christ's action in her, causes her "very many faults" to come to the fore and gives her a deep impression of the burden of suffering. But fortunately this at least "opens up the path to prayer".

**66.** It was about this time that one of my companions fell seriously ill. Judging her to be in danger of death, I had recourse to Our Lady of Sorrows. As I prayed I was reassured that she would not die.

**67.** It was a great consolation for me to hear once again that inner voice which had become so well-known to me. God had not abandoned me, after all.

**68.** When I went to pray, the usual feelings of affection towards God returned, but they vanished much too quickly with everything else.

**66-68.** We are in January 1816. Magdalene informs C. Durini what had happened in Santa Lucia: "I am keeping very well, but nearly all my companions are unwell. Angioletta (Guarnieri) from Verona, has measles (morbillo)<sup>25</sup>. Magdalene fears for this daughter and invokes the Most Sorrowful Virgin. While she prays she knows, in a mysterious but certain way, that the companion will not die. It is the "inner voice" that assures her and contrary to what she feared, gives her the certainty that she has not been abandoned.

**69.** I had long been praying for the Venetian Church (which had a vacant office in the See) fearing that a certain person would not be sent to govern it. It seemed that the Lord had decided in favour of another person. I said to Him: "Don't you want to act? After all, what I am asking is only for your service and your Glory!"

**70.** A day or two later I think I perceived in a flash, the voice of the Lord, indicating a different name from the first one. It was a matter of an instant and from the peace I

<sup>25</sup> M.d.C. to C. Durini, 12 January 1816, Ep. I, pp. 428-429.



experienced I knew that even the second person would prove suitable.

**69-70.** Yet another occurrence of Magdalene's supernatural gift of insight. From 1808 the See of Venice was vacant. During the Napoleonic period the Bishop of Faenza, Msgr. Stefano Bonsignore was illegitimately elected to fill the vacancy. Magdalene fears, because of hearsay, that the choice may fall on a Jansenist Bishop. Msgr. Pacetti had also sounded her on this. How to avoid the danger? Magdalene turns to God in this way: "Don't you want to act? After all what I am asking is only for your service and your Glory". It is the usual voice of the Lord that assures her that it will not be the person mentioned by others, but one more "suitable". On December 7, Msgr. Francesco Maria Milesi was nominated Patriarch. After some years, he will be the one who will give juridical recognition to her Institute in the diocese of Venice.

### CHRIST CRUCIFIED, THE TREASURE OF THE INSTITUTE

**71.** One day as I was praying, after these last Communions, I wanted to beg the Lord again for a temporal matter which was giving me great pain. Many a time I had attempted to pray and failed. My anguish was so great that I was not able to do so at all.

**72.** Finding myself recollected, I spoke about it to the Lord and He replied: "When I sent my Apostles without shoes, etc. did they lack anything?", making me thus understand that He alone is the Treasure of the Institute.

**71-72.** After a sacramental Communion Magdalene wants to recommend "a temporal matter" to the Lord which gives her great preoccupation and though she attempts many times, she cannot succeed. From within, God will recall her to what is essential. He makes her understand that "He alone is the Treasure of the Institute". The Apostles did not have anything when they started their preaching ministry. This was a reminder of what she herself had written in the Rules: "... stripped of every affection and care for earthly things, the Sisters will always have their heart near their Treasure"<sup>26</sup>.

**73.** One day, while reading the life of St. Cajetan I felt inspired to imitate this Saint's spirit of poverty and his charity which was permeated by the love of God. This had enabled him to engage continuously in works of charity. After making this resolution, I felt closely united to God.

**73.** The life of St. Cajetan prepares Magdalene "to imitate him in his spirit of poverty" and the gift of herself for the service of her neediest fellowmen. It is a spiritual preparation for the next Foundation in Milan for which she will be

<sup>26</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I., p. 57.



concerned only for the essentials. The Lord wanted her to be an expert spiritual guide, to experience in herself what she would eventually hand down to her daughters. She had written: "... those Sisters who practise with greater perfection the spirit of poverty by rooting themselves in God alone, not expecting anything, not loving anyone but Him, not wanting nor seeking in themselves, in the internal occupations and in the works of charity, anything but God alone, wanting nothing else but His Glory, they will be the happiest"<sup>27</sup>.

## Chapter XII FOR A GREATER LOVE

### AFTER A LONG INTERRUPTION

1. I have not been able to write for a long period of time and today, June 2, I take up writing again and I find that I recall very little. I will try my best to write what I remember.

1. It is June 2, 1816. After an interruption of five months Magdalene takes up again her Memoirs. As in the beginning she will write the little she can remember.

2. As soon as the one who directs me arrived, I had to leave. As usual, I admired how the Lord allows circumstances to occur in such a way as to always leave me alone.

2. The first happy memory is the arrival of Msgr. Pacetti in Venice; he had been absent from the city for about four years. He had left on July 6, 1812 and having recovered his health, he returns on February 21, 1816. He had not been able to help in the foundation of the first house in Sant' Andrea and now he finds the Work well established in Santa Lucia. He had left when nothing had been achieved and now returns after writing to Magdalene in December 1815: "The Holy Father (Pius VII) has given his approval to the Institute and His Majesty (Francis I) has lauded it... The Institute has received approval and the Rules will be approved later. Take heart and do not cease to bless the generous mercies of the Lord and the loving care of the dearest Sorrowful Mother"<sup>1</sup>. Now, together in Venice, they can both turn their eyes towards the future; but only for twenty days.

3. I returned to Verona, there to find some 'crosses' and among these was the serious illness of our Empress.

3. Their Majesties, the Emperor Francis I and his consort Maria Lodovica d'Este, arrive as guests at Canossa Palace. Magdalene cannot be absent. She will arrive in Verona on March 11. After some days she will write to her friend, Paola Taverna, Carolina's sister: "After a very good journey I arrived happily at Verona on Monday evening where I found my family in good health, very busy however, preparing the house for His Majesty who is awaited here on Monday 18. On my return, which is very near, I will be happy to meet you to relate all the hectic

<sup>27</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, p. 55.

<sup>1</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, to M.d.C., 11 December 1815, Ep. II/1, p. 199.





ventures of the good, madhatters of Verona”<sup>2</sup>. In Verona other crosses await her. Their Majesties are in Canossa Palace on the 20th but the Empress is afflicted with a “serious illness”.

4. I succeeded in sending her a relic of the Holy Father and the following evening, while at prayer, I offered ten years of my life to the Lord, if He would only spare our Empress, thus glorifying the Pontiff and the Church.

5. It seemed to me that the obstacle towards her recovery could be the festivities that were continuing even though it was Lent. I promised myself that if, through the merits of the Holy Father, Her Majesty was cured I would clearly refer everything to the Sovereign.

6. The Empress improved considerably. On hearing that the festivities continued in spite of the Lenten Season I was full of remorse at keeping silent.

7. As Her Majesty had not been cured instantly, I was afraid to expose our faith to ridicule if I spoke. I asked for advice and was told to keep my peace.

**4-7.** Trusting in the sanctity of the reigning Pope Pius VII, she thinks of sending the Empress a relic of his. She is distressed for the festivities that are being held in Verona in honour of the illustrious guests because they are in open contrast to the serious illness of the Empress. Magdalene makes a generous offering with her own prayer: ten years of her own life in exchange for the recovery of Her Majesty.

The improvement felt by the patient makes her hope for the awaited cure. In the meantime Magdalene fears “exposing our faith to ridicule” and requests advice whether it would be prudent to publicise the grace. She receives a negative reply.

8. Later on I cannot say for sure whether it was before or after this, as I was praying before the Blessed Sacrament exposed, to obtain the grace of recovery for the Empress, I had an intuition that she would die. Furthermore I understood that the present Government would not last long in this country.

**8.** During adoration before the exposed Blessed Sacrament, Magdalene has a clear intuition that Maria Lodovica would die and yet she cannot state whether the intuition came before or after she had sought advice. On March 28, Her Majesty receives the Viaticum. On the 30th, her condition improves. Magdalene writes to Countess Paola: we are all consoled by the noticeable improvement of Her Majesty... I cannot tell you how the people here are afflicted, but certainly my family and myself are especially so... Here, as you can imagine all the festivities

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<sup>2</sup> M.d.C., to Countess Paola Taverna, 15 March 1816, Ep. I, pp. 604-605.



are over, the theatres are closed; public and private prayers are offered up to obtain from the Lord good health for this angelic Empress"<sup>3</sup>.

9. As I am very fond of our Sovereigns, I wept before the Lord but it was impossible to obtain another reply.

10. It is true that it was not a clear illumination from above, since at present I do not have such light. However on leaving the Church I experienced a profound peace. This was an unmistakable sign that it was God who had spoken to me in spite of the fact that the presentiment was contrary to my desires.

**9-10.** Magdalene's tears before the Lord have no response. She still hopes that the insight previously received about the death of the Empress will not come true. But God's message was very clear even if Magdalene's desires were different

11. Time passed and the visit promised by the Sovereign to our Convent failed to materialise. Though feeling at peace in the certainty that God and His most Holy Mother would manage everything for the best, I prayed for the Institute. It seemed as though I came to know the name of the person who would do everything.

**11.** The visit of the Sovereign to the Monastery of San Giuseppe, given the painful circumstance, went up in smoke. Magdalene has the proof, from experience, that "God and the Most Holy Virgin Mary would manage everything themselves". In fact, always in prayer, she has a clear insight as to the identity of the person who would come to her help for the juridical recognition of the Institute.

12. And I really came to know that this person had written much in favour of the Institute. Nonetheless, as they were not deep presentiments I have doubts about their credibility, even if later they were to be proved true.

**12.** As she is in the habit of doing in these Memoirs, Magdalene leaves the identity of this person anonymous. Conjectures can be made about various people who are interested in the Institute. First of all Father Emanuele Lodi, a Dominican, who took it upon himself with complete secrecy to send the Rules to Father Francesco Fontana<sup>4</sup> who in April 1816 will receive a Cardinal's red hat. Another Cardinal, Lorenzo Litta, who had remained at Pius VII's side since his election to the Papacy, proved to be a valid help in the final approval of the Institute. Another Cardinal, Giovanni Giacomo Sinibaldi will personally consign the Rules brought to Rome by Father Lodi to Cardinal Fontana. Magdalene's aim was to obtain Pontifical approval of the Rules to avoid the lengthy procedures of the Congregation of Bishops. Even if she does not give excessive importance to her presentiments, Magdalene will in time see all of them verified.

<sup>3</sup> M.d.C., to Countess Paola Taverna, 30 March 1816, Ep. I, p. 606.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Durini, 12 January 1816, Ep. I, p. 429.



13. On Palm Sunday, without knowing the motive, I felt urged to pray for the Institute. I did the same in the afternoon and as the Empress had died unexpectedly, I believe I understood the reason for my prolonged prayer.

14. I felt the loss very keenly but as far as I can remember, I had no fears in the least concerning the Institute.

**13-14.** Magdalene recalls Holy Week in 1816. On April 7, Palm Sunday, the day on which the Empress Maria Lodovica d'Este died in Canossa Palace, Magdalene prolongs her prayer not only for the Empress, whose loss she deeply feels but also for her Institute and receives knowledge that this unexpected event will not hinder its juridical recognition. In future, other influential persons will come to her assistance.

### TO DIE OF LOVE

15. On Good Friday, as far as I can remember, something unusual happened to me. I was so deeply penetrated into the suffering of Christ that I could not do anything but weep.

16. I tried very hard not to let my companions notice it, but I am afraid that I was not completely successful.

**15-16.** On Good Friday, April 12, in a hall of Canossa Palace, the body of the Empress Maria Lodovica d'Este still lies in state. In harmony with that suffering Magdalene contemplates the sufferings of Jesus Christ on the Cross and allows herself to be penetrated by that mystery to such an extent that she is not able to hide her innermost feelings.

17. I understood why St. Francis of Assisi would weep in the woods over the Passion of the Lord, and indeed I envied him. I thought I would die of love, and there was nothing I could think of except Jesus Christ.

18. But on the following day when an occasion for suffering presented itself, I did not behave accordingly. As a result my fervour immediately vanished and I was back to my old self.

**17-18.** She would have wanted, like St. Francis, "to weep in the woods over the passion of the Lord" away from the sight of human beings. The mystery of Christ had penetrated her inner being to the point that she was physically touched; it seemed to her she would "die of love".

It was like this throughout Good Friday. On Holy Saturday, due to an act lacking in generosity, those feelings disappeared and she returned to her "old self".



19. I notice a difference between this last experience and the preceding ones. These were touching me more or less intimately in the deepest part of myself, while the last one affected also my mind and senses.

20. As far as I can remember, my Easter day was a day of joy which however was by no means proportionate to the sorrow.

**19-20.** Magdalene analyses this present experience in the light of past occurrences and recognizes that previously, these touched only the inmost recesses of her soul, while this time her physical senses are also involved. The joy of Easter brought her less happiness than the suffering she experienced during those preceding days.

21. So I left my Retreat to return to Venice, feeling the separation from my companions in a deeper way this time.

**21.** Magdalene remains in the Retreat of San Giuseppe till the end of April. On the 29th she informs Carolina Durini: "I am writing to you from Venice where I arrived on Friday last (April 26) after a very good journey"<sup>5</sup>. In the same letter she informs her of the departure of Msgr. Pacetti from Venice. In fact, on April 30, he will be in Verona "to take part in the Holy Missions" of a month-long duration in the Church of San Fermo Maggiore. Magdalene will have only a few days to discuss with him the steps to be taken to ensure that the Rules may reach directly the Holy Father, but above all, she wanted guidance on the subject of the proper spirit that must animate the members of the Institute. The most comforting news for Carolina Durini is contained in the postscript where Magdalene informs her that the following July she will be in Milan "for the well-known project" of the foundation of a house in Milan.

## THE VOW OF CHASTITY

22. When I returned, I experienced the usual transports of love in prayer. I longed then to take my vow of perpetual chastity because I thought I could not say to the Lord in truth that I was His if I were free to do so only when it pleased me.

23. I again begged the one who directs me to accord me permission and he warned me that, once I pronounced the vow, I would be subjected to strong temptation in this matter. I was finally won over by my insistence and granted me permission.

**22-23.** The desire to pronounce the "vow of perpetual chastity" is a response to the promptings of God who enlightens and invites her to respond to His infinite love. The Spouse has given her everything. How can she be "His" if she has not

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<sup>5</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini 29 April 1816, Ep. I, p. 445.



yet given all of herself to Him, entrusting not only her own body to Him but above all surrendering the freedom to do so. Her Director who, until then, had agreed on her taking the vow only at specified times with precise expiry and renewal dates is won over by her insistence and finally approves.

24. Once I had received permission, I fell prey to a thousand doubts; so I practically did not have the courage to pronounce the vow.

25. Some years before, when I had been disturbed by temptations, I was inspired to pray in a special way to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and I believe that I was freed from this ordeal through her intercession.

**24-25.** The delay in taking the final decision of total consecration probably stems from the fear of having snatched a permission not in line with God's Will. In the past Magdalene had always received efficacious help against this type of temptation through the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin Mary.

26. Thinking about it, I started to doubt that it was not true and at once I was assailed by the violence of the above mentioned temptations. I told everything to my Confessor, who reassured me, and I recovered my calm.

27. Despite the encouragement received from my Confessor, my fears still hindered me and a month passed before I resolved to take the vow.

28. Finally one day my Director approached me of his own accord and encouraged me to take it.

29. But I wanted to wait for a day dedicated to the Most Holy Virgin Mary because I desired to entrust it into her hands.

**26-29.** Throughout the month of May she experiences doubts, violent assaults of temptations against chastity and a peaceful return to serenity. Encouraged by her Director, she finally decides to choose a day dedicated to Mary, a Saturday, June 8, 1816.

It is a memorable day for Magdalene. It is the realization of what she had written for her daughters: "What is required to live well the vow of chastity, is a total interior and exterior detachment from everything that is not God, to be able to devote all our time, all our cares and all our thoughts to the Divine Glory, and to ensure that all that we are, and all that we possess, belong entirely to the Lord"<sup>6</sup>.

30. Once, while praying during this time, I experienced God's presence. As it were I saw nothing, yet I could perceive His essence in my inner self. I felt as though the soul was being transported, with great peace and

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<sup>6</sup> M.d.C.R.s.s., P.I, p. 53.



sweetness to unite itself with God and, to explain it better, it was as if I were being immersed in Him with such power that, had it been a degree stronger I would certainly have lost my senses.

**30.** God does not delay in responding to Magdalene's generous gesture. During one of her prayer moments, God shows Himself in His "essence" in her innermost being. It is an authentic rapture which involves both spirit and body. The spirit is transported towards God in peace and sweetness as though it were "immersed" in Him, and the body, incapable of following the spirit, almost loses "its senses". Thus St. Teresa explains one of her raptures: "... I was surprised by a great rapture. The soul, incapable of being by itself, seemed as though it wanted to leave the body... As I could not bear it... I tried to lean myself because the natural strength seemed to be abandoning me"<sup>7</sup>.

**31.** I sat down as I was not able to support myself. I felt my strength failing me. Perhaps it was the fruit of an excited imagination, but in that prayer I felt as though my heart was being seized to make it one with Christ's though they remained distinctly two.

**31.** With a deep sense of modesty, Magdalene almost attributes a highly mystical experience to her "excited imagination". She describes what mystics call a spiritual marriage. Love is a power that tends to unite. And Jesus Christ, by means of His Spirit, takes Magdalene's heart to unite it with His in the oneness of love. The Saint describes this phenomenon with passive verbs: "I had the impression that my heart was being seized to make it one with that of Christ though they remained distinctly two". The love of God, even if it is all powerful, does not obliterate Magdalene's. Love can only exist if two are involved. St. Teresa writes thus: "God the Spirit, wanting to show us the love that He offers, reveals to us and to some people, to what extent His love would reach so that we may praise His greatness. He is pleased to unite Himself to one of His creatures and does not want to separate Himself from it just as those who are married cannot separate themselves anymore"<sup>8</sup>.

**32.** Physically I was exhausted. Towards the end of my prayer I think I saw a short cross planted in the midst of my soul. It was short but very heavy.

**33.** Since I naturally shrink from suffering, I tried to distract myself from this thought as I was under the impression that it belonged more to the imagination than to an inner sentiment. The cross was surrounded with light.

**32-33.** Besides this deep joy of the spirit and a vague sense of physical exhaustion, the soul has been strengthened enough to bear the foreboding

<sup>7</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., pp. 394-395.

<sup>8</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 943.





crosses that will have to be borne for the Glory of God. Magdalene does not love suffering but love will bring her very soon to desire even a thousand deaths provided she can give Glory to her Lord.

34. After that day had passed, I was again recollected but not fully, and I was prey to my imagination and distractions.

35. Days passed by and my old temptations made their reappearance. This time they were many and different from those indicated above. In fact I was extremely tired of prayer and everything else, doubtful of my salvation and worried by the responsibilities I had to bear in connection with the Institute.

**34-35.** She has another less intense experience and then reverts back into temptations of different kinds, except those against chastity which have been described earlier. Prayer becomes a burden and the fear of being condemned increases; there is also a further anxiety regarding the responsibility of her leadership of the Institute which is still having teething troubles. Msgr. Pacetti gives her a report on the Community of San Giuseppe which he had visited earlier: "... on the 21st, the day I left San Fermo, I was at the disposition of the Sisters in San Giuseppe all day... The storm broke in Verona on the 5th... I listened to all those who desired to see me... I found three to my liking... Leopoldina wants to do something different from what she originally had in mind and for this reason I am examining the *Rules*. Perhaps she will not agree to this... but it is better to do what is necessary"<sup>9</sup>. At Venice, in the meantime, her companion Vincenza Pancrazio, has taken ill seriously. The foreseen crosses have become realities.

36. I could not find any kind of relief, neither spiritual nor human. All my prayer experiences seemed sheer folly to me and in fact, what is worse, I knew that I was the main cause of ruin for the Institute in which the Lord had placed me.

**36.** Once more, she is ensnared by the thought that all of the past expressions which she describes, could be classed as "sheer folly". She does not find relief neither in heaven nor on earth. The things of heaven she had previously experienced have vanished like in a dream; the things of the earth have little taste for her. The feeling of emptiness and the conviction that she is "the main cause of ruin for the Institute" remain. It is the purifying torment of the saints.

37. As I had committed many faults, on a Saturday, on June 8, to be precise, I tried to help myself with thoughts and acts of love during my prayer.

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<sup>9</sup> Msgr. PACETTI, M.d.C., 22 June 1816, ms. A2, XXXI, A.C.R.



38. I saw well that I did not deserve to love the Lord and I feared, as I had already told Him the day before, to be a hateful object in His eyes.

39. But to this thought there came the reply: “Ego diligentes me diligo.”

**37-39.** It is June 8, 1816, the second Saturday of the month. The day before, Magdalene had feared and believed herself to be “a hateful object” for the Lord and she had told Him so during prayer.

She found herself full of defects, incapable of loving a God who deserved to be loved. But God, whose mercy is infinite, thus speaks to her heart: “I love those who love me”.

40. According to obedience, I have to tread the path of love so I took courage and began as usual to give vent to some expressions. Gradually my old desire for the Glory of God swept over me. As I repeatedly offered myself to the Lord, it flashed through my mind that this might be the right moment to pronounce the vow of perpetual chastity.

**40.** Magdalene is won over by God’s goodness and on recalling Father Marino di Cadore’s invitation to tread the path of love,<sup>10</sup> she begins “to give vent to some usual expressions”. God Himself does not delay in meeting her and awakening in her the desire to give and dedicate herself for His Glory.

41. Forgetting it was a Saturday, I decided to wait for a day dedicated to Our Lady.

42. But when I remembered it I made an act of contrition not knowing whether it would be efficacious, but it certainly was sincere. I shed many tears begging the Lord to send me any suffering, sorrows, privations and crosses, provided He would never allow me to sin anymore.

43. I even made myself available, if possible at all, to be reduced to atoms of dust, just to see God glorified, and I was also prepared to suffer the pains of hell, provided no one entered there.

**41-43.** It was on a Saturday dedicated to the Blessed Virgin that she thought fit to consecrate herself for ever to the Lord. After a sincere act of sorrow, she asks for the grace to never offend Him again and offers herself to be pulverized into “atoms” on condition she can see Him glorified. “The glory for these souls”, writes St. Teresa, “lies in being able in some way to help their Crucified God, especially

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Chapter VIII, v. 16.



when they see He is so offended and that few there are, who detached from everything else really look after His Honour”<sup>11</sup>.

**44.** Then, with all the affection I could muster, I pronounced my vow. The thought of belonging wholly to Jesus Christ overwhelmed me to the extent that I could think of nothing else.

**45.** I simply told Our Lord that henceforward He would be my very own and begged Him to take care of everything for me.

**46.** Physically I remained exhausted and it was outwardly visible; though because of my frail health no one guessed the real motive.

**44-46.** The gift of herself has been made absolute. Magdalene belongs totally to the Lord and the Lord is all hers. They have common interests, in fact each loves the interest of the beloved. “I will take care of my beloved and my beloved will take care of me. He will watch over my interests and I over His”<sup>12</sup>.

Physical exhaustion is the outcome of this new experience and just happens to correspond with what her companions consider to be a logical consequence of poor health and naturally they suspect nothing.

**47.** While praying, I felt a little pacified concerning my sins. After my vow, another fear took possession of me, the fear that other souls would be lost. For such souls Christ’s blood would have been shed in vain.

**48.** In my dejection I spoke to the Lord, confiding to Him that I felt like dying. I tried to distract my mind from what I could not possibly bear.

**47-48.** The sense of her own poverty is felt simultaneously with the favours God bestows on her. “The more the souls see themselves favoured by Him they trust themselves less and fear themselves to the point of not having the courage even to raise their eyes, like the publican of the Gospel; for they know better the Divine Greatness and their extreme misery and the enormous malice of their sins”<sup>13</sup>.

After taking the vow, she is overcome with anguish over the ineffectiveness of Christ’s bloodshed for lost souls. She is so overwhelmed by sorrow that it seems as if she would die. It is a taste of the agony of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

**49.** Because my mind was taken up with all this, I knew that it was not merely an interior experience like the ones already described.

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<sup>11</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU`, o.c., p. 950.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p. 1012.

<sup>13</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU`, o.c., pp. 954-955.



50. I was left bewildered the whole day long, also because I had shed many tears which I am not accustomed to doing. It was not, as I said, a purely interior impression.

**49-50.** Occasionally Magdalene examines her mystical experiences. At this point of the narration it is to be noted that these last phenomena not only affect the spirit but also the mind and the senses. The state of bewilderment in which she finds herself and the unusual weeping which accompanies it, do in fact reveal that the whole person has been affected by the irresistible action of God.

### A COMPANION IN HEAVEN

51. It was around this time that the Lord took one of my companions to Himself. I cannot explain why it was that I never felt like praying for her health.

52. She was a widow and lived with us for a mere six months; there is no doubt that she was already very holy when she came to the Institute. She was a person of rich interior life, profound recollection and perfect obedience.

53. Had she followed her inclination, she would have spoken unceasingly of God to the point of exaggeration, if exaggeration were possible in such a matter. Her life was in perfect harmony with her words.

54. Her love for God and neighbours was immense. In the last stage of her earthly life, she succeeded in controlling her passions to such an extent that she no longer experienced any repugnance in practising virtue and mortification.

**51-54.** In the month of May 1816, the Lord visits the Community of Santa Lucia and takes to Himself one of the companions, a certain Vincenza Pancrazio Astori. She had entered six months earlier, already endowed with "a rich interior life". During the illness, Magdalene could never bring herself to pray for her; almost as if an interior impulse prevented her from doing so.

55. Some weeks before her death she spoke of her departure with great accuracy mentioning the very day she would go to Heaven, which was the feast of the Ascension of the Lord.

56. I have a strong feeling that her illness was the result of her excessive charity in assisting sick women in the hospital of the city. She used to embrace and even kiss them, in different to the consequences, and without taking the least precautions.



57. She had tried to go to the hospital on the very same day she was overcome by her sickness and had then to be taken to her bed.

58. The Superior, in fact, on perceiving the pallor of her face and that she was not feeling well, prevented her from doing so.

**55-58.** Vincenza Pancrazio must have contracted the illness through infection. She used to visit the sick in hospitals with such charity as not to mind about her own health.

Her presentiment that she would die on May 23, feast of the Ascension, comes true.

59. In the beginning we did not make very much of it. The next day there was no apparent worsening of the situation, and yet she expressed her wish for confession.

60. Thinking that there was really no hurry, the Superior persuaded her to drop the matter.

61. On the morrow she inquired how many days remained before Ascension day. The Superior's answer was rather evasive.

62. Things precipitated in a short time and the sick Sister confided to the Superior that she was positively sure that she would die and go to Heaven on Ascension day.

63. The Superior encouraged her to be equally resigned to live and serve the Lord or to die and be eternally happy with Him.

64. The Superior called the confessor and procured for her all the spiritual comforts of our faith, as she was bound in justice to do. The doctor saw no urgent need for the Holy Viaticum to be administered and when the Superior insisted, he laughed at such fears.

**59-64.** With a mother's heart Magdalene writes the story of the illness and Vincenza's presentiments of an imminent death. The doctor is not very convinced that it is a case of fatal illness.

65. The infirm Sister, who knew nothing about the request, herself expressed the wish to receive the sacrament. Since it could not be done without the doctor's permission, she begged to fast so that she could receive Holy Communion in the ordinary way but the request was not granted.

66. Finally the Superior prevailed upon the doctor and the Holy Viaticum was brought to her.



**65-66.** According to the ecclesiastical rules of that period, the patient had to request permission to fast to be able to receive the Viaticum; she alone is convinced that she would soon die.

**67.** After a general Confession she insisted on asking forgiveness of all her companions for any sorrow or bad example she might have given them, then sitting up in bed as if in no suffering at all, she received the Sacred Host with the greatest joy.

**68.** As her condition worsened, the Superior begged the doctor's permission to have Extreme Unction administered to her. He agreed and she in full consciousness answered all the prayers of the Church.

**69.** Her Spiritual Director wanted to add straight away the indulgence of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, but she remarked that she did not want to be hurried but would prefer to take time to savour the gifts of the Lord peacefully.

**70.** She finally received also this indulgence with equal devotion after which she warmly recommended us all to promote the devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows, that she herself had set up in the parish of St. Marcuola. She begged us to spread it as widely as possible. She then expressed the wish to benefit from those prayers that members of the Confraternity are entitled to after death.

**67-70.** Magdalene offers this dying daughter all the spiritual comforts: Confession, Viaticum, Extreme Unction, indulgence of the Carmel, special prayers to the Most Sorrowful Virgin Mary, a devotion which she herself had established in the parish of St. Marcuola and even prayers for the souls of the dead which were usually said for those already deceased.

**71.** Her illness grew worse, and on another day she was granted some more indulgences, but this time she was only partly aware of what was happening.

**72.** Recovering consciousness for awhile, she told us that she had just overcome a violent temptation. She then promised the Superior that, because she had been mother to her, she would be like a daughter to her in Heaven.

**73.** She also promised all her companions that she would remember them. She expressed the wish to have them near her so that she could embrace them all.





74. One day, in fact, she asked the Superior to call all the Sisters around her. The Superior did not feel like doing so but instead she greeted them for her.

**71-74.** For the first time, Magdalene assists at the deathbed of one of her daughters with the loving care of a Mother and perhaps, also for the first time, she hears herself addressed as "Mother" by the last of her companions.

75. Finally, the Sunday preceding the feast of the Ascension, she entered into agony, but always remaining conscious. At least this was our impression.

76. Her last words to her Superior were to recommend her to Mary, the Mother of Sorrows.

**75-76.** As she had predicted at the start of her illness, Vincenza expired on the feast day of the Ascension, May 23, 1816. Magdalene informs her friend Carolina Durini who had recently lost her brother-in-law, Marquis Carlo Arconati: "The Lord has visited both of us, my dear Carolina but He has visited you more seriously than me"<sup>14</sup>.

77. During her final agony, whenever she opened her eyes and saw the Superior she would smile. It was half past six when she passed away.

78. During the entire period of her illness she never complained except once for being unable to contemplate Christ Crucified and having to die without suffering. She showed great joy when the Superior encouraged her to offer her sufferings.

79. When the remedies were painful she would simply say so.

80. And as the Superior encouraged her to suffer bravely by thinking of the Lord's Passion she whispered that she was ready to accept whatever was given to her.

81. She did not show the least sign of impatience and repeated acts of love and ejaculations uninterruptedly. Frequently she directed these to Christ Crucified saying: "Forgive me everything, thank you for everything and do with me what you will."

82. For the entire duration of the illness of this companion, it was not possible for me to pray for her recovery. In fact it came to my mind that the Lord perhaps did not want widows in this Institute.

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<sup>14</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 9 June 1816, Ep. I, p. 448.



**78-82.** Recalling the sad event much later, Magdalene emphasises that she was never able to pray for the recovery of this daughter probably due to a presentiment of her imminent death.

### Chapter XIII

#### NUPTIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

##### **“MY DEAR SPOUSE”**

1. As far as future events are concerned, I have already mentioned that this knowledge came to me through clear interior illuminations, but which I no longer receive. They left me in a tranquil and peaceful state. However during this time I had flashes of insights into future or distant events, which eventually would prove true.

2. When at times I felt disinclined to suffer, I diverted my mind from those matters I know that would afflict me. In fact these premonitions would cause me great distress when through them I was given knowledge of imminent sufferings.

**1-2.** Magdalene examines the gift of supernatural insight she has received from the Lord in the light of past events, and stresses her own feelings about the illuminations which she continues to receive.

If, in the past, the “clear interior illuminations” brought her to “a tranquil and peaceful state”, at present, she is “disinclined to suffer”, and recoils from the cross she foresees on the horizon. For this reason, at times, she tries to engage her mind in matters other than what God wants to communicate to her.

3. After having taken the vow of perpetual chastity followed by the great bewilderment which came over me, I moved into a state of temptations and weariness. Nothing seemed to give me relief, not even prayer, in which in fact, I found myself very distracted.

**3.** Glorious days spiritually enlightened by the divine sun and dark nights charged with temptations and boredom followed one another in Magdalene’s life. They indicate a journey of increasing communion with God and of purifying interior sufferings.

Christ Himself explained these experiences to St. Teresa of Avila: “No one should think that through his own effort he can be in light or that he can do anything to prevent the night, because this state depends upon my grace...at the moment I withdraw, the night will come”<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU`, o.c., p. 499.



4. I acknowledge that I was myself the cause of the Institute's uncertain establishment, and my affliction grew to such an extent that I lost sleep.

5. Every time a fault was committed, my affliction increased seeing that this harm stemmed from me.

6. Even speaking with the one who was directing me was burdensome. The same happened with my confessor except when I approached the sacrament of Penance.

**4-6.** The state of deep dejection in which she lives, is responsible for Magdalene's sense of guilt regarding her companions' faults and the fear that she alone has brought about the still uncertain situation of the Institute. The greatest preoccupation is given by the Community of Verona where the storm is becoming more menacing. She is affected to the extent of losing sleep. But we know, as we have already seen, that the sun will soon return in Magdalene's heart because God is Faithful and will not permit a Work, of which He and His Mother are joint authors, to end in smoke.

7. The former reassured me that my fears were unfounded, but I was convinced that, if they could see my customary behaviour, their opinions would be quite different as, in fact, it is with my companions.

**7.** Delving even deeper into her own conscience, Magdalene tends to base herself-judgement on the opinions of her companions with whom she lives, rather than that of her Director who judges her on what she says of herself. She is afraid of not being able to reveal her negative qualities sufficiently.

8. On one of the days that followed (I think that it was the first on which I received Holy Communion after pronouncing my vow of Perpetual Chastity) I had the impression of holding my Spouse in my heart and I felt peace restored to my soul.

9. It seemed to me, however, that I could no longer love Him because according to the spirit with which I had taken my vow I had given myself to God and it seemed that my heart was not mine to dispose of.

10. It was perhaps that morning during prayer that this thought came to me. Since I cannot any longer love Him myself, I would love Jesus with the Heart of Jesus.

**8-10.** The sacraments have an important place in Magdalene's life. The first encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist after the vow of perpetual chastity, lights up her darkness. The Spouse returns to live in her. Her first concern is to return His love. But how will she do it since she had already given all of herself, heart included, to her Lord? An interior inspiration prompts her to love God with the



Heart of Jesus Himself. The process of identification with her beloved Spouse is at its height. Magdalene surrenders her own heart, intelligence, will, and the whole of herself to God through the Heart of Christ. It is the prelude to the eternal nuptial feast.

**11.** I cannot recall in detail the spiritual experiences of that day, but I do remember the very tender transports of love that caught hold of me, and I spent the rest of the time in close union with God repeating frequently loving expressions.

**12.** My love increased and gathered strength as I was prompted to call Him "My dear Spouse." Another time, during prayer, I thought I heard Him call me "My dear spouse" but I might have imagined it.

**11-12.** Magdalene has succeeded in putting into words, the experience of her nuptial union with Jesus Christ. For some time now, during prayer the Lord had been murmuring those words: "My dear spouse", but only after she had taken the vow of perpetual chastity, the corresponding expression: "My dear Spouse!" arose within her. The nuptial relationship is the most intimate relationship a human person can know here on earth. Christ, the Man-God knows all the various nuances of human love because He alone is the source. When He wants to unite Himself spiritually to His creatures, He uses the typical language of human love. Magdalene has reached the highest level of communion with Christ. The two hearts live in the unity of love.

**13.** I was left with a consuming desire to work for the Lord and to seek nothing else but Him alone. Because of my weakness always commit some imperfections when dealing with those with whom I live even though they are holy. I begged the Lord to make me die on a deserted beach alone, with Him alone.

**14.** Though physically exhausted, I felt disposed to go to serve Him even at the North Pole if it were necessary.

**13-14.** The sure signs of this mystical marriage with God are the total availability to do the Will of the Lord, not to seek anything but God alone and the desire to work for His Glory.

Thus St. Teresa expresses the effects of this new style of life: "The spiritual marriage strives for this: to produce works and works, as these are the true sign of knowing if it is a matter of Divine favours and graces"<sup>2</sup>.

Magdalene's missionary zeal is the continuation of the same zeal that Christ Himself manifested here on earth.

**15.** On that day there was much disagreement with my companions as I tried to convince them that we must part.

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<sup>2</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 958.



16. But the fullness of spirit that I received from prayer, however, was such that I not only felt no suffering desire to work for this separation, but I was also unable to understand how others could be so upset by it.

17. That night, however, I was given abundant proof of my personal weakness for I had not succeeded in restraining myself.

18. In fact, when correcting one of my companions I hurt her feelings. As a result I was deeply disturbed and was incapable of resuming the trend of my prayer.

**15-18.** The responsibilities of the Foundress follow one upon another, and despite the resistance of her daughters, Magdalene prepares them for an immediate separation. She had already written in May 1816 to C. Durini: "I confirm what I have said about my coming, as long as the Lord does not put up new obstacles"<sup>3</sup>.

And the following month: "Believe me, dear Carolina...I would like today to be the day of my arrival in Milan...but it is better to let a few more weeks pass"<sup>4</sup>.

Faced with the resistance of her daughters who did not want to let her go, Magdalene loses her patience and mortifies one of them with a correction. She herself remains "deeply disturbed" and is not able to concentrate in prayer.

### PRAYING FOR A COMPANION

19. I believe I suffered for many days, on account of one of the Sisters who had in mind to leave the Institute.

20. I myself prayed and requested prayer. I begged the Lord's pardon also on behalf of the Sister herself.

21. I also began a novena to Jesus the Nazarene, beseeching Him to give me this daughter.

**19-21.** Before leaving for Milan more suffering strikes Magdalene. One of her companions wants to leave the Institute. According to G. Stofella, the person referred to appears to be Angioletta Guarnieri and the motive is given as the refusal to accept a responsibility entrusted to her. An anonymous witness, referring to cases of defections from the consecrated life, thus relates the thought of the Foundress: "My daughters I am not surprised that one may commit faults... but that one should find a religious who, after having left the world, her family and what is more, her own freedom, should have other aims and other ideals apart from her own sanctification, this she was saying, I cannot understand. And neither that the smallest clash, the slightest difficulty can make one put aside the great task of one's sanctification. I repeat, it may be due to my ignorance, but I cannot understand this"<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 4 May 1816, Ep. I, p. 447.

<sup>4</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 9 June 1816, Ep. I, p. 449.

<sup>5</sup> Some recollections of our Mother Foundress. M.d.C., A3, IIIA, A.C.R.



Magdalene, spiritual Mother to all, takes upon herself that daughter's whim and asks pardon of the Lord. She personally starts a novena to Jesus the Nazarene so that He may grant her the grace to stay.

**22.** Since the day I had made my vow (of perpetual chastity) a certain impression lingered with me. I felt greater pain now, when my companions committed offences against me, for I belonged totally to the Lord. I was afraid He would be displeased all the more against them because of this.

**22.** The vow of perpetual chastity establishes between Christ and Magdalene a nuptial relationship loaded with all its consequences. Magdalene becomes aware of such an identification with Christ to the point of fearing that faults committed against her by her companions would displease the Lord with whom she is now one. It is as though the Lord tells her from within: "The insults which are hurled at you fall on me"<sup>6</sup>.

**23.** While praying for these companions, in the usual manner I was given to understand, not clearly but with a degree of certainty, that my companion would not only remain, but that her eternal salvation was assured.

**24.** While I was about to recite, or perhaps had already recited the Novena, she came to plead with me to hear her.

**25.** After finishing the Novena I left the choir and went before the picture of Our Lady where I knelt. My companion also did the same and weeping, asked my pardon and promised to do better. She was disposed to remain and obey, to do what she had previously refused, after my departure.

**26.** After this, with the exception of some brief trials, she has always been a great help to others.

**23-26.** Again there is another insight into the near future and the "eternal salvation" of the daughter for whom she is praying. While Magdalene is in prayer for that daughter who has decided to leave the Institute, the Lord gives her proof of having been heard.

Magdalene kneels before the statue of the Most Sorrowful Virgin Mary and receives her daughter's request for forgiveness and the desire to remain in the Institute, and the promise to carry out what she had previously refused to do.

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<sup>6</sup> Ps. 69, 9.





She will turn out to be, comments the Mother, a very good Daughter of Charity and “a great help to others”.

### AND FOR ALL MY COMPANIONS

**27.** And so this first storm subsided, but I found myself greatly distressed as I was having many temptations, mainly against faith. These are the ones which oppress me most. I felt crushed by the many preoccupations I had at hand. I thought about the suffering that awaited me in Milan and I was completely overwhelmed by the distress of my companions over my departure. As a consequence, my health began to fail.

**28.** Instead of seeking support in prayer, one day, when I was free to do so I dedicated only half the time at my disposal. This was due to my weariness and many distractions.

**27-28.** Suffering always accompanies every maternity. The separation from the Venice Community, the thought of the suffering awaiting her in Milan and the clash with the community in Verona even if brief, are factors that contribute to the deterioration of her health.

Added to all these external sufferings, are her renewed temptations against faith, “the ones which oppress most” the heart of a spouse.

In this situation, burdened with numerous preoccupations, even prayer loses its attraction and Magdalene halves the time that should be consecrated to the Spouse.

**29.** I made an effort to immerse myself in prayer after several days of such ingratitude to the Lord and because of much anxiety over problems in the Institute These problems had visibly affected nearly all my companions, besides myself, and I felt the necessity to pray.

**30.** Seeing that the measures I had taken, all the anxiety and words had not served any purpose — but only distressed others — I started anew the Novena to Jesus the Nazarene.

**29-30.** The entire community is wavering, “nearly all my companions” are affected. Magdalene tries with words and every other human means to instil calm and peace but to no avail. She feels again “the necessity to pray” and turns to Jesus of Nazareth.

**31.** Though I could not pray much, I immediately noticed that my companions were gradually beginning to calm



down. It was quite clear to me now that I had become only a figurehead in the Institute.

**32.** On numerous occasions my companions, including the younger ones, were quicker to see things better than I.

**33.** I then understood that I would achieve much more by turning to God in prayer, than with all my talking and doing. God is so good that He never misses the opportunity to make me aware that it is He who is doing everything, and He alone.

**31-33.** The novena to Jesus of Nazareth had its effects, "my companions were beginning to calm down". Magdalene deduces the futility of her presence in the Institute.

The lessons God gives, even in these circumstances, are powerful and considerably efficacious. God makes her understand that if "the nature and capacity of her prayers are not consistent with, and proportionate to, the demands of the divine pleasure"<sup>7</sup> the Institute will then have no basis for survival and will be unable to assert itself.

She "would achieve much more by turning to God in prayer than with all her talking and doing". The Lord saw fit to enlighten her with concrete signs on the efficacy of prayer to enable her to hand down to her Sons and daughters this kind of conviction: "... the spirit and practice of the mental prayer of the heart is to be considered as very necessary for those who want to embrace this type of vocation... prayer influences the soul and sustains it in any kind of suffering... provided He be pleased, served, and possessed so that others may be helped to attain such a happiness"<sup>8</sup>.

### COMPELLED TO TAKE UP THE PEN

**34.** Various occupations and circumstances had compelled me to discontinue my writing for several years. Now I am urged by my Superiors to take it up again. I shall therefore try to narrate some recent happenings and then, always under obedience, I shall continue to recall them.

**34.** From June 1816 to the end of 1824 the Memoirs are interrupted. In these 8 years, only very few dates appear. Magdalene gives the reasons as due to "various occupations and circumstances". Several important events stand out in this period. The foundation of the House of Santo Stefano in Milan in July 1816. In November, Leopoldina Naudet leaves the Convent of San Giuseppe for the foundation of her own Institute. In the same month, a Laudatory Brief of Pius VII, an important step towards the juridical recognition of the Institute comes as a great consolation. On the first Saturday of February 1817, at Santa Lucia in Venice all the companions took the habit. In May 1819, Magdalene will obtain juridical status in the diocese of Venice, from the Patriarch, Msgr. Francesco

<sup>7</sup> Cf. T. M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 470.

<sup>8</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P.2, p. 184.



Milesi, and in the month of June, from the Bishop of Verona, Msgr Innocenzo Liruti. The death of Msgr Pacetti on December 18, 1819, affected Magdalene very deeply. His support had been most valuable in taking the first decisive steps towards the Pontifical approval of the Institute. In July 1820 also the Archbishop of Milan, Msgr. Carlo Gaysruck will grant juridical status to the Institute in his diocese. In September of the same year the House at Bergamo was canonically erected and in 1821, Bishop Msgr. Pietro Mola will issue the decree of erection of the Institute in his diocese. From 1816 to 1823, the Foundress frequently visited the houses she had founded, with the purpose of strengthening in the spirit the daughters that the Lord had given her and also to attend to legal, ecclesiastical or government matters. She travelled to Venice thirteen times and fourteen to Bergamo and Milan. She travelled to Verona, the Mother House and her home town, twenty-three times. All these events and movements engage her in such a way that Magdalene thinks she is justified in suspending the Memoirs. But perhaps the actual reason can be found in her aversion to reveal details of her inner life on paper, had not obedience obliged her to do so. Msgr. Pacetti who had put her under this obedience had, by then, died. Why then, must she continue to write? She will soon receive another obedience from another representative of God, the priest, Don Giovanni Zanetti.

**35.** While I was passing from Milan on my way to Bergamo, I took the road that led to Caravaggio. I did this with the aim of visiting that Shrine of the Most Holy Virgin Mary. I was very tired and sat down on the bench and after having prayed to Our Lady for many intentions, I also recommended the Sons of Charity to her.

**35.** After a long sojourn in Milan, Magdalene moves to Bergamo in early May 1823. During the journey she visits the Shrine of Caravaggio. To the Most Holy Virgin Mary she entrusts many of her cares, community problems, new foundations and especially she recommends the Institute of the Sons of Charity which is still uncertain and wavering. Attempts had been made in various cities like Verona, Milan and Bergamo.

Since 1815, Magdalene had been following with interest a certain Giuseppe Bellotti in Verona, a miller "who had opened a free school for boys"<sup>9</sup>.

In Bergamo she had been observing with interest the Work of Canon Gaetano Benaglio who was the Director of the "charity school" for boys which had been started in the old seminary. In Milan she was negotiating for a similar institute with Canon Pietro Giglio<sup>10</sup>.

It was difficult, impossible in fact, to find a priest who would accept to direct the Institute after the refusal of Antonio Rosmini. All these projects and secret aspirations Magdalene entrusted to the Virgin of Caravaggio in prayer.

**36.** Then I caught sight, in a sensible way, of a shadow behind me. I saw it through my veil, as I would see a

<sup>9</sup> DON N. GALVANI, M.d.C., 2 October 1815, ms. A2, XXXVIII, A.C.R.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Promemoria della Canossa a Msgr. Zoppi, 7 May 1823, Ep. II/2, p. 775.



person but it did not have any shape. As I was not used to seeing anything with my bodily eyes I was a little afraid. While I was wondering about this, I felt a slight push on my shoulder.

**37.** Alarmed, I was on my feet and looked carefully behind me to see if it was someone or some animal but I saw nothing. I returned to my usual place and as far as I can remember, I resumed my prayer for the Sons of Charity.

**38.** It came to my mind that the devil wanted to signify something about them but as it was an external matter, I did not let it worry me and neither was I further distracted.

**36-38.** Magdalene has a strange experience in that Shrine. While she is praying for the Sons of Charity she sees a shapeless shadow in visible form and receives a "slight push" on the shoulder. She gets up, turns around, looks but sees nothing. She composes herself and returns to pray for the Sons of Charity and wonders if it was a sign of the devil's anger against such an Institute.

"Magdalene of Canossa", it is written in the Rule of life of the Sons of Charity, "met with many obstacles in giving life to our Congregation. She often found herself alone, suffered misunderstanding and felt herself incapable; she continued to believe however in the gift of the Spirit and after various attempts on May 23, 1831 she started in Venice the Institute of the Sons of Charity. Our Congregation was born in the humility and in the obscurity of the Cross while Magdalene understood always more and more that for her and for the Institute, God wanted to be the only one, the corner stone, the supreme aim and the greatest love"<sup>11</sup>.

**39.** When I arrived at Bergamo, after a long journey, the first aspirant to the Institute informed me that he had been advised to join another one. Even the priest who was to direct the Institute had decided against it.

**39.** On arriving at Bergamo, Magdalene has the confirmation of what she experienced in Caravaggio: precisely in that city the first aspirant to the Canossian male Branch had gone over to another Institute and Count Don Marco Passi from whom she had hoped for help and collaboration does not intend to engage himself in directing the Work<sup>12</sup>.

**40.** I began to recall what had befallen me that morning and understood it to be a sign of Satan's efforts to prevent the birth of that Institute.

**41.** I was guiding the Spiritual Exercises for teachers of the rural areas. That evening they should have done meditation on the Crucifixion but I felt urged to suggest a meditation on Jesus carrying the cross to Calvary.

<sup>11</sup> Rule of the Congregation of the Sons of Charity, Verona, 1985, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to Msgr. Zoppi, 7 March 1824, Ep. II/2, p. 787.



42. While I was helping them to reflect on the generosity Jesus had shown in carrying the cross, suddenly my imagination was illumined with a vision of Jesus carrying the cross on His shoulders, as if He were a shadow.

**41-42.** The Spiritual Exercises for the Rural Teachers are in full swing in Bergamo. They began on September 22, and would have ended on October 3. The Retreat Master, because of his other duties, is replaced sometimes by Magdalene, for some of the meditations. That evening she was to have spoken about Christ Crucified. She instead felt inspired to present Him as carrying the cross to Calvary. She became so involved in her description of Christ's generosity in embracing the cross that suddenly, she saw Him like a shadow in the act of carrying it. The Lord's mysterious action invades her being not only while she is praying but also when she is carrying out her apostolic duties.

43. He seemed like a skeleton, half-clothed in purple and crowned with thorns, under the weight of the cross and in the usual way He said: "I too, was weak when I carried the cross."

44. It left me with a very strong impression of having to be strong in suffering though at times I felt weak in my body as well as in my work. Consequently, every time I was in pain and suffering I seemed to hear those words: "I too..."

45. With this interior prompting, it seemed to me everything was of scarce or no value at all, and I desired to remain strong in my suffering and in my work.

**43-45.** Magdalene describes in detail the suffering Christ; He presents Himself extremely thin, half-naked and vested in purple and crushed under the weight of the cross. During that period, Magdalene is carrying all kinds of crosses that are weighing her down.

She is in Bergamo but the problems of the Superiors of Milan, Verona and Venice are constantly in her thoughts and it is the Lord who speaks to her: "I too, was weak when I carried the cross".

The result of this vision was that Magdalene acquired more strength in suffering and in facing difficulties and she seemed to hear Christ repeating to her: "I too..."

46. In the preceding page I have described what happened to me on... 1823. Here I simply mention it because of its relation to another which took place towards the end of this year 1824.

**46.** Magdalene joins two dates together: the beginning of October 1823 and the end of 1824 and connects them with two similar incidents. She is no longer writing for Msgr. Pacetti, who went to his rest in 1819, but for Msgr. Francesco



Maria Zoppi. He became Bishop of Massa in 1823 and delegated Don Giovanni Zanetti as Spiritual Director as well as Director of the Institute's works<sup>13</sup>.

47. I was praying in the choir one day and I was feeling rather ill. My health was quite precarious at that time. I think I was examining the possibility of a journey to Milan where I knew that, because of several reasons, a lot of suffering was awaiting me. I felt neither the will nor the energy to go and face this ordeal.

48. I am not absolutely sure whether this thought came to me at that moment, but certainly I thought about it with apprehension though, and to spare the Sisters who saw me unwell, I avoided mentioning this point to them.

49. In my imagination I saw Our Lord carrying the cross on His shoulders. He was crowned with thorns, and I observed in particular, what seemed like a gush of blood below His chin, at the level of His neck.

50. As usual, it was not a matter of seeing with my eyes but with my imagination.

**47-50.** We are towards the end of 1824. Magdalene finds herself in the house at Bergamo in Santa Croce. She is on the point of leaving for Milan where she foresees that she will meet with new sufferings. While at prayer and preoccupied with what awaits her in that city, "the Lord with the cross on His shoulders" and with obvious signs of a cruel passion, lights up her imagination.

The effects of this vision of Christ's passion are to be seen in the fortitude that Magdalene has been given to enable her to face any kind of adversity with the courage of the saints. "When the heart is inflamed with love", she writes, "it leads the soul to work great things and, by imitating the Apostle of the Gentiles, it will be ready to face the chains, prison and even death rather than be separated from the Charity of Jesus Christ"<sup>14</sup>.

51. I also have to admit that many times, I had seen a picture resembling this, in a Station of the Cross Again I remembered having seen another one, similar to my imaginative vision, which I described on October 1.

52. This time, however, I was profoundly impressed by the immense suffering of our Redeemer and by the heaviness of the cross He was carrying.

53. I resolved that, once in Milan, I would not try to get away too soon.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to Msgr. Zoppi, February 1824, ms. A2, XXXVI, A.C.R.

<sup>14</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P.2, p. 183.





54. However, the one who directed me and to whom I confided my experience told me that on completing my mission there, I should try to leave that town.

**51-54.** It is not the first time that the suffering Christ presents Himself to Magdalene but this time, she is particularly struck by the weight of the cross He was carrying on his shoulders. Confronted with such a vision, her own sufferings almost disappear and she thinks of staying in Milan longer than she had foreseen to comply even more with the passion of Christ. Don Giovanni Zanetti, who has been delegated by Msgr. Zoppi<sup>15</sup> to direct her, advises her to leave the city as soon as matters are concluded.

55. That vision encouraged me and I imagined that I would find great sufferings there. These came to pass but they concerned only my person, I really had to suffer though not continuously. It seemed thus in my weakness.

56. At times I made an attempt to recapture this experience, but I did not find the cross as heavy as I expected.

**55-56.** The crosses are Magdalene's daily bread and with visions, Christ gives her the necessary courage to bear her prolonged Calvary.

Her health is in a very precarious state. She writes to one of her daughters from Milan: "... if I had to undergo the same medical treatment that is prescribed to these ladies, before accepting it, as I do not have patience, I should ask to prepare a grave for me in the cemetery..., for within a few days they would have to take me there... it is blessed to be poor and blessed is the 'air of Monte Baldo' (a cheerful spirit)"<sup>16</sup>.

Another unhappy news arrives from Canossa Palace informing her of the precarious health of her sister-in-law, Marchioness Francesca Castiglioni.

### **"THE DIVINE REDEEMER... THREW HIMSELF INTO MY ARMS"**

57. On my return to Bergamo I was informed that my sister was in danger of death. I could not reconcile myself to the idea of losing her.

58. So, after hearing the sad news, I spent some days in utter misery and suffering. It was only trust in her recovery that quietened me while I anxiously waited to receive further information.

59. I remember that while praying in the choir, two or three days before the letter conveying the news of her

<sup>15</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 453.

<sup>16</sup> M.d.C., to R. Daba`, 5 February 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 796.



death reached me, I began to recall the image of Jesus with the cross which I had described earlier.

**57-59.** Magdalene leaves Milan on February 12, 1824 together with her secretary, Cristina Pilotti. Awaiting her in Bergamo, is the news that her sister-in-law's condition had worsened. While at prayer, she recalls the figure of Christ weighed down by the cross, some days before receiving the news of her death.

**60.** I cannot remember if I had offered myself to carry the cross for Him or if the Divine Redeemer presented Himself before me. I saw Him without the cross throwing Himself into my arms. I saw Him in my imagination and His person was not clearly delineated.

**61.** I remained recollected and nestled closely in His embrace for the duration of a Mass. I was consoled to see Him without the cross and without the crown of thorns, and I was only too ready to carry the cross if this would alleviate His suffering. I too, was relieved and at peace.

**60-61.** Magdalene cannot bear to see the suffering Christ weighed down by the cross and offers to carry it herself. It is the gesture of the spouse who, unmindful of herself, intends to share the pain of the bridegroom. And Christ agrees. He presents Himself at once to Magdalene without the cross bearing the semblance of the Redeemer. As if imploring her love, He throws Himself into her arms and Magdalene remains united with the Man-God for "the duration of a Mass". This expression echoes that of the Canticle of Canticles: "...I held him and would not let him go"<sup>17</sup>.

After this ecstasy of love, Magdalene is more than disposed to embrace whatever cross as long as He is alleviated.

**62.** Then I received news of the death of my sister in-law with great sorrow, but with considerable restraint and I believe this to be a result of the above-mentioned experience.

**63.** Though weeping for that loss, I kept repeating to the Lord: "Even if all should die, provided that you may be relieved".

**64.** It seemed as though the Lord had given me the cross He was first carrying.

**62-64.** Magdalene receives the news of the loss of her sister-in-law directly from her brother. Strong in her deep sorrow, fruit of the previous mystic experience, she replies "It is impossible to explain to you, my dear brother, my sorrow on receiving your precious letter of the 16th, from which I learned of the bitter loss of our Checchina (Castiglioni). You know the close and continual friendship between us and the affection and respect I held for her virtues. Consequently, as regards

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<sup>17</sup> Sg. 3, 4.



her and you, I consider it to be the biggest cross in the world"<sup>18</sup>. Christ's cross and her brother's cross had passed on to her shoulders...

65. A few days later, again during prayer, I think I was still pondering over this when I fervently asked the Lord's pardon for my many sins.

66. I saw the extent of my ingratitude towards the Divine Mercies. The scriptural text: "Torcular calcavi solus" came to my mind and the Divine Redeemer was represented to me, in the same way as the last time, without the cross or crown of thorns, but lacerated with wounds and blood spattered.

67. I could see Him only from His waist upwards as I was not paying attention to anything else...and saw that He was naked.

**65-67.** A few days later another mystical experience follows the news of the death of her sister-in-law. Another vision of "the Divine Redeemer without the cross and crown of thorns", but with signs of the wounds and blood. Magdalene sees only the top half of the person of Christ. And the other half? Perhaps she herself who has been made similar to the Man-God whom she loves more than herself, is the other half.

68. I also wish to say here, that I saw an image of Jesus in the winepress as He appeared to Magdalene de' Pazzi and as she represented Him.

69. This time, too, it seemed that He threw Himself into my arms and that His blood stuck to my person.

70. This time I was again spurred by the desire to alleviate His suffering even though I shuddered at the thought. I do not know if it was the view of that unspeakable pain, or for some other reasons, that I offered myself to bear any cross, to go to any place, or do any other thing, provided that He does not suffer.

**68-70.** The text "torcular calcavi solus" (I have trodden the winepress alone) recalls Magdalene to a similar vision experienced by St. Magdalene de' Pazzi: "Jesus in the Winepress". "This time too" He throws Himself into the arms of this faithful spouse and His blood adhered to her person. Christ becomes for Magdalene a Bridegroom of blood<sup>19</sup>.

On the strength of this mystic union with Christ, she is made Mother of a multitude of children<sup>20</sup>. Between the Daughters and Sons of Charity, nearly six

<sup>18</sup> M.d.C., Marquis Bonifacio, w.d. Ep. I, pp. 556-557.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ex. 4, 25.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Ps. 113, 9.



thousand have gone to their Heavenly Horne and more than four thousand are working on earth to spread the knowledge, service and glory of God.

**71.** What I have just quoted, affected me deeply, and I was ready to be left alone and unsupported in my sorrows, works and feelings. Several days have gone by but this state endures and sustains me in many difficulties.

**71.** The effect of mystical favours, if they are authentic, render the chosen person bold in the service of God.

"It is a state that is very painful", writes St. Teresa, "but the soul emerges with great results, without any fear of possible sufferings and there is nothing that can ever frighten her anymore"<sup>21</sup>.

### **A PILGRIM TO ROME AND IN THE WORLD**

**72.** As far as I can remember, I have always been indifferent to the idea of a foundation in Rome. As a matter of fact I had an aversion for this idea and now, without having solicited it in any way, it has been proposed to me.

**73.** I recalled that when I was very young, I was prepared to leave everything and go unknown into the world if I could have done so without any danger, and if I had known for certain that it was the Will of God. I had some kind of plan to go and live this way just in Rome to serve the Lord. It seemed to me then, in so doing, I would have satisfied all my desires.

**72-73.** In July 1824, Cardinal Placido Zurla, on behalf of the Holy Father, Leo XII and other Cardinals, proposes to Magdalene to start a foundation in Rome. The Cardinal writes: "The Holy Father and I are very convinced, as also other Cardinals with whom I spoke, that it would be desirable to have a group even here... I consider you a special daughter of mine in Jesus Christ and it will be my pleasure to be concerned with your Institute"<sup>22</sup>. In years to come God Himself through His Vicar on earth, fulfils Magdalene's desires.

**74.** I had a vivid memory of how willing I was then to abandon all, especially my family, but now instead, I am so concerned about them and suffer so keenly when I lose any of my relatives.

<sup>21</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 933.

<sup>22</sup> Card. PLACIDO ZURLA, to M.d.C., 6 July 1824, Ep. II/1, p. 725.



**75.** The thought then came to me that if I went to Rome now, I would be protected from all danger; no matter in what situation I would find myself because of the distance, and in how much poverty the Lord would want me to live, I had trust in God that He would help me.

**74-75.** The youthful impulse to leave everyone and everything seems to have toned down now as she reflects on her attachment to her family and the grief she suffers over the loss of some of her relatives. But Rome remains a dream that can come true today more than ever, in the certainty that the Lord, through His Vicar, will call her and help in whatever situation she finds herself. She replies to Cardinal Zurla's urgings: "...whenever the Lord sees it fit to have a House in Rome, I am always at the respectful command of the Holy Father and your Excellency. In fact with the divine help, if you so desire, and if God shows me the way, I would go to whatever place or country"<sup>23</sup>.

**76.** Once again, I made a resolution to be brave and go anywhere, provided I could do something to promote the Glory of God although I knew that, as usual, I would fail.

**76.** In Rome or in any other place Magdalene's inborn call "ad gentes" finds her ready to travel as pilgrim to any corner of the earth. She thus says to one of her daughters: "... for the good of our fellowmen, and when this is brought about, and all my dear daughters become saints, then I am most willing that we be spread even to all parts of the world"<sup>24</sup>. Years later, she would write to the same Sister: "My dear daughter take care of yourself... if you wish that we may go as pilgrims throughout the whole world to expand the Institute of the Daughters of Charity even to the most distant lands"<sup>25</sup>. All the daughters will be thus presented to Msgr. Zoppi who will replace Canon Pacetti after two years: "... the spirit of the Institute is that of being detached of everything and everyone and to be prepared to go to any place even to the remotest country to serve God"<sup>26</sup>.

**77.** Later, when recalling my last experience and my desire to relieve Jesus of His wounds, I was harbouring a great interest in the Greek Church. I think I offered myself most lovingly to bear any suffering, and even to be ground into dust and to go to those countries, if only Our Lord would grant me the consolation of seeing the Greek Church reunited to the Latin Church.

<sup>23</sup> M.d.C., to Card. Zurla, 24 October 1823, Ep. II/1, p. 576.

<sup>24</sup> M.d.C., to E. Bernardi, 31 January 1818, Ep. III/1, p. 154.

<sup>25</sup> M.d.C., to E. Bernardi 1826, Ep. III/5, p. 4077.

<sup>26</sup> M.d.C., to Msgr. Zoppi, 20 May 1827, Ep. II/1, p. 266.



**77.** The very remembrance of Jesus covered with wounds and suffering for the salvation of men, arouses another desire, that of the unity of the Greek and Latin Churches. To obtain this grace, she offers herself “most lovingly to bear any suffering even to be ground into dust”. This expression, full of love, has the taste of martyrdom. The soul, writes St. Teresa, is ready to give a thousand lives, if she had as many, on condition she can get one soul to praise the Lord more<sup>27</sup>.

**78.** One day, when this last vision came before my eyes, I felt compelled to free the Lord from that suffering. Whether it was dictated by my pride, or by my lack of reflection or genuine desire, I do not know. I asked the Lord to keep His Paradise for Himself because I now prefer to remain in this world to relieve Him of His pains, suffering in His stead and to work for Him. In the meantime I was left awaiting some proposal of a foundation.

**78.** The image of the suffering Christ returns again “before her eyes” and even though in the past the desire for Heaven was strong and ardent, she now wants to remain on earth to suffer as a substitute for her Lord. She prefers to remain and work in His place, for His Glory, because, in the Rules she writes: “Christ is not loved because He is not known”<sup>28</sup>.

**79.** I want to emphasise that never in the past, had I ever experienced such forms of imaginative visions. In fact I am rather sceptical myself, and more convinced that it was a matter of my pious ideas.

**80.** Nevertheless I cannot deny the authenticity of their effects, such as union with God, readiness to suffer and work as I have explained above. These, it seems to me, were genuine enough.

**79-80.** Magdalene notes that the mental illuminations of this period, are new compared with the previous ones. And even though she minimizes them, she cannot but consider the effects these mystic experiences have on her. With St. Teresa, she concludes that they were a reality. “Such sublime effects do not belong to the devil. No, the peace, the comfort and the benefit which the soul experiences cannot but come from Him. Three things especially, are felt to the highest degree and can only come from God: first, knowledge and recognition of God’s greatness, because the more we see of this, the greater is our understanding; second, humility and knowledge of self, the thought that one could be so vile as to dare offend the Creator of so many wonders and yet dare to

<sup>27</sup> Cf. S. TERESA DI GESU’, o.c., p. 895.

<sup>28</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, p. 180.





face Him; third, contempt for earthly things save for those that can be used to serve so great a God"<sup>29</sup>.

## Chapter XIV APOSTOLIC ZEAL

### INTERIOR PROMPTINGS

April 20, 1824

1. For various circumstances I was unable to keep a record of events up to this day, May 16. But, now compelled by obedience, I will write all that I am able to recall, though obviously, the dates will be approximate.

1. Magdalene writes these lines on May 16, 1824. She had neglected her Memoirs for some months and recommended them from April 20. 1824 is a year of frequent travels. She travelled seven times to Bergamo, five to Verona, and five to Milan. It is probable that Don Giovanni Zanetti could have reminded her also about her duty to update her Memoirs.

2. Around April 20, after the above-mentioned experience, I felt fortified to carry the cross the Lord had sent me.

3. In fact, I had to come to Verona, where humanly speaking, my sorrows were renewed. I felt perfectly tranquil in everything even amidst bitter circumstances, with the exception of some rare moments, when the description of my sister-in-law's death afflicted me profoundly.

4. I knew that God wished me to belong totally to Him and not to be involved in my family's affairs, even though I was ready to make any sacrifice. The Lord however did everything on His own.

2-4. Magdalene remembers a certain state of mind during the period she was at Bergamo (April 10 - May 15). The different visions of Christ, weighed down by the cross, had given her inner strength and prepared her to face the journey to Verona where the recent family bereavement "afflicted her profoundly". She also felt that the Lord wanted her "totally for Himself", interiorly detached from everything and everyone. But the Lord Himself is guiding her life and Magdalene allows herself to be led, with the constant desire to adapt her life to Him.

5. Around the afore-mentioned date while in prayer, I was seized by a great longing to be with God, not in the interior of the soul where it usually happens but exteriorly as if the soul had to come out of the body to be united to God.

<sup>29</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU'. o.c., pp. 891-892.



6. Without imagining or seeing anything I was reminded of a hymn that describes the soul: “as light as a feather, the soul abandoned its prison and rested in God’s bosom.”

7. It was not a lasting experience, but the effort made by my soul against the grip of the body to attain such a state of union, left me prostrate; especially in my bosom where, for obvious reasons, the effort was greater.

**5-7.** The experience described here occurred around April 20 in Bergamo, and has the characteristics of a rapture which St. Teresa describes: “... the experience provokes a rare detachment that I am not able to describe. I can say that it is in a certain way different from other phenomena that are experienced at only the spiritual level: for if in these last experiences, detachment from things is only in the spirit, but here it seems that the Lord wants to involve the body”<sup>1</sup>. Even Magdalene is transported out of herself “without imagining or seeing anything”. Her spirit unites itself to God in a real but mysterious way. She is physically prostrated for the “effort made by the soul” but at the same time inebriated by light and love.

8. After a few days, I believed I was being tempted to complacency regarding the Mercies of God.

9. This led to another violent temptation. Though I did not yield to it, I saw myself in such a danger that through fear of offending the Lord, I completely lost the thread of prayer; but I was pacified by the one who represents God for me.

**8-9.** Some days later Magdalene is not sure whether she was “tempted to complacency regarding the Mercies of God” that were granted to her. She knows only that she has been confronted with another strong temptation and cannot pray as usual. Again the reassuring words of Don Zanetti, to whom she listens with faith, restore her to tranquillity and peace.

10. It was around May 1, that by chance, a preacher informed me about the irregular behaviour of some people unknown to me, but all the same, I found it distressing.

11. During prayer, I do not know whether it was fruit of the imagination or the memory of what I had experienced at the time of my sister-in-law’s death, but once again, the Divine Redeemer in the winepress appeared to me. The only difference was that the wounds around His neck were very fresh, inflamed and bleeding.

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<sup>1</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU`, o.c., p. 191.



12. This time too He appeared to throw Himself into my arms.

**10-12.** This is the third time that Magdalene sees Jesus the Redeemer who throws Himself into her arms in a transport of divine love, as though to seek comfort for the offences He continually receives from people unknown to her but of whose moral disorders she was informed.

13. Whether before or after this, I cannot say for sure, I offered myself to the Lord to be disintegrated into atoms, if it were possible, in order to suffer repeatedly and simultaneously all that was required of me.

**13.** The unconditional love for her God inflames Magdalene's heart with a zeal that cannot be contained. To the Divine Redeemer who had thrown Himself into her arms, she offers her life, multiplied by the number of atoms that make up her body that would enable her to suffer that many times, and contemporaneously, for the purpose of not seeing Him continually offended.

### THE SONS OF CHARITY

14. To this vision was added, as far as I can remember, the usual transports of love, together with the memory of my unworthiness to love God and the fear of self-deception.

15. In fact, it seemed to me that this vision was the result of my fantasy and I prayed to the Lord intently not to allow me to be deceived.

**14-15.** Magdalene prays fervently to the Lord to assure her of the authenticity of these mental or imaginative visions, that she be convinced they are not fruit of her fantasy and that she is not deluding herself. There are two positive elements to her advantage: the feeling of her own unworthiness confronted with the greatness and goodness of God and the steady growth of a love that is becoming more and more sacrificial.

16. It seemed to me that those wounds could be healed by the establishment of the Institution of the Sons of Charity. I prayed fervently for this as I also did for the Greek Church, for the Daughters of Charity and for many other intentions.

**16.** The repeated visions of the Divine Redeemer with the signs of His fresh and bleeding wounds<sup>2</sup> bring Magdalene to think about founding an Institute of the Sons of Charity. She had cherished this project since 1799. She writes to Antonio Rosmini hoping that he will accept her proposal to become the founder of the corresponding male branch: "I want you to know that the idea, or the draft,

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. v. 11.



which I have sent to you in writing... has been in my mind for as many as 20 years... It was not the Lord's pleasure then to enable me to find persons having a true spirit and a vocation at the same time; or if I did find any, God took them to Himself"<sup>3</sup>.

Only in 1831 when she was still alive, the first House of the Sons of Charity, situated near the Church of Santa Lucia, was opened.

Today, the Sons of Charity after a long period of uncertainty, are increasing in number and work in various cities of Italy and also overseas.

**17.** I had already discussed with the Lord, with great deference and affection, about all that could be done to serve Him.

**18.** Towards the end of this prayer I thought I understood that in order to relieve the needs that had been made known to me by the afore-mentioned preacher, it was necessary to reinstate the Congregation of St. Paul in the life of the Church.

**19.** It also seemed to me that this idea came from God and as to how I should make the attempt in Verona, in Venice, in Bergamo or in Milan, I do not remember well.

**17-19.** Magdalene's ardent desire to serve the Lord brings her to consult Him in prayer to discover how to work in line with His interests. And it seems to her, always in prayer, that God wanted her to use her work and her social prestige to re-establish the Congregation of St. Paul which was suppressed in 1810, by the Napoleonic Edict. Cardinal Fontana and Cardinal Lambruschini helped to re-establish it in Rome in 1814. Marquis Carlo Arconati and the Marchioness of Canossa could have used their influence in Verona, Venice, Bergamo and Milan. But how would it have been possible for Magdalene, burdened as she was with all the duties of the growing Institute?

**20.** Later it dawned on me that there were other things to be done but I cannot remember distinctly.

**21.** Though the fear of illusion lingered on, anyway felt myself sustained in my suffering, in fact I was consoled and ready to work.

**22.** Consequently, I was considering what could be done to reach the upper classes so as to further their Christian education. I therefore made myself available to willingly accept humiliations and hardships.

**20-22** Magdalene, in her apostolic zeal, continuously devised apostolic projects... Prayer inflames her with almost impossible desires but also with the necessary fortitude to undertake all that would bring about the Glory of the Lord.

<sup>3</sup> M.d.C., to Antonio Rosmini, 3 October 1821, Ep. II/2, Ep. II/2, pp. 756-757.



She asks herself in what way she could operate for the good of the nobility and towards this end she is even prepared to meet "humiliations and hardships". She will establish the fourth apostolic branch for the Daughters of Charity, who will undertake the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies of the nobility so as "to help these ladies... acquire a place among the poor" for whom they will do all they possibly can in life<sup>4</sup>.

She herself will conduct many courses of Spiritual Exercises and will extend this initiative to the different categories of persons with whom the Daughters of Charity will come into contact in their apostolate.

### CHRIST IN THE CENTRE OF THE SOUL

**23.** This Sunday morning, while I was in the choir to attend Holy Mass, the Divine Redeemer appeared to me, as though in the centre of my soul, in all His splendour without wounds or any sign of suffering, apparently asleep in the depth of my soul.

**24.** On the one hand, I was bewildered, for fear of illusions but on the other, transported by such tender feelings of love, I clung closely to the Lord. Rather than offend Him with venial sins, I begged Him to send me to Purgatory and keep me there until Judgement Day.

**25.** I volunteered to suffer anything in His stead, provided I could keep Him in my heart, unharmed by any offence and outrage.

**23-25.** A precise historical date: May 9, 1824. Magdalene is in the choir of the Convent of Santa Croce in Bergamo, taking part in the Sunday Eucharistic Celebrations. There is another vision of the "Divine Redeemer", this time without the signs of suffering and appearing to be asleep "in the depth of her soul".

In the midst of bewilderment and fear of illusion, love prevails. She warmly embraces her Spouse beseeching Him not to let her offend Him again, not even in the slightest way. She then offers what she fears most: to go to Purgatory until Judgement Day and to suffer on earth no matter what pain, provided that Jesus Christ does not leave the centre of her soul. "Magdalene had lived this relationship with an ever increasing intimacy with Christ and has lived it relying on the Eucharist. In the *Memoirs*, it is made clear that every deep experience of life for her, is always connected with the Blessed Sacrament"<sup>5</sup>.

To the unconditional gift of the Eucharistic Christ, Magdalene replies with an offering that costs her most. She is spurred by a desire for purification worthy of so great a Spouse.

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<sup>4</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, p. 266.

<sup>5</sup> D. BARSOTTI, *Dio solo e Gesù Crocifisso (God alone and Jesus Crucified)*, ed. Rusconi, Milano, 1985, p. 26.



26. With sorrow, I asked pardon for my sins though I feared that I myself would treat Him badly.

27. I then entered into a state of interior union and the Mass seemed to be over in an instant.

28. When I was forced to return to my daily routine, the intense feeling remained with me to such an extent that when it was meal-time, I did not know whether I would be able to eat.

**26-28.** Magdalene feels wretched before the Divine Majesty and asks pardon for her own sins with more frequency. This continual recognition of one's own miseries and unworthiness is explained by St. Teresa in this way: "The sorrow for sins grows in proportion to the favours God bestows and I believe that it ceases only in the place where no pain can be experienced"<sup>6</sup>.

After such an act of sorrow, God unites her to Himself for the length of the Holy Mass, which seems like an "instant". It looks as if she has been liberated of those things that condition space and time. The elation of that "instant" remains even while carrying out her various duties of the day to the extent that even the act of eating disturbs her.

29. However, fearing that it was the fruit of my imagination, I tried to distract myself. I did so quite easily because, after all, this had not been one of my most profound experiences of union.

30. But, I was left with an immense desire to work in the service of God. However, I am somewhat doubtful whether these experiences are real because I am not always faithful and constant in wanting God alone and in my resolution to seek humiliations.

**29-30.** Once more, there is a note of diffidence regarding her intense mystical experiences. Magdalene keeps a distant attitude towards these experiences because of the suspicion that all could be the fruit of her own imagination. The reason being that she is not always "faithful and constant in wanting God alone" and in her resolution to seek humiliations.

And yet, she herself confesses that the effects of such experiences are the result of a deeper knowledge of herself and a greater availability "to work in the service of God".

31. And yet, now and then, the image of Jesus in the midst of my soul, would come before me and I would give anything to safeguard Him.

32. After this last experience my old temptations against faith and God returned.

**31-32.** Now and then, the Spouse presents Himself "in the midst of her soul". The arms of love would like to hold Him but God operates in whatever way He

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<sup>6</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 900.





pleases and stays as long as He pleases. After this joyous experience of the Lord's presence, "temptations against faith and God" return and Magdalene is again full of anguish. The Saint of Avila thus affirms: "If any one maintains that he is always in the same condition... I would doubt very much his spiritual state"<sup>7</sup>.

**33.** In this year, 1824, I was in a city during the Novena of Pentecost and came across a sick person whose eternal salvation I had much at heart.

**34.** One evening, as I knelt before the Blessed Sacrament, I was urged to pray for this person in a very special way. I was in great distress and could not recover my peace.

**35.** After praying as fervently as I could, I had the impression that my prayer would be answered.

**36.** The following morning I came to know how this person's condition had worsened the previous day as to leave doubts about her survival. But after that evening the crisis was overcome and she recovered.

**33-36.** Magdalene arrived in Venice on May 26, 1824<sup>8</sup>. During the Novena of Pentecost (May 28 - June 5) she conducts the Spiritual Exercises for the Ladies of the nobility. One evening before the Blessed Sacrament she prays for the recovery and the eternal salvation of a sick person, whose name she does not mention. In prayer she understands that the Lord has heard her request and that person recovers the following day. The prayers are answered for Magdalene as it was with other saints. Jesus had said: "Ask and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. For the one who asks, receives. The one who seeks, finds. The one who knocks enters"<sup>9</sup>.

### "IN PURE FAITH"

**37.** It was at this time that the Lord gave me an opportunity to suffer and work for Him. The visions I have just mentioned had ceased, and in prayer I was back to exercising pure faith, but the Lord continued to grant the various requests I submitted to Him for this or that intention.

**38.** During these occasions I implored our Lord, and the Most Holy Virgin Mary, in a spirit of pure faith, addressing them as though they were not present within me, but in Heaven, and they deigned to grant my requests.

**37-38.** After the mystical phenomena which Magdalene has hitherto described she is back to exercising "pure faith". There are no more raptures, no more

<sup>7</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 907.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to R. Dabala, 26 May 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 862.

<sup>9</sup> Mt. 7, 7-8.



ecstasies, no more visions, except on rare occasions. Thus St. Teresa explains this new procedure of God: "The soul that arrives at this point is not subjected to any ecstasy... she loses the extreme weakness which it had previously and which was tormenting her... the Lord has strengthened her, made her grow and be more capable"<sup>10</sup>. In this situation the Lord and the Most Holy Virgin Mary invoked by Magdalene, continue to hear her prayers for it is the "intention" that concerns them more than the one who is interceding. Magdalene no longer has any personal interest except those which concern the "Glory of God and the good of souls"<sup>11</sup>.

**39.** On my arrival at Bergamo, I yielded to my physical weakness perhaps more than necessary. I had no wish to work for God. On many occasions I failed to commit myself especially with regard to past resolutions.

**39.** Magdalene left Venice for Verona on June 26, 1824. She writes to one of her daughters: "Thanks to the Lord, after a very good journey, I arrived yesterday... here in Verona"<sup>12</sup>. She remains in Verona for about two weeks and goes on to Bergamo on July 15. She thus writes to the Superior of Milan: "... after a very good journey I arrived yesterday at Bergamo"<sup>13</sup>. Her health is always delicate, even if she is sustained by a great desire "to work for God". She realizes that all previous projects are to be re-dimensioned and weighed against her physical capacity. Some months earlier, she wrote to Don Giovanni Zanetti of Verona: "... our doctor keeps saying that I may not have long to live. I am already more than sure that I can no longer sustain any medical treatment. If I am not certain, at least I am persuaded that all my ailments will come to nothing as usual and that I will die only when the Lord wants but not on account of these ailments... I will get another diagnosis in Padua and Venice. These doctors' opinions greatly amuse me because I do not believe in any of them"<sup>14</sup>.

**40.** Among the various works of charity proposed to me I accepted to find a place to accommodate a little girl, but because of my lack of virtue I felt some repugnance to do so. If, however, my Superiors had wanted me to undertake it I know I would have complied with all my heart.

**41.** Feeling somewhat disturbed I resorted to prayer. As usual I prayed to Most Holy Virgin Mary and entrusted this affair to her goodness.

**42.** I then felt deep down in my heart that this child would not come to me, though I could not see the reason. This was in fact what my Superiors had decided.

<sup>10</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., pp. 953-954.

<sup>11</sup> M.d.C., to Msgr. Zoppi, December 1822, Ep. II/1, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> M.d.C., to R. Dabala, 27 June 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 884.

<sup>13</sup> M.d.C., to E. Bernardi, 16 July 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 902.

<sup>14</sup> M.d.C., to Don Giovanni Zanetti, 24 May 1824, ms. A2, XXXV.



43. Owing to my many duties I could not record everything exactly as it happened. Consequently some points have been omitted as I no longer remember them.

**40-43.** For more than eight months she had been involved in the case of the daughter of a Lutheran whom she wanted to see properly settled. She corresponded from August 1824 to August 1825 to find some lady, or charitable institution for a possible placement. Several good people had shown interest but there were so few results that only in the following October accommodation was found for the child. Also in January 1825 Magdalene is interested in "dear Ursula, an ex-Lutheran"<sup>15</sup> and the mother of the child. In March, she writes again to the Superior of Bergamo, Rosa Dabalà, "I recommend, Ursula... If I had remembered, I would have sent her some money... do not let them go hungry and give them what you think best to pay the rent and for their daily expenses"<sup>16</sup>.

### AT THE SHRINE OF CARAVAGGIO

44. On August 4, on my way to Milan, I stopped at the Shrine of Caravaggio.

45. I was weighed down by cares and had a presentiment that I was going to meet with certain duties and circumstances that would bring me no small suffering.

**44-45.** On Wednesday, August 3, 1824 Magdalene leaves Bergamo for Milan, called by the Superior of Milan, Don Bernardino Burocco, and during the journey she pays a visit to the Shrine of Caravaggio. The problem she has at heart concerns the House of San Michele at Chiusa, where big repair work is being carried out with considerable and necessary slowness<sup>17</sup>. "... that blessed quarrel worries me more than if the fever should return thrice<sup>18</sup>". To Our Lady of Caravaggio "as the Mother of the Prince of Peace she recommends the dispute"<sup>19</sup>.

46. As I prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary, I was shown the perils that could come my way, that is, I could commit faults by failing in my duties.

47. Thoroughly dejected, I wept for about an hour before Mary, invoking her through my tears and calling her "Mother"! Rather than offend her Divine Son, I prefer death which I begged her to obtain for me. For this intention I also offered to remain in Purgatory until Judgement Day.

<sup>15</sup> M.d.C., R. Dabala`, January 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1028.

<sup>16</sup> M.d.C., to R. Dabala`, 11 March 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1063.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to G. Terragnoli, 21 August 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 918.

<sup>18</sup> M.d.C., to R. Dabala`, 21 August 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 920.

<sup>19</sup> M.d.C., to G. Terragnoli, 21 August 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 918.



48. At first I looked upon this desire to die as an escapism from my troubles. 49. But as prayer proceeded, I kept imploring Our Lady's help and this longing for death grew. It was no longer a means of escape but a sincere desire to be united to Mary.

50. I made a great effort to refrain from asking, knowing that obedience was definitely against it.

**46-50.** Before the Mother of God, Magdalene gives outlet to her preoccupations and her sorrows. She weeps for about an hour in fear that any attempt to resolve the pending matter may lead her to commit faults and cause her to displease God. Rather than that, she offers to stay in Purgatory until the day of final judgement. "The desire to die" returns for two reasons: a normal human desire to avoid the troubles of suffering, and a supernatural desire to unite herself with Mary whom she calls "Mother" through her tears..

51. Though I continued to weep, I finally resolved, yet again, to really serve God and seek Him alone. I placed myself in the heart of Mary.

52. I remember well that, I considered myself unworthy to remain there and wondered what I could do to deserve such honour. Once in Milan, I was determined that I would practise humility and charity in a special way.

53. This gave me peace and the readiness to suffer and bear all that lay before me.

**51-53.** The prayer Magdalene made with so much suffering is concluded as she places herself in Mary's heart. To make herself worthy of such a delightful dwelling place she proposes that once in Milan, she would practise two virtues: humility and charity. Incessant is the recommendation made in the letters to her daughters to live within the heart of Mary. On her part she always places her daughters in the heart of that great Mother. In fact, out of 1,834 letters addressed to her daughters, she inevitably ends about 1,829 of them with: "I leave you in the heart of the Most Holy Virgin Mary". "I embrace you in the heart of the Most Holy Mary" "I leave you in the arms of the Most Sorrowful Virgin Mary". After Christ, the Holy Virgin will be her greatest and deepest love as it should be for every true follower of hers.

54. Days have gone by since this experience but the effect survives, and I feel myself interiorly sustained among the many difficulties that surround me.

55. There was a time when all these worries seemed to get the better of me, but recourse to Mary and the memory of what I have narrated above, helped me to recover my spiritual composure.



**54-55.** The interior consolation and peace that are felt after that encounter with the Mother of God, linger on in Magdalene's heart. The very remembrance of that happy meeting, after considerable time has passed, fills her with tranquillity and peace.

**56.** Before leaving for Bergamo I was at a loss not knowing which companion I should take with me. The Superior, had informed me that several members of her Community were ill and that the needs of the House were many. I prayed very much for enlightenment.

**57.** And I was able to discern that, for the time being the House could do without this help. When I reached Bergamo I saw this was really the case. The Superior who had begged for reinforcement, was now in a position to affirm it was no longer needed.

**56-57.** Magdalene leaves Milan for Bergamo in all probability, on Monday, September 13, 1824. On the 15th "the S:piritual Exercises will start", she writes from Bergamo, "... and they will end on the 25th"<sup>20</sup>.

Before leaving Milan she had asked the Lord in prayer which person she should take with her to assist the Community of Bergamo. In prayer it is revealed that the need was no longer there. When she reaches her destination the Superior confirms her intuition.

## SECOND HOUSE IN MILAN

**58.** At the moment of departure for Milan for the foundation of a second House, I decided to spend some time in prayer. This I did before bedtime to prepare myself for the sufferings which I knew were awaiting me. I needed strength to be faithful to my duty, to respond to God's grace and to exercise virtue.

**58.** After she had finished the Spiritual Exercises in Bergamo for the young teachers who were trained in the Institute, "in all about thirty lodged in the House", Magdalene prepares to return to Milan "for the foundation of a second House". The second House is the so-called Certosina, situated in Via della Chiusa<sup>21</sup>. In prayer, she prepares her spirit to face the difficulties which await her in the Lombard metropolis. Prayer always remains her refuge, her support and

<sup>20</sup> M.d.C., to G. Terragnoli, 14 September 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 936.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. G. STOFELLA, o.c., p. 466.



her strength. "Prayer", she will write, "is the exercise by which the soul draws close to the Lord. By thus learning to know Him in some way, she becomes ever more disposed, and enkindled with the desire to love Him and to imitate Him in His availability to the Father"<sup>22</sup>. She recalls the promise she made to Our Lady of Caravaggio, that she would practise the virtues, especially humility and charity, in Milan.

**59.** I recalled all the blessings God had lavished on me in the foundation at Venice as well as my lack of response, I repented for the latter and made a resolution to be more faithful while I was in Milan.

**60.** It was then in my imagination, that I beheld a cross but only saw it with my mind: it was black, simple, unadorned and bare. I could not see anything on it except the inscription. It seemed to be very light and rather short.

**59-60.** It is September 27, 1824. Magdalene remembers how, when establishing the foundation in Venice, God had bestowed on her the signs of His mercy and asks pardon for her "lack of response".

Even in feelings of humility the saints are in harmony. After successfully establishing many foundations of monasteries, St. Teresa writes: "The Lord... has deigned to make use of me. And so as to allow things to work out He had to give me the qualities I was lacking, and I lacked them all. The weaker I was as an instrument, the more His greatness was revealed"<sup>23</sup>.

**61.** I discerned in this vision that inner detachment which God had so often requested of me but which I had constantly failed to practise.

**62.** I also guessed that He wanted to warn me that the cross awaiting me in Milan would not be as heavy as I had expected it to be and that my sojourn in that city would not be prolonged.

**63.** I felt fortified and ready to embrace it. Some time has gone by since then, but the fact is that I am still full of courage and firm in my resolutions; whether this is due to my having encountered less suffering or whether I am still under the effects of the vision, I cannot say.

**61-63.** The meaning of the vision has been dearly understood by Magdalene: God recalls to her mind His long-standing invitation to detach herself from everything that is not of Him. In Milan the cross will not be too heavy to bear, and she is aware that the Lord Himself has infused in her the courage and readiness to suffer.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 504.





64. While I was in prayer I begged the Lord not to send me to Purgatory.

65. He showed me, in my innermost being, something that looked very dark, and I knew that suffering awaited me but much more, there was all the apostolic work that was waiting to be done. This work would make up for the debts I should have to repay in Purgatory.

**64-65.** While at other moments of her life Magdalene asks to stay in Purgatory until the day of Universal Judgement rather than offend the Lord, she now asks to avoid it so as not to remain deprived, not even for an instant, of the vision and possession of God. She writes in her letter testament: "(Sisters), you know how much in life I feared Purgatory not so much the pain but the fear of having to be separated... from the One I love"<sup>24</sup>.

But the Lord enlightens her with the knowledge that her "suffering" and above all her "toil" for Him here on earth would replace Purgatory.

66. About two years later I met a person, Julia by name, who had been favoured with supernatural gifts. I asked her to pray that I would not be sent to Purgatory, if it were possible.

67. Unaware of what I have just described, this person said that I would not go there, adding that the hard work that I would have to perform in this world would serve as my Purgatory. She did not say this in many words but from the way she spoke, I knew this is what she meant.

**66-67.** The truth that was revealed in prayer is confirmed two years later by a certain Julia, who is endowed with special gifts of discernment. Julia knew nothing of the enlightenment Magdalene had received in prayer, but the Holy Spirit, who knows all, inspired her to allay Magdalene's fears regarding the next world.

68. She also added that there would come many requests from several places for new foundations that would compel me to travel long distances, away from her. I was left consoled, ready to work and strengthened for imminent suffering.

**68.** Not only has Magdalene's supernatural knowledge been confirmed but Julia has also predicted that many foundations would be requested of her. The meeting with Julia strengthens, consoles and prepares her to face "imminent suffering".

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<sup>24</sup> M.d.C., Lettera-testamento, 16 January 1835, A3, I, A.C.R.



## Chapter XV HIM ALONE AND HIS GLORY

### TO CONSUME MYSELF FOR HIM

1. As I opened a book which spoke of the life of total consummation which the soul must lead taking the example of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, I experienced a strong interior compulsion to practise it.

1. Magdalene vibrates like a harp at every stimulus received not only from God who operates in her inner being but also from any other external source.

It is Monday, October 4, 1824, feast of St. Francis of Assisi, a saint consumed with love for his God.

Her act of opening a book which deals with the theme of how the Heart of Christ is consumed with love for the Father in Heaven and for all men on earth, past, present and future, stirs in Magdalene not so much the desire, but the will to put that "consummation" into practice.

2. I started to reflect on this life of consummation and, for a few brief moments, I had a mental vision of Jesus Crucified.

3. I could then hardly grasp the depth of His sorrow on the cross, and I was stirred to consume myself for Him by accomplishing all the works which accompany my present situation.

2-3. Magdalene is in love; before her eyes she has always Jesus Christ Crucified who is the divine source of every human love. The mental vision and the ecstatic contemplation of this mystery of human-divine Charity, lived out in indescribable suffering, spurs Magdalene to relive Christ's interior attitude in her own life. This means she must consume herself for Him by serving Him in those who are in dire need of bread and love. The letters of this period are full of apostolic zeal. Here is just an example.

Writing to the Superior of Venice she recommends: "... for the sake of souls we must be like those merchants who leave no stone unturned to make money. One of the things that I am very concerned about is the sea-coast, that is the surrounding islands and the nearby places. As Don Francesco (Luzzo) has to go to Malamocco for the next Lenten devotions I informed him of the branch of our Institute which trains teachers. He hopes to undertake work in Malamocco and I have recommended to him Pellestrina, the coastal areas of Chioggia and other areas alike. He tells me that he will try to see what can be done to send us young ladies of these rural areas so that later, they can be effectively engaged there as teachers. He has committed himself to do this. My dear daughter, I am consoled with the hope that when I can come to Venice, other than having the happiness of seeing all of you, we will also be able to perform some good"<sup>1</sup>.

4. It was a fleeting experience, and not one of the same intensity as in the past, but it encouraged me to suffer and bear any hardship for God.

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<sup>1</sup> M.d.C., to G. Terragnoli, 24 October 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 976.



4. The mystical experience, Magdalene points out, was just “a fleeting experience”, but the effect that follows is an additional strengthening of the spirit that will enable her to face suffering and serve God for the salvation of men, just as Christ did.

5. Most of my time has been spent in deep inner affliction because I felt far removed from God’s presence. Today, Sunday, as I attended Mass I was more recollected than usual.

6. And on receiving Holy Communion, an unusual feeling of trust stirred up in me. I understood that Our Lord was giving Himself entirely to me in the Eucharist. It is obvious that I too, must make a total gift of myself to Him.

5-6. From Magdalene’s letters written during this period we know something of her material preoccupations but not enough about her spiritual problems. With regard to the former, we know that she will not move from Bergamo until her companion Teodora Roggia will “recover satisfactorily” from a near fatal illness and also that the communities everywhere are claiming her presence. From Bergamo she writes to the Superior in Venice: “...after Milan, Verona needs me and then there is also you to consider in this world. I too would like to speed up every thing”<sup>2</sup>. As far as her spiritual state is concerned, just a flash of light out of the darkness of her “deep affliction”, can be seen in these words: “My dear daughter, I thank you for the prayer said for me on Christmas night. Remember not to tire yourself doing it, not so much for the body... but for my soul which is shattered”<sup>3</sup>. On Christmas Day, at Mass and Holy Communion, Magdalene receives a special understanding of her duty to exchange the total gift of Christ with the unconditional gift of herself.

7. In the customary manner, I had the impression that the Lord was asking me to leave the thought of my eternal salvation and all that concerned the Houses of the Institute to Him, as I think I have done.

8. He also wanted me to surrender everything, especially my personal worries, one by one, so as to think of nothing but His Glory. It seems that I must no longer pay so much attention to temptations, anxieties, difficulties, hardships. All these things I had to forget or rather ignore altogether and only be concerned with the Glory of God and to care for Him alone.

7-8. Magdalene specifies the things she must put in the hands of God as a response to the gift He has made of Himself in the Eucharist. First of all, the thought of her “eternal salvation”. In the second place her apprehension for “the Houses of the Institute”, which she had already entrusted to Him at that moment. To Him she must give all her anxieties, temptations and toil so that she need not worry about anything else except the “Glory of God” and concern herself with “Him alone”. It is interesting to note how Magdalene’s mystical life stems from the Eucharist and finds its culmination in it. D. Barsotti thus

<sup>2</sup> M.d.C., to G. Terragnoli, 22 December 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 1008.

<sup>3</sup> M.d.C., to A. Bagato, 25 December 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 1012.



confirms: "There is no mystical life in the Church which is not precisely the effect and fruit of Eucharistic Communion"<sup>4</sup>.

9. It seemed to me that this required, and effectively brought about in me, a total detachment from everything and, in particular, from every house of the Institute which I loved so much. This brought about a total detachment in me. In a word, it signified being indifferent to everything.

9. The more Magdalene's fame increases as the Foundress of an Institute that is expanding and becoming well-known in various Italian cities, the more the Lord from within, not only invites her, but effectively detaches her, from everything that is not "Him alone". Magdalene loves the Houses she founded, but she also considers them to be God's property especially granted through the intercession of Mary.

In the preface to the Rules we read: "... I must let you know who it was that obtained the carrying out of this Work from the Lord... It is the Virgin Mary... constituted Mother of Charity under the Cross... you must never make the mistake of thinking that someone else might have done anything"<sup>5</sup>.

God roots her in a complete detachment so that there may always be more space in her heart for "Him alone" and that she might always be a free instrument in His hands.

10. As I tried to adhere to such requests I felt a shiver run through me.

11. Love overcame this feeling and I thought that God wanted to prepare me for a long journey in order to perform some works in a remote corner of the world, where I would have to practise a special detachment.

10-11. The term "detachment" is repeated frequently in these last pages of the Memoirs. The shudder that passes through her person when she thinks of the renunciations God is inviting her to make, is overcome by the strength of love. God prepares her spiritually as "for a long journey". With an ever increasing conviction, life is looked upon as a journey towards the House of the Father. She writes to Margherita Rosmini: "My dear Daughter, God reminds us continually that we are in exile, also letting us know and hear about the anxieties of our fellowmen. Divine Mercy will allow us then to live in the land of the living and have no other aim than to enjoy consolations"<sup>6</sup>.

12. I felt quite strengthened in my willingness to suffer and work, and I do so even now. Naturally I commit faults but the fact is that I am ready to accept suffering, which is never lacking, and to do the Will of God. I desire nothing else and am ready to go wherever He wants, whenever He thinks fit to manifest His plan to me.

<sup>4</sup> D. BARSOTTI, *La preghiera cristiana (Christian Prayer)*, ed. Messaggero, Padova, p. 113.

<sup>5</sup> M.d.C., R.s.s., P.I, p. 25.

<sup>6</sup> M.d.C., to M. Rosmini, 27 December 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 1018.



**12.** Anchored to the Will of God like a rock in the midst of breakers, Magdalene translates in life the two verbs which are very dear to her: "suffer" and "work". She is always available "to go wherever God wants her", whatever His project may be for her, and whatever cross may await her.

"Courage, and again courage", she had written to one of her daughters, "the cross is the key to Paradise"<sup>7</sup>.

**13.** This morning, after all these resolutions. I seemed to enter into close union with the Lord, as I used to do in the past. As a result, I experienced the same struggle in my bosom, so forceful that it would be noticed outwardly.

**14.** I tried to rouse myself but the exterior effects persisted.

**13-14.** Even this lengthy description of God's mysterious action on that Sunday, and first mentioned in verse 5, happens to be one of the many raptures, by now familiar even if they are less frequent. She has already achieved, as on other occasions, the interior union with God but with certain external effects that cannot escape notice.

**15.** This intimate union with God obliged me to make a sincere effort to overcome temptations, anxiety and other sorrows. This was damaging to my body, especially my chest, (though I tried to avoid any effort, I easily spat blood). I was told that when this happens I must abandon myself to God without the least resistance.

**15.** Her illness progressed slowly and was aggravated by the return of each winter: "My health", she writes to a daughter, "is sufficiently good, but. . .as I had suffered much anxiety for our Sister (Teodora Roggia), and as I spat blood on occasions, I was ordered to let blood; otherwise I should already be on my feet"<sup>8</sup>. And some days later: "... this cold does not help the discomfort of my chest as when it is warm"<sup>9</sup>. The raptures and, above all, the ascetic effort which Magdalene imposes on herself as her response of love to God contribute in impairing her health. The haemorrhages increase but with humour she reassures her daughters by saying that the older one gets, the easier it becomes to overcome illness, so she writes, "... if it continues like this I will live right up to the end of the world...". And she concludes with what is closest to her heart: "Pray to the Lord that I may in all things accomplish His most Holy Will"<sup>10</sup>. The goal is already within sight: "... we do not have any good in this world other than to do the Will of the Lord"<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> M.d.C., to A Bragato, 20 October 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 967.

<sup>8</sup> M.d.C., to E. Bernardi, 12 December 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 1001.

<sup>9</sup> M.d.C., to G. Terragnoli, 22 December 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 1008.

<sup>10</sup> M.d.C., to G. Terragnoli, \* January 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1024.

<sup>11</sup> M.d.C., to Chiara, 24 December 1833, Ep. III/5, p. 3530.



## AVERSION FOR SUFFERING

16. All that I have experienced since September 27, 1824, the day on which I saw the bare black cross, is written here, with the exception of a few events which I have forgotten, because of my inability to record them at the moment of their actual happening.

16. Magdalene leaves Bergamo for Milan on September 30, 1824. On the 27th she had seen the bare black cross which foretold her stay in Milan, as indicated in Ch. XIV, v. 60. On Sunday, October 3, she moves from the House of Santo Stefano to that of San Michele in Via della Chiusa. She reveals her embarrassment at having to stay in a house which is more suited to the nobility: "... on Sunday, after lunch, I came to sleep in the new house... the more you look around the more you see its beauty... let me confide in you, I cannot bear to see it because it seems to me to be a mansion for rich people and it is better that I do not let myself be heard"<sup>12</sup>. She had become so used to living in poverty that she felt uncomfortable even with the minimum of comforts. It was as though she had not been born and bred in a mansion worthy of accommodating the highest nobility and the most influential political authorities of Europe at that time.

17. I underwent extraordinary suffering during my stay in Milan. Strong temptations, remoteness from God and a whole series of crosses in such complexity as to cause a nakedness of suffering which was really astonishing.

18. The effect that remained from those very violent temptations was a deep awareness of my nothingness which made it intolerable for me to hear someone praise me.

19. Sometimes, however on rare occasions, insults would have been a true relief for me.

17-19. The time spent in Milan is full of "extraordinary suffering". "Remoteness from God and heavy temptations", crosses of every kind and above all an active and profound recognition of her own nothingness. The Lord also contributes to afflict the soul, as St. Teresa explains, "it happens that the Lord gives such a self knowledge of one's nothingness as to bring the pain to a high degree of intensity... the pain is not felt in the body, but in the depth of the soul"<sup>13</sup>. More cause for anguish comes from outside. In the new House Magdalene closes the doors to outsiders to pass "some weeks in quiet and seclusion before going on to the two Houses to direct her apostolic activity"<sup>14</sup>. Countess Durini does not understand the reason which moves Magdalene to consolidate the spirit of her daughters before engaging them in works of charity. With a cold, ironic and apparently critical tone she writes to Magdalene: "... I confess that I am mortified, afflicted and disheartened to find a real Certosina (a place of seclusion for contemplatives) instead of an open sea-port. No doubt by breathing that air you have been influenced by a spirit of solitude... The entire city is in great expectation, all the collaborators and friends

<sup>12</sup> M.d.C., to G. Teragnoli, 6 October 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 949.

<sup>13</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU' o.c., p. 929.

<sup>14</sup> M.d.C., to Cardinal P. Zurla, 7 October 1824, Ep. II/1, p. 592.





of the Work ask for you and wait to see you in the hope that you will open your heart. We all hope that you will not keep the door closed while it is pouring and that you will not close the port while the storm continues"<sup>15</sup>. There is a little rift even in this intimate friendship. Magdalene remains firm on her principles: "... let everything go, even if all are displeased but do not lose God"<sup>16</sup>. And again: "...it is better to let everyone think as they like and then do whatever pleases the Lord"<sup>17</sup>.

**20.** I can see now that one of the major motives which contributed to this utter desolation, was the impossibility to pray.

This was caused by some particular situation at the time.

**20.** Magdalene attributes the accumulated sufferings experienced in Milan to the "impossibility... to pray". Deep communion with God is the constant longing of her life. She feels that without prayer she is like a plant without roots. God is her earth, water, sun and everything.

She thus writes to C. Durini: "... the more time passes, the more I need God to be able to do all that I should do in an edifying and pleasing way"<sup>18</sup>.

**21.** When I returned to Bergamo, where I had greater opportunity to pray, my suffering did not lessen. One evening, when I was in a state of affliction over the cross one of my companions was carrying, I received inner knowledge that God was allowing my suffering for her good and for the salvation of the person who was grieved by that cross.

**21.** Magdalene again returns to Bergamo on February 26, 1825. She writes to Giuseppina Terragnoli: "I write to you from Bergamo, my dear daughter, where I arrived safely on Saturday after lunch"<sup>19</sup>.

Here she manages to find more time for God in prayer. Added to the sufferings which she has brought with her from Milan is the trouble of a daughter there in Bergamo. She takes this anxiety upon herself and makes it the object of prayer. The Lord however gives her an inner understanding that it is not a cross to be anxious about but it will be used for the spiritual benefit of that companion and directed towards her salvation.

**22.** While praying in this state of mind which, I would define as spoliation of everything except temptation, I lifted my eyes and I saw the Crucified Jesus in the act of expiring.

**23.** I lowered my eyes, thinking it was my imagination but on raising them for the second time, there I saw Him again.

<sup>15</sup> C. DURINI, to M.d.C., 31 October 1824, ms. A2, XX, A.C.R.

<sup>16</sup> M.d.C., to G. Bedeschi, 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 1014.

<sup>17</sup> M.d.C., to A. Bragato, 28 February 1835, Ep. III/5, p. 3863.

<sup>18</sup> M.d.C., to C. Durini, 11 December 1825, Ep. I, p. 518.

<sup>19</sup> M.d.C., to G. Terragnoli, December 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1025, Ep. III/2, p. 1057.



24. I shook myself, suspecting a trick of my fantasy, all the more because it had no effect on me and I knew prayer always leaves me strong in temptations.

**22-24.** While Magdalene found herself in a state of “spoliation of everything”, except for temptation, Christ Crucified appeared before her eyes “in the act of expiring”. For three times she feared the vision to be the product of her imagination or fantasy. She analyses the effects produced by the vision and by her prayer. When Magdalene is overcome by doubts about these experiences, she is wrought by anxiety. She is in perfect agreement with St. Teresa regarding her doubts and anguish: “intelligence would dim and I would debate with myself in the midst of a thousand doubts and anxiety till it would seem as though I could not understand anymore what befell me and that everything seemed like an illusion”<sup>20</sup>. But later, analysing the effects of the vision as well as of prayer, Magdalene discovers that it was more from the latter, that she receives the strength to overcome difficulties, temptations included. She concludes that strength can only come from God.

25. In the next few days I continued to pray in pure faith I found it hard to reconcile myself to be deprived of the presence of God.

26. Assailed by temptations, I continued to pray much and complain to Our Lord. I seemed to understand how this state was necessary for me if I wanted to overcome the temptation of pride and it convinced me to embrace this privation with good will.

**25-26.** God wants to espouse Magdalene in “pure faith”, in total detachment from every consolation. The temptations which “assailed” her, intensify her prayer and even her lamentations with a God she can no longer perceive. But the Lord is present within her and informs her that “this state was necessary”. In the obscurity of faith and in desolation, she embraces this painful situation always out of love for her Lord.

27. I think it was that very night, as I was meditating on the same subject, I saw Our Lord carrying His cross. It was clear from this that I too, must persevere in carrying the cross. This gave me courage to endure suffering and I was willing to accept it, as I effectively experienced on some later occasions.

**27.** In prayer, the figure of Christ carrying the cross is united to an inner illumination: that of having to, like a faithful spouse, follow Him perseveringly along the path He had previously trodden out of love. Such illuminations have the effect of infusing her with a supply of strength to face the approaching suffering with generosity and total availability.

28. My nature however, did not cease from feeling aversion to suffering which was still as keen as at the moment when I had first foreseen that I would have to bear a heavy cross.

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<sup>20</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU`, o.c., p. 293.



29. But, even in times of trial, as I said above, there were quite a few moments of peace when my love for God came back in all its strength. After these last two experiences, unless my memory fails me, I felt ready to disintegrate into many atoms if this were possible (in fact I offered myself to the Lord expressly for this purpose) and to be multiplied many times over. I was also prepared to undergo and embrace all the suffering I would find wherever I went, and welcome them for the only reason that God might be served and glorified.

**28-29.** Magdalene instinctively feels an aversion before the heavy cross she had foreseen. But as God stirs in her heart strong feelings of love she is capable of offering herself to Him with gestures of total availability and heroic generosity. She asks the Lord if she could divide herself “into many atoms”, and as many times as the number of atoms that make up her person, that will allow her to suffer all that awaits her in every corner of the earth. The sole purpose of this is that God may “be served and glorified”. The passion for God burns her heart and God feeds her flames. St. Teresa explains these mystical impulses as: “The soul if only it could, would devise new means to consume itself in love. And if greater glory demands its perpetual nothingness it would submit itself willingly”<sup>21</sup>.

### OUR LADY OF LORETO

30. What I am saying now should have been said earlier, when it actually took place, namely on December 10, but at that time I forgot to record it.

31. At the beginning of this month I had been informed that one of my companions in Bergamo was gravely ill. Overcome with grief I began to pray for her. Stripping myself of all human affection I tried to seek only God’s Will and Glory.

32. On the advice of our (ecclesiastical) Superior I left for Bergamo, anguished at what seemed to be the inevitable loss of a dear friend.

**30-32.** Magdalene writes these notes in April 1825. In the style of the Memoirs she recalls an event which had taken place the preceding year. On December 4, 1824, Magdalene rushes from Milan to the bedside of one of her daughters, Teodora Roggia who, according to medical diagnosis, was expected to expire on the 8th night. Even though Magdalene is overcome with sorrow she does not ask for recovery, but only desires “God’s Will and Glory”.

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<sup>21</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU`, o.c., p. 293.



33. On arrival there she was still alive. For the days she survived I do not think I ever asked the Lord for her life.

34. The Confessor of the House suggested I pray to Our Lady. Since the case was desperate we could only trust in Mary: that had always been my natural impulse and hope.

**33-34.** Her only hope for the daughter in danger is Our Lady. Even though she realizes the seriousness of the illness, she follows her Confessor's advice to invoke the Mother of God with faith.

35. On December 10, the day on which the Church celebrates the miraculous transportation of the Holy House of Loreto (three days earlier we had started a fervent Novena to the Blessed Virgin) I attended a Mass, which, unknown to me was being offered for the sick companion.

36. Once again I tried to strip myself of all human affection. With all the strength I could muster, I begged the Lord through the merits of His Mother, to grant me the life of that Sister.

37. I implored Him especially to glorify His Most Holy Mother, declaring myself willing to accept any sufferings which, I knew very well, were likely to come my way because of some foreseen circumstances.

38. Numerous persons had unceasingly interceded the Mother of God for this good daughter.

39. A priest of that Diocese, who had the reputation of being a Saint, had sent her a small picture of Our Lady of Loreto assuring her that she would be cured. But I did not remember this.

**35-39.** December 10, is the day the Church celebrates the feast of Our Lady of Loreto. During the Eucharistic Celebration Magdalene, through the intercession of Mary and with the purpose of glorifying her, asks the Lord to spare the life of Teodora. Together with the sacrifice of Christ she offers her imminent sufferings in anticipation. At the same time, a chorus of prayer ascends to the Mother of God, while a priest predicts Teodora's recovery.

40. After lunch, two companions of the sick Sister, who knew nothing of this, found a copy of the miraculous statue of Our Lady of Loreto. They cut a small piece of veil and they gave it to me in a little water of Our Lady of Caravaggio for the sick Sister to drink. This I did.

41. That same evening she was really well.

42. Because of the many remedies already administered, she was still in some discomfort; but when she suffered attacks of pain, she



was given a tiny piece of the veil and her condition would improve immediately.

**40-42.** Her trust in Mary, accompanied by a concrete gesture, makes the dying daughter recover. That same evening, after drinking a little of the water in which was immersed a tiny fragment of the veil which covered the statue of Our Lady of Loreto, Teodora “was really well”.

Magdalene hides herself behind the prayers of many persons, of the holy priest, the two friends’ gesture of faith, and attributes to others the extraordinary cure. Teodora will be closely followed by Magdalene up to the end of 1833... During her frequent travels from one place to another she will continue to be interested in her health which improves gradually. Teodora will die in Venice in November 1835.

### STRENGTH DURING TRIALS

August 7, 1825

**43.** As I reflect on what I recorded on March 3, concerning the vision of the Redeemer carrying His cross, I feel it dutiful to add a few details that escaped my memory at that time but now, owing to the consequences that followed, I feel they must be recorded.

**43.** The dates recorded by Magdalene are now more frequent but the events which are described belong to the past. The style of the *Memoirs* remains constant and is not that of a diary. From August 7, 1825, she leaps back to March 3, of the same year when the Divine Redeemer appeared with the cross on His shoulders. She adds her reflections on the effects that followed.

**44.** On that occasion I saw the Lord, He was motionless, with a cross so big that one could not see the end of it.

**45.** My attention was focused on the Lord rather than on the height of the cross. This wood was of a special type, of a colour which was darker than the yellow wood of America, having a certain grain that struck me considerably.

**46.** As a result my strength increased and I was no longer afraid of suffering, of which I am never deprived.

**44-46.** At a distance of six months, Magdalene notes down the details of the vision with precision. It was a cross of such dimensions that the bottom was not visible and the dark-yellow colour of the cross with its own particular grain. But above all, her attention is held by the Lord’s face and from that face and heart she draws such a spirit of strength that she no longer fears the suffering which was never lacking and will never be lacking in the future.



47. Till August I was, if not entirely, but at least almost free from temptations against faith. It was this, I am sure, that made me stronger and more courageous to bear with all other kinds of suffering.

47. From March till August 1825, Magdalene remains quite free from temptations against faith. Greatly relieved, she is able to face other internal and external battles with more strength and courage. Various and numerous are the preoccupations of Magdalene as a Foundress: one of her daughters is in a crisis of vocation, and she, the concerned Mother, reassures her that if only a shadow of a doubt exists, she herself would encourage her to leave<sup>22</sup>. Msgr. Zoppi is pressing her with a request for a foundation at Massa Carrara and Don Gabellini<sup>23</sup> asks for another foundation at Coriano (Forlì). From Verona she writes words of encouragement to Pedrino Porta, one of the Sons of Charity who has been left behind in Milan: "... I ask you to have a lot of courage. Disappointments must not make you lose heart but make you vigorous in matters pertaining to the service of God<sup>24</sup>.

48. I happened, at that time, to pass through Desenzano. On seeing the statue of St. Angela Merici I recommended myself to her, saying that I was quite willing to leave Brescia to her Ursulines.

49. I thought I heard her reply that she would leave space for me too.

48-49. On August 20, 1825 Magdalene leaves Bergamo for Verona. To Elena Bernardi she writes: "Here I come to give you news about Verona, my daughter, where, thanks to the Lord we arrived happily on Saturday evening"<sup>25</sup>.

The journey to Desenzano of Garda, the home-town of St. Angela Merici, provokes in Magdalene a strange secret conversation with the saint. Magdalene would have left the apostolic field in Brescia to the Ursulines but deep within she hears the saint's voice replying that in the same city there would also be room for the Daughters of Charity. Magdalene began to work for the opening of the first house in Brescia during the last few years of her life, but she will see its inauguration only from Heaven, in 1838.

## TO SEE MARY

50. I visited the Shrine of Caravaggio three times during this period.

51. The first time I experienced such a tender love for Mary that, for the whole of my prayer, I could say no more than: "My dear Mother!"

<sup>22</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to C. Carminati, 10 August 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1174.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to Don Gabellini, 27 August 1825, Ep. II/2, p. 1135.

<sup>24</sup> M.d.C., to P. Porta, 29 August 1825, Ep. II/2, p. 792.

<sup>25</sup> M.d.C., to E. Bernardi, 22 August 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1180.





**50-51.** In 1825 Magdalene visited the Shrine of Caravaggio three times. The first time occurred during her journey from Bergamo to Milan on June 8. The second probably took place on July 14, during the second journey to Milan. The third time could have taken place, in all probability, on Saturday, August 20, while on transit from Bergamo to Verona. On all three occasions she writes what she experiences in the spirit. In her first visit she is drawn by great tenderness towards Mary. Throughout the time she spent in her presence, she did not know how to say anything but "My dear Mother!"

**52.** I was longing to see her. Through my tears I tried to explain that obedience forbade me to pray for death.

**53.** And then I fancied I heard the Most Holy Virgin Mary reply that she had never been ordered by anyone not to take me with her.

**54.** I did not look on this necessarily as a promise of impending death and also I seemed to understand that in Milan, she would have blessed everything concerning the visit of the Sovereigns.

**52-54.** Even this is a silent dialogue between Magdalene and the Most Holy Virgin Mary. Longing to see her in Heaven, she would have desired the death she was prohibited from asking. Mary seems to reply from within that she is not aware of having been forbidden to take her to Heaven with her. In that moment she receives an inner perception that death was not yet near. In the meantime, she recommends to Mary the private audience she hopes to have in Milan with the Emperor Francis I who is passing through it. The aim is to ask the Sovereign for the free use of the Monastery of San Francesco in Trent where she intends to open a house and invite him to visit the House of San Michele at Via della Chiusa. Mary assures her of her blessing as will be seen later. On June 15, she has an audience with the Sovereign who promises to give her what she asks. She will relate the news some days later to the Capitular Vicar of Trent, Msgr. Emanuele Sardagna: "His Majesty deigned to visit our Institute" on June 16<sup>26</sup>.

**55.** I was left exhausted. I wondered how I could show my gratitude to Mary. I thought I would do so by promoting the devotion and the memory of the Lord's Passion and of the Sorrows of the Virgin Mary among the Tertiaries of the Institute.

**56.** I immediately set about to this, regretting the mistake I had committed up to then, namely of having failed to encourage my companions to take up this devotion as the Rule prescribes.

**57.** The cause of this is that I do not have the Passion of Christ in my heart.

**55-57.** What would be a concrete way of showing her gratitude to Our Lady? She thought that a way would be to instil in the hearts of the Tertiaries of her Institute the devotion for the Passion of the Lord and the Sorrowful Virgin Mary, a thing, she writes, which she has not done with her daughters, as the Rule prescribes. How can she accuse herself of not

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<sup>26</sup> M.d.C., to Msgr. Sardagna, 18 June 1825, Ep. II/1, p. 506.



having the Passion of the Lord in her heart, writes T.M. Piccari, when she longs intensely to suffer and work for Him?<sup>27</sup>.

Moreover, all the chapters of the Unabridged Rules, written for her daughters, are centred on the contemplation and imitation of the spirit of Charity of Christ Crucified and Mary at the foot of the Cross.

**58.** In our prayer encounters with the Tertiaries, I began by making them reflect on the insults Jesus received when He appeared before the tribunals.

**58.** Magdalene makes amends for what she believes to be negligence, with her desire to encourage the Tertiaries to reflect on that part of the Passion where the Lord was forced to suffer morally and spiritually, "before the tribunals". It is not so much wanting to make amends but, more to impress on everyone of her works, the characteristic seal of the Redemptive Mystery of Christ.

**59.** On my second visit to Caravaggio being very tired I was most of the time indifferent and sleepy.

**60.** As I prayed before the Blessed Sacrament, before leaving the Church, I was reminded of the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Olives. I understood that the Tertiaries should start the reflection on the Passion from this point.

**59-60.** After the visit of the Emperor in Milan, Magdalene returns to Bergamo and remains there for about a month. On July 14, she returns again to Milan to follow a course of Spiritual Exercises planned for the Ladies of that city. She thus writes to the Superior of Venice: "... I have great embarrassment when I am with the Ladies of Milan, even though they are very good... I will do everything I can to lose it"<sup>28</sup>.

It is possible that during this journey she visits the Shrine of Caravaggio for the second time. The heat is oppressive and she arrives there very tired. Again "the agony of Jesus in the Garden" returns to her memory and again inspires her to encourage the Tertiaries to meditate on His Passion.

**61.** For several days I had a thirst for suffering. Had God deigned to send me some, I would have welcomed it as a consolation, meanwhile I willingly put up with the small inconveniences the Lord sent me at that time.

**61.** The thought of the Passion of Jesus in the Garden, provokes an intense "thirst for suffering" which lasted many days; if God had sent them to her, she would have been consoled. This interior attitude allows her to accept with serenity and promptness the small crosses which the Lord permitted during that time.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. T.M. PICCARI, o.c., p. 583.

<sup>28</sup> M.d.C., to G. Terragnoli, 16 July 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1163.



62. One day, I cannot say for sure whether it was in the usual manner or because of a meditation, (though I am inclined to believe that it was the former) I was illuminated on the infinite love of Jesus in the institution of the Blessed Sacrament.

63. I decided that in considering the Passion, both the Tertiaries and the Sisters should reflect on the excessive charity of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and pray to be able to bear with love The bitterness, the insults, the contempt, the forgetfulness, the wrong and anything else which the Lord deigns to send them, in imitation of the patient Saviour.

**62-63.** In this second visit to the Shrine of Caravaggio, it is the Eucharistic Christ, more than Mary, who dominates the mind and heart of Magdalene as if the Virgin is saying implicitly as clearly as on that day at Cana: "Do as He tells you"<sup>29</sup>.

She remains impressed by "the infinite love of Jesus" in the Eucharist, of His patient availability to God the Father and to mankind and plans to animate the Tertiaries, and the Daughters of the Institute to welcome lovingly with the same interior attitude of Jesus, the bitterness, the insults, the contempt, the forgetfulness and the wrongs they would meet in the apostolic service of their fellow men. It is the same spirit of Charity and holiness of Christ that every member belonging to the Institute, is progressively called to assimilate<sup>30</sup>.

64. On the third visit to the Shrine my tender feeling of affection for Mary gradually increased and also the desire to unite myself to her and to be able to see her.

65. It was hard to wrench myself away from there, especially because I foresaw it would be a long time before I could return.

66. Forbidden by obedience to ask for death, I threw myself into Mary's arms, begging her to obtain for me either life or death, as she pleased. I knew that by doing this I was satisfying the obedience I had received.

**64-66.** On the third visit to the shrine made on Saturday August 20, 1825 on her way from Bergamo to Verona<sup>31</sup> the figure of Mary again dominates. Magdalene is overcome by a renewed desire to "see her" and to unite herself to Mary forever. As she cannot ask to die, she "throws herself into Mary's arms" placing her own life and death in her hands.

67. Among other things I fervently prayed for two of my companions who were ill. In one case, I had already knowledge that she would be cured; indeed, I thought that Our Lord and His Mother were rather surprised at my doubts in this connection.

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<sup>29</sup> Jn. 2, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. M.d.C., R.s.s., P. I, pp. 23-24.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. M.d.C., to E. Bernardi, 22 August 1825, Ep. III/2, p. 1180.



68. As for the other companion, I seemed to understand that because of her innocence God wanted her for Himself.

69. I think that sometimes, through prayer, the Lord changes His disposition. In the above case though, I must confess that I lacked the courage to utter any word.

**67-69.** Magdalene recommends to the Holy Virgin her two sick daughters. They are perhaps Teodora Roggia and Beatrice Olivieri. She had already been assured of the cure of the first one. That is why the Lord and His Mother are surprised at her slight trust. For the second companion instead, she has the presentiment that they are calling her to themselves. In fact Beatrice will expire on July 6, 1827, while Teodora will die in 1835. Faced with what had been decided for Beatrice, Magdalene does not dare to utter "any word". "What the Lord does", she had written the year before, "is always right and we must be content with whatever is His disposition"<sup>32</sup>.

### TO LIVE FOR HIS GLORY

70. While I was attending Mass on Friday, October 19, 1827, on my return from Milan, at the beginning of the Celebration I was overcome by a great sadness for all the toil and sufferings that I had just endured in Milan and for having at once to bear the cross of the change of Superior to whom the Sisters of the Community were deeply attached.

**70.** Magdalene leaves Milan for Bergamo after nominating Teresa Spasciani as the Superior of the House of Via della Chiusa. She thus writes to one of her daughters: "... yesterday, Thursday 18, I arrived in Bergamo after leaving the Milanese happy"<sup>33</sup>. The day after her return to Bergamo, while she is taking part in the Eucharistic Celebration she is overcome by a deep sadness as a result of the problems she has to face in that House: the change-over of the Superior, Rosa Dabalà, to whom all the Sisters "were deeply attached". Notwithstanding her own sufferings and that of others, Magdalene will proceed with the change in accordance with the Rule she had drawn up. She will state what happened: "Saturday evening (October 27) our dear Domenica Faccioli, weeping bitter tears... was honoured to take up her new charge as Superior"<sup>34</sup>.

71. I leaned mentally on the sacred humanity of Jesus Christ whom I pictured as weighed down by my own cross. I withdrew myself from Him wondering if my suffering could make the sufferings of the Passion of Christ any lighter; then each suffering seemed lighter to me but I had no desire to suffer.

**71.** In her own sufferings Magdalene seeks comfort in the contemplation of the Passion of Christ but has the fear of overburdening His cross, which He is carrying for all men.

<sup>32</sup> M.d.C., to R. Dabala, 21 October 1824, Ep. III/2, p. 972.

<sup>33</sup> M.d.C., to A. Bragato, 21 October 1827, Ep. III/3, p. 1745.

<sup>34</sup> M.d.C., to E. Bernardi, 30 October 1827, Ep. III/3, p. 1755.



Instinctively she has “no desire to suffer”, but the love and example of Christ, perennially immolated on every altar, strengthens her will and renews her desire to lighten the suffering of her Lord.

**72.** I think it was then that the Lord made me understand that the more sins are committed, the more He suffered in His Passion. As a result of this I understood that those who engage themselves in preventing sins, have already consoled Jesus and Mary in their sufferings not only now but, even at the time of the Passion.

**72.** The Lord is alive and present on the altar and in her heart. He illumines Magdalene on the appeasing value of the sacrifice of the cross, a universal act of redemption which reaches men of all places and of all times. She also understands how the suffering of Christ on Calvary has been proportionate to the gravity of the sins of men; she also recognises that, giving herself today for love of Him, to prevent so much evil, she had united herself to Him in that unique redemptive act and had relieved Him of His sufferings. As she had consoled Christ she had also consoled His Mother.

**73.** I do not think that it was only a thought of mine but a sentiment infused by God and because of it, there awakened in me the usual feeling of love. With great sincerity, affection and with readiness of heart, I accepted to endure any kind of suffering, in fact, I almost desired it.

**73.** Analysing once more her own supernatural experience Magdalene recognises that it is not a matter of a simple mental reflection but “a sentiment infused by God”. “The usual feeling of love” springs up from within and she prepares herself wholeheartedly for any kind of suffering. The love which God Himself pours into her is so transforming that it gives her the desire to suffer. It is an echo of the cry of St. Teresa: “to suffer or to die”.

**74.** At Holy Mass I offered myself to the Lord and the thought of being able to relieve Jesus and Mary made me ready notwithstanding the horror I have for it, to willingly accept to live until the final Judgement Day so as to prevent sin on the strength of love. After that, I remained tranquil in my nothingness and all the things that had weighed on me seemed as trifles.

**74.** The personal participation in the Eucharistic Mystery opens in Magdalene an increasing interior availability. The aversion for suffering disappears from her heart. Moved by the thought of alleviating the suffering of her God, she offers not to die but to live until Judgement Day for the purpose of preventing sins which offend Him so much. Even St. Teresa describes thus, the person clothed in the spirit of Christ: “... the longing to live, if it pleases the Lord, returns to the soul, so as to be able to serve Him a little more... this



seems to it even more important than being already in glory"<sup>35</sup>. Here Magdalene overcomes the desire for reparation and in her ardent love she longs to prevent the offence before it reaches the Heart of Christ. After such an impulse of charity which envelops the oneness of love for God and for others, there is a desire to remain "tranquil in her nothingness" content only to have loved. Magdalene fully recognizes the "God alone" whom she discovered in the Crucified Christ who, unmindful of self, gave Himself up for the glorification of the Father. "Fix your eyes on the Crucified", writes St. Teresa, "and everything will become easy... Do you know what it means to be spiritual? It means to be the slaves of God, in such a way, that signed by His seal, that of the cross, He can sell them as slaves to all the world as it was for Him"<sup>36</sup>.

**75.** That effect stayed with me for the rest of the day so that I was able to take everything calmly, totally available to accept every suffering for the expansion of the Institute throughout Italy.

**76.** It seemed that I would be able to bear willingly the suffering I had to face in every place.

**75-76.** The beneficial effect of this mystical experience is prolonged for the entire day. It allows Magdalene to receive the events with great tranquillity and with an interior disposition to receive any suffering from the hands of the Lord "for the expansion of the Institute throughout Italy".

Magdalene carries this dream in her heart beyond her death which occurs eight years after writing these last lines. It will become true one day not only in Italy but throughout the world, on the strength of a charism which she handed down to her Sons and Daughters.

35. While I was passing from Milan on my way to Bergamo, I took the road that led to Caravaggio. I did this with the aim of visiting that Shrine of the Most Holy Virgin Mary. I was very tired and sat down on the bench and after having prayed to Our Lady for many intentions, I also recommended the Sons of Charity to her.

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<sup>35</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 483.

<sup>36</sup> S. TERESA DI GESU', o.c., p. 959.

