

## AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CRUCIFIED



Fra Leopoldo Maria Musso OFM

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AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP  
WITH  
JESUS CRUCIFIED

The life of the Servant of God  
Fra Leopoldo Luigi Musso OFM

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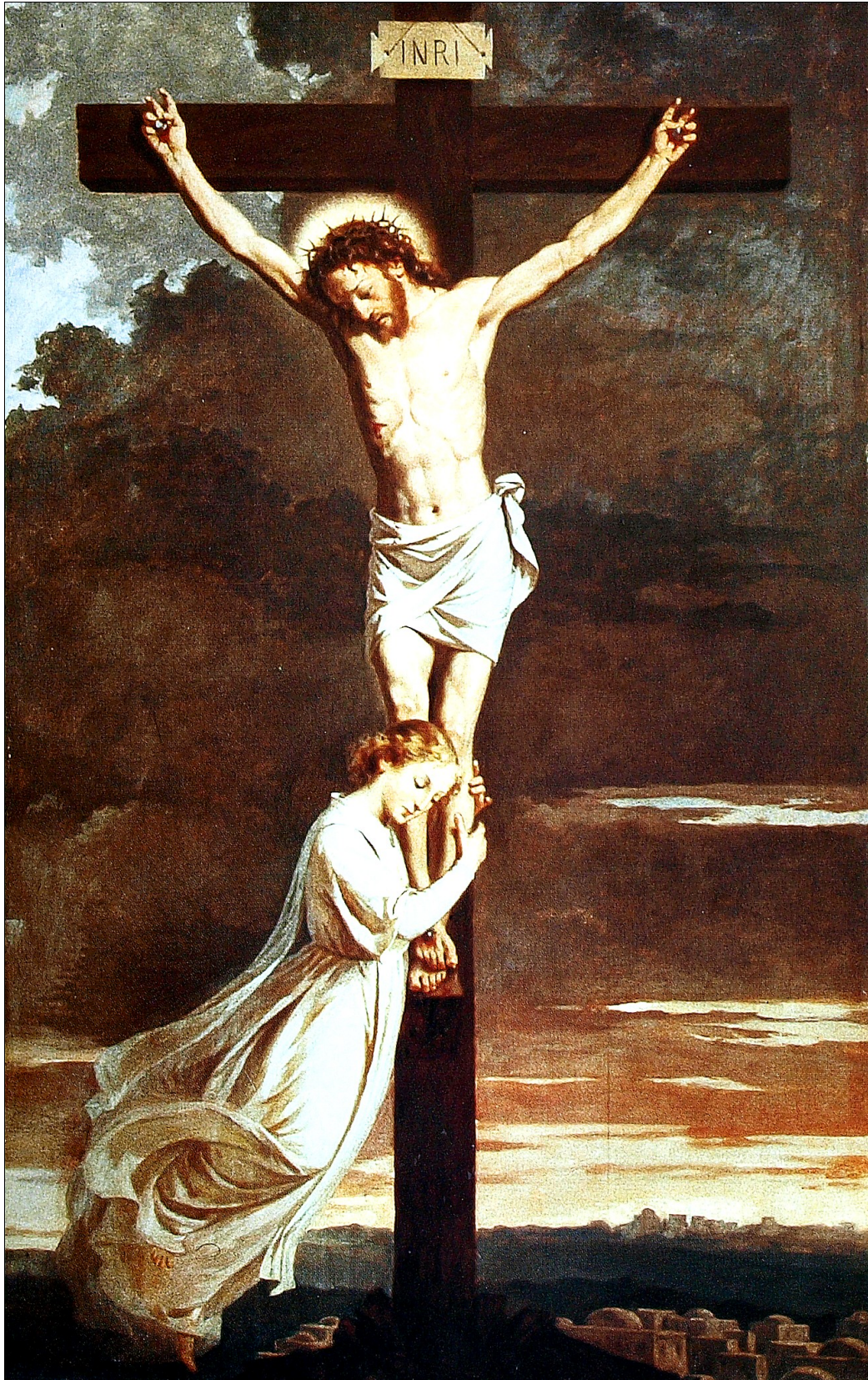
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Painting of the vision of Jesus Crucified with a soul embracing his feet which Fra Leopoldo saw in 1893 in the Castello at Viale d'Asti.

## CHAPTER 1

# The Dawn

### Revealing signs

Dawn usually heralds a splendid afternoon; the early childhood of men generally reveals their future. For Fra Leopoldo, the beauty of this dawn was mirrored by that of the fields surrounding his native town, Terruggia Monferrato (diocese of Casali). The land was fertile, and the town nestled in its green vineyards which seemed to sing of the fecundity of life and the joy of work.

In Terruggia, one of the many gems of the Monferrato region, Luigi Musso (later known by his religious name Fra Leopoldo) was born on January 30th 1850.

Predestined by Providence for great things, his birth added to the number and glory of his fellow townsfolk, hardworking people of modest means, the hardness of whose work did nothing to lessen their constant cheerfulness which reflected their Christian life.

His parents “good and fervent Christians”,<sup>1</sup> believing him to be on the brink of death when he was born, had him baptised immediately by the midwife, Lucia Gavione, and gave him the name of Luigi.

His father, Giuseppe Musso, who was somewhat strict in outlook, but a good man, was the gardener of Luigi Noe, an inland revenue officer, and at the time when Heaven presented him with the little Luigi, he was living in a farm-house located in the courtyard of 5, Via Roma.<sup>2</sup>

The Christian virtues and the meticulousness with which he carried out his duties were a distinctive trait of this excellent father who worked for the Noe family for 40 years, and continued to enjoy their complete trust.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Giuseppe Ballarino of Terruggia.

2 On September 30th 1951, the people of Terruggia Monferrato placed a commemorative plaque at first floor level on the wall of No 5 Via Roma (at present the property of Sig. Caire, a lawyer), to mark the first centenary of the birth of the Servant of God. The inscription reads:

“The Servant of God – Fra Leopoldo M. Musso, OFM, Apostle of Jesus Crucified, was born in this place. Through divine inspiration he foretold, and with prayer sustained, the Secular Institute of the Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate. He was a patient supporter of the Case di Carità, Arti e Mestieri in the world. On the first centenary of his birth, his fellow citizens placed this plaque. 1850 – 1950.

3 The father of Fra Leopoldo was twice married. His first wife, Luigia Monti, bore him one son, Pietro Celestino, born on May 18th 1841. His second wife, Maria Cavallone, bore him three sons and one daughter: 1st Vincenzo Lorenzo, August 9th 1848; 2nd Luigi (our Servant of God) January 30th 1850; 3rd Angelo, February 19th 1853; 4th Maria Teresa Delfina September 3rd 1864, who died in her twenties.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

The mother, Maria Cavallone, was a pious and fervent Christian, as well as actively involved in bringing up her children.

The two parents brought up their family strictly.

At night they went to bed very soon after singing their prayers.<sup>4</sup>

Her maternal care for little Luigi was very successful, as is borne out by the following incident which occurred when he was still very young.

His mother, busy with the housework and therefore needing to be free from having to look after her child, gave him a book one day, containing pictures of the Way of the Cross, and explained at the same time the meaning of these pictures.

Little Luigi was impressed by her words and, with his vivid imagination, he tried to think of ways he could comfort Jesus in his suffering. He looked for a needle and then proceeded to prick the bad men to make them stop making Our Lord suffer. His mother soon came in and asked him why he was doing this, and Luigi replied: "I don't want these bad men to mistreat Jesus." Although pleased with this answer, his mother took the book from him to prevent him from ruining it.

This was the first spark which, with the passage of time, would kindle the fire of love in the heart of the passionate devotee of Christ Crucified.

When he grew older, Luigi attended the local primary school with much love and diligence. He was taught by his mother to love singing sacred music, a love he never lost in later years, and put to good use in his apostolic work.<sup>5</sup>

His early introduction to the Eucharist both from his family and before the altar in his parish church had a profound influence on little Luigi. One day, when he was nine or ten years old, he found some lime and cement left behind by the builders in the courtyard, and with it he fashioned a monstrance. When it had dried, his parents thought it was good enough to be put on permanent display on a piece of furniture in the house.

Luigi avoided his boisterous companions, and would go away to spend his time looking at holy pictures and praying.

He made himself a little altar to Our Lady which he adorned with fresh flowers gathered from the garden tended by his father.

I remember his mother saying that Luigi was always very well behaved and as a result was her favourite.<sup>6</sup>

### The first fruits of grace

The supernatural lifeblood of grace needed to strengthen the Christian in his daily struggle to be virtuous, is doubly necessary for young people when they first come to face their hard battle with their overwhelming passions and the devastating tyranny of the senses.

Consequently, it is important to bring young children as soon as possible to the fount of the sacraments.

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4 Giuditta Ballarino of Terruggia.

5 Giuditta Ballarino.

6 Giuditta Ballarino.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

The good people of Terruggia had the praiseworthy custom of introducing young children in good time to the Church and its rites.

We find that Luigi is assiduous in his frequentation of the church, and diligent and attentive at parish catechism lessons in preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation. He was confirmed on May 24th 1857 by Mgr Luigi Nazari di Calabiana, Bishop of Casale Monferrato.<sup>7</sup>

Subsequently, he made his first Holy Communion, and the marvellous fruits of this great step were soon remarked in him: when he spoke of pious things his words were so edifying that it seemed that it was a little saint speaking. On hearing him, one of the neighbours exclaimed “These are the words of a saint!”<sup>8</sup>

It was not long before an opportunity presented itself for Luigi to demonstrate how much strength he had received from his Confirmation and his first Holy Communion, especially where his purity was concerned.

One day, he met a wicked boy who wanted to take advantage of his naivety to lead him into sin, but he was able to resist his evil insinuations, and preferred to put up with the slaps he received rather than stain the purity of his innocence.

Luigi’s piety was so remarkable that, even though he was the third-born son, he was able to gather together his brothers for prayer, and when they did not feel like doing so, he persuaded them by his gentle ways to pray with devotion.<sup>9</sup>

### Prayer and work

In Christian families, the love of work is an integral part of bringing up children, because, apart from being an indispensable source of sustenance, work is a powerful means of preserving young people from forming bad habits.

Luigi’s studies did not last long, as was the case, unfortunately, for many children at that time, who grew up in rural areas, where the harsh demands of life soon called school children to the fields or to work.

Having completed his second year in primary school, he was sent by his father to work for the local doctor, a certain Dr Boltri. He spent the best years of his adolescence and youth in his service. In turn, he helped in various house chores, worked as a gardener, and served as a coachman for the family. He was assiduous, confident, diligent, and endowed with remarkable modesty which lent remarkable grace to all his conduct, and to his sincere and delightful features.

From a religious point of view, not only did he never deviate from the straight path, but also his piety did not grow feeble at the onset of the dangerous age, when personal development often drives a young person to emancipation and corruption. On the contrary, as his peers affirmed, he was very devout, a model for the local youth and the pride of his family, assiduous as he was in the life of the parish, in its work, in its feasts, and a participant, heart and soul, in the sacraments.

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7 Parish documents.

8 Giuditta Ballarino.

9 The niece, Luigia Musso, referring to information from her father, the first-born brother of Luigi Musso.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

It was in this way that his religious activity grew and flourished, nourished by divine ideals, but it certainly did not exclude the healthy joys of life which tend to spring up in greater abundance in the footsteps of good people.

Luigi was a virtuoso guitar player, as were also other members of his family in which, despite its modest social status, the hours devoted to rest were gladdened by a holy joy.

In our consideration of the early adolescent years of the Servant of God what is more admirable than the virtue of the young man, like others, naturally inclined to distraction and thoughtlessness, is the influence of his upbringing and of the family atmosphere, which cannot fail to bear good fruit when the fear of God is the basic principle of the child's upbringing, and is combined with religious practice.

And so Luigi's Christian family can never be admired and praised enough. It was the blessed soil in which this beautiful flower of innocence sprang up, the provident preparation which day after day disposed him so well and nurtured him.

After God, it is first of all to the Christian home, in which inestimable moral treasures are honoured and perpetuated, that the merit should go for the goodness of its sons, for the virtue with which they clothe and arm themselves, for the strength and integrity of their character, for the solid and rich spiritual patrimony with which they set out on their life's journey.

## CHAPTER 2

### At Vercelli

#### His life

Even when he became more mature, the young man did not abandon the direction his life had taken.

Family needs led Luigi to leave his paternal home at the age of 19 and to go to Vercelli where he entered the service of a rich landowner. It was a bitter separation. Having up to that age preserved intact by a virtuous youth the immense treasures of love, tenderness and goodness placed by God in man's heart, Luigi was sensitive also to family affections, to the memories of his home town and of his dear friends.

Whenever he turned his gaze to the sharp point of the white parish church bell-tower, or greeted the smiling vineyards which adorned the hilly surroundings of his Terruggia, Luigi felt a pang of nostalgia.

In his modest little home, he had left behind his dear mother, the greatest treasure of his life, and the memories of a serene childhood: now he was about to enter into the unknown of a bustling town. What a sacrifice this was! However, the pressing need for better-paid work had persuaded him to accept this painful separation. But a promise to be good, and a vow to be faithful to his Christian duties were engraved on his heart; and a sense of the duties he owed God sustained him in this time of such great sadness.

Meanwhile, a mother's heart was beseeching the Most Blessed Virgin to preserve the innocence of the son she so dearly treasured and on whom she had bestowed all the loving care of a Christian mother; and this strong woman with a burning faith felt in her breast a growing certainty her prayer had been answered.

The employer to whom the young man had been entrusted was considered by the Musso family to be a good man. Luigi, however, discovered very quickly that things had turned out very badly: he found himself in the service of a person with very loose morals. For this reason he wanted to leave his employment at all costs.

He set about immediately to look for other work, tried various jobs, and finally was taken on by Mgr Giuseppe Miglione. He grew fond of his new employer and served him for many years, not only as his cook, but also as a devoted servant attentive to the all needs of the family.

This was very fortunate because when his beloved father, who had given him such a solid and Christian upbringing, died in 1870, Luigi was in a position to help his widowed mother because of his assured, honourable and peaceful employment.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

### Friends

A true friend, who is a treasure because he is rare, becomes all the more so when, as in Luigi's case, he is met at a sad and distressing moment in life.

Luigi used to go to the market everyday to buy food for the family, and it was there he met and struck up a friendship with Giuseppe Necco, who came from Casale Monferrato and was a cook in the employ of a Vercelli family. His friend invited him to spend some of his free time with some other cooks and Luigi agreed, but he did so only for a short period in the 1878–1879 working season. One outcome of this was that Necco subsequently made some providential statements in writing, confirmed by an official deposition, made on oath to tell the truth, at the Informative Process for the cause of beatification of the Servant of God

“Luigi Musso was always the most restrained of our group of young friends when we relaxed after a day's work. He behaved modestly and did not want to take part in all our leisure activities, such as dancing.

“With his deeply religious sentiments, he was a great example for all of us, commanding our respect by his affable but reserved ways.”<sup>1</sup>

This deposition describes and sums up well the life of Luigi in the period of his life between the ages of 20 and 34, a period in which a man resolutely takes charge of all aspects of his own life, and his tempestuous youth gives way to manhood at the peak of its self-affirmation. Luigi consecrated it entirely to God by his unshakeable fidelity to his daily duties, through which he expressed the total and generous gift of himself, fragrant with humility and sacrifice.

When Mgr Miglione died in 1884, Luigi went to work as a cook for the family of the Conti Arborio Mella in Vercelli. There was much work to be done as the mother, who had been a widow since August 5th 1870, struggled each day simply to survive.

Luigi did not neglect in his new home his assiduous Christian practice. Every morning, in the mystical half-light of the cathedral, during the celebration of the first Mass of the day, the faithful would see a young man totally absorbed in his devotions, and watch him as he fervently prayed. And unfailingly, whether it was summer or a harsh winter, he would be there. Offering to God in this way the first fruits of the day and its most precious moments in a sweet effusion of affection, Luigi Musso was unconsciously preparing himself to embark on the shining path of sanctity to which Heaven was calling him. He was noticed also by a teaching religious who was much edified by him. This religious, who also came to Mass at the cathedral every morning with his small community, was Brother Basilio of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the headmaster of the nearby free school for poor children. Full of admiration for his intense piety, he sought to make his acquaintance so as to propose him as an example of a fervent Christian life to the pupils of his school.

By a supernatural process, Luigi had for some time now left his friends: when the world becomes impoverished, we look to Heaven. It was logical, therefore, that, tired of the world and its futile noise, he should gradually find himself enveloped in a solitude which is, however, a treasure because of its profound sweetness and the

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1 Giuseppe Necco.

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divine light that the soul finds there; for there, conversation is sweet, consolation is dear, peace is plentiful and familiarity with God is exceedingly wonderful.

Good reading had taken the place of his friends, as he notes in his *Diario*, written later in Turin in 1907.

“Finishing quickly my work in the kitchen, I would devote myself to embroidery or reading. My favourite reading material was *La buona settimana* (a religious periodical, printed in Turin for 50 years) which in 1887 published a life of the Servant of God Thomas More, which confirmed me even more in the faith and the practice of virtue.”\*

Prayerful reading and silent meditation were the school in which the Divine Master taught him to speak of God and of the things of God. Throughout his life, his conversation was always of an elevated nature, supernatural, interspersed with frequent references to the lives of saints, and to topics related to the praise of Jesus and Mary. On this account, the good and spiritual people were glad to seek his company and listen to him, finding in his words the savour and nourishment they needed.

### Flashes of light from Heaven

The intervention of the Most Blessed Virgin in the lives of saints is a very frequent occurrence, but since no individual has the right to give judgment on specific cases of apparitions or revelations, the author of these pages, a most respectful son of Holy Mother the Church, will recount for the sake of historical truth the extraordinary things narrated by Fra Leopoldo in his writings and in his conversations, attributing to these things the value of purely human belief. In its own time, the Church will make its pronouncement which the author accepts as of now unconditionally.

“In 1887, in the month of November,” the Servant of God writes in his *Diario*, “I had a vision of Mary in my sleep. I saw the sorrowful Blessed Virgin in a most sad state, her head nobly bowed, who gently said to me, ‘*Remember what my Son suffered!*’”

“Even though I did not fully understand the meaning of these words they remained impressed upon my mind. The vision disappeared, and in my poor heart I went on to meditate on the goodness, piety and mercy of Mary for poor sinners”. Not only did the brief and significant words recorded by him remain impressed on the mind of the Servant of God, but everything he narrates in this section of his *Diario* was like a light from Heaven which illuminated his mind and made his heart burn so fiercely that it produced a new surge in his spiritual life.

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\* From the *Diario* of Fra Leopoldo. [Quotations from the *Diario* are indicated by an asterisk\* ed.]

## The time of trial<sup>2</sup>

As he meditated on the sufferings of Jesus and Mary, penetrating deeply into the abyss of mercy and suffering which accomplished the redemption of mankind, the Servant of God felt himself singularly drawn to follow the Saviour and his Divine Mother by a fervent life of love. To make himself better, to raise himself above the pettiness of this world; to live a totally spiritual life was for him more than a vague aspiration driven by feelings, but a firm decision of his will. But such a decision, like every divine work, has to be confirmed by trial and sanctified by tears.

His aged mother was growing weaker. In 1889, an infirmity made it impossible for her to work, and forced her to rely on outside help to meet household expenses. It was an act of Providence that in these straitened circumstances, the post of head cook became vacant at the *Collegio Dal Pozzo* in Vercelli. Luigi applied for the job and obtained it.

Content with this arrangement which put an end to a period of worrying uncertainty, he brought to his new work the reliability and moral integrity of his character.

He was driven by a great love of God and zeal for his neighbour: a young fellow-servant was completely won over to lead a good life by his good example, his piety, and the determination with which he fulfilled his duty to act justly.

Things went well for a certain time but not for long: because of one of those incidents which seem to be brought about solely by the whim of men, but which are the hidden ways the Lord uses to sanctify his elect, the Servant of God was summarily dismissed from the College which he had honoured by his work.

His unyielding uprightness, the purity of his morals, his honesty and his love of justice attracted the resentment of the malevolent, a war which knows no mercy. Against him perversity wove a clever web of calumny, proved subsequently to be unfounded by irrefutable documents and testimonies.

Leaving evil its fleeting victory, he had to leave, bitterly disappointed but confident that divine help would not desert him because of what had occurred.

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2 As Brother Teodoreto was preparing this second edition, and reflecting on the importance of the facts involving Fra Leopoldo during his stay at Vercelli, he contacted the Office of the Archbishop of Turin and copied from the Acts of the Informative Process many testimonies confirming the virtues of the Servant of God. In order not to break up the flow of the narrative, we include it in part in the appendix.

## CHAPTER 3

### Turin

#### The ways of Divine Providence

*“Your thoughts are not my thoughts, your ways are not my ways”* (Is 55. 8)

If, in the history of sanctity, the good which comes from the works of hatred and human wickedness were eliminated, perhaps the Church would be deprived of a great many saints whom persecution prepared in this way for even greater battles.

Persecution is a fire that torments, but it is also a wind which disseminates far and wide the mysterious seeds of future harvests.

The painful circumstances which obliged the Servant of God to leave the *Collegio Dal Pozzo* illustrated even more his angelic virtue, his great charity, and his generosity in pardoning calumniators: this was the path chosen by Providence to lead him to a goal unknown to him, where the Lord had prepared for him a much vaster field for his apostolate, and an abundance of grace to sanctify him even more.

Turin, the city of the Most Blessed Sacrament and of the *Consolata*, welcomed the one Divine Providence had chosen to become the Apostle of Jesus Crucified. In 1890, he entered the service of the family of the Conti Caissotti di Chiusano as cook.

In Turin, the Servant of God initially rented a room at 4 Via Mazzini where, when he was not working, driven by the desire to save souls, he brought together the local children to make them pray, and to help them revise the catechism homeworks given them by the parish priest of S. Massimo.

The good relations subsequently established with the very religious Vacca family, the mother of which, Carolina, pursued a holy apostolate among the youngsters of Monferrato, led the Servant of God to decide in the spring of 1893 to take a room with that family at 1 Via della Consolata, in the Parish of S. Dalmazzo. Here Divine Providence had prepared for him, in the person of Fr Giulio Giuseppe Cozzi, a Barnabite, the spiritual director who would guide him on the path to perfection, and lead him to that total dedication to God which subsequently developed into most intimate loving relationship with Jesus Crucified.

#### Supernatural life

In his *Diario*, the Servant of God makes reference to the supernatural help he received from this serious and prudent spiritual direction.

After a few years (in Turin) I took for my spiritual director Fr Cozzi, at the present time, 1907, the Provincial of the Barnabites; and the church served by the Barnabites, S. Damazzo, became my favourite, and I continued to frequent this house of God every day until the Lord, in his mercy, called me to be a religious as a son of St

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

Francis”

The exquisite goodness and piety with which my meritorious spiritual father took care of my soul led him to advise me to communicate daily. I replied that such was my desire but that I was such a sinner that I would not dare . . .

The goodness of God came to my aid, and so I did not let a single day pass without nourishing myself with the Bread of Angels, unless illness prevented me from doing so.

Not through any merits of mine, but out of the goodness of his heart, my spiritual director came to wish me so well that I felt that I was considered to be a Brother of his Order. I took great pleasure in serving the 5.30 morning Mass. One day, Brother Giuseppe, the sacristan, said to me, ‘Would you, please, carry the umbrella to accompany the Holy Viaticum to a lady?’ For a moment I stood there dumbstruck, as if human respect wanted to take me by surprise, but I obeyed. As I walked along, so close to my Jesus, while the accompanying procession recited the psalm *Miserere*, I said in my heart, ‘Sweet Jesus, in your infinite mercy, after I die, let me find myself close to you in Paradise, as I am close to you now.’\*

### The first interior voice

One morning, in the church of S. Damazzo, I was anxious to receive communion, and hardly had I received it than I heard my good Jesus say to me,

*Between me and you, in the future, there will be great intimacy.*

In my simplicity, I meditated in my heart on this sign of God’s mercy: How is it possible that a God should want to abase himself as low as me, a poor sinner? And yet, it will soon be seen how great the goodness and mercy of God are towards us poor mortals.

As days passed, the grace of God worked more and more in me, unworthy as I was of such a great favour, and poured into my poor heart such sweetness that I forgot the bitter moments of life.

However much I took delight in serving Mass, which brought to mind holy memories of eternal things, one day, drawn gently to the feet of a large crucifix, carved in wood, in the nave of the above mentioned church of S. Damazzo, I found myself there with my Jesus, my mind inebriated with the joys of Paradise. I burst into tears and could not tear myself away from the cross. Just then, the good Crucified Jesus said to me,

*Go and serve Mass, don’t keep them waiting for you.*

Not even a minute had gone by when Fr Cozzi came and told me to go straightaway and serve Mass, and he seemed to reproach me gently for my lateness.

This was sufficient to convince from then on that haste in serving the Lord, and sacrificing a little time in doing so is a sweet and holy thing: good Jesus does not delay, even on this earth, to give ineffable graces and sweetness to his sons who love him, serve him and fear him.

Seeing myself favoured by God, I resolved to entrust myself interiorly, body and soul to Jesus Crucified, because only in God can be found the fount of all virtue.

Wholly aflame with the holy love of God, I resolved to give myself entirely to him, trampling underfoot human respect and the derision and the mockery of men,

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

believing that it is not they who will judge me at the point of death, but God alone.\*

### Filial love

While the Servant of God grew each day in the love of his Lord and in the practice of virtue, he did not forget his aged mother living in Terruggia, and for her sake he imposed upon himself financial sacrifices inspired by the great affection he had for her, as is attested by the following letter:

*My Very Dear Mama,*

Today, Sunday, I received your letter. I am pleased you are well. I also am very well. I am sending you 60 Lire. I am sending you all I have. I wish you a Happy Christmas and a good New Year. I have so much work that I cannot even spend more time writing to you.

Your son,

Luigi.

In Luigi, this tender and filial love, which was manifested by such a ready detachment from worldly goods, was accompanied by total abandonment to Divine Providence, as was noted by a friend:

As an intimate friend of the family, I recall that on a number of occasions Luigi spoke of how he would feel when his mother died. As he shared his anxiety, and even though these thoughts made him sad, he would raise his eyes to heaven and his face would become serene again and regain its usual smiling appearance, in complete resignation and abandonment to whatever God wanted of him.<sup>1</sup>

A few years later, in 1895, Luigi brought his good mother to Turin to have treatment for an illness and to have a wound in her leg taken care of. He rented a small apartment at 26 Via Garibaldi, at the back of the courtyard, on the third floor of the Martini house.

One of his brothers would come to visit them. I met him also, and in this way our dear friendship continued. I knew this good mother well, and she was a worthy mother of her son. I used to visit this good lady: despite her suffering she was patient, calm and resigned to the will of God, and had the same happy disposition as her holy Luigi, who lived with his mother for a couple of years.<sup>2</sup>

### “Servite Domino in laetitia”

The serenity of holy souls is a major attraction for young people who, even as they seek virtue, do not wish it to be a heavy burden, which explains why many of them sought the company of our Luigi.

It was this same love of God that led him to devote himself to his neighbour, and made him industrious in making virtue, even the more austere virtue, attractive, as is attested by Luigi Vacca:

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1 Giuseppe Necco.

2 Luigi Vacca of Turin.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

He was always in a good humour and cheerful with our fellow townsmen and with everybody: he really lived according to his motto, *Servite Domino in laetitia*.

His serenity was frequently manifested in wonderful ways. Among other things, I recall that our good Luigi had a grand piano sent over from Terruggia, a sort of old harpsichord, on which he played religious music during his free time.

Our house was frequented by our good friends from Monteferrato who gladly listened to Luigi's pious words, and were edified by his good example and by his exhortations which sought to stimulate the love of God, devotion to Our Lady, the frequentation of the sacraments and assiduous prayer.

And then he was extraordinarily kind and refined in his ways; he made his exhortations with such delicacy that all loved him and obeyed him with great veneration.

He spread the Faith and taught whoever approached him the goodness and mercy of God.

When there was a night-time vigil at the church of the Blessed Trinity, he would come to wake me up. For me it was a real sacrifice to give up sleep, at my age at the time – about 20 – and after a hard day's work, but I did so willingly because he had made me understand the great value of such an act.

We got up at one or two o'clock at night and went to pray and sing the Lord's praises. I recall that sometimes the occasion was graced also by the dear presence of Mgr Davide Riccardi, the Archbishop of Turin.

One day, he took me to Fr P. Zampieri at the Chapel of the Annunciation, at 1 Via Stampatori, so that we could both consecrate ourselves to the Sacred Heart. Another time, he took me to join a procession in reparation for a sacrilegious theft from Our Lady of Salvation, which was only a small chapel at that time. In conclusion, I affirm that in the years when we had the good fortune of having this holy man living in our house, we learned to lead good lives.<sup>3</sup>

## Work and fidelity

In 1895, with my husband, Gioachino Ferraris, who was in the Catholic Men's Union, I came to know Luigi Musso, who also belonged to the Union and attended its meetings in the parish of S. Damazzo.

On a number of occasions we invited him to our house, and in this way he became a family friend.

A few years later, my husband had reason to go to Terruggia where he spoke with the relatives and acquaintances of Luigi. All agreed that from his early childhood he had always been good and serious-minded.

In Turin, he was always meticulous in carrying out his duties, even to the point of scrupulosity. This is demonstrated by the following fact: in a family where daily expenditure on food was fixed for each person (for the master's family and for the servants), he had to satisfy the master's family, but at

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3 Luigi Vacca.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

times he found himself in a position where he might displease the household servants. In such circumstances, he would sacrifice his own share, and survive on what was strictly necessary, in order to be able to ensure the other servants were happy.

He had no difficulty in revealing to us the hope he nurtured of becoming a religious one day, but only once he had fulfilled his duty to care for his mother.<sup>4</sup>

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4 Angela Ferraris of Turin.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified



1: Terrugia – Panorama



2: The family home of Fra Leopoldo

## CHAPTER 4

### At Viale d'Asti

#### Holidays

The sweet perfume of virtue is spread by a soul that lives with true piety. This was true in the case of our dear Luigi. As he enjoyed the rest offered by the countryside, the very exuberance of his interior life made him set about spreading the seeds of virtue, the good word that brings light, the works of charity which redeem, like a good apostle always ready to engage in holy battles.

As always, the *Diario* bears eloquent witness to this piety. It should be mentioned in passing that, as the reader will already have noted, the pages referred to, written without any stylistic pretension but so warming by the honesty of their simplicity, are all the more marked by the seal of truth as a result. Casting light for us on the secular period of the author's life, they gradually open up broader horizons and give us entry into a life totally consecrated to God and to the things of God, and one imbued with supernatural beauty. The principal characteristic of this life is humility and self-effacement: although welcomed into aristocratic households, the young man, absorbed all day by the duties of a lowly profession, still led a unworldly and intensely spiritual life, untouched by human teachings or the vain splendour of learning and, perhaps for this very reason, a life more effectively directed by the Master, even through interior revelation. Let us follow the path he traces out in his chronicle.

Every year, there would be four months' holiday in the castle at Viale d'Asti, and there, every day, I would do my utmost to draw ever closer to God through prayer; and with the grace of the Lord, I implored God's blessing on me and on all I did.

During this time in the countryside, I had as my spiritual director Don Antonio Gambino, the local parish priest, a dear and pious soul, who never ceased to encourage me to be virtuous and to do good.

I did not forget the advice of Fr P. Cozzi, that is, to have devotion not only to the Most Blessed Virgin, but also to her Divine Son, Jesus. From my earliest childhood, I had a very special devotion to the great Mother of God, Mary Most Holy; but not so for Jesus. I was favoured with graces from the Most Blessed Virgin, but because of my imperfection, I did not correspond with all of them.

Every Sunday, at two o'clock in the afternoon, after I had finished my work in the kitchen, and with the permission of the parish priest, I made my way to a small chapel dedicated to St Rocco and there, surrounded by the countryside, not far from the town, I rang the bell. It was not long before the little church was full of the faithful, and there we recited the Holy Rosary in honour of the Great Mother of the Saviour.

And this continued on every feast-day as long as I was fortunate enough to live with

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

this most Christian family.

God raises up souls full of goodwill in all towns, and there in the fortunate region of Viale, I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of a certain Pietro Conti, a simple soul, wholly devoted to the Lord, and whenever we happened to meet, our conversation would always turn to things to do with our Catholic religion.

Pietro was a well-to-do person, very charitable, and he spared no expense when it came to helping to embellish the house of the Lord; and as the little church of St Rocco was very poor and neglected, I suggested to him to refurbish it. Pietro, with his generous heart, told me to go to the merchant Andrea Fausone, and added, 'Take as much material as you need, without being stingy, because where the Lord is concerned, you need to be generous, all the more so since all I possess, it was God who gave it to me'.

I did as he said, and took as much material as was necessary and carried it home. After finishing my work in the kitchen, I set about working on the cloth to make it as attractive as I could. I did this work in a room in the castle which was well-hidden from sight, where no one would see me, and there I worked three hours a day during my free time.

I encountered many difficulties, but as God willed, gradually the work was completed: before I left the countryside, the church of St Rocco was adorned in the best way that was possible.\*

### The Apostle of Our Lady

A remarkably large amount of space in the *Diario* is devoted to the Most Blessed Virgin: devotion to her has always been and always will be the prerogative of souls that desire their own eternal salvation and that of others.

This devotion was also the flame of love which burned in the heart of Luigi Musso who in his writings describes his pious little schemes to inflame others with this same fire, and refers to graces attributed to the Most Blessed Virgin.

Next year, as usual, we returned to the countryside. Hardly had we arrived than I went to my friend Pietro's house, anxious to see him, and I thanked the Lord on finding him in good health. After talking about so many things, our hearts were filled with the pious wish to acquire for the church of St Rocco a fine statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. We ordered the statue from Turin and in the July of that year (1895), with the permission of the local mayor, a special niche was made for the statue in the church. On August 5th, the feast of Our Lady of the Snow, the parish priest invited all his good parishioners to come to St Rocco's to celebrate the feast of Most Holy Mary, Mother of Heavenly Graces, to ask her to protect and bless our families and our countryside.

The entire population accepted the invitation of this pious priest; the statue of the Most Blessed Virgin was blessed according to the prescribed rite, and solemn sung Mass was celebrated: how beautiful religious feasts are! The soul exults with holy joy, with sweetness, with happiness at seeing God glorified and the great Mother of the Lord venerated by hundreds of her faithful servants; and certainly all those who loved our dear heavenly Mother wept from consolation on seeing so many faithful bowing low to honour and bless her. But the Most Glorious Virgin was not slow to reward the faith of her sons who invoked her.

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That year, there had not been a single drop of rain in June and July; the sun had been burning hot and the heat suffocating; and those dear country folk would have considered it as an extraordinary favour if the Most Blessed Virgin were to send them a little rain: they would have welcomed it as the Hebrews welcomed manna in the desert. 'But, it's impossible now' they said, 'the heat is killing us! Ah, if only that Madonna worked a miracle and sent us some rain!'

They were told: 'Trust the great Mother of the Saviour. She is a Mother who takes pity and is never slow to help those who trust and invoke her'

And then, on that same great feast-day, at five o'clock in the afternoon, a small cloud appeared on the horizon, and gradually a great storm took shape and grew – it was like the end of the world but there was no damage – and the beneficial rain fell in such great torrents that it filled all the ditches and everywhere.

And the most remarkable thing about it was that the rain fell only on Viale and its surroundings.

And those good parishioners, seeing themselves so favoured, increased their devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, whom they always invoke as their Patron when calamities occur.

Oh, yes! Let us always turn to Mary and reserve for the Great Mother of God the most profound gratitude for the precious and sweet consolation of the graces received.\*

I received confirmation of the authenticity of these facts in 1917 from the parish priest Fr Antonio Gambino who added that, a few days after this beneficial rainfall, he had invited various parish priests from neighbouring parishes to celebrate a feast. These priests were all filled with amazement on seeing the green and lush countryside, whereas in their own area everything was parched and drooping because of the drought.

### Suffrages for the dead

*"It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead"* (2 M. 12. 46)

Deeply imbued with this sentiment of universal charity, God's souls listen to the Church when its grieving voice calls on us to show pity for the dead. They listen also to the voice of love and of gratitude to relatives and benefactors 'who have preceded us with the sign of faith and sleep the sleep of peace' as they wait for pious suffrages to open for them 'a place of light, peace and shelter from the heat'.

The Servant of God, who every day offered up to Heaven pious suffrages for the soul of his father, did not forget at the same time the souls of all those who had died in the state of God's grace, and strove to intercede for them by his prayers and meritorious acts.

In the cemetery of Viale there is a church dedicated to St Andrew, built, I think, in 1875 which, for twenty years stood there without having been consecrated. The local people would say to me, 'Luigi, you're on good terms with the parish priest: tell him to get the bishop to come to consecrate it'.

On numerous occasions the parish priest was asked to support the pious wishes of his parishioners, but to no avail. Finally, one fine day, I said to him, 'Father, when you

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

die, no one will come to recite a requiem for you; the cemetery is covered in grass – it looks like a meadow, and the church is of no use because it hasn't been blessed'. The Lord moved the heart of his minister, and no sooner said than done, he wrote to Mgr Ronco, Bishop of Asti. The reply came three days later, delegating the parish priest to bless the church.

The news spread like wildfire throughout the town and filled the hearts of its population with jubilation.

The happy news reached the good Pietro Conti, who advised me immediately to set about doing the same work as I had done for the church of St Rocco, and promised to provide the necessary money.

And so arrangements were made to adorn the cemetery church with funerary ornaments.

The devil, however, did not stand still: once again, he started attacking me, and for all the time I was in the countryside, he continued to molest me.

One evening, at around the time I served dinner, I had prepared some croutons to go with the soup. While I was working preparing the croutons, I heard a cracking sound that came from the glass covering of the large paraffin lamp which lit up the kitchen. Not seeing any change in the level of light, I continued working.<sup>1</sup> As I was carrying the food to the table, I heard a voice in my heart which said to me, '*Look at the croutons, there's a piece of glass there*'. I looked and looked again, and there was the piece of glass.

If this had happened at table, my employers would have been right to show me the door, but the great goodness of God always came to my aid.

I continued to spend my free time making the wall hangings for the cemetery church. One day, I gathered up the completed hangings and went directly to the church. On my way, I met a woman who was over 75 years old, who said to me in all simplicity, 'Luigi, you always go to the cemetery by yourself: aren't you afraid the dead will trip you up?'

'Good woman', I said, 'it's the living who frighten me more, especially those who are far from the Church'.

I added that I enjoyed the company of the dead through my prayers and my work, and that I begged the Lord to free from their sufferings the souls of those whose remains were there, if they were in Purgatory.

Then the day came for the blessing of the church of St Andrew: there was a procession to the cemetery, and there was a fine ceremony which was certainly a reason for rejoicing for the souls in Purgatory, for many prayers were said that day for the poor dead, to whom may the Lord in his mercy give peace and eternal light.

All Souls Day in the year 1896 was beautiful and full of consolation: for the first time since this town was founded was so much good done. There was a procession to the cemetery; the good parish priest, in order to honour and thank the Lord God for the graces received, to make the occasion more solemn and to help the souls of the deceased, had exhorted and prepared the people to approach the Holy Sacraments. A very great number of the faithful came up to receive the Bread of Angels, while the Daughters of Mary sang hymns to their Holy Patron and her Divine Son: it was a moment of heavenly bliss! How many souls must have entered eternal glory through

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1 Oral explanations of Fra Leopoldo.

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the prayers of these simple folk! The celebration ended with a sermon in the cemetery from the parish priest, which brought tears of deep emotion to the eyes of the people. There is no doubt that the memory of this All Souls Day never faded from the hearts of the people of Viale.

Oh! Yes, may God grant the dead the ineffable enjoyment destined for the souls that pass into the next life into the embrace of the Lord!\*

### Piety and charity

We have some precious testimonies regarding the outstanding charity that the Servant of God reserved for his neighbour; the sacrifices, concern and fatigue he endured in order to come to the aid of the sick and the destitute. The love of God has as its principal effect this supernatural dedication: the Saint is at the same time the first true lover of suffering humanity and the martyr of the love that is given.

Luigi Musso loved his neighbour greatly, and especially the poor: in his free time he looked after and, if necessary, remained with the sick day and night.

There was a man in Viale who had been bedridden for a long time because of a wound. Luigi sent for some Lourdes water, and ministering to both his body and soul, brought about their healing.

He shunned indolence by working constantly either for the poor or the Church, or by praying; and invited everybody to join him in the recitation of the Holy Rosary which he recited in the church to obtain grace for the good of the town.

His repose was short, for he worked until late at night and rose early in the morning.

He observed fasts and abstinence scrupulously.<sup>2</sup>

Luigi always gave alms. There lived at that time in Viale a poor aunt of mine called Teresa Occhiena. She lived in a kind of cave in the rocks, like a savage, and Luigi would bring a portion of his own food to her every day.<sup>3</sup>

Not only during the time we spent together at Viale d'Asti, but also when he lived in Turin, Luigi Musso always led a morally irreproachable life, that is, one that was reserved, modest and very religious.

Whenever in the castle at Viale or in Turin, Count Caissotti announced there would be feast, the cook made himself available for as long as necessary, but when no longer needed he withdrew immediately.

He was always affable with everyone. With his fellow servants he was always unpretentious.

Where food was concerned, he always gave the best parts to the others, and always on one pretext or another, found a way to mortify himself, edifying us by his virtue.

He was always cheerful: in his dealings with others he demonstrated his deep peace of heart and tranquillity of mind.

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\* From the *Diario* of Fra Leopoldo.

2 Emilio Navone, gardener at the Castle of Viale Asti.

3 Giuseppina Conti of Viale Asti.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

No one ever heard him utter any word that was disdainful or anything less than Christian and holy. I can attest this from the seven years we lived together.<sup>4</sup>

In my family there was Angela, my grandmother, in need of much help, and the good cook Luigi Musso would visit her each day, bringing her soup, other dishes and all kinds of food, depriving himself for the love of God.

He used to urge not only our family members, but everyone in general, to receive communion frequently, as well as to have a devotion to Jesus Crucified.

The sick poor were his dearest friends.<sup>5</sup>

Luigi Musso had a deep hatred for sin, and in reparation for it, on a number of occasions, he organised parish functions, with the permission of the parish priest, making confession and communion available to the parishioners. He prepared for these occasions by visiting families personally to exhort, advise and persuade the faithful to undertake this holy act of expiation.<sup>6</sup>

The holiday period, therefore, brought Luigi into contact with many villagers with whom, given that he was born and had grown up in the country, we can believe, he was very much at ease. This fact also gave him many more opportunities to exercise his Christian charity. We see, however, that this period of relative summer rest, did not mean his virtue slumbered: he continued to be admirable for the purity of his life, the cheerfulness and affability of his ways, and his mortification and spirit of sacrifice.

Then there was the return to Turin at the end of the summer season, and then to his paternal home.

On November 19th 1896, (after the solemn ceremonies at the cemetery of Viale) there was the return to Turin.

I remained for a further seven months with that most noble family of Caissotti di Chiusano and then I returned to the paternal house to look after my infirm dear mother.

In the final months I went a number of times to visit the shrine of Our Lady of Consolation and serve Mass there.

I also bought a large picture of Our Lady of Consolation, and with Angelo Gemelli, one of my friends, went to His Eminence Cardinal Richelmy to have it blessed. Not satisfied with that, I wanted to place it on the altar while I served Holy Communion at the shrine; and I said secretly to Mary our dear Mother, the Most Holy Virgin of Consolation, wishing to demonstrate my love and my devotion to the great Mother of God: 'Most sweet Virgin, you know our misery, you know that at every moment of our lives we always need help. I shall still have difficult days in this vale of tears and suffering; Most Pure Virgin, in those moments, extend your mantle of mercy; obtain heavenly peace for me from your Son Jesus; may your most holy name, O Mary, and that of my Jesus, your Most Sweet Son, shine forever in my heart.\*

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4 Luigi Francesco Nebiolo, kitchen assistant to Fra Leopoldo in Turin and at Viale d'Asti.

5 Clara Conti of Viale d'Asti.

6 Luigia Andorno of Viale d'Asti.

## CHAPTER 5

# Return to Terruggia

### Love for Holy Communion

Saints, in imitation of Jesus, had a true God-inspired love for their native town, and manifested it by their prayers to obtain the salvation of its inhabitants, and by organising there good works, when Divine Providence offered them the opportunity to perform them.

In May 1897, the Servant of God returned to his dear town with every good intention to work for the good of his fellow townsfolk, and this included the promotion of a whole range of daily pious practices including daily communion. But, in those days, the effects of the teachings of Jansenism were still very much felt in Piedmont, and receiving communion was infrequent also in Terruggia.

One day, when he went up to receive communion at the parish church, he was turned away and was told that if he wished to receive communion every day he would have to become a priest. Without complaining, and even excusing the parish priest if others grumbled against him, Musso made his way daily to St Germano Monferrato, some three kilometres away, where he received communion in the parish church. This refusal lasted for about a year.<sup>1</sup>

The Servant of God went to St Germano to receive communion even in winter, whatever the weather, not through obstinacy or spite, but through love of Jesus, with humility and without saying anything, nor manifesting any resentment against the parish priest.<sup>2</sup>

### Apostolate of good example

Having returned for a while to breathe once again the air of his home town, Luigi continued to give his fellow citizens and especially the children and young people, examples of great virtue. Patience, gentleness, humility, an intense spiritual life, union with God through meditation, control over the senses through temperance, a whole range of modest, hidden and, we could say, domestic virtues: all this showed that his was a privileged soul, dear to God and greatly loved also by people.

At Terruggia, Luigi Musso manifested his Faith by praying continuously, and often withdrawing to spend long periods in meditation.

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1 Francesco Gagliardone of Terruggia.

2 In explanation of the fact mentioned here, it should be borne in mind that, apart from the effects of Jansenism, contemporaries speak of the rather difficult and strange character of this parish priest who, it should be said, had second thoughts and appointed Luigi Musso president of Catholic Action in the parish, and before dying left me a statement full of praise for the Servant of God. (The author).

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He received the Holy Sacraments with the greatest of devotion, and there are good reasons to believe that his joy on receiving Holy Communion was clearly reflected in his body.

He always manifested a special devotion to Jesus Crucified, and he spent as much time as he could in prayer before the crucifix of St Grato in Terruggia, which was considered to be miraculous.

He had great devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, he recited the rosary every day and offered up all his actions to her. He also had a very special devotion to the souls in Purgatory.

He was edifying by his Christian resignation, and never complained about his crosses, which he accepted with a true spirit of sacrifice, always smiling and full of joy.

He loved simplicity and prudence, and before making any decision, he would withdraw to seek inspiration from God through prayer.

He practised in an admirable way temperance in eating and drinking, depriving himself almost daily of food, and sometimes going without any meals.

He allowed himself very little rest, given that the nights he spent in prayer and meditation were not infrequent.

He considered himself to be a worthless person and a sinner: one could even say that this was how he usually referred to himself. He took into account neither esteem nor the contempt of the world: the expression on his face was humble, although there was something about his whole person that was out of the ordinary. He fulfilled his religious and civil duties and those of his state with great scrupulosity and at the cost of some sacrifice.<sup>3</sup>

Luigi Musso was very devout and truly a man given totally to God. Whenever I met him, he always spoke to me of religion.

He was always very patient and full of charity. Every step he took, one can say, was through charity and with a most generous heart. On occasion he would use his skills as a cook for charity. When there was someone ill locally, he would hurry to help the person to the best of his ability, especially if the person was poor.

He was most affectionate: one day, when I was a boy, I was returning from a festival at Mirabello, I met him and he greeted me and accompanied me home with great paternal affection.

It was impossible to get annoyed with him: he was always so kind.<sup>4</sup>

## Catechetical apostolate

Such a holy life convinced the parish priest that the Servant of God had extraordinary virtue.

I remember that Luigi Musso, at the request of the parish priest, Mgr Gerolamo Robba, gathered a group of men and young people and enrolled them in the society of the 'Twelve Apostles' or the 'Company of the Most

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3 Assunta Scagliotti and Giuditta Ballarino.

4 Angelo Mosso, Mayor of Terruggia (1933)

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

Blessed Sacrament'. With them he performed acts of piety and prepared them to receive Holy Communion on the third Sunday of the month. They heard Mass together, recited the Holy Rosary and sang hymns. On Sundays, they attended evening services. Luigi Musso, however, received communion daily and promoted works of charity.

The 'Company of the Twelve Apostles or of the Most Blessed Sacrament' existed already, but Luigi Musso, joining it with great fervour, infused new life into it.

And then, he was charged by the same parish priest with the task of forming a Parish Council for Catholic activities, and was appointed its president.<sup>5</sup>

From that time (1898) on, to the apostolate of good example, the Servant of God added that of the word and especially, the teaching of catechism to the children of the parish. Every Sunday, he gathered together the children entrusted to him by the parish priest, and taught them prayer and catechism with much patience and kindness. He knew how to choose the right moment to say a word of encouragement, or correct a child, and to lead them all to be good.

### Miraculous cure

And now a moving page from his *Diario* in all its unassuming simplicity. The trial of an illness was a heavy blow for the Servant of God, while his mother also was brought to death's door. But such great torment was alleviated by an interior revelation and a prodigious cure.

After living with my mother for two years I was struck down by pneumonia which confined me to my bed for more than forty days; the fever would not abate and gradually weakened me to the extent that after having endured this state for so much time I felt I was dying.

My poor mother also was on her deathbed. On that day (May 6th 1899) by the grace of God she had received Holy Viaticum, but I was unable to receive my dear Jesus as I was unconscious much of the time. The next day, the assistant parish priest, Don Ernesto Bertana, a most zealous priest who never abandoned me, took advantage of an opportune moment when, through God's goodness, my mind was clear, to administer the Blessed Sacrament to me. And then I fell into a most profound sleep.

On May 8th 1899, Doctor Fano told the men of the Catholic Society who, in their piety, watched over me at night, 'Keep watch, he will die tonight: there is no longer any hope'. However, even when a person is close to death, God allows him to understand the situation in which he finds himself: I gradually remembered my poor mother who had reached the last moments of her life; and with an anguished heart (I always adored, however, the decrees of God in submission to his most holy will) I remembered what I had asked of the Virgin of Consolation before I left Turin. I turned to the great Mother of God with my heart and mind, asking her for the grace not to allow my poor mother to die without my seeing her for the last time on this earth.

It was May 8th, as I have already said. I fell asleep and slept for an hour from 8 o'clock to 9 o'clock in the evening (I hadn't had any rest for forty days), and then

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5 Giuseppe Ballarino of Terruggia

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

suddenly I saw the Most Holy Virgin approach me in all her majesty, holding her Divine Son Jesus in her arms. She said to me, 'Get up! The grace of your cure has been granted!'

She left me inebriated with most holy love, and I exclaimed, 'Oh my God! Oh heavenly moment! Oh night of such pure affection and ineffable joys!'

Hardly had dawn broken, I got up: all my pain had gone; without anyone's help, I went to kneel down before the effigy of the Virgin of Consolation and promised her that in the future, because of the grace I had received, I would consecrate the rest of my life to Jesus and to his Most Holy Mother, always with his holy help.\*

### Canticle of thanksgiving

Ah! If I could have the pen of an angel to write of and narrate the graces and marvels the great Mother of God obtains from her Divine Son Jesus for those who call on her with lively faith! Listen to this poor sinner and to what I write. I call upon the whole world to consider as a most precious gem the great Mother of Our Saviour, Mother of mercy, of goodness, of infinite happiness; and in our needs, let us raise our eyes to heaven and invoke the Most Holy Virgin, confiding in her all our troubles. Our prayers will certainly reach the throne of the Most High, if we place them in the hands of the Mother of Jesus Crucified, full of grace, glory, and holy sweetness.

Mary Most Holy not only brought about my cure, but also preserved for me my dear mother.\*

### Acts of gratitude

To spread devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin more widely in Terruggia, Luigi Musso bought a large statue of the Madonna and had it placed on a specially built altar in the church of St Grato.<sup>6</sup>

Every Sunday, Luigi Musso used to go to the cemetery of Terruggia and, when it rained, to St Grato, to recite the Holy Rosary, the Miserere and the De Profundis. Many men and women (about 200) would follow him there (especially to the church of St Grato), attracted by the example of this fervent young man.<sup>7</sup>

Luigi Musso was always considered by everyone to be a pious, religious and charitable man, and a peacemaker.

He would speak enthusiastically about the truths of Faith. He made people pray and kept on saying, 'Pray from the heart!'<sup>8</sup>

### Fidelity in times of trial

The recitation of the rosary on feast-days after parish evening services, begun by the Servant of God, first in the cemetery and then in the church of St Grato, took place in both places with the permission of the parish priest who had appointed him President of parish Catholic activities. And so, with the permission of the said parish priest, the

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6 Assunta Scagliotti in Ballarino.

7 Giuseppe Ballarino.

8 Francesco Gagliardone.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

recitation of the rosary in St Grato was sometimes attended by the assistant parish priest, who concluded this exercise of piety by a brief and appropriate few words.

There existed, however, between the parish priest of Terruggia and some members of the Confraternity of St Grato, some differences of opinion and some more or less clear disagreements, but which in various circumstances were revealed as real. And so, what happened was that, with the increase in the number of people attending the recitation of the rosary in the church of St Grato, the occasion attracted also some persons considered hostile to the parish priest. The parish priest, fearful that this might lead to some abuses, ordered the suspension of these meetings and had the keys of the church returned to him.

As soon as the Servant of God heard of the prohibition of the meetings, he abstained completely from holding them; and not only did he not take part in demonstrations organised by someone against the parish priest, but was sincerely sickened by such demonstrations and showed that he was.

The conduct of Luigi Musso in the circumstances surrounding the prohibition of the recitation of the rosary in the church of St Grato was irreproachable: he did not complain about the parish priest, and even defended his conduct and authority against those who censured him.<sup>9</sup>

Luigi Musso had absolutely no wish to hear any kind of murmuring, and even less so when it was a question of religion, ecclesiastics or religious.<sup>10</sup>

In these testimonies we have a clear and decisive proof of the true religious virtue of the servant of God, attested by the respect, obedience, and docility to religious authority that superseded any personal views.

### The Holy Rosary for the deceased

The prohibition to hold meetings in St Grato did nothing to discourage the zeal of the servant of God: he continued to pursue his catechetical apostolate among the children and young people of the parish, and to perform his good works among adults.

Moreover, with the parish priest absent from Terruggia for about three months in the summer of 1899, the Servant of God, with the permission of the priest replacing him, resumed the recitation of the Holy Rosary in the cemetery, which he had started with the permission of the parish priest and which had not been prohibited.

In this, as in all his conduct, he proceeded with simplicity and not out of spite, guided solely by his great charity for the souls in Purgatory. In any case, as far as the cemetery was concerned, the reasons for which the recitation of the rosary in St Grato had been prohibited could not exist: people went there only when the weather permitted it; and the number of people attending was reduced because of the distance from the town and the nature of the place. The priest who replaced the parish priest attended on a number of occasions, and seeing the seriousness with which the exercise of piety was performed, had nothing but words of praise and encouragement for all who took part.

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9 Giuseppe Ballarino.

10 Luigia Musso, niece of Fra Leopoldo.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

### **Life at home and in the neighbourhood**

At home, Luigi did not waste time on idle chatter, but recounted edifying facts, and when his presence was not required, he took his leave of the company very politely, and retired to his room and devoted himself to prayer or other personal matters. He also paid his daily visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in addition evidently, to attending Holy Mass and receiving Holy Communion daily.

His patience was admirable too: whatever the occasion, he was always calm and smiling.<sup>11</sup>

He spoke only to draw people to the Faith, or to say words of comfort to them.

For the Holy Father the Pope he had more than respect: it was veneration.

From what he said, one felt how happy and confident he was, that through the merits of Jesus Christ, he would enter Paradise; and he urged others to share his confidence, assuring them that God was most merciful to sinners.

He inspired in others very great Christian trust, and he drew countless people to God.<sup>12</sup>

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11 Angela Cavallone, cousin of Fra Leopoldo.

12 Assunta Scagliotti in Ballarino.

## CHAPTER 6

### At Casale Monferrato

#### With the Camillian Fathers

Luigi's serious and long illness and that of his mother had stretched the financial resources of the Musso family to breaking point, and it was now in some financial difficulty. To remedy this difficult situation, and with his health restored to its previous state, Luigi, with the agreement of his mother, decided to resume his former profession as cook with some family or religious institute.

And so, in the summer of 1899, the Servant of God left Terruggia for the neighbouring town of Casale, the administrative centre of the diocese, and looking for employment, found it with the Camillian Fathers, Ministers to the Sick. These religious of St Camillo, who ministered especially to the sick, served the church of St Paul in Casale, and had their community house next to it. Here Luigi found lodgings, and his work among religious, in addition to being a kind of experience of religious life to which he aspired, also had the advantage of being only a few kilometres from Terruggia, which made it easy for him to go to visit his elderly mother.

The church of St Paul next to the community house made it easy for him to perform his usual religious exercises, to be in good time to serve Mass every morning, to pay frequent visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and to nurture his tender devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin by his fervent visits to the replica chapel of the Holy House of Loreto, which was much venerated in the church of St Paul. These pious practices, however, with their timing and place, did not prevent him in any way from fulfilling scrupulously and exactly his duties as the cook of the religious community, because as an eye-witness attests, 'praised by his Camillian superiors, he fulfilled his duties with great distinction.'<sup>1</sup>

#### First contacts with the Franciscan lay brothers

During his stay in Casale, Luigi Musso made contact with the religious family of the Franciscan Fathers who officiated at the church of St Anthony the Abbot. 'The Servant of God went there every day to make his confession and for other specific devotions. There is no need to say with how much piety and recollection he approached the Holy Sacraments.'<sup>2</sup>

The sincere and edifying piety of Musso did not go unnoticed by a young lay brother called Fra Bernardo, who served in this church. When an opportune occasion presented itself, the lay brother called him to himself, showed him around the friary,

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1 Rev. Fr. Pietro Palena, OFM.

2 Rev. Fr. Pietro Palena, OFM.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

and speaking affably with him, asked him, through love of God and when he was free during the afternoon, to teach him the different ways of cooking, which his many years of experience would suggest to him.

Kind Luigi accepted gladly the request of the young lay brother, and when he had free time at his disposal, he went to teach him the art of cooking, and he did this with such patience and charity that he made a deep impression on the heart of Fra Bernardo, who profited greatly from the instruction he had received.

And so, it was at Casale that the future Fra Leopoldo Maria Musso of the Friars Minor, first came into contact with the sons of St Francis of Assisi. Instructed by them in their spirit, and seeing for himself their daily life in the friary, he was unconsciously formed in the Franciscan vocation which would reveal itself in him a year later.

### The death of his mother

When his mother fell seriously sick and was close to death, the Servant of God went to her bedside to tend her with love and Christian solicitude. He himself gives a moving account of the last moments of his beloved mother.

My dear mother died in my arms just as I had asked the Most Blessed Mary in my prayer.

At seven o'clock, on the morning of May 11th 1900, the Holy Year, having received on the previous day the anointing of our holy religion, with a clear mind and voice she said, 'Dear Luigi, before night comes I shall have entered eternal life'

Why do you say that to me, dear Mother?

I have just seen Jesus Crucified with a great multitude of angels, who have made me a sign to follow them.

Hearing this, I took the crucifix and gave it to her to kiss, saying, 'Look Mother, how good Jesus Crucified is! Let us ask him to help you in the last days of your life as you pass on to the joys of eternity.'

And we began to speak of heavenly things, of Paradise, of the souls that had loved Jesus so much. Oh! How sweet are the last moments of life of such souls!

Do you remember, Mother, when your pain was unbearable, instead of complaining, you sang hymns to the great Mother of God and in this way you soothed your suffering?

I encouraged her to die happily, doing the Lord's will.

Your faithful Guardian Angel, who has been with you all your life, will accompany you to eternal bliss. Yes, you will see him, all shining and kneeling nobly before his Divine Majesty, presenting to him the book of gold in which are written the sufferings borne patiently for the love of Jesus Crucified for so many years. In that sublime moment you will hear the words, *Come, my faithful servant, who have loved me so much by your sufferings; come to my house which I have prepared, come to me for ever.*

Our mind cannot imagine what will happen when you see for the first time the beauty of God, and the glory of Mary Most Holy in the company of all the angels and blessed of Paradise! Oh! Infinite beauty!

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

My poor mother expressed her regret at leaving me all alone, but I told her not to think of me.

Even though I am no longer young, I trust in Providence, because God's goodness calls me to religious life. Ever since my early childhood, I have always aspired to this most sublime state. Above all, my hopes rested on the protection of Mary Most Holy, Mother of my most sweet Jesus, my treasure, my all.

So let us pray, my good mother, let us bless the King of Eternal Glory, so that in his infinite mercy your soul will fly into the embrace of the Lord.

As I said this, she crossed her hands on her breast and without making a single movement closed her eyes serenely and reopened them in Paradise, through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Crucified.

Go, dear soul, your sufferings have happily won for you the glory of God, that most sweet and gracious heavenly melody, awaited and desired by all the faithful who love Jesus much.\*

### Divine consolations

Tired and depressed by the entire nights spent at the bedside of my dear deceased mother, I rested for a few days; and I had a vision in my sleep. I saw Most Holy Mary who placed her hands on a veil which stretched from the earth to heaven. She drew it apart and then I saw the Most Holy Trinity. Oh wonder! And she told me never to displease these three most precious gems, that is, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Most sweet and sad contemplation: most sweet, because I saw an immense number of souls enter into eternal glory (a great number of them were poor). I saw some souls which greatly outranked others. I asked who they were, and I was told they were those who had brought to heaven their baptismal robes unstained. A sad contemplation, when I saw souls go to Purgatory. Some of them were in great distress and panting. Oh my God! What a time of suffering for these poor souls! And then a most horrifying moment for those unhappy souls who during their lives not only devoted themselves to a world full of wretchedness, but also tried to blot out from the minds of men God Most Holy. No monster will succeed in doing this because God is infallible truth. I even saw some of these unhappy souls try brazenly to enter Paradise, but there stood at the entrance two tall and proud angels, holding a sword in their hand, with which they drove them into the infernal abyss.

The supreme goodness of God knocked gently on the door of my heart, and I was attentive to the call of the Lord. I remained in the world for a few months; I meditated every day on the promises made to the great Mother of the Saviour, that is, to consecrate to her my body and soul for the rest of my life, leading, with the grace of God, a truly Christian life.\*

### Return to Casale

After the death of his mother, Luigi returned to the Camillians in Casale Monferrato where he remained until October 1900. The life of the Servant of God at Casale can be deduced from what Fra Carlo Reale, a Camillian, had to say about him.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

The first time I saw Luigi Musso, I was immediately very much impressed by the affability with which he greeted me shortly after I had arrived at the monastery of S. Paolo in Casale Monferrato.

I remember even in a special way the words he said to me one day, ‘You are fortunate to have entered religious life so young!’

Luigi Musso edified me by his fervour, especially when he served Mass. He showed his devotion to the Madonna also by advising me to join the Society of the Holy Rosary, and personally filled in the necessary forms at the church of St Dominic in Turin.

Luigi Musso often counselled me like a confessor, and his advice helped me much.

I noted also the great and cheerful patience with which Musso performed his duties as cook and doorkeeper, and fulfilled his other responsibilities.

I affirm also that Musso was most scrupulous regarding anything to do with shopping for the house.<sup>3</sup>

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3 Fra Carlo Reali, Camillian.

## CHAPTER 7

# Religious Life

### The example of St Francis

The humble *Poverello* of Assisi, raised up by God for the good of the Church, tormented by the infernal wind of pride and enjoyment of worldly goods, illustrated by his holy life the great value of poverty, combined with chastity and obedience.

Following in his footsteps, over the course of seven centuries, many souls have felt attracted to the same kind of life which has given Heaven myriads of saints, and Christian society an approved pattern of good example which, if imitated, would save it from a new tendency to paganism.

Luigi Musso also felt attracted to the religious family of St Francis of Assisi, having aspired from his youth to great perfection, having led a truly Christian life in the midst of the world, and having fulfilled all his duties to his dear mother.

### In religious life

Divine Providence led me to Turin in the same year my dear mother died, that is, in the first days of November 1900.

When I reached Turin, I went to the Franciscan Fathers and begged the Father Provincial to be so good as to accept me as one of his sons of St Francis.

The Provincial then was Fr Luigi Borgialli. He greeted me very kindly and told me to come back later because at that time he could not receive me.

Every day, I went to the shrine of Our Lady of Consolation to beg her to obtain this great grace for me.

On December 17th 1900<sup>1</sup> I was admitted, and on January 18th 1901, with great rejoicing, I put on (as a Tertiary) the coarse woollen habit of the *Poverello* of Assisi, at the shrine of San Antonio in Turin.

On January 21st 1901, I was sent to the monastery parish of San Tommaso in the same city, where, with the help of God, I did what I could to observe the Holy Rule of our Father St Francis.\*

### Mysterious help

After two years, Father Guardian gave me the task of visiting religious boarding schools to distribute leaflets on Universal Daily Adoration.

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<sup>1</sup> This and the two following dates in the same section of Fra Leopoldo's *Diario*, need to be moved to a year later, because Fr Luigi Borgialli was elected OFM Provincial in July 1901. The Servant of God, writing seven years after this date, probably did not remember clearly the time he spent in Turin at that time.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

I continued to do this throughout May, June, July and August. At the end of July (1904), I went to the religious houses on the hills of Valsice. On the return journey, as I was walking along the road, I suddenly felt ill and was overcome by the stifling heat, so much so, I could hardly stand. I made my way to the church of the Sacramentine Sisters, where the 40 Hours Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament was taking place. I hoped my good Jesus would take me up to heaven with himself, but it was not yet time.

As God willed, I returned to the monastery where I remembered I still had my prayers to say. As I was reciting vespers, I was overcome by sleep against my wishes. I remained asleep for ten minutes. Suddenly, I felt I was being shaken vigorously; I woke up, opened my eyes and saw a Friar rising very rapidly into the air: in everything he resembled St Francis. All my sickness and fatigue left me. I felt so well it was as if nothing had happened. And so the following day, I began once again distributing the leaflets about visiting Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, a task willed by God, through the intermediary of the Franciscan Tertiaries, Teresa and Giuseppina Comoglio, both deceased in the odour of sanctity.

My mission completed, I attended to my duties in the Friary.\*

### Novitiate

By the whole Church, by all the souls who dedicate themselves to the life of perfection, the novitiate is considered to be an indispensable foundation of the religious life, the time of trial in which the young person tests his strength, examines the rules he will have to observe, measures the weight of the burden his shoulders will have to bear and the length and the roughness of the road ahead, so as to say, or not, the yes that will save him for all eternity, and will prepare for him even on earth stupendous and honorable days, consoled by the sublime joys of the mind and even of learning.

By all religious, it is considered as the springtime of a person's spiritual life; because they feel that, just as the springtime-diligence of farmers is a preparation for the abundance of future harvests, so, on the application of the young religious to meditation, prayer and regular observance, depends the holiness and purity of his whole life, and depend the fruits of apostolic work.

Fra Leopoldo spent his short and pleasant season of sowing seeds, deliberation and outpouring of love to God, most devoutly, and was blessed with an abundance of graces and merits, as we can see from his *Diario*, and from the few words that refer to it: 'Through the protection of Mary Most Holy, (the novitiate) was a year of retreat, prayer and meditation'.

With this fine disposition, Fra Leopoldo began his novitiate on April 1st 1905 which, with a kind dispensation of the Holy See, he was able to make in the Friary of San Tommaso. Having entered religious life at quite an advanced age, with great experience of life and its deceits, and in addition much advanced already on the road to holiness, he embraced religious life with the passion of one who finally realises a yearned-for dream.

*"When I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself!"* (Jn 12, 32).

These divine words describe something which has been occurring over the

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

centuries: generation after generation, saints with different characters and backgrounds, have all been, nevertheless, great lovers of Jesus Crucified.

Fra Leopoldo had already felt attracted to the Crucified Christ during his life in the world, but in religious life he had the good fortune to have the same Crucified Jesus as his Teacher.

And so, in our times, which are so superficial and so far from the spirit of sacrifice, we shall see a resplendent Fra Leopoldo, champion of the 'Devotion to Jesus Crucified', seeking to raise up a new army of God's elect to perpetuate this fruitful apostolate.

### An ancient crucifix

During his year of novitiate, Fra Leopoldo repaired a crucifix which had been put into storage with other objects no longer in use, and on Good Friday, April 13th 1906, this crucifix was once again displayed for the adoration of the faithful at one of the altars in the parish church of San Tommaso in Turin.

After that day in Holy Week, the crucifix was placed in the Friary corridor next to Fra Leopoldo's room.

Fra Leopoldo adopted the habit of stopping for a few moments before entering his room to look at the crucifix and say a few short prayers.

One day, Father Guardian came down the corridor just as Fra Leopoldo was praying to his Crucified Jesus, and then occurred what he narrates in his *Diario*:

I saw next to my cell a crucifix which inspired great veneration in my heart. With a good opportunity at hand, I plucked up courage and said to Fr Fedele Provera of Mirabello, the Father Guardian, 'How I really want this dear crucifix!'

'Do you want it?' he said. 'Take it by all means, but never forget that this sacred effigy, for many years, was displayed for adoration, and the good faithful would genuflect and prostrate themselves at its feet on Good Friday'. And he added, 'The first adoration you make, I beg you, make it for me'.

And that is what I did; and from that time onwards, I never let a day pass without making my adoration to Jesus Crucified, most sweet nourishment of my soul.\*

### The lover of Jesus Crucified

The Servant of God knelt down every morning at about four o'clock before the crucifix he had received from his Superior and remained there in deep meditation until it was time for the first Mass, which was normally at six.

In his meditation, he began with the sacred wound in the right hand, and then moved on to that in the left hand, the wound in the right foot, the wound in the left and finally, the wound in the side.

He made meditations which were full of most affectionate sentiments for his Crucified Jesus and his heavenly Mother.

After Holy Mass and Holy Communion, to the thanksgiving in common, he added during the course of the morning another adoration of the Five Wounds, in thanksgiving for Communion.

At about ten o'clock in the evening, he returned to his crucifix and usually

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

remained there in fervent prayer until midnight.

With his meditation on the Five Wounds, the Servant of God reached in a short time a very high level of intimacy with Jesus Crucified, with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and with the Most Blessed Virgin, to the extent that he heard them speak to him interiorly.

In the course of this biography, I shall refer to some of the words spoken interiorly to Fra Leopoldo, and narrated to me and others, or in his *Diario*. But, as I already said in Chapter 2, I do not intend to attribute to such manifestations any value other than human; and, presenting them as written by the Servant of God, I here accept the judgment which our Holy Church will give in its own good time.

Fra Leopoldo writes:

On August 2nd 1906, the feast of Our Lady of the Angels, Jesus said to me:

*Let adoration be made with great devotion as on Good Friday, and I shall grant many graces and favours to all those who in the grace of God will prostrate themselves to adore me.\**

The Servant of God understood that such interior communications were the beginning of something great and, responding to an impulse of his faith and his love of the Church, he immediately wrote in his *Diario*:

My thoughts, my first glance turned to Rome. I prayed with all the fervour of my heart and said to Jesus, ‘Most Sweet Jesus, show us your merciful gaze, console, defend our Holy Father, the Pope, your Vicar on earth, from his enemies, in these times of such embittered impiety; give peace to your Church; in your mercy grant her prosperous days and the return of our brothers who have strayed.\*

The Servant of God revealed to his confessor the spiritual conversations he had with Jesus and the Most Blessed Virgin, and showed him some sheets of paper on which he had written them down.<sup>2</sup>

The Superior attached apparently, no importance to what he had said and to what he had written. He set about, however, examining the writings and the conduct of the Servant of God, and putting his virtue to the test. He found that the very edifying writings revealed great respect for the Church, the Superiors, as well as a burning spirit of charity and apostolic zeal. In the Servant of God, he found no form of morbid exaltation, no symptom of hallucination. On the contrary, he found him to be always calm, patient, serene, and balanced. He concluded by believing that these interior words and conversations had to be real.

### “My good Jesus”

In his conversations with Jesus Crucified, the Servant of God declares that he received practical instructions like those his novice master would give him in the novitiate.

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2 The following were the Servant of God’s confessors and spiritual directors: Fr Giulio Giuseppe Cozzi, Barnabite, 1902–1917; Don Ernesto Bertana, 1897–1900; Franciscan priests in Casale Monferrato, 1900–1902; Fr Fedele Provera of Mirabello, 1902–1907; Fr Filippo Faletti OFM, 1907–1914; Don Giovanni Battista Pastorino, Franciscan Tertiary, 1914–1916; Fr Lodovico Bertana OFM, 1916–1917; Fr Norberto Osenga OFM, 1917–1918; Fr Accursio Paldi OFM, 1918–1921; Fr Fogliati, Oblate of Mary, 1921–1922.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

In this adoration (August 18th 1906), my good Crucified Jesus wants me to love him a lot and to remain very humble.\*

The goodness of God let me see (August 19th 1906) my defects: I am too expansive when I speak. He exhorted me to speak little but in an exemplary way. He added:

*The love you owe me, let it be fraternal charity, in me.\**

My good Crucified Jesus told me (September 8th 1906) that he finds great pleasure in seeing souls making frequent acts of love of God during the day, such as: 'My God, mercy!'; 'My Crucified God, be always my love'. These acts, even unspoken, are very pleasing to good Jesus, and will be noted in Heaven.\*

My good Jesus takes pleasure (September 11th 1906) in seeing souls who make sacrifices, even the smallest ones; in God's sight they have great value. For example, not taking a look, not visiting, giving up some sleep, and so many other little things that are easy to do.\*

I prostrated myself with great reverence to make my holy adoration (September 14th 1906) and Jesus said to me:

*My son, treasure the time that remains to you; that short time is enough time for you to make yourself holy by loving me, and by persevering in the holy Devotion.\**

My Jesus said (September 15th 1906):

*Son, do you wish to make quick progress in holiness? Speak little, and when you speak, let your words be an example for others.\**

You, Oh, most sweet Jesus, help me in this: I am too wretched to be of any edification for others.

*Don't spend any time speaking to others, unless it is to encourage them to practise virtue, to pray, and to love and serve only God.*

*In your work, think frequently of your Crucified Jesus in his Passion; remember him at every moment of your life.\**

I asked Jesus to teach me how I could love him more, and he said to me (September 24th 1906):

*Do this: whatever humiliation befalls you, accept it willingly, without complaining, but through love of me; and if you are opposed in your holy Devotion, you will say: Let's leave it to the Lord God: He himself will defend his own cause.\**

I understood (September 25th 1906) from my Crucified Jesus, that he wants me to honour with three 'Hail Marys' his Most Holy Mother under the title of the Most Sorrowful Virgin, in memory of the pain she suffered during the crucifixion of her Most Holy Son Jesus.\*

My Good Jesus (October 5th 1906), when I think I shall soon have to render an account of what I have done, I beg you, by your passion and death, to take away from me the fear of death, but grant that in expiation of my sins, you will close my eyes in peace.

*Dear Son, do you not realise that I am beginning to prepare you? Live as a good religious, and in your passage from this life to eternity, your last days will be for you full of joy, love and happiness.\**

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*Why (October 12th 1906, 2 pm) have you returned so early to your cell today?*

I replied that I had been drawn by a great desire to recite the Franciscan rosary with vespers and compline, in union with him, my Crucified Christ.”

*Well, he said, remember that at Our Lady’s shrine I am alive in the Blessed Sacrament. Finish first the prayers you have to say close to me, and then come to your cell where I am always waiting for you.*

He added:

*Prepare yourself to bear with contempt, calumny, adversity, but guard against complaining. Always remain silent and at peace within yourself, and pray. Dear son, today, Friday, be sure to remain closer to me by prayer and mortification.\**

O my good Crucified Jesus (October 13th 1906) make me a saint.

*In whatever place your superiors want you, be obedient with a happy heart, because I am always with you, and never fear anything that may happen to you, not even death.*

*I use you, not to make you proud; always remain very humble. When you are no longer on this earth, my Devotion, through my good souls, will make progress with my help.\**

## Devotion to Jesus Crucified

Alternating vocal prayers and more affectionate mental prayer, Fra Leopoldo, almost without realising, was led to compose, under the guidance of Jesus Crucified, a new formula of prayer which he himself wrote and disseminated among people he knew. This prayer or Adoration to the five Most Sacred Wounds, entitled *Devotion to Jesus Crucified*, is the one later approved and endowed with indulgences by His Holiness Pope Benedict XV, of revered memory, in 1915, and which was included, with a few modifications, in the volume *Preces et pia Opera* of the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary in the 1938 edition, No. 170, with the following introductory formula:

- v. Deus, in adiutorium meum intende.
- r. Domine, ad adiuvandum me festina.
- v. Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.
- r. Sicut erat in principio, et nunc et semper, et in saecula saeculorum.  
Amen.

### To the Wound in the Right Hand

My most beloved Crucified Lord Jesus, bowing profoundly before you, with Mary Most Holy, and all the angels and blessed in Heaven, I adore the Most Sacred wound in your right hand. I thank you for the Infinite Love with which you were willing to bear so many and such atrocious sufferings on account of my sins, which I detest with all my heart. I ask you the grace to grant your Church victory over its enemies, and to all your sons, to walk devoutly on the path of your commandments. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

### **To the Wound in the Left Hand**

My most beloved Crucified Lord Jesus, bowing profoundly before you, with Mary Most Holy, and all the angels and blessed in Heaven, I adore the Most Sacred wound in your left hand, and I ask your grace for the poor sinners and the dying, especially for those who do not wish to become reconciled with you. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

### **To the Wound in the Right Foot**

My most beloved Crucified Lord Jesus, bowing profoundly before you, with Mary Most Holy, and all the angels and blessed in Heaven, I adore the Most Sacred wound in your right foot, and I ask you for the grace that among all the clergy and persons consecrated to you, there may spring up many flowers of sanctity. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

### **To the wound in the Left Foot**

My most beloved Crucified Lord Jesus, bowing profoundly before you, with Mary Most Holy, and all the angels and blessed in Heaven, I adore the Most Sacred wound in your left foot, and I ask you for the release of the souls in Purgatory, especially those who in their lives were most devoted to your Sacred Wounds. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

### **To the wound in the Sacred Side**

My most beloved Crucified Lord Jesus, bowing profoundly before you, with Mary Most Holy, and all the angels and the blessed in Heaven, I adore the Most Sacred wound in your Sacred Side, and I beg you to bless and hear the prayers of all the persons who have asked for my prayers. Pater, Ave, Gloria.

v. Virgo dolorosissima.

r. Ora pro nobis (3 times)

Crucified Jesus, confirm these prayers with the merits of your Passion; grant me a holy life and the grace of receiving the Holy Sacraments at the point of death, and eternal glory.

(300 days indulgence each time and a plenary indulgence once a month, under the ordinary conditions.)

## **Approbation of the Devotion**

Yesterday (September 24th 1906), I informed Don Giovanni Pons, secretary to His Eminence Cardinal Agostino Richelmy, Archbishop of Turin, about the precious Devotion, and he told me to write it out for him on a sheet of paper, because he would very much like to have a copy; and he advised me to go to His Eminence and show him the Devotion, in order to obtain his permission to have it printed and have indulgences attached to it. I answered that I did not dare to go and see him because I would feel too ill at ease, but he encouraged me, assuring me that he would be happy to see me. At this point I prayed to my good Jesus, saying, 'If I go to see His Eminence, I won't really know how to behave!' And I heard my good Jesus say:

*Behave simply. Say that your Crucified Jesus, in addition to giving you many graces and favours, gives you great faith, hope and charity, and an immense*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*love. Go, and don't be afraid. If the Cardinal doesn't listen to you, shortly afterwards, I shall put the idea into his head to listen to you, so that the holy Devotion can go ahead.\**

And that is what happened. When I went to see His Eminence Cardinal Richelmy, I was ushered into his reception room. When he made his venerable entrance, I bowed down and kissed his ring. Hardly had he heard the reason for my being in his presence, he refused even to listen to me, saying there were already many devotions around, and he dismissed me.

However, I did not lose courage and I begged the Lord God to grant me other more favourable opportunities. I asked His Eminence for his holy blessing, certain that the blessing of such a pious pastor would always do me good; and in the name of my Crucified Jesus, I returned to my friary of San Tommaso. On July 7th or 8th 1907, Fr Fedele from Mirabello Monferrato went to his Eminence to obtain approbation for the Devotion in order to be able to have it printed. And so it was approved through the intermediary of His Eminence's Vicar General, Mgr Castrale, and in this way I was more easily able to propagate the holy Devotion, the adoration of Jesus Crucified.\*

### Consoling promises

For the Servant of God, the Devotion to Jesus Crucified was not simply a mechanical recitation of the formulas, but an affectionate penetration into the Most Holy Wounds of Jesus, and into the Immaculate Heart of the Most Holy Virgin, pierced by the sword of suffering. Because of his intimacy, he had consoling promises to induce sinners to become converted.

My sweet Jesus led me to understand (September 13th 1906) that he loves those who perform this holy exercise of adoration: even if a person were the greatest sinner in the world, if he promised to serve him faithfully for the rest of his life, not only would he [Jesus] forget all his wickedness and the sins he had committed, but he would make his soul beautiful, innocent, as if he had never displeased him, dear Jesus.\*

My good Jesus told me (October 7th 1906) how many souls would be saved through this holy Adoration, in particular, sinners.\*

The Servant of God had consoling promises regarding not only the conversion of sinners, but even after conversion, to raise them to holiness.

My good Jesus said to me (October 5th 1906):

*I have made use of you to sow the seed, now I am cultivating it with grace and charity. For the souls who love me, I shall be present in the holy Adoration, always close, and I shall be their sanctification.\**

Jesus (October 10th 1906):

*Here are the graces and blessings I pour out over those devoted to me: I shall grant them the gift of tears, compunction of the heart, and all the nourishment most necessary for the soul.\**

My good Crucified Jesus said to me (October 11th 1906):

*Don't be afraid of losing merit for promoting my work, my mercy for my creatures who love me much. It is even a good thing to take comfort, to rejoice in me, your Crucified Jesus, for many will become holy through the*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*frequent practice of this most precious Devotion.\**

### Pious exhortation

I exhort pious souls not to neglect to perform this Devotion. They can perform it anywhere – in church, at home, especially in their room before going to bed, imploring God's mercy, so that the persons who enter eternal life that night, especially the stubborn dying persons who do not wish to become reconciled with God, the Infinite Goodness, may, through prayer, be saved by the merits of Jesus Crucified (Fra Leopoldo)\*

Let us ask for the grace to perform this holy Devotion with a great desire, to make reparation for so many wicked blasphemies which are directed towards the divine majesty of God, Jesus Crucified; and at the same time, let us resolve to adore him on all the Crosses in churches and all over the world (Fra Leopoldo)\*

### Spiritual fruits

The same Servant of God mentions in his *Diario* an extraordinary fact attributed to the efficacy of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified regarding the conversion of souls. This is with how much confidence he prayed to his Crucified Jesus:

My good Jesus, the poor sinner for whose conversion the Third Order Friar Giovanni Caneparo asked me to pray, I want you to plunge him into your divine heart, and purify him so that he never leaves that furnace of love which burns so much for your sons, especially for repentant sinners . . .

Today (July 11th 1909) this same Brother Caneparo came to see me, and he told me that the sinner he had recommended to me, after 45 years of a bad and sinful life (he himself had told him that he was in a permanent state of offending God), with the grace of God, he was led, to the great joy of this same Brother, to make a general confession covering his whole life, in the Shrine of the Most Holy and Most Dear Mother of Consolation. He was truly consoled by the Blessed Virgin who made him divest himself of all his wretchedness, and had prepared him for a new and wholly Christian life.\*

Jesus Crucified gave his Servant to understand that these were the fruits which are obtained by the prayers of the Devotion performed by him and his spiritual sons.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified



3: The crucifix in the church of S. Dalmazzo before which the Servant of God was praying when he heard Jesus say the following words: 'Between me and you, in the future, there will be great intimacy'. This is the beginning of his extraordinary communications.

CHAPTER 8  
“My Master Jesus”  
– 1908 –

**Powerful and gentle words**

My good Jesus said to me (May) in an irritated voice that he wishes me to go without fail to the foot of the crucifix in my free time because he wants to tell me things in order to learn about virtue both for myself and for others.\*

Jesus (May 24th):

*Dear Leopoldo, woe betide you if you move away from the love I have for you: I would be obliged to take a whip to you.*

You who have formed me, in times of difficulty, have mercy on me.\*

My dear Crucified Jesus said to me (July 12th):

*Whatever the torments you have to suffer, I don't want you to become upset; draw close to me always with a tranquil mind because I have many things to say to you.\**

Jesus (July 15th):

*Suffer willingly, partly with me on the Cross. It is not enough to get up early; I also want you to resemble me, in a small way, on the Cross. Depriving yourself of sleep is very meritorious, and by doing so, you will always see me happy with you, but if you satisfy your need for sleep, you will see me sad.\**

The son (July 19th): My sweet God, you give me so much confidence, and I distinctly hear your voice, so angelic and gentle! How is it possible to treat me, a poor sinner, so kindly! And this is how Jesus answered me:

*To all those who have divested themselves of all – of everything and of everyone, in other words, of the world; who have made themselves naked like St Francis of Assisi through love of me, to these, my true sons, I give so much confidence so that they will form one single heart, one single soul. They are rare the souls that wish to be like this.*

Then he said to me, as I conversed with my dear Jesus, that in Paradise, every day there are celebrations for all the blessed who on that day have had the grace to enter the Kingdom of Heaven; but the souls that loved Jesus so much, stand out because of the brilliantly white dress they wear, and they shine so brightly that even the Angels greatly enjoy their company.\*

Jesus (July 21st):

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\* \* From the *Diario* of Fra Leopoldo.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*Be at peace with yourself: I tell you that what you see, what you feel are things that do not belong to you. If they are not to your taste or give you displeasure, remain calm, because if you do not, when you come to do the Adoration, if you see me sad, it will be because you have upset my heart united with yours. (For not having been able to accept what my most holy Spouse had told me).*

My Crucified Jesus, help me.\*

My good Jesus said to me (July 22nd):

*Woe betide you if you neglect the Adoration morning and night: if I have called you to be a religious, it is because I want prayer, I want prayer, I want prayer.\**

The son (July 30th): My dear Jesus, if in your mercy you take me into Paradise, you certainly diminish the joy, because you already now give me a momentary foretaste of the joys of Heaven.

*My son, and perhaps you do not console me by doing everything to spread my Devotion so that souls reawaken the memory of a God crucified for them? \**

## Temptation

Adoration on August 11th. Prostrate at the foot of the altar, I began to pray as usual. I was suddenly overcome with fear, and I heard a loud voice inside my heart say to me: 'All the good, the prayers and the vigils you have made, they are all worthless'.

Taken unawares, I remained silent and then said in my heart: 'What I did, I did solely for the love of Jesus. In any case, without this love it is impossible to do it'. And I contented myself with asking forgiveness for my shortcomings, saying to Jesus, 'My Jesus, what I did, I did believing that I was doing what was right. Teach me, O my God, to do what you want, which is what I also want'.

In the meantime, I searched my mind and said to myself: 'How many beautiful things my good Jesus has said to me, and now everything has been turned on its head; but I do not want to lose heart'. And I said: 'My good Jesus, I have said to you quite clearly that I am a sinner! If this is what you want, your will be done in all things', and I put myself into the hands of Jesus my crucified Redeemer".

Having returned to my humble cell, with great coldness of heart I began to do the Adoration of my crucified Jesus, as I had promised to. Whatever obstacles I encountered – suffering, pain, illness – I did not want to break my promise. While I was praying, my dear Jesus said to me:

*Dear Leopoldo, because of your faith and humility, and for your consolation, continue your prayers always, which no one will ever come to disturb again.*

My Jesus had allowed the devil to tempt my faith.\*

Jesus (August 12th):

*You are my Leopoldo of the pierced Heart of your crucified Jesus. I want to make of you what I want. I have allowed these temptations to put you to the test. Your humility has won, and I shall not permit any temptations beyond your strength. I do not want doubts; even though you are small and weak, I*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*have used you to sow the seed, and I shall call other expert sons, who will continue to sow the seed and cultivate it. All that I make you write will be carefully preserved, because it has been dictated by your crucified Jesus.*<sup>1</sup>

My God, you have chosen me for this work, I who am so ignorant.

Jesus replied:

*You please me as you are. There are already too many people full of learning; there are also some who abuse of the learning I have given them, and sometimes they cause me displeasure. Blessed are the humble all of whose knowledge is directed towards the goodness and the will of God. From my pierced Heart, and from the Heart of my Mother, Mary most holy, you will receive every blessing. All that I have made you write is in the name of your Crucified Jesus.\**

### Prayer and sobriety

The son (August 14th): ‘Enable me, my supreme Good, to think only of you, my beloved Jesus!’

Jesus said to me:

*When you are in your humble cell, write down also this thought: Do not get up later than a quarter to four or four in the morning: that is the time for the Adoration. An hour of silence, a more suitable hour for the Adoration.*

My God, what a paradise it is to be with you; O Lord, it is true happiness, the fruit of your mercy!

*Ask me for something your love desires.*

Sweet Jesus, you know what I desire: it is that the whole world should love you immensely, and that you should save everyone.

*You are the son of my Heart, as I have always said to you. My son, in the evening, eat just enough to keep your body going, because I have something important for you to write down. If you wanted, there would be no need for you to eat, but what you do in this regard must not be noticed by anyone.\**

### “How does your Jesus speak to you?”

Jesus (August 18th):

*My heart and your heart will burn in the future with a holy love.*

Lord, when I think of the souls who will read these pages, I feel humiliated.

*Why is that, my son?*

Because I feel I am writing too favourably about myself, and praising myself.

*But you know well that I have already told you that you are too small. Is it not I who have told you everything you write, so that my mercy can shine brighter than the sun, before the whole world?*

*As I have always said to you: when you have a free moment, come to me. If I don't make you write, pray, but not a moment of time must be lost.*

*If you are asked: how does your Crucified Jesus speak to you? Do you really hear his voice?*

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<sup>1</sup> All the writings of Fra Leopoldo are (1944) typed and bound in 8 in-folio volumes.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*Yes, I speak to you with my interior voice and my Spirit communicates with yours which submits to my will.*

Jesus' answer to such questions.\*

### “Suffer with your Jesus”

Jesus (August 19th):

*All that I have made you write is like a mirror: that is, you must remember that I was ill-treated, crucified, and you must see yourself mirroring me in your tribulations, crosses..and not fail every time an occasion presents itself.\**

Jesus (August 20th):

*All the good faithful know that they are on this earth not to enjoy themselves but as a test, in preparation. Many crosses still await you, and through these I wish to grant you immeasurable graces . . . and when afflictions come to you, remember how much love I have for you, how many graces I have granted you, and that you must be constantly prepared to stay with me united with the Cross! I shall be your strength, as I have always said to you. You will not be holy if you do not continue to pass by way of the Cross.\**

Jesus (August 22nd):

*Although you have to suffer on this earth, you will have paradise within yourself, because I am always with you.\**

Jesus (September 3rd):

*Today, Friday, stay even closer to me through prayer and mortification. Why, son, once your prayers are finished, would you want to return to your rest? No, son, keep me company; what beautiful things will happen; everything for the good of mankind.\**

Jesus (September 6th):

*If every now and then you come across thorns, and sometimes very sharp thorns, don't be upset, be brave: the thought of how little time remains for you on this earth will help you to bear so much wretchedness with patience. Unite yourself always with the memory of a Crucified God. Pray, my son, make reparation!\**

Jesus speaking (August 29th):

*Son, have you thought of me today? How many times?*

*The people you have to live with, be compassionate towards them: much of the time their defects are involuntary. Son, if sometimes you do not attach importance to small things, because they are small, I punish you, that is, I do not speak to you for a week, because in your judgment they are small.\**

*This evening (September 5th) I do not reward you, because you have not tried to correct a defect of which you are aware. Remember that you must become perfect! Beware of very small things.\**

Jesus (September 13th):

*Look, Leopoldo, if you withdrew your love from me, even the least amount, and gave it to some object, I would punish you out of love, which is so great*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*that I have given you my whole heart.\**

Jesus (September 15th):

*Some days I leave you disheartened: I want you to continue to practise all the virtues until the last day of your life.*

My God, be my guide, my Crucified Jesus! Make my heart like a clock whose every beat is in unison with the Sacred Heart of my Crucified Jesus. Through his Passion and Cross, may the whole world have an eternal and monumental memory of our salvation!\*

Jesus (September 17th):

*Son, if you rely on your own strength, on yourself, all you do is worth nothing.*

My God, what a difference between the state of sweet and gentle tranquillity that you give me at times, and moments, such as now, when I am suddenly overwhelmed by a terrifying hurricane which crushes me with all its strength! And my Jesus has hidden himself away?

*You know, the adversity you unexpectedly had to face, partly with credit, I allowed it so that you would always have clearly impressed upon your heart, that far from God, man is in the dark, in pitch-black darkness. On the other hand, a soul resigned to the will of God, always sees some light, because it is encouraged by pious thoughts, puts all its trust in the Creator, waiting patiently that the goodness of God, coming to its aid, will grant it the treasure of its grace, of its consolation; and the full afternoon sun in a bright blue sky, gives joy to the heart that was longing to be blessed by its Jesus.\**

Jesus (September 18th):

*Be quiet, Leopoldo; don't you know that I want to make you perfect? You're at the school of your Crucified Jesus!*

My God, whichever way I turn, I trip and find thorns; but no one has a word of comfort for me, or of encouragement. At times, tempted by the demon, I am contradicted even by decent persons when I do all that I can to be close to the Lord: my sole consolation and support is my Crucified Jesus!\*

Jesus said to me (September 19th):

*Ask me for something that will console me.*

I ask you, O my Jesus, through the love of your merits, for the gift of patience and of silence.

*What did you promise me in prosperous times when I adorned you with exquisite joys and such sweet pleasure as a foretaste of heavenly bliss?*

*And now that you have to drink a little from the bitter chalice, would you perhaps want to belie the promises made to your Jesus?*

*Never allow yourself to be cast down. Even faced by death, recall what your Jesus said to you. Take courage from the fact that I am always with you. Remember that all the saints have had to follow very thorny paths, such as Don Bosco, Canon Cottolengo, who are your closest examples. So, be strong,*

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*suffer with your Jesus in silence, on the Cross.*<sup>2</sup>

Yes, my God, I accept with joyous rapture these teachings from the school of my Crucified Jesus, and with the supreme strength of the one who makes me write, I will draw a holy lesson.

*When you see something which disturbs you, if in the world people say that you should close one eye and in this way you do a meritorious act; you, son, who are a religious, close both eyes. Also, if you hear something that disturbs you, pretend that you hear nothing. Do this for the love of your Jesus, and go in peace and busy yourself with Friary chores.*

How my soul is saddened when I see my Jesus in great pain!

*Son, do not worry. Pray, and do not ever leave from this my sacred Heart. And I tell you that part of my sadness comes from the fact you did not come to me with that angelical cheerfulness you promised me, which you promised me!*

My crucified Jesus always forgives if some sharp thorn makes me fail because of my excessive fragility.\*

### “Trust in mercy”

I asked (September 6th) my Jesus if in his Mercy he is saving me. My most sweet Crucified Jesus gently reprimanded me, saying:

*Woe betide you if you dare repeat such a question! So, what's the point of all I have made you write? Be brave, and always bear in mind that the Mercy of a God has no bounds; and read again what I have made you write, because to doubt is to insult your Crucified Jesus who has an immense love for you; and if I make you write this thought, it is to encourage all my sons to trust in the Mercy and goodness of a Crucified God who holds out his arms constantly to embrace all those who draw close to him. With raptures of immense love I press them to my immense Heart, always giving them the kiss of forgiveness.\**

Jesus to the son (September 4th):

*When a sinner recognises his faults, and his greatest torment is the pain of having offended his God, believe me, my son, I will burn him with my holy love. At the same time, I will reduce to dust the sins committed, and the divine breath of an impetuous wind will disperse the infected ashes; and I will give back to the soul its previous health so that it shines with a bright light like a faithful angel who pays court to me.\**

Jesus (September 8th):

*You have a great love for my most holy Mother, and she obtains for you the love and strength to remain with me always. I make you write this so that other sons will imitate this.\**

Jesus (September 10th):

*I want you to abandon yourself in holy love on my pierced heart, like a*

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2 The reader will have noted that in this passage Don Bosco and Canon Cottolengo are proposed as examples of sanctity about 20 years before their canonisation.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*seraphim on earth; and when you have some free time, I want you to come close to your Jesus, and always with angelic serenity. Banish all troubles for the love of your Jesus; for the love of your Crucified Jesus, stifle all adversity by your merits; remember that those are precious opportunities to change bitter bile, with virtuous preparations, into the sweetest honey.\**

### “Obey swiftly”

Jesus (September 11th):

*Apart from communicating to you my spirit! do you not perhaps carry me alive within you when you receive me in Holy Communion? However much in your work it seems that I have left you, I am still close to you; and when you are writing and you are called to work in the friary, stop your writing and obey swiftly.\**

I wanted to do the Adoration (September 13th) but my Jesus said to me:

*Stay calm, Leopoldo, you no longer have the time to do the Adoration: what you are doing now takes the place of the Adoration’ (that is, writing what is dictated to me by my Crucified Jesus).*

My Jesus, put it into the head of the Holy Father to attach an indulgence to the Adoration Prayer.

*Rest assured, the Holy Father will grant you this favour.<sup>3</sup>*

Jesus (September 13th, evening):

*My son, I see the great love you have for me both in the Blessed Sacrament and on the Cross. I assure you that because of this greatly devout respect for your Lord, the most beautiful blessings will rain down on all you do.*

Lord, you know so many souls who weep at seeing you crucified on the Cross; their tears of compassion for your sufferings never cease. In the beginning, I too was favoured by your love, and now, my good Jesus, have you taken it away from me?

*See, dear son, how many paths there are to take souls to Paradise! One soul may choose a devotion which particularly suits his taste, always of course, one that is approved by our Holy Mother the Church. And in your case, I have chosen this way which you have followed now for many years at the school of your Jesus. I want you to learn the practice of perfection, and you will study in obedience to your humble teacher Jesus; and first of all, you will learn the practice of humility, followed by all the virtues taught by God. There you are, my son; do not worry if your Crucified Jesus leads you in ways you did not intend, but in his own most straight way.\**

Jesus (September 14th):

*I have chosen all the saints as so many pleasantly smelling flowers, each with its own particular perfume: to one, I have granted great penitence; to another, great love and sorrow for my Passion; to others, great repentance for their sins and the grace to be penitents (a fine virtue to imitate); and to others, the gift of continual prayer, enough to make them great saints; to others, the gift of drawing souls to my Heart, and bringing them to salvation*

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3 His Holiness Benedict XV of venerable memory granted an indulgence of 300 days every time the Devotion to Jesus Crucified was recited, applicable also to the souls in Purgatory.

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*with my grace; and for you, my Leopoldo, I have chosen to give you my immense love, suffering and work: that is the way you have to follow to reach the land of the living, where your Jesus awaits you in loving expectation.*

*Now that I have made you write all that, would you be brave enough to doubt that you are my secretary? Now, go to work, so that you don't fail in any of your duties.*

*Write down this thought also: for all sinners who draw close to me, I make their souls as white as snow.\**

### “A soul made beautiful”

My good Jesus said to me (September 26th):

*I want to make you beautiful, innocent like a one-year old child!*

Just look at the marvels of the divine Mercy of a God! – from sinners he transforms us into flesh-and-blood angels.

*Now you must reveal what I want you to be by your example and virtue.\**

Jesus to the son (September 27th):

*I have made your soul beautiful like an angel: your concern, your hard work, even in the midst of manual work, is to remain always as you are now, because I no longer want to be a single moment without you.*

Oh, my God! Help me to cooperate: left to myself, I can't do it!\*

Jesus (October 15th):

*I have given you back a shining white garment: I am telling you this so that sinners may have confidence in my Heart, because when they return to me they will be re-clothed in sanctifying grace. And I give my love to all who come to me. You shall have the small gift, with the simplicity that I shall give you, to attract souls to the glory of your Most High God, Jesus. For some it will seem impossible that a God can abase himself so much, and yet it is true: if I love pure white souls, it is very important for me to see sinners return to the embrace of my immense arms.*

O infinite goodness of God, how close I feel you are to me! I should not even dare to breathe: let me forget you for a moment, let me forget that you are so much alive in my presence and, through the love I have for you, let me press you to my heart!

*And why ever forget me in order to press me to your heart? Do you not know that I, even though God, am more humble than you; and it even gives me great pleasure to be with souls who love me, and to speak as the Love of the angels? But it is not enough: the love of a Crucified God cannot be measured! If you only knew, Leopoldo! When the time comes for you to come to make your adoration of me, in the shrine dedicated to my Mother, aren't you aware that I am waiting for you?*

Yes, my purest Love, because when I am about to finish my supper, I feel enraptured, and my soul is anxious: I would like to be already near to my Jesus, but obedience holds me back.

*If I had two Paradises, I would give you both of them, so great is the love I have for you, because you are obedient to me and do my will.*

My sweetest Jesus, the work you make me do is not very hard, but a joy. And who

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

does not like writing? It is a continuing conversation with God! Who makes me write? Who dictates to me? Jesus Crucified! O Infinite Love, for an eternity I would be my Jesus' secretary.\*

Jesus said to me (September 28th):

*O Leopoldo, after doing the Adoration of my sacred Wounds in the hands and feet, would you like to do the adoration of my Heart with greater fervour?*

Yes, my God”.

*My Heart is at the centre of my Devotion.\**

Jesus said to me (October 10th):

*For whatever grace you need, turn first to my Most Holy Mother Mary.\**

Jesus (October 17th):

*It is impossible for a mortal eye to see the white garment you received from your Jesus: it would be blinded. Your soul is enveloped in a sea of light. Do you love me, Leopoldo?*

O so much, my good Jesus. And you?

*You see very well how I nourish you every day with my most sacred body; what more would you want?*

### “A gentle reproach”

The son (September 29th): My God, what I would like is that no one should ever come again to speak to me about the things of the world; this tends to take me away from you.

*You should not attach any importance to this. These are repugnant things for you, and a source of greater merit for you. It's as if you are in the world or have occasion to have dealings with it, even though you have withdrawn from it.*

How fortunate are the souls who live the contemplative life; ah, why can't I also!

*My son, you too live it: what more do you need to do so? when you work, you think of me; when you speak with someone, your mind thinks of me; part of the day you spend with your Jesus; what more do you want? The conditions in which I have placed you are very meritorious.*

*Make the most, my son, of the time that remains to you.\**

Jesus (October 5th):

*Be sure, Leopoldo, to love me so much; and I don't want you to betray my love just because not everything is to your liking,. In prosperity and in misfortune , make sure that your Jesus is always the centre of your heart. Go now! Run to receive me in Holy Communion!\**

Jesus (October 9th):

*Son, in certain things, correct yourself: don't be so punctilious: always make allowances. Even with good reason, never become anxious, but always be kind and cheerful. Your Master Jesus.\**

Jesus (October 20th):

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*When I tell you to write, O Leopoldo, I want you to show faith, just like the first Christians, in what I tell you.*

On some occasions when I hesitated to write, because it seemed to be in my praise, and I knew well that I deserved none at all, my good Jesus made me a kind of gentle reproach, saying to me:

*How many times have I told you that what you write is not all for yourself; so always be attentive to the commands of your Jesus, without investigating whether you are worthy or not. What I have made you write is all virtue to be imitated: dear Leopoldo, you work for me and I work for you to make your soul more angelic, but it is a stimulus also for others.\**

### “Come and visit me”

Jesus (October 16th):

*Never neglect, Leopoldo, to come and visit me in the Most Blessed Sacrament, in the evening, before going back to your cell to rest.*

Jesus added:

*Write it down immediately so that others can imitate you.*

How can I thank you for all the love that you pour into my heart?

*Don't leave me there, with the excuse that you can't; love me with all your strength, with all your soul. In this way you will be able to love me. Do you understand, my son, how much I love you?\**

My good Jesus made me promise him again (in the evening of the same day, October 16th) that every evening in the hours of silence I would go to visit him in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and he gave me a glimpse of the majesty of a God, his power, and at the same time the respect that is owed to the Creator. To tell the truth, I didn't dare breathe even: what a solemn moment! How much respect we should have for our Lord, if we only knew who it was there before us; if we realised, we would prostrate ourselves deeply in the dust.\*

### “I speak of Mercy”

Jesus (October 25th):

*This book will reveal clearly the infinite Mercy of God.\**

Jesus (November 4th):

*Have a look at the pages you have written and you will see that I speak of Mercy all the time. So, abandon yourself entirely to the Mercy of God and to that of the Most Holy Mother.\**

The son (November 25th): Oh, my Most Holy Jesus, Oh, Beloved Mother of my Jesus, you have made me write so many beautiful and holy things, even about me, even though I am lacking in everything, protecting me in order to preserve me in the future, with the grace of God and of Most Holy Mary, and always to keep me good, even though you know I am so unworthy of such love and Mercy!

*Everything that we have made you write until now is a single voice, so that sinners may have great confidence in the goodness and Mercy of God, and the graces granted to you, by your example will be granted to others.\**

Jesus said (November 5th):

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*The Most Holy Crucifix and the Most Blessed Sacrament are the two principal and sure ways to raise the world from the dust.\**

### Duty and gratitude

The son (October 4th): My Jesus, I always hasten to be able to be with you.

*Yes, but don't rush: I shall always give you bodily health and wisdom in your physical work.\**

The son (October 24th): Sometimes, my Crucified Jesus thanks me for the work he makes me do, and I absolutely do not want to be thanked: I should thank him, who gives me this pious work!

Jesus' reply:

*You know well that I am your Teacher: if a God thanks you for this, I leave it to you to apply it.\**

The son (October 31st): Although my Jesus wants me to keep him company, he always wants it in my free time, and does not want me to neglect my duties in the friary.\*

Jesus (November 18th):

*See, Leopoldo, I love a sinner who has sincerely repented more than many who have never sinned gravely against me, but who are lacking, insofar as they are lukewarm and do not deign even to glance at me.\**

The son (December 5th): My Jesus wants me to bring him something in the evening, that is, some virtue I have practised during the day.\*

### “The Lamb who takes away sins”

Jesus (August 25th):

*Love me with all the outpouring of your heart: you will never regret having loved your Jesus so much. When the demon comes to confront you with your sins, or with images which are anything but praiseworthy, don't listen to him. Remember that I love you to come and see me at the end of the day in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, as you do. Remember that I am the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, and that you must never be upset by any temptation: with my power, I can make your soul like that of an angel.\**

Jesus to the son (August 4th):

*I want you to love me with all your strength, with all your heart, without ceasing. If sins are committed in this world, I want souls who, like the seraphim in heaven, follow me with prayer and other virtues, so that they can make reparation.\**

Jesus to the son (August 14th):

*How much I love you, especially when you nourish yourself with my Body in Holy Communion. Even if at the time I do not give you great signs of my love, all the same the soul always becomes more angelic with my grace and virtue.\**

Jesus to the son (August 27th):

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*I am all yours, as you desire; and are you all mine, as I desire?\**

Jesus to the son (September 13th):

*Do you want to learn the love of the angels?*

Yes, my God.

*Well, any mad temptation which seeks or attempts to steal from you the least amount of love for your Jesus, flee from it, drive it away, as if you had to hide yourself from a wild beast that wished to tear you to pieces.\**

Jesus to the son (September 28th):

*Remember that in the future your life must be totally angelic and, if through weakness you succumb to some little defect, turn to me immediately with an act of contrition.\**

Jesus to the son (October 29th):

*If you stamp on human respect, if you very rightly trample mercilessly this ugly beast of human respect, your sacramental Jesus will grant your spirit to rise to the highest heaven: immense graces are lost through this hideous suggestion!\**

Jesus to the son (November 20th):

*The mission I have entrusted to you is very important: cultivate your mind; let your mind be always innocent; banish useless thoughts, as soon as they appear, drive them away like sparks of fire, and recall to yourself the most choice virtues.\**

Jesus to the son (November 27th):

*As soon as temptations arise, turn your thoughts to your sacramental Jesus. He will make the bad and useless thoughts disappear, and his light will kindly clear your mind and lead you to holy thoughts'.\**

Jesus to the son (October 7th):

*Always stay close to my heart, dear Leopoldo; love me greatly in the place of millions of baptised souls who never think of making an act of gratitude to me!*

*Remember always the white garment I have clothed you in; treasure it; make sure you preserve it from all contamination; cover it with white cotton, that is, with prayer and penance.\**

Jesus (October 10th):

*Don't you know, Leopoldo, that you could not show me greater love than by distributing the leaflets (on the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and on Jesus Crucified) so that generous souls may be found who will make reparation to my Sacred Person?\**

Jesus (October 13th):

*We shall never leave each other, you and I, Leopoldo, night or day! The cross you wear on your breast, always place it on your heart when you take your rest, and you will always have undisturbed sleep with your Jesus.*

*Look, Leopoldo, I cast away all your sins; the white garment you wear, make sure you treasure it, and so when you come to me to do your Adoration, it is*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*always beautiful and devoid of any small stain or dust.\**

My Jesus said to me (October 14th):

*Leopoldo, can you find anywhere else love which is greater than mine? You are here close to me, you have serene peace in your heart, and your soul exults with angelic joy. We are here, the two of us; let us love each other! Love for love: you love me, I love you beyond any measure!\**

Jesus said to me (October 15th):

*Kiss my side: tomorrow your Jesus will kiss your heart, when you receive me in Holy Communion.\**

The son (October 14th): My God, when I press my lips to your Divine Heart, it is so that you may cleanse them, so that my tongue may serve to sing your praises, to give glory to you, my Eternal Paradise!

Jesus loves the ejaculation 'My Jesus, Mercy!' He says it is full of humility and trust in God.\*

Jesus (November 13th):

*When you are brought low by internal or external suffering, remember my Passion.*

*There is great corruption in the midst of this world: pray! Love people moderately, with charity. But love, you owe it solely to me, your Jesus.\**

Jesus (November 16th):

*Leopoldo, continue to pray: prayer has tremendous power against temptation and all the wretched thoughts the devil puts into your head; and with prayer my will and heavenly beauties are revealed.*

*Son, go now and attend to your work in the kitchen, and before you leave, kneel down: I your Jesus and my Virgin Mother Mary will bless you. And so you will receive the blessing of God and of Mary Most Holy!\**

### **“Have more faith”**

Jesus (September 25th):

*Have you looked at what I have made you write?*

Yes, my God.

*Do you like it?*

O my sweet Lord, if only I could imitate, if only in part, what you have made me write!

*Not only in part, you must put it into practice continuously, and I shall give the grace to persevere!\**

Jesus (September 28th):

*Why, Leopoldo, do you always find some difficulty when I tell what to do? What do you want me to do to give your more faith when you write? Your Jesus never lies.\**

Jesus (October 5th):

*Leopoldo! You continue to harbour some doubts: These wretched things never reign in souls that belong to God.\**

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

The son (October 31st): Jesus wants me to do his most holy Will in everything. I complained about my Jesus; I almost lost faith in all I had written. Jesus said:

*This question needs to be taken into consideration seriously: if I were to appear to you, would you believe me? You would certainly accuse yourself of being a visionary and would have thought it was all the work of the devil. Remember what I said to you: I am your guide.\**

The son (October 27th): My good Jesus, I put my trust in grace, but it all came to nothing!

*Jesus your Master replies to you that even though you are the favourite of your Jesus, you must always remain humble: of himself, a man is nothing; in whatever you do, it is your Jesus who is acting. Cheer up and forever forward in the Lord's vineyard! And if your Jesus had given you what you had asked of me, all that I'm making you write now, you wouldn't have written, so let this be a lesson also for your other brothers.\**

Jesus to the son (December 5th):

*If you hear it said that you will have to undergo difficult trials, even martyrdom, you must always remain cheerful, because I am always with you!\**

The son (December 20th): O Most Holy Lord, all my thoughts, all my affection, are fixed on the pierced Heart of my Eternal Good! But you know, O Lord, how much in the course of the day I am troubled, how many are the annoyances that afflict me to prevent me from being close to you!

*Such a situation pleases me, your Jesus: this is so that I can see if you really love me, if in your difficulties you still have love for me, and this would be very meritorious.\**

### “A terrible punishment”

Jesus (November 17th):

*If men do not mend their ways after my holy Adoration, that is, of the Most Holy Crucifix, is established, I shall send them a terrible punishment.*

*The world has broken down: instead of loving virtue, God and his Most Holy Mother, flowers of the most choice consolation and blessings, and always finding there, in either prosperity or suffering, strength and peace for the heart; accompanied all the while by Divine Providence, the comfort and consolation of the human race; the world gives itself over to the most degenerate and most hideous vices, which inspire shame and bring men so low that they cannot see any light at all and rise up again.*

*If men do not listen to my Vicar, to his call by means of the Cross, the most sure means of gathering all people once again around the Holy Shepherd who represents me; if they remain deaf to this Divine Call, a terrible punishment awaits them.\**

Jesus (November 18th):

*At whatever cost, I want the world to be converted.\**

Jesus to the son (November 19th):

*Do you know why I love you so much? Because apart from the fact you love*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*me by your prayers and example, you make me loved as much as you can by others by means of my Devotion, and when the time comes, by telling the Holy Father the Pope to spread the Adoration of the Cross, of the Most Holy Crucified Jesus, throughout the world. I repeat once more, if the world does not listen, I shall send a terrible plague.\**

Jesus (November 22nd):

*The evil press is spreading all over the world; my Divine Name is being dragged through the mud, robbing the faithful sons of their faith which I gave them, in my Sacred Heart. In its place there is creeping in immorality, brutality, removing from the minds of poor little children the very idea of a God who directs everything. I turn once again to the Cross for the salvation of the souls redeemed by the blood I shed through the sufferings of my Passion, the martyrdom of the Cross; and if they take no notice of this most kind invitation and want to persist in their vice, in their wickedness, a terrible and frightening punishment awaits them.\**

Jesus (November 24th):

*Let it be impressed on the minds of men that when the Adoration of the Most Holy Jesus Crucified is established in all families, I shall console them with my grace; but woe betide those who abuse it: I am tired of so much evil ill-treatment.\**

### “Do the will of God”

The son (November 19th): My Jesus, I no longer find the time to do the Adoration of the five Most Sacred Wounds, as I have to write.

Jesus replied:

*And writing is not prayer? Doing the will of God is always prayer.*

*When a soul bows to the will of God, the Lord does everything for it, and gives it the most precious part, that is, the Heart, accompanied by unending waves of sweetest joy even in the midst of thorns . . .*

*The crosses that you encounter, embrace them with outpourings of joy, because I, your Jesus, help you to bear them.\**

Jesus to the son (November 3rd):

*When you awake, ask your Crucified Jesus for his holy blessing, and I shall give it to you.\**

### The Protectress of the Work

Jesus to the son (October 4th):

*The love of my Mother, Mary Most Holy, for you is immense.\**

Jesus (October 20th):

*Do you see, my son, how much my Mother, Mary Most Holy, loves you?*

Yes, my God, for the last few days, she has been showing her holy maternal affection for me.

*And you, Leopoldo, try to remain always close to her.\**

Jesus to the son (December 20th):

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*I absolutely want you to remain always close to the Most Holy Mother, because she, as the Protectress of the Foundation, needs to tell you something, and you must write everything.\**

Jesus (December 31st):

*O Leopoldo, under the guidance of my Mother, Mary Most Holy, you will have many things to do.\**

The reference above to a 'Foundation' of which Mary Most Holy is proclaimed to be the Protectress, was made some five years before the foundation of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, which was subsequently set up in the house of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, at 14, Via delle Rosine, Turin. I shall speak at greater length about it in the course of this biography.

At that time, I did not know Fra Leopoldo, but considering now what happened in 1906 and subsequently, I feel obliged to repeat what I wrote in 1937 in the *Bolletino dell'Unione Catechisti*, that is, 'God was preparing men and things'.

CHAPTER 9

**“My Teacher, Mary Most Holy”**

**– 1908 –**

**“The benevolence of my Heart”**

Words of Most Holy Mary (August 15th):

*Today, Leopoldo, I wish to show you the benevolence of my Heart because you have great love for my Son Jesus.*

*Those who love to adore my Divine Son Jesus Crucified, not only, as a result, have grace from my Son, but I, his Mother, pour into their hearts the sweetest consolations.\**

Most Holy Mary, in Jesus’ name also, to the son (October 18th):

*How glad we are to have such a son!*

Most Holy Virgin, I’m not going to write this; it praises me too much; I’m really a miserable creature.

*Write it down immediately: this is not just for you, but so that other imitators may read it, so that they can work in the Lord’s vineyard. The Divine Father is pleased to see you have this attitude, that is, to Jesus and Mary.\**

Most Holy Mary to the son (October 21st):

*I take great pleasure in seeing souls who have a great love for my Divine Son.\**

The son (October 21st): To the souls who I know have a great love for My Jesus and his Most Holy Mother, I wish immense blessings.

*To these souls is due a measured love, but your Jesus and his Most Holy Mother ask you for immense love. Have great love for my Divine Son, love which consists in doing his will in everything.\**

Most Holy Mary (August 15th):

*Be on your guard, my son, against the suggestions of the demon, especially when you do the Adoration. Remember that the cunning tempter, knowing how fragile man is, has such subtle ways that he succeeds in persuading people. But remember you have the protection of Most Holy Mary your Mother.\**

The son (December 9th): I asked Most Holy Mary why there was so much love, so much grace, so much peace in my heart, which I don’t deserve on account of my so many imperfections.

*Know, my son, that I fought courageously against terrible temptations, and for this reason I give myself totally to you; and if all my sons learn this lesson, once the frightening storm has passed, I, your merciful Mother, come*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*to console them and give them courage for future battles; and if they keep in their minds my Most Holy Name, no monster will be able to harm them, and because of this the demon will be overcome. I come to bring them consolation and the most ineffable joys.\**

Most Holy Mary (December 10th):

*The demon will always be lying in wait for you to make you commit some fault, but you must not move away from me: keep me always close to your heart, and it will never be able to harm you.\**

The son (December 22nd): Many temptations attack us, but our Most Holy Mother ensures victory for those who have recourse to her maternal Heart, and so these temptations are so many steps put there to enable us to reach the highest perfection.

For the love I have for you and your Divine Son, O my Most Sweet Mother, help us in our most difficult moments. All our hope is in you and, through the merits of your Divine Son, may we be given the strength to overcome every difficulty, and spend truly holy days to honour you, Most Holy Mother, and Jesus Crucified, your Divine Son.

*Fight, work! Or perhaps you would like to languish after so many years of spiritual and temporal work? Come on, rouse yourself! Very little time remains for you to suffer, and then a brightly shining throne awaits you up there in Heaven if you listen to your Most Holy Mother, who loves you with a heart of surpassing greatness.\**

Most Holy Mary (October 18th):

*Go, my son, and receive my Divine Son in Holy Communion, because I am with you.\**

Most Holy Mary (October 23rd):

*Son, every time you receive my Divine Son, your soul becomes ever more beautiful.\**

Mary Most Holy (October 29th):

*Listen, my son, be always joyful, happy with everybody in the Lord, and let your mind be always absorbed in the eternal glory of God and of Most Holy Mary.\**

Mary Most Holy (November 3rd):

*My son, although the thorns which confront you inflict deep wounds in your heart, rise above them and always preserve peace in your heart. Times of worry make you neglect prayer, pious intentions, love for Jesus. All that time, even if it does not last long, is nonetheless time lost, which you can never regain as long as you live.\**

Mary Most Holy (November 10th):

*My love and that of my Son Jesus for you can never be erased: I shall pour so much love into your heart, into your soul, that the sufferings you have to endure will seem to you less bitter. If your faith wavers at certain moments, call to mind your prodigious and instant cure.\**

Mary Most Holy (November 14th):

*Listen, my son, to my advice, to all I have said to you; and when you need*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*something, turn to Most Holy Mary, your Mother, and in this my maternal Heart you will find protection and comfort!\**

The Most Holy Virgin let me know (November 22nd) that she has millions of angels at her disposal, and that, at the point of death, she sends an immense host of them to meet those souls who loved her greatly, as they make their way to Paradise.\*

Most Holy Mary (November 22nd):

*Son, is it true that yesterday you decided you would make a triduum of Communion for the Vicar of my Son? This morning you did not pray for this intention but I did so in your place.\**

Tomorrow, Sunday, the end of the Holy Jubilee of the Holy Father Pius X; and so it is also the end of the triduum of Communion.\*

Most Holy Mary (December 5th):

*Know, my Leopoldo, that the wisdom of God has made me very powerful; and you, under my watchful eyes, must purify yourself with the sweetest and gentlest joy, without fear.\**

Most Holy Mary (October 24th):

*Write about me, my son, and I shall know how to reward you: when your body is dead, your soul shall lean against my breast like a charming child. In the future, I shall be your teacher.\**

Listen to my Teacher, O you devout readers, (she herself has offered to be such, as I have already written above): she said (October 24th) to her Divine Son:

*What shall we do with this Leopoldo? Let's put him in prison, that is, in the prison of our Heart.*

O, how I would like to enter that furnace of love and burn endlessly!

The great Mother of God said to me :

*You are my angelic secretary.*

I said to her that I am a sinner. She replied I should write:

*And now, precisely because, as you say, you are a sinner, you will be in prison for always in the Heart of Jesus and of Mary. And now that, Leopoldo, you can no longer leave this heavenly prison, it's not good for you to be alone: you must call others to keep you company by continuous prayer. Are you happy, son, to be my secretary also?*

Sweet Mother, give me a pen of gold, so that, my hand guided by angels, I can write of the wonders worked in souls by your power, your charity, by your immense goodness: you alone are the Mother of Mercy for the world.\*

Most Holy Mary (October 26th):

*Now that I have confirmed that you are my secretary, are you happy?*

O Most Dear Holy Mother, who would not be happy to be the secretary of the Madonna? I am such a sinner, dear Mother! You have made a poor choice!

*Well, let all sinners be like you: let them return to the source of every good, till they fill Paradise!*

*So, you are my son: be attentive to my suggestions, to write what I tell you to write. You see, you were almost complaining that my Divine Son was not giving you any work. And now your dear Mother is finding you some. I really*

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*want, Leopoldo, to give you my maternal love, because you have great love for my Crucified Son, Jesus!\**

Mary Most Holy (November 6th):

*Son, make sure you write all that I say to you, because the things that seem small to you, are in reality necessary.*

Mary Most Holy (December 9th):

*All right then, my son? When you have even the smallest amount of time, run to this blessed cell and write all I tell you, and don't simply remain enjoying all the delights I grant you: these consolations are there to encourage you to do good, work and practise virtue.\**

Most Holy Mary (December 11th):

*Always have faith in what your dear Mother makes you write; I say this to you often because man needs such holy and constant exhortations to support him, because he is weak and needs nourishment for his faith just as the body needs bread.\**

### “Silence, prayer, reparation”

Mary Most Holy (November 20th):

*My son, you want me to be your teacher; well, I willingly offer my services. You will start, not from today, but from this very moment, to practise all the virtues. First of all, united with God and your Teacher, Mary Most Holy, you will practise silence and prayer; and if you are not questioned, you will speak only with Jesus and his Mother, Mary Most Holy. Today, Friday, you will practise this virtue.\**

Mary Most Holy (November 28th):

*Son, do you really love me?*

Sweetest Mother, who does not love you?

*Son, if you only knew how ill-treated and mocked I am by men! Yes, the dear Mother of your Jesus is insulted. You my son, make reparation by your writing and prayer, and after, I shall make you happy\**

Oh, world! Let us not sicken the Mother of our Divine Redeemer. Instead of disgusting her, let us remember that she with the Passion of her Divine Son shared in our redemption. Let us not disgust her any more. Let us proclaim her glory with the Angels and Saints, and she, at the moment of our death, at that difficult time, will be our strength, our guide to Paradise.

*Son, I am pleased by what you have just written about me, and I promise you that to all human beings who turn their pleading eyes towards me, the Mother of God, I shall grant peace of heart.\**

Mary Most Holy (November 29th):

*I am always present in your prayers, and when you invoke me I listen to you.\**

Mary Most Holy (December 2nd):

*When you come to my shrine to pray, even if I do not reveal myself openly, I observe you, I watch you with the greatest of pleasure, and I do the same with all my devoted sons . . . Treasure, my son, the time that remains to you;*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*write, pray, work; the final hour will come soon, and when I come to take you, have your store of good works properly set out, because once that moment has come, it will be too late.\**

The Most Holy Mother (December 6th):

*You cannot imagine the joy in my Heart when the converted sinner returns sincerely to my Heart: I have such tender feelings as to press him spiritually to my bosom.\**

Mary Most Holy (December 7th):

*Son, prepare yourself to celebrate the most beautiful title the Divine Creator could ever give his daughter, the Mother of his Divine Son, my Jesus, the title of Immaculate, which is celebrated tomorrow, Tuesday. On this day, I shall grant you the grace you have asked of me, and take care to cultivate this most beautiful flower, chastity, innocence.\**

Most Holy Mary (December 8th):

*If you only knew, my son, how much grace I pour out onto my devoted sons on this day dedicated to my Immaculate Conception!*

In addition, the Most Holy Mother advised me to consecrate to her all my thoughts, my tongue, my heart, my actions, my tiredness, but especially my prayer and the holiness of my life.\*

Most Holy Mary (December 15th):

*My son, take this Heart of mine which is a Mother's Heart! (She said this twice). Draw close to my Heart, because I wish to nourish you with faith, hope, charity, a great love for my Divine Son and myself, and with all those virtues which please your Jesus and me.\**

Mary Most Holy (December 29th):

*Do you know, Leopoldo, why we insist on such details with you? It's because you spare neither fatigue or sleep; even when you are ill, you give short shrift to evil and pay no attention to it, and your thoughts are focused always on what your Jesus has suffered; and because of this humility of yours, and your way of life, you will be blessed and favoured by your Crucified Jesus and by your Mother in life and in death. I know very well that because of your humility you would not like to write these things, but I, your Mother Mary Most Holy order you to do so.\**

Most Holy Mary (December 30th):

*My son, remain always humble, never wish to know a lot in order to examine very high things, because this is impossible; and those who persist to the end will find desolation, because they are proud. These things are reserved for the beatific life.*

*Your life has been traced out like this: you must not remain satisfied to spend your days in a holy way only for your own benefit, but you must take care to spend every moment joyfully, with a way of life which is more evangelical than human, to serve as an example for others.\**

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

### “Devotion to Jesus Crucified”

The son (November 6th) filled with a powerful feeling of love for Mary Most Holy, I asked her: ‘What can I do to console your Divine Son?’

*Do what you do now: love him, and make him loved through the Devotion to the Most Holy Crucifix, inviting others to practise it, and in this way you will make giant steps along the path to holiness, drawing precious virtue from such a loving treasure.\**

Mary Most Holy (November 22nd):

*Leopoldo, your mission is to introduce the Devotion of the Adoration of the Most Holy Crucifix to all Christian families, under the leadership of the Holy Father the Pope.\**

Mary Most Holy (November 23rd):

*You will see what your dear Mother, the Great Mother of God will do for you in the future because of the love you have for her Divine Son Jesus. Whatever happens to you, will be blessed by God the Eternal Father.*

*Take, my son, my Heart and the Heart of my Divine Son which for you are everything; write so that, in the school of the Lord, all learn to love God and the Most Holy Virgin. Take care, Leopoldo, never to waver in the face of difficulties; trust Jesus and Mary always, as now as you write. And if at certain moments we hide ourselves, it is to point out to you the battles you have to endure on this earth. And when the sweetest joy envelops your soul in love and grace, as a reminder and sign of the immense joys the soul enjoys in Heaven, remember that even the consolations here below are things that pass and an encouragement: the reward for the practice of virtue is heavenly Paradise, a place of ineffable delights.*

*Let the Devotion to Jesus Crucified be extended to the whole world. All that you have written, will happen. It is God’s will. When the Holy Father establishes the Devotion to the Most Holy Crucifix in all parts of the world, I will make them prosperous. I do not want to be horribly mistreated any longer by all kinds of wickedness.\**

Most Holy Mary (November 24th):

*Prayer is the remedy for all evils.*

So, my Most Dear Holy Mother, help me with the holy undertaking of the Adoration, so that it can be extended to the whole world.

*This is the wish and an immense treasure of the Mercy of my Divine Son.\**

Mary Most Holy (November 25th):

*The most effective means of halting scourges is the Adoration of the Most Holy Crucifix.\**

Mary Most Holy (November 28th):

*An immense, an incalculable number of souls will be saved through this Devotion, and you, Leopoldo, will have the merit for it.\**

Mary Most Holy (December 8th):

*My son, go forward always with me. I shall be like a captain at the head of*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*the army, to fight and overcome my enemies. Believe in what I make you write and fear nothing: I am your strength.*

Let me, O dear and Most Holy Mother, love you in the place of all those who do not wish to know you or your Divine Son.

*My Leopoldo, you know very well I grant you everything you ask of me. By means of the Adoration make a whole world of souls love, and in this way your wish will be fulfilled.\**

### “Patron of the Great Order”

Mary Most Holy (November 8th):

*The world needs to rouse itself: many souls wish to damn themselves on their own, despising the Mercy of my Divine Son.\**

The son (December 13th): Most Holy Dear Mother, but I have an ardent desire to make your and my Jesus loved: will you help me?

*My son, if I made myself the Protectress of the Order, it was precisely because so that my Son would be loved and not despised and horribly mistreated.\**

The son (December 15th): Most Holy Dear Mother, my and your Jesus wants me to turn my gaze frequently to you!

*Yes, my son, because I am the Protectress of the Order, and many times I need to make you write.\**

Mary Most Holy (December 29th):

*I am the powerful Patron of the great Order; your spirit and mine will be constantly at work to show to the whole world the great Mercy of my Lord and the great glory of the Most High God.*

Great Mother of God, Mary the light, illumine the mind of all those sad people who fight against you, who sneer at you and your Divine Son.

What horror to have write these vile things! and despise the most precious jewels that the all-powerful Divine Wisdom has given us, miserable mortals! for our joy and salvation.

O Most sweet dear Mother, more merciful than all the mothers of the world put together, make your piety manifest in all its power to the honour and glory of your Divine Son, who has redeemed us and made you so great; and with your Mother's Heart, through your immense charity, make these poor unhappy people, who have such a hideous misfortune to despise good, mend their ways, and may they be showered with abundant mercy. In a word, you my sweetest dear Mother, have to save everybody; remember that we are all your children, redeemed with the most precious blood of your Divine Son, my love, Jesus Crucified, true Son of God.\*



**CHAPTER 10**  
**“My Master Jesus”**  
**– 1909 –**

**“Devotion to Jesus Crucified”**

Jesus (January 1st):

*Write, my son: when I ask you if you love me, I do not intend to put this question only and directly to you, but I intend to make myself loved through the Devotion to the Most Holy Crucifix, and, with the permission and support of my Vicar, may it spread to the whole world.\**

Jesus (January 13th):

*The penance I ask you to do is to make me loved through the Devotion all the world over; to make it known, as I have always told you, to my Vicar the Pope; and if I, your Jesus, was the Saviour by the cross, by redemption, I shall be so at all times, so that the human race will mend its ways, and recognise me as the true Son of God, Jesus Crucified.\**

Jesus (January 29th):

*In truth, those houses in which this Devotion reigns will be blessed: let them believe this.\**

Jesus (May 1st):

*After your death, I shall show you all the souls which will be saved through this Devotion, as I have already asked you to write, and the soul that makes such that Holy Adoration will not be lost.\**

Jesus (July 11th):

*My son, treasure the mission I have given you.  
May the holy Adoration spread throughout the world, and the wonders of God will come from the Cross.\**

Jesus (August 20th):

*I want to give you a court of souls saved by this Adoration Devotion, but the court I want to prepare for you is not of this world, because the things of this world are passing.\**

Jesus (August 23rd):

*Those who do the Adoration of the Most Holy Crucifix with love and faith will enjoy eternal happiness.\**

Jesus (November 2nd):

*The clearest sign of the love you have for me is the Devotion you are*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*spreading so that you can see me, your Jesus, loved once again by the human race redeemed by my Divine Blood. In this way, because of you, it will be an on-going sermon which will last until the end of the world.\**

Jesus (November 16th):

*Know, Leopoldo, that I, your sweetest Love, Crucified Jesus, exult with the most noble and supreme joy, when I see myself glorified by you on earth by your propagation of my holy Adoration Devotion, so desired by me, so that it may be remembered for all eternity that, without this Cross, sanctified by my most precious Blood, no one will enter Paradise.\**

### **“My wish is an innocent life”**

Jesus (January 5th):

*What I wish is an innocent life; I want chastity to be practised so that people become worthy of my grace, the purest fruit derived from prayer and Holy Communion.*

Jesus (January 6th):

*By love and by prayer, you must always remain immersed in God in an intimate union: the rest of your life must be like this. Nourish this thought, so that it never leaves your mind.*

Jesus (April 16th):

*Just think, Leopoldo, that a single Communion would be enough to be intimate with me, preserving innocence, or practising penance, but I am not satisfied: I want to feed you every day.*

Jesus (April 19th):

*My soul, the soul of my Most Holy Dear Mother and your soul are in such a great and such close union that your soul is no longer distinguishable. Those who do not believe this, so much the worse for them.*

Jesus (April 30th):

*Nourish yourself with this my Divine Heart, satiate yourself with life and love, and every day recite to me, like a rosary, fifty times the following invocation: Sweet Heart of My Jesus, make me love you always more.*

After spending part of the night in adoration, and having recited as my last prayer 50 times ‘Sweet Heart of Jesus make me love you always more’, I wanted to stand up and go to bed, but my Jesus said to me (September 4th) :

*Wait another minute and say this: Jesus, sweet and humble of heart, make my heart like unto thine.*

Jesus (October 3rd):

*Man falls easily and does not have recourse to me, your Jesus, by prayer and love.*

As I was writing (October 24th), the demon came to tempt me. Good Jesus told me to tell him to go away, but I replied: How can I, you need virtue for that!

*All you need is a sign of the Cross.*

Standing (November 29th) at the feet of Jesus Crucified, absorbed in the deepest

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

adoration and with the love of the angels which the Mercy of God shared with me, Good Jesus said to me:

*Leopoldo, you make me weep with consolation when I see how much you love me*

I did not want to write this down, because it seemed to me that Most Holy Jesus was abasing himself to me, a most vile creature, but it was in order to make people understand the joy felt by Jesus to be loved by his sons and brothers. He himself ordered me to write this, and he added:

*Even if you don't understand the importance of what I make you write, the theologians will understand it well.*

Jesus (December 29th):

*Chastity is the most beautiful flower which grows in the heart of man.*

### **“The Order which will come”**

Jesus (January 7th):

*With this plant of an Order I shall make many saints.*

When my good Jesus reprimands me, he corrects my defects; whereas if a mortal man reprimands his inferior, the inferior feels humiliated, and sometimes even hurt. In the case of the reprimands of my Jesus, this does not happen. When Crucified Jesus corrects me, he pours out so much exquisite joy as to make me weep. This is that beautiful virtue of charity.

Ah, you alone O God Most Holy, have these perfumed vessels of sweet charity! O my dear Jesus, give me so much of it, so that I too can pour out over my brothers in such great quantity this most sweet perfume that your whole Order may be watered.\*

Recommendation Fra Leopoldo was made to write down by Jesus (March 4th): In those who come after me in the Order that will be formed, do not look to see if they have great learning, but demand a love of prayer and unbounded devotion to the great Mother of God. Whoever is lacking in these virtues, will not be pleasing to God.\*

Jesus (November 13th):

*The Order which will come, will be the vineyard of saints.*

To the Order willed by the Lord God will be given the beautiful and holy grace of the Almighty Lord to defend the Most Holy Name of Jesus Crucified and that of his Most Holy Mother the Virgin Mary.\*

### **“You will gain much merit”**

I complained (January 7th) to my Jesus that I was disturbed and distracted in my mind, being constantly obliged to speak with seculars for one reason or another. As this is a parish, I am in a situation from which obedience is not willing to exempt me. My good Jesus encouraged me by saying:

*You, my son, do violence to yourself to remain close to me, and you will gain much merit for this.*

Jesus (April 8th):

*The Cross is an inestimable treasure which the world does not know.*

O my Jesus, you have suffered so much; let me share in part your sufferings!

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*My son, if you did not have tribulations you would not understand our love (Jesus and Mary); sufferings open your eyes so that you can see very far.*

Jesus (April 17th):

*In all things, even the smallest, to obtain merit, the Spirit of the Lord must be there.\**

Jesus (May 11th):

*Never let your thoughts dwell on useless things because that is time wasted; but convert it into precious time by raising your thoughts to Most Holy Jesus Crucified.*

Jesus June 2nd):

*My son, will you remain a little longer with me?*

My good Jesus, if you wish, I'll stay longer.

*No, my son, I don't want to force you.*

Jesus (October 25th):

*My son, if you didn't always have some Cross to carry, you couldn't have great love. Crosses are an increase in my immense love, and this is true also for your brothers.*

Jesus (November 20th):

*Know, Leopoldo, that in both prosperity and pain, I want you to remain if not the same, at least resigned to my will. Don't you know that in suffering you obtain worth and merit for eternal life?*

Jesus (December 6th):

*My son, never become discouraged in trials; in joy and in pain, always love me; a little love in suffering is worth more than much love in joy. Be a little patient, my son: life is short; obtain for yourself many pearls to adorn the eternal home where Jesus your Lord is preparing joy and eternal glory for his faithful servants.*

### **“Make reparation”**

Jesus (February 20th):

*Pray, make reparation for the many sins which are committed during these days.*

Jesus (April 13th):

*Look, Leopoldo, when you are partly ill, work as someone partly ill; and when you are healthy, work as a healthy person.*

Jesus (April 16th):

*See, Leopoldo, these are called the sacred hours (four in the morning) during which I can make you write quietly what I want; at other times, you can't because you are busy working and you would be disturbed.*

Thank you for everything, O my God and Crucified Jesus!

Jesus (April 17th, 4 am):

*How dear to me are these moments when everything is silent and when I can,*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*with my Leopoldo, say what I long to say. I tell you that my spirit and that of the Most Holy Mother will be united with your spirit. I see that your love for me, your Jesus, knows no bounds, and that is what is needed, that is, a human being that has so much love for me in order to cover, to stifle, the insults and all the miseries of the world.*

Jesus (September 25th):

*My son, ask for something for yourself, which I shall grant for the love of my Father.*

My Most Holy Lord, the grace, the greatest miracle, O my God Jesus Crucified, that I could have on this earth would be the salvation of the souls that are in the whole world!

*Well, make it your holy practice to recite several times a day the invocation: Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat in my heart and in the heart of all the souls in the world.*

Jesus (November 22nd):

*Learn from your Divine Master never to grow tired of exhorting the souls who have taken the path to goodness, but whose steps are still unsure.*

My good Jesus, allowed me to experience (December 7th), clearly for my greater good, great internal sadness: no more sweetness, no more caresses not even from my Most Holy Dear Mother. Accustomed in the past to enjoy often heavenly joys, I now find only gloom and darkness. I think of my good Crucified Jesus who, after spending a life full of suffering and humiliations, found himself in the Garden of Olives deeply saddened and abandoned by everybody, even by his faithful disciples.\*

Wednesday, December 8th, I went to the shrine of Our Lady to make my afternoon thanksgiving, and the Lord allowed me, as it were, to glimpse the pain of believing myself to be abandoned by my most sweet love Jesus and by Mary my Most Holy Dear Mother. He made me feel in my heart that I should be brave. Certainly, the Lord has a thousand reasons for not sweetening my suffering with his delightful caresses.\*

Jesus (December 15th):

*My dear son, would you be so brave as to doubt your Jesus because for many days I have hidden myself a little from you, and do not give you any caresses or any joys? Now I shall make you feel that I am swimming in your soul, and I shall mark the intervals of your sufferings with unexpected moments of ecstasy and the affection that my Divine Mother has for you.*

Jesus (December 28th):

*Know, my son, that those for whom everything is fine do not belong to my army.*

My Crucified Jesus told me once again not to leave him and to keep him company night and day, even purely spiritually during work, and added (March 23rd):

*I cannot hold up my arms any longer, so many are the sins committed by men, and if they continue to do so, I shall be obliged to send them great punishments.*

Jesus (March 24th):

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*When my Vicar, the Pope, has ordered that in all Christian families my effigy should occupy a place of honour, and that they should venerate it, adoring Jesus Crucified, as I have told you more than once; if they do not mend their ways after so many favours and warnings; and if I am not listened to, I shall be obliged to punish so that the world mends its ways.*

Jesus (April 17th):

*My son, never move away from my Heart; console me . . . the world with its sins is something horrible.*

During the Adoration of the Most Holy Crucifix (October 19th), I prayed for our most sweet Holy Mother the Church. Jesus said:

*I am being patient, I am being patient, but in the end I shall make myself heard, if men continue to offend me by such contempt and indifference.*

Jesus (November 18th):

*Leopoldo, when you're sad, I'm sad too; and when I, your Jesus, am sad, you too are sad. This is true. Ah, men! men! You, Leopoldo, don't know . . . Ah, I must send them a punishment!*

### **“I make him the king of my Heart”**

Jesus (January 15th):

*Whoever loves me from his heart, really, with lively faith, and has no other aim than his Jesus, I make him the king of my pierced Heart, which contains all kinds of graces.*

Jesus (January 18th):

*When unexpectedly a vain thought comes into your head and tries to distract you from your prayer, shun this thought like the plague, and let your mind take you immediately to the Divine Side of your Crucified Jesus, and you will find a source of sure strength to continue your pious practices.*

Jesus (January 24th):

*Don't think of material work while you make the Adoration. You must, in those moments, consecrate yourself completely to my Divine Side, that is, listen attentively to my voice so that you can execute my will respectfully. Your spirit of prayer must never waver; everything else must serve to this end.*

Jesus (March 21st):

*Your daily bread is to think always of me and of my Most Holy Mother. Here you must have no restraint. Let this food of your soul, formed of grace and prayer, accompany you throughout the time of your life, and in your afflictions, do not be alarmed, be brave, remember immediately your Crucified Jesus and that I am close to you. Do not neglect your duties, that is, your work; use the rest of your time in prayer, and when you are mocked or made fun of, think that you have your Jesus with you, and that is sufficient for you in order to overcome any kind of humiliation.*

Jesus (April 20th):

*On the 26th (Fra Leopoldo's solemn profession), a day dedicated to Our*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*Lady of Good Counsel, I shall re-clothe your soul anew so as to make it just like the angels and, sharing in angelic life, you will come to visit me every evening at the foot of my altar, and there I shall bless the fatigue of the day borne peacefully through love of your Jesus. I shall bless your night's repose, and will instruct you in the way of virtue.*

Jesus (April 25th, vigil of Fra Leopoldo's Solemn Profession):

*If you knew the love I have for you, instead of worrying about failing to respond to my love, you would let the world and everything collapse, I mean, that you would let the world go with all its beauty, because there is no beauty that can be compared to that of a love that loves God.*

Jesus (18 days after Fra Leopoldo's Solemn Profession):

*Write, my son: Today, May 14th, is the most beautiful day in your life, because your Crucified Jesus, through the supplication of my Mother, Mary Most Holy, confirms the Espousal of your soul with me, your Crucified Jesus.*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified



4: Church of S. Tommaso in Turin. The door giving access from the friary to the sacristy, which on many occasions was opened by Our Lady for Fra Leopoldo.

## CHAPTER 11

### “My Teacher, Mary Most Holy”

– 1909 –

#### “Keep the most beautiful flowers”

Mary Most Holy (January 8th):

*My son, cultivate your mind with holy intentions directed only towards Jesus and Most Holy Mary, and treasure this garden, water it when necessary, keep it always beautiful, green as in a spring willed by the power of God, and keep most beautiful flowers there from which to draw virtues that are more angelical than human. I know, the condition in which Divine Providence has placed you requires much virtue, but with the help of prayer, it should all spring up and bear fruit.*

Most Holy Mary (April 17th):

*Immense in the world is the number of souls who despise me and level a thousand insults at me. What consoles me is that, when I go to knock on the door of the heart of my son Leopoldo, I am sure that he will open it and do everything for me.*

Most Holy Mary (April 27th):

*Ah! my son, my son! My son! If you only knew: they have cast a net all over the world to catch souls and tear them away from good, and it is called the net of wickedness. My son, you make me weep with consolation when I see how much you love me, just as you also love my Divine Son; but how many souls point the sword of sorrow at me and my Son, your Jesus, with the most unspeakable offences. Soon the measure will be full.*

My Most Holy Mother expressed the wish (November 13th) that I should offer her a flower of virtue every time I go to visit her in her shrine in the evening.\*

#### “The great work”

Mary Most Holy (January 3rd):

*Son, we are preparing you for the future: and, as I am the Protectress of the Great Work, my Divine Son has given me a free hand in its running.*

Mary Most Holy (January 11th):

*Leopoldo, make sure we are loved: propagate the Devotion to my Divine Son.*

(January 16th):

*Mary Most Holy, Patron of the Order of the Most Holy Crucifix, will obtain*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*graces, favours and miracles, for whomsoever has faith in this Devotion; and when the Vicar of my Son has authorised it and disseminated it all over the world, the Divine anger will be calmed, as behaviour will have been converted by this. My son, I ask you this: you must keep us, Jesus and Mary, pressed to your heart, at work and in prayer. When you work, try to converse with your Jesus, with me, your Most Holy Mother, and with your Guardian Angel: keep him close to you so that he becomes very familiar to you.*

Mary Most Holy (November 14th):

*Leopoldo, you are the best shopkeeper in the world, because with your goods which are so pleasing to God, you accumulate inestimable treasures for eternal life through the Devotion to your Crucified Jesus.*

### **“Be even more generous in your charity”**

Most Holy Mary (January 10th):

*My son, be very careful, because the demon has bound you by a small and very thin cord and you must break it immediately, that is, you must be more generous in your charity. If we have fixed our gaze on you, you must correct yourself of these defects which the Divine Goodness has brought to your notice. Do not stop for a long time on so many steps: instead you must keep on going higher until you reach Heaven.*

Mary Most Holy (January 11th):

*Make sure you are attentive, O son, and execute the orders given by my Divine Son, so that this evening, when you are in your cell, prostrate in adoration at the feet of your Crucified Jesus, you do not blush with shame for not having overcome the thorns you have encountered. Let this exhortation be your guide so that you can present some virtue you have practised, and this is how it should be every day.*

Mary Most Holy (February 9th):

*Son, keep yourself always pure and calm to facilitate intimacy with me and my Divine Son Jesus. Act on the suggestions you receive from your Guardian Angel to make small acts of mortification. If in your judgment they seem trivial, after your death you will discover much.*

Mary Most Holy (March 17th):

*Son, all your actions, work, prayers and holy aspirations are so many steps leading upwards.*

Most Holy Mary (April 3rd):

*Live a holy life, stay calm; never let an angry complaint escape your lips, because that would sadden the Heart. These are all tethers the demon attaches to you to keep you away from my maternal Heart.*

Mary Most Holy (April 5th):

*Keep watch over your eyes; do not look at anyone unless it is necessary, and this will help you to remain united to my Divine Son.*

Mary Most Holy (December 20th):

*Leopoldo, when you are tempted by the demon to seek revenge, because*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*people have done you wrong and despised you, chase away immediately this demonic thought and turn to my Heart.*

Mary Most Holy (December 21st):

*It is better for you to have these signs of the greatest intimacy than have it shown to you visibly. The love which the Blessed enjoy to the highest degree in Heaven is such that no one ever again has concern for himself, nor whether others are nearer to God or further away; but through this shared love of the Lord, the peace and the happiness they have is carried by their joy to the Infinite.*

### “My Solemn Profession”

Most Holy Mother, I can't bear it any longer, I desire so much to write to my brother to tell him to take the house and land that for years now I have let him use. The Rule tells me to renounce everything, and for me this is an anticipated joy. I shall now be free of the bother of worldly possessions, and I shall be able to breathe more freely, and love my dear Jesus and his Most Holy Mother more closely.\*

Most Holy Mary (April 5th):

*Break your ties with your relatives, so that your and my desire may be fulfilled to make the union between me, my Divine Son and you, more closely and doubly sacred.*

Mary Most Holy (April 17th):

*Leopoldo, you console my Divine Son by loving and adoring him; and I console you now and at the moment of your death.*

Most sweet Mother, today I begin the novena to prepare myself to honour you, Great Mother of God, under your title of Our Lady of Good Counsel. That will be the most beautiful day of my life when, by the grace of God, I shall make my Solemn Profession. Deign, O Most Holy Virgin, to cover me with your mantle, and be my Most Wise Counsellor for the whole of my life.\*

I asked (April 18th) the Most Blessed Virgin for a special blessing for April 26th which will be for me one of the most beautiful days, that is, the day of my Solemn Profession. In her great charity, my Most Holy Mother said to me:

*May the blessing I give you come down upon your head like a burning flame, a sign of most ardent faith and immense love for God Jesus Crucified.*

I asked (April 25th) Our Lady for a thought for tomorrow, April 26th, the day of my Solemn Profession, and she said:

*‘Tomorrow, your Mother of Good Counsel will obtain for you a soul as white as a lily, and for the day of your Solemn Profession you will have the most sweet gift of prayer.*

Mary Most Holy (May 14th):

*Son, you made your profession on April 26th, a day dedicated to me under the title of Our Lady of Good Counsel, and I promised you that, if you recited in this cell, hidden from the world and from everybody, my Rosary, I would give you a fine present. As you paid heed to what I said, receive now the wedding ring as the Spouse of my Divine Son Jesus Crucified, and may your*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*soul be closely bound to my Divine Son forever; and for me, continue this practice and you will have grace and great favours from the Holy Rosary.*

### **“For opening and closing the door for me”**

Most Holy Mother, I thank you (March 26th) a thousand times for the kindness and mercy you have for me by coming personally to open and close for me the door of the inside corridor of the friary leading to the sacristy and to your Shrine. Like this I am not prevented from coming to greet you, Most Holy Mother, and your most loving and Most Divine Son Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament”.

You, Most Holy Mother, have understood my anguish and the threats of those who said to me: ‘Don’t let it happen again, leaving the door hardly half closed: the key needed to be turned several more times to make sure it was properly secure’

I agreed completely with this, but it was impossible to do this with my key. In order to be able to do this with the key I had, I asked the Superior several times if he would have it altered, but it was impossible to have him do so. I prayed to my good Mother Mary Most Holy to help me open the door to go into the church and to close it when I left. The Most Holy Virgin saw my great desire to go and adore my Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and she showed great compassion for me and she never abandoned me. She herself acted as my doorkeeper. What a great duty I have to love and bless constantly my dear Most Holy Mother, the great Mother of God! Many times in the course of the year, I was locked in the church, but when the time came to take leave of my good Jesus, I was certain that my dear Most Holy Mother would accompany me to open the door for me, so much so that on one occasion, while remaining outside, she opened the iron bolt which was four fingers long.\*

Mary Most Holy (April 10th):

*Son, do you know why I come to open and close the door? Because you open for souls the way to draw closer to my Divine Son through the Devotion to the Most Holy Crucifix.*

According to the promise made to Most Holy Mary, as soon as I had cleared up the refectory (April 18th), I immediately went anxiously to the dear Mother of the Saviour, the great Mother of God, and hardly had I touched the door than she herself opened it and said to me: ‘I was waiting for you!’, and filled me with heavenly joy. I said my prayers and I recommended to God a number of souls whom I had promised I would include in my most poor prayers.\*

I was speaking (June 1st) with some of my fellow brothers about work to be done in the friary. As soon as we had organised the work to be done, they left and I remained alone. I heard loud knocking on the door to the sacristy, but I didn’t see anyone. I went to the altar of Our Lady and remained there until I had finished my prayers to Jesus and to his Most Holy Mother. If on other occasions, when leaving, it was easy because my Most Holy Mother herself closed the door (I couldn’t do so with my key, and this time it was more than ever impossible), that evening, I said to myself, ‘How was it that my Most Holy Mother was late in coming to lock up?’ I began to wonder whether on that day I had had the misfortune to offend my good Mother. But after a few minutes, the door closed – it was about 11 o’clock. Later, when I was doing my Adoration of Jesus Crucified in my cell, my Most Holy Mother told me, with such nobility and gentleness, that I should not use more words than necessary; and that the time indicated for my visit to her altar made no allowance for delay, except in the

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

case of some urgent need.\*

Most Holy Mary (June 12th):

*My son, once again I say to you: because of the love you have for me and for my Divine Son, not only do I treat you with great favour by coming personally to lock the door, but I wish also to make other gifts to you.*

Most Holy Mary (July 6th):

*Know, my son, that if I come in the evening to close the door, it is not only to spare you having to endure the reprimands of others, since you yourself can't do so; but I impress upon you that I have an immense desire that before you retire to your cell you should come to greet the great King of Heaven and earth in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. If you only knew how dear to my heart your visit to my Divine Son is! At that moment, on your head are poured out the heavenly blessings of me, your Mother Most Holy and of the Eternal Divine Father, King of the ages and of souls.*

Most Holy Mary (July 27th):

*I want you to come every evening to pay your respects to me at my altar, and I shall accompany you and close the door so that you are not troubled by anyone.*

Most Holy Mary continues to come (September 7th) to close the door, and I with the utmost joy thank her by reciting the Hail Mary and kissing the door, my heart filled with great peace, and my soul overflowing with the most delightful sweetness.\*

Most Holy Mary (September 10th):

*My Leopoldo, it is I, the Mother of your Lord, the Virgin Mary, who come to close the door. The purpose of this holy happening is so that people should honour me, and join to this, love for my Son Jesus Crucified and in the Blessed Sacrament, who in these days is so ill-treated and beaten.*

And who can describe (September 24th) the goodness, the charity, the gentleness and the most delicate and noble ways of the Mother of Jesus our Saviour, when she draws near to close the door? While I wait for my most beloved benefactor, Mary Most Holy, I feel her approaching, because in that moment, as a foretaste, she fills my heart and soul with holy affection and delightful sweetness.\*

Every evening (October 15th) I receive from Mary Most Holy this great service performed by the Mother of Jesus the Saviour, who has already told me that she would not appear to me visibly, but would make me feel her holy presence.\*

Mary Most Holy (November 5th):

*The door that the great Mother of God comes to close every evening signifies the passage from earth to Paradise, because you leave your material work and the kitchen and come to my altar where Jesus and Mary wait for you.*

That evening (November 13th) I offered the Most Holy Virgin, the great Mother of God, a basket of artificial flowers made of material, and my Most Holy Mother was most grateful: to show me her pleasure, as I left her altar and she closed the door, she said to me:

*'I am here now; this evening I won't make you wait.*

As I returned from my Adoration (November 14th) I wanted to close the door without

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

the help of my Most Holy Mother Mary, but she herself said to me: 'It's useless trying, you won't succeed'. For me, to doubt is a great humiliation! In any case, my Most Holy Mother, the great Mother of God, had no need of my useless attempt with the key, and in her goodness she added: '*Look, I'm here . . . Now go, the door is closed*'.

I made the sign of the cross with my tongue on the door a good three times and, as usual, I moved to a spot where no one would see me, and I bowed deeply and I repeated on the floor the sign of the cross I had made on the door, raising my mind and my arms to the great Mother of God, Jesus Crucified, and I thanked her for the great care and mercy she continues to show me.\*

This evening (December 2nd) I was locked in the church and my Most Holy Mother, in her ineffable goodness opened the door for me and then closed it with more than angelic grace. Eternity would not be long enough to thank her for her charity and mercy.\*

### The question of the door in 1910

From March 1909 to July 1910, the *Diario* of Fra Leopoldo contains almost every day, in addition to what has been reported above, references like the following:

The great Mother of God, in her goodness and charity, came (July 29th) to close the door”.

On the following day, on the other hand, we read the following:

This evening (July 30th) I did not have the beautiful grace of God to see the door closed for me, certainly because I did not spend the day in accordance with the Heart of Jesus and of Mary Most Holy.

On July 31st and August 1st 1910 we find the following words in the *Diario*:

My Most Holy Mother did not come to close the door.

On August 3rd, we read the following:

To prove the reality of the fact that Most Holy Mary came to open and close the door in her great kindness and most sweet mercy, she no longer came any more and made me feel that she no longer came so that I should show the most lively faith...Now I am content to say my prayers at a window which gives onto the grilled entrance to the shrine, and wait for the beautiful charity of the Virgin Mary to deign to open and close the door.\*

Up to now (August 5th) the Most Holy Virgin has not come again to close the door. As I was making my thanksgiving for food at her altar, she explained to me that she no longer came in order to make me understand clearly and with faith that:

*I am really the Great Mother of God, but if this friendly behaviour continued you might doubt this. I leave you now to manage by yourself.*

Fra Leopoldo, on the suggestion of his fellow-friar the sacristan, subsequently obtained a key that worked from the servant assistant sacristan, and in this way, without disturbing anyone, was able to make his evening visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Most Holy Mary.

## CHAPTER 12

### Teachings of my Teacher Jesus

#### “Always be obedient”

Jesus (July 27th 1910):

*My son, be always obedient to my Vicar the Pope: what he wants, is my will.*

Lord, you see (October 8th 1910) how narrow-minded I am, how uneducated; but if you want me to glorify you, give me some knowledge so that my voice can serve for your glory.

*There is no need for you to be great in the eyes of men. Are you small? Do my will and you will become great.*

Lord (October 9th 1910) how could I make your glory and your truth shine out, I who am poor in everything?

*Do what your Superiors tell you to do, or rather what they want.*

Jesus (May 2nd 1915):

*Leopoldo, O how I love to see humility practised!*

Jesus Crucified (December 19th 1917) wants me, in the evening before going to bed, to prostrate myself at the foot of the Cross and render him an account of my day, of the virtues practised and of the time wasted.\*

Jesus (February 6th 1919):

*All those who spend a less virtuous life, will never experience joy; only those who stay with me will always have peace.*

Jesus (August 6th 1910):

*My son, write, and who makes you write is your Jesus. No more obstacles, whether rain or wind, darkness or light, infirmity or prosperity, you must always serve me in the same way according to your strength, as my most faithful and true servant.*

Jesus (November 4th 1911):

*Be always at peace with yourself and in this way you will always be joyful and cheerful with Jesus and Mary.*

Jesus (January 22nd 1912):

*Leopoldo, spend your time well, don't give way to the useless thoughts that the tempter comes to suggest to you.*

Jesus (January 23rd 1913):

*You cannot imagine my delight in being with you because you get up in good time to keep me company.*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*You must not move away from my Heart as long as you live, because my Heart is a delicate balm for everybody.*

Jesus (October 12th 1913):

*Leopoldo, how many times have I said to you: you love me? I love you!*

Today I forgot!

*Ah! Leopoldo, Leopoldo! Let this be the daily bread of your soul.*

Jesus (September 2nd 1914):

*Stay here close to me, to comfort and console me.*

Jesus (September 4th 1914):

*Go on in my presence and try not to commit even a venial sin. My Leopoldo, I need in this world souls who have great love for me.*

### “Opportunities for merit”

Jesus (August 6th 1910):

*My son, I want to give you so many opportunities to accumulate merit for yourself, and you should know how, with humility and experience, to take advantage of them.*

Jesus (October 13th 1910):

*Leopoldo, stay close to me as much as you can.*

Jesus, my Love, tell me how I can stay close to you.

*By being patient with everyone and with humility.*

Jesus (February 5th 1912):

*Set aside all those muddy things: persecution, being upset, contradicted, badly thought of. Just think that Jesus is there with you; be patient and pray.\**

Jesus (February 19th 1912):

*Here is the level road for your sanctification and for attaining perfection: patience with everybody, charity with everyone.*

Jesus (March 22nd 1912):

*Leopoldo, you are in one of the most fortunate of situations: no one aspires to your most humble position. Clever people do what you do.\**

Jesus (May 4th 1912):

*When you are troubled, come here to the foot of the Cross: at the sight of my crucifixion, you console me with your prayers, and I console you with grace.*

Jesus (June 21st 1912):

*Listen, Leopoldo, to my divine lessons: never speak about anybody; if some do not behave charitably towards you, speak about them to me, your Jesus, and rest assured I shall make you happy. In the course of your life you will have joys and thorns, thorns and joys.\**

Jesus (September 6th 1912):

*Troubles and sufferings are signs of my predilection, but who knows of this*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*treasure?\**

Jesus (January 30th 1914):

*Today, you will have problems: say nothing, be patient, I am with you.*

Jesus (February 22nd 1914):

*When you are annoyed or reprimanded, possibly through no fault of your own, don't think about it, but in all charity, go away, withdraw.*

Jesus (April 5th 1914):

*Do not let those who persecute you be repugnant to you: they are the instruments of your sanctification; be patient; if you had seen me when I was being persecuted!*

Jesus (October 26th 1914):

*You are mocked also by someone who claims to be my servant? Well, this is what distinguishes the souls that are dear to me.*

Jesus (March 20th 1915):

*Have faith in my sayings. And why are troubled because of your persecutors? Have you forgotten the words of my Divine Mother who said to you: He who defends the whole world will defend you too?*

Jesus (August 23rd 1911):

*Leopoldo, when you bring that son to the foot of my Altar, initially keep him there for a short time, don't tire him. Do this for two months, and after that he will need no other guide than the grace of your Lord.*

Jesus (January 25th 1912):

*It is good example that I want! It is good example that I want! This is the real heavenly medicine which is very effective in the healing of redeemed souls.\**

Jesus (September 2nd 1914):

*Some soul will come out with the words: Is that all you would like to do, to save the world? And you will answer: Yes, if it is the will of Jesus Crucified. Tell them to do what I have made you write down, and then they will see how their soul will change for the better.*

Lord my God, what must I do for you, I who am mean, poor in every way and too much of a sinner?

*O look (February 15th 1918), you serve me as well as you can; do what you can.*

*These words should be accepted as a kindly instruction in charity from the sweetest Mercy of God.*

## Recommended devotions

I needed (November 4th 1911) a most important grace . . .; my good Jesus advised me during the Holy Adoration to have recourse to the most chaste Spouse of the great Mother of God and, hardly had I said my prayer, I was granted everything on time.\*

Jesus (February 13th 1914):

*Pray to my Mother, pray to my Mother! I am very pleased because we have*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*placed in your hands the treasure of all the prayers.\**

My Jesus (August 19th 1914), I wish to commend to you the last moments of your Holy Vicar Pope Pius X, but there's no point because he is a great Saint.

*It doesn't matter; in fact I am very pleased that many people love my Vicar.  
Pray.*

At this moment (the evening of April 28th 1915) my good Jesus opens his most loving Heart, gives me immense love and says to me:

*See, in this Heart there is room for the whole world; here there is the fount of all blessings.*

## Devotion to Jesus Crucified

Jesus (January 6th 1912):

*In the mystical garden of devotions, the one that is dear to my heart is the Devotion to the Most Holy Crucifix, the source of all the others, and the weapon to grasp, with preaching and prayer, in order to defend my rights.*

Blessing (January 8th 1912) all those who practise the holy Devotion, Jesus said:

*You will hear of great marvels performed by me through the holy Devotion in those who practise it.*

Jesus (January 7th 1913):

*To all those who do the holy Adoration I shall give so much faith and I will continue to nourish them.*

Jesus (January 18th 1913):

*When you recommend the holy Adoration, make sure you turn to my Mother Most Holy Mary; she is the Protectress.*

O my God, what a sweet joy it is to be with you, O my Lord!

*Be quiet, because this is nothing compared with the marvels enjoyed in Heaven.*

Jesus (January 18th 1913):

*Don't worry if you see things which according to you are not going well. Just continue working in my vineyard; continue propagating my Devotion, because it is mine.*

Jesus (January 28th 1913):

*I need priests and preachers to teach this my Devotion all over the world, so that I may shower people with health and my blessings.\**

Jesus (September 30th 1913):

*Go and have a rest.*

O my Lord, make me work!

*Very well then, write that I, your Jesus, am waiting for souls to come to me so that I can give them my Heart in the holy Adoration of Jesus Crucified.*

Jesus (December 5th 1913):

*Remember the holy undertaking, the holy Adoration to teach and propagate*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*all over the world.*

Jesus (April 5th 1914):

*For those who do the holy Adoration of the Most Holy Crucifix, I am preparing the way for them to receive me in Holy Communion.*

Jesus (July 31st 1914):

*When you draw close to make the holy Adoration, ensure your mind is concentrated on me, free of any worldly impediment. In this way, much of my love will come to you.*

Jesus (September 13th 1914):

*It will take a little time, but my Devotion will arise glorious and triumphant.*

Jesus (April 12th 1915):

*Write what I made you see while you were praying at the foot of my altar'.*

Standing at the foot of the holy altar, Jesus showed me the beauty of this Devotion: bishops, parish priests, religious all must preach Jesus Crucified.\*

O my beloved, my good Jesus (March 29th 1917) draw close to your Divine Heart the whole world by means of the holy Adoration.

*Ah! Son, know that I am sending good inspirations to everyone, I make every effort, but the will is free, and there are certain people with hearts that are difficult to sway.*

*The world should know that for a single soul, just to see it saved, I would allow myself to be crucified again.*

### “Be irreproachable”

Jesus (July 3rd 1912):

*I want you to maintain your word to those who come to you and ask you to pray for them: Be faithful to your promise.\**

Jesus (January 22nd 1913):

*Take care, my Leopoldo, to please your Brothers; let there be nothing there for people to object to. Oh! How grumbling displeases me! We will never be separated: you chain my Heart to yourself by prayer; and I chain you to myself by my love.*

Jesus (September 17th 1913):

*Do not satisfy those who come to criticise their neighbour. If you can't excuse him, say nothing. Advise always what is good, and you will always have peace in yourself and grace before God. Do this for your part and I shall help you. Do not give me the displeasure of not doing so, because with God there is great Mercy, but also Justice.*

Jesus (October 17th 1913):

*Be always merry with everyone, including your enemies.*

Jesus (December 21st 1912):

*Do you wish to find happiness with your Jesus? Be always aware of me, and in suffering you will find pleasure.*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

Jesus (January 1st 1913):

*I want to converse with you always; I like being with you.*

Jesus (December 5th 1913):

*Bring everyone to my Divine Heart; all those who ask for your prayers.*

Jesus (January 29th 1918):

*Go and write these words: you must have this thought in your mind during this day and repeat it several times: "You love me, I love you". But don't you know that these words are important, and do you value them so little?.*

Jesus (February 5th 1918):

*When something happens to you, even something very small, against charity or something else, come to me here, tell me all about it, and then go to confess it: I don't want you to be melancholy and listless.*

Jesus Crucified (August 10th 1920):

*Every evening I am pleased to see you go first there to the Holy Tabernacle and then here to seek advice: the Most Blessed Sacrament is the fount of living water; the Most Holy Crucifix is the fount of Mercy.*

### **"My Divine Mercy"**

Jesus (May 4th 1912):

*Know that you must write for others: as long as man is on the earth he is in time, with the grace of God, to return to the loving arms of God.*

Jesus (April 3rd 1913):

*My Heart is all aflame for you. Get up and write this<sup>1</sup> because I want the world to know how far my Divine Mercy goes.*

Jesus (October 11th 1913):

*When you are on your bed of suffering, Jesus and Mary will be closely united to you. Go and write this so that all who lie dying will think of God's goodness and my Mercy.*

Jesus (August 19th 1914):

*So many, because they have been sinners, despair and even think that I am so cruel as not to forgive them, and they are troubled. Write that if they decide to live a Christian life, I shall forget everything; for me, past evil is completely forgotten.*

How have you been able (March 6th 1915), O Lord, to bear with me when I was full of imperfections?

*Oh look, let's not talk any more of sins already detested and confessed; rather, let me stay close to your heart where I am so happy to be.*

Let the reader judge the degree to which the great Mercy of God extends to me a miserable sinner.\*

Jesus (March 29th 1917):

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<sup>1</sup> Fra Leopoldo was praying prostrate at the foot of the Crucifix, and every time he received the command, he got up and wrote.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*I shall give so much faith to those who read my sayings, that is, to those who love me; and let those who do not love me mend their ways; I call on them all; I am the Father of all; blessed are those who will treasure my call.*

### “The scourge”

Jesus (February 21st 1914):

*Leopoldo, I can't bear it any longer!*

As a person in great pain he writhed on the cross and said:

*I have to send a scourge! '*

He was saddened by the great regret he had at having to do so: (10.45 pm). This is true compassion! Poor Jesus!

Jesus (February 22nd 1914):

*You don't know; there are mountains of sins which are drifting out of control!*

Jesus (February 25th 1914):

*Ah! Leopoldo, Leopoldo, things are getting worse! When mankind persists in evil-doing, I must do what I have done from antiquity.*

Jesus (October 17th 1914):

*It wasn't I who wanted the scourge, it was man!\**

Jesus (April 27th 1915):

*Ah! Leopoldo, how distressing destruction is!*

Jesus (May 3rd 1915):

*I want the world to recognise my Mercy in this scourge, and not insult me further and increase my pain.*

My beloved Jesus (May 28th 1915), save the souls of the soldiers killed in this terrible war, and give us peace soon.

*Peace will come when man glorifies me.*

### “You will receive many favours”

Jesus (August 17th 1914):

*Let the man who lives in chastity and prayer prepare himself to receive grace from God. If you bring me in the evening the merit of some mortification, you will receive many favours; if you have nothing to bring, you will receive nothing. But I do not complain because I hope that subsequent moments will be fruitful.*

Jesus (September 30th 1914):

*I have great pleasure when a soul gives itself wholly to me.\**

Jesus (December 2nd, 3.0 pm):

*Every time you come in good time to pray here with me, there are so many giant steps by which you rise up towards me your Crucified Jesus.*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

Jesus (January 18th 1915):

*I love you Leopoldo, because you speak to me always of spiritual things, and never of earthly things.*

Jesus (March 2nd 1918):

*The good-will of anyone who seeks to do good, even in a small way, will be rewarded.*

### “No affection for the world”

Jesus (October 31st 1914):

*When a person becomes a religious, consecrated to the Lord, he should no longer have any affection for the world, but instead should nurture charity towards his neighbour: affection, actions, all should be reserved for God, and at all moments of his life.*

Jesus (April 27th 1915):

*Since I your Jesus have become the Spouse of your soul, you must think of me always without becoming distracted from your work. You must be very attentive to your Jesus.*

*Remember when things go against you to remain always worthy of me.\**

Jesus (June 5th 1915):

*Every moment that passes is either holy or vain: whoever possesses my love works and employs his time for love of me: vanity employs its time for the world.*

Jesus (February 20th 1919):

*Leopoldo, do you still love me?*

O my most Holy Lord. Why do you ask me this? My God, you know that I love you!

*It is because I have not spoken to you for some time.*

This morning (March 14th 1920) I lacked recollection when I received the Sacred Host in Holy Communion, the great goodness of God who sees the interior of our heart. Hardly had I returned to the nave, than Most Holy Jesus said to me :

*Son, think of me, the things of the world serve no purpose.*

### “Console me”

My beloved Jesus Most Holy (March 31st 1915), if I knew how to console you, I would do so willingly, but I am nothing, I am incapable.

*Pray, pray: this is the way to console me.*

Jesus (April 25th 1915):

*Leopoldo, I have already said to you so many beautiful and holy things. And when you see me sad, console me; tell me also in your turn what you know; go and write it down so that the world knows that I am the kindly Father of all.*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

### “For tempted souls”

Jesus (May 5th , 3.0 am, 1915):

*I am pleased that you come in good time to humiliate yourself at the foot of the Cross; and if the world understood that this is a salutary medicine for tempted souls, I would come to their aid.*

*Leopoldo, I am all yours, I am all yours!*

What are you saying, my beloved Jesus; can't you see how great a sinner I am?

*It doesn't matter; when you fight imperfections, I am with you.*

Jesus (May 6th 1915, 3.45 am):

*Get up soon.*

Lord, I would like to be with you all night long; and you, my beautiful Jesus, take away all my sleepiness.

*No, my son, I want men to work. If I did as you say, you would have no merit.*

Jesus (May 6th 1915):

*Suffer, my son, without complaining for love of me. Know that this silence will be encrusted with precious gems.\**

### “Faith in what is said”

Jesus (February 8<sup>th</sup> 1918):

*Blessed are those who read what I have said and draw fruit from it.\**

Jesus (March 25<sup>th</sup> 1919):

*Trust what I have said, don't be afraid of being fooled. If it came from Satan, he would make you write against me; but the work of God appears as something beautiful, serene, completely blessed, all goodness and charity.*

Jesus (October 16<sup>th</sup> 1920):

*Those who don't believe in what I say, will certainly believe in my works.*

The works of God (January 12<sup>th</sup> 1921) are always opposed. We trust what the Lord has said: it is the most sure support, and with him we have his Divine Mother and Protectress of the Work.\*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified



5: Interior of the Chapel of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the church of S. Tommaso where Fra Leopoldo adored the *'most beloved Lord Jesus Crucified, with Mary Most Holy and all the Angels and Blessed in Heaven'*. On the walls and the ceiling of the chapel are represented rank upon rank of angels around the Queen of Heaven and *'around God with us'* in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar.

## CHAPTER 13

# Teachings of my Teacher Mary Most Holy

### Devotion to Jesus Crucified

Mary Most Holy (October 7th 1911):

*I am truly the Protectress of the Holy Adoration-Devotion to the Most Holy Crucifix, and I am pleased that you call down blessings on all who practise it because there are truly so many graces and blessings that come from Heaven.*

Mary Most Holy (December 31st 1911):

*The Devotion to my Divine Crucified Son will cover the whole world with Mercy.*

Great Mother of God, give me something that will sanctify me.

*Take the Cross and treasure it: it is the tree from which come the most beautiful virtues and constant sparks of grace.*

Mary Most Holy (January 19th 1912):

*At the foot of the Cross is learned true knowledge unequalled by any human knowledge, because it is divine.*

Mary Most Holy (June 30th 1912):

*I await you at my altar to bless you and all those who make the holy Adoration of Jesus Crucified.*

Mary Most Holy (April 10th 1913):

*The Holy Adoration will bear great fruit in the world.*

Mary Most Holy (October 18th 1913):

*Spread the Adoration-Devotion to my Divine Crucified Son Jesus, and at the hour of your death I shall come to take your soul.*

*I am always waiting for someone to come and ask for my Heart and that of my Divine Son. Write that there are few requests.*

*Leopoldo, I give it to you for the whole world; pray for all those who do not have recourse to my maternal Mercy.*

Mary Most Holy (February 13th 1914):

*Keep your cell as clean as possible because it is my and my Divine Son's favourite place, and the Holy Adoration was born here.*

Mary Most Holy (June 20th 1914):

*The adoration of the Most Holy Wound of the left hand will be the salvation of ungrateful dying persons, especially by virtue of the prayers of young*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*people.*

Mary Most Holy (May 3rd 1915):

*I am pleased because you have done what I commanded you, that is, you have left me united to my Divine Son (5 Hail Marys and Most Sorrowful Virgin 3 times) in the Adoration–Devotion.*

The Most Blessed Virgin let me understand (June 7th 1918) that she wants me to devote myself solely to the Devotion to the Most Holy Crucifix; the other devotions have been taken care of.\*

### **“I want you to love me so much”**

Mary Most Holy (December 19th 1911):

*I want you to love me so much!*

Teach me what I should do to love you so much.

*With patience , with humility, with chastity and with prayer!*

Most Holy Mary (December 29th 1911):

*One cannot have love for God and for Mary Most Holy unless one is pure and chaste.*

Mary Most Holy (December 31st 1911):

*Always speak of the love that gives life to the just person so that he can rise closer to the Creator, and to the sinner so that he can mend his ways.\**

Mary Most Holy (January 6th 1912):

*Souls know that there exists a Mother who is interested in their salvation: let them show her their faith, trust and love!\**

Mary Most Holy (January 9th 1912):

*Get up, as I tell you, in good time! I have many things to tell you. Do not fear sleep, mortal sufferings, because everything is in the hands of the One who gives you life, that is, in the hands of God!\**

Most Holy Mary (December 30th 1912):

*Don't be afraid, Leopoldo, of harming your bodily health because you deprive yourself of sleep; rather be afraid of not doing so.*

Mary Most Holy (April 4th 1913):

*Go and write that Paradise is made for all my devoted sons and servants.\**

Most Holy Mary (June 20th 1914):

*Call me during the course of the day: Sweet Heart of Mary, be my salvation!*

Most Holy Mary (January 26th 1915):

*Look, Leopoldo, let us remain intimate: it is true that you really love me, but if you only knew how much I love you! Go and write that down now, so that reading these pages, other souls can be touched by my love.*

Mary Most Holy (April 26th 1915):

*Do you remember, Leopoldo, when you were very young, what intimacy there*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*was between me and you?*

### “Divine Mercy”

Mary Most Holy (January 3rd 1912):

*We shall make (with what I have said) a catechism, so that souls can wake up from their deep torpor, and from among so many beautiful and holy things given by God, they can learn also of the love coming from the Divine Mercy.*

Mary Most Holy (January 10th 1912):

*Not one of those who love my Heart and that of my Divine Son will be lost (3.0 am). Begin the Holy Rosary! Let it be known that everything you learn, you learn by praying.*

Mary Most Holy (January 15th 1912):

*Everything they find written above is the powerful voice of God who calls the whole world to the arms of God.*

*Souls that return to God will find the abundant fount of grace and of the sweetest repentance.*

### “Reform yourself”

Mary Most Holy (January 4th 1912):

*Whoever wishes to be another's teacher, let him first reform himself, asking grace from Heaven.*

Mary Most Holy (January 16th 1912):

*All those who put into practice the sayings I have entrusted to you, will find pleasure as if they were in the antechamber of Paradise.*

Mary Most Holy (January 17th 1912):

*When you are asked for some favour, even by an enemy of yours, do so with charity even at the cost of a sacrifice.*

Mary Most Holy (January 22nd 1912):

*Any mortification at all, even the smallest, will always be a beautiful little flower transplanted into the exquisite garden of eternal happiness.*

Mary Most Holy (March 22nd 1912):

*Force yourself, Leopoldo, to love everybody, especially those who dislike you.*

Mary Most Holy (February 24th 1921):

*If you want me to come and fetch you, and go with a firm step from this earth to Heaven, you will have to pull out all those little roots I shall show you.\**

### “Great destruction”

Mary Most Holy (January 9th 1912):

*What I am pointing out to you is the easiest thing in the world; you don't need a lens to see it: Don't you see how much bestial corruption there is? the*

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*whole world is engaged in evil-doing; and if this is not remedied, it will be all the worse for it. Please do not provoke the anger of God; for there will come about great destruction to uproot the weeds!*

*Total desolation will reign; and it will even be seen in those moments of God's anger that his Mercy is exhausted. No more excuses in these moments, because God's indignation knows no bounds!*

*Let not the goodness of my Divine Son stand accused, but rather all kinds of human evil-doing.*

*Go and write, Leopoldo, that of all that I have made you write not a syllable should be changed!*

*Complete negation! man wants to do everything; there is absolutely no place for God!*

*Write immediately: Is perhaps the Last Judgment being brought forward?*

*I have always used my servants to call all people to the Heart of my Divine Son!*

*The heart of man has turned to ice!*

*Now onwards man wants terror, plague and famine!*

*Luigi Leopoldo Maria, pray now!'*

*My Jesus and Mary, save souls, save souls!*

*Do you see the world? It is too cruel to God; it needs punishment! And punishment it will have! To send scourges is something that is repugnant to us, but do you want to let the world become gangrenous?*

*Dear Most Holy Mother, yes, let the body perish, but through the Blood of my Jesus, your Most Holy Son, Jesus Christ, save the soul, save the soul.\**

Mary Most Holy (January 12th 1912):

*During the scourge which has been prepared, blessed will those be who in the midst of the triumph of a dissolute world will not listen to it and will follow the way of the Lord.*

*You see, Leopoldo, it is a constant invitation throughout the ages, a warning to my sons not to stray from the sanctity of life!*

*With visions, with apparitions, with messages, with dreams and with miracles, my intention is always to watch over creatures, but it seems that in these days their heart has become like a rock! What insolence, how much malicious gossip, what horrible things they say of me and of my Divine Son, scandalising at the same time young people: this makes me sad!*

*I recommend these defenceless young people without a guide whom they bring down even before they know that I am their most tender Mother.\**

## “The Foundation that will come about”

Mary Most Holy (January 17th 1912):

*The Foundation that will come about, will be worldwide; its driving force will produce most abundant fruit.*

Mary Most Holy (June 19th 1912):

*Ah, Leopoldo, my faithful servant! Call, shout over land and sea, with prayer, with preaching, by example! This is the treasure I want especially –*

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*good example, when the Foundation has been completed.*

Mary Most Holy (May 22nd 1912):

*I am the Protectress of the Order, the Foundation of the Most Holy Adoration, and you are the Teacher.*

Mary Most Holy (January 7th 1913):

*The Holy Spirit will descend on the Foundation.*

*They will have the most choice blessings.*

*The fruits it will bear will be most copious.*

*The world will be transformed.*

*Charity will flourish.\**

And who will believe (December 7th 1914) such sublime things, and such intimacy, seeing that I am so small and a sinner?

*They will believe it, and what will make them believe is the Foundation and the Power of God' Mary Most Holy.\**

### **“The most beautiful newspaper”**

I came across (January 28th 1912) a Catholic newspaper, and I was suddenly devoured by a desire to have news about the war and other curiosities of the world, but at that moment I heard a voice inside me which said: ‘Put down that newspaper, run, fly to your cell, I need to tell you something’. The thought came to me: perhaps my dear Most Holy Mother will want to show me something, taking advantage of this free moment. When I arrived in my cell, I prostrated myself before the Cross (and the small statue of Our Lady of Consolation), in order to feel nearer to the words of Jesus and Mary. My dear Most Holy Mother began to say to me distinctly:

*For you, the newspaper that you must read is this – the Most Holy Crucifix. Don't you know that the Crucifix is the most beautiful newspaper there is...that it is a book of eternal Wisdom?*

Mary Most Holy (March 22nd 1912):

*If you wish to be all mine, have the humility and simplicity of a child.*

Mary Most Holy (March 26th 1912):

*Morning prayer prolonged during the course of the day, even during work, is like a weaver's loom whose purpose it is to weave the tapestry to take into eternal happiness to adorn your castle.*

Mary Most Holy (September 28th 1913):

*The heretical world seeks frantically to understand reality: people leaf through books and maps, but all this work is in vain because, blinded by an improper life, they cannot see far, because fog prevents them from seeing everything, and they will never discover the beauty of God.*

*The souls that live in holiness discover the marvels of the Lord from very close up, and with the sweetest joy meditate on what was foretold by the Prophets, and on all that revealed, by the most spectacular miracles, the great Sanctity of Jesus Christ, confirming that he is the Living Christ God, the Redeemer of the world.*

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### Devotions – Rosary

Mary Most Holy (January 19th 1912):

*How pleased I am that you get up at this time (3.0 am). How I desire to be with you! Ask me for the grace you want, and I shall grant it to you.*

Dear Mother Most Holy, I ask for the grace of prayer and the salvation of souls.

*You will have this: call other brothers to help you in this holy undertaking.*

Mary Most Holy (March 19th 1912):

*How much love and joy you will receive from my most chaste Spouse Saint Joseph if you profess to him the most ardent devotion!*

Mary Most Holy (June 30th 1912):

*Arm yourself with the virtue of the Holy Rosary: I have given you a weapon powerful enough to rout an army.*

Mary Most Holy (November 24th 1912):

*I am pleased with the devotion you have to my most chaste Spouse Saint Joseph.*

As she recommended (September 23rd 1913) to the Patriarch St Joseph my last hour, the Most Blessed Virgin said:

*My most chaste Spouse has much love for you because you love me greatly. All those who have a devotion to me are helped at the moment of death by my most chaste Spouse.*

Mary Most Holy (September 28th 1913):

*If only you knew how much my Divine Son has suffered! He has suffered doubly because it is his love that he wanted to give you!*

Mary Most Holy (October 10th 1913):

*When you recite the Holy Rosary, don't allow yourself to fall asleep, because during it I really love to converse with you; and this is helpful for the whole world.*

Dear Most Holy Mother of God, today, Holy Tuesday (March 30th 1915), what must I do to please your Divine Son during his Passion?

*Your only thought during all this week should be to accompany my Divine Son in his sufferings on Calvary.*

Mary Most Holy (April 23rd 1915):

*Leopoldo, have confidence in the protection of St Joseph; every kind of grace is granted to him for those devoted to him, because he was the most faithful Guardian of the Master of the whole world.*

### “Will of God”

Mary Most Holy (January 20th 1912):

*Ah, Leopoldo, not a minute of time must be wasted; put it to good use; Time put to good use is an eternal gem. I have said this before, Leopoldo; always keep yourself pure. And let this virtue be the bread of your life, and your eyes*

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*will be opened to the light which makes you see the will of God.*

Mary Most Holy (December 7th 1914):

*Happy are the parents who have made a gift to God of their own children, helping them in their vocation to become Religious, and who, having embraced the religious state, do not become troublesome monks, but lead a holy life. Such glorify the Lord and give great comfort to the souls of their parents and benefactors who helped them in their vocation, and who are in Purgatory.*



## CHAPTER 14

# **The Beginning of the Union of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate**

### **Advance warning**

The humble position of lay Brother of Fra Leopoldo did not allow him to promote the spread of the Devotion as much as his apostolic heart wanted. This did not prevent him from doing all he could to spread it among the faithful – first in the form of a manuscript written by some Franciscan Third Order nuns; and then, from 1907 to 1912, by a restricted number of copies in printed form, through the intermediary of the same 3 or 4 Franciscan Tertiaries.

During that period, the Servant of God prayed with insistence to obtain the necessary help from Heaven to spread this Devotion.

One day (September 10th 1906) while he was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the following words:

*You're the one who has to push for this or for that to spread this Devotion.  
There will be no lack of souls who love me and who will come to your help.  
Know this, dear son, that I have lay Brothers who love me greatly; if you  
only knew how much they love me.\**

For some time, the significance of this assertion remained mysterious for Fra Leopoldo who, isolated in the most humble corner of his friary, could not understand who were these people who were to continue to promote the spread of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified.

### **Contact with the Brothers of the Christian Schools**

At the beginning of November 1911, there came to see me at our school at 14 via delle Rosine, one of the Franciscan Tertiaries who were spreading the Devotion to Jesus Crucified. She gave me some leaflets explaining the Devotion and said to me with great conviction: 'This is a most effective pious practice. It was written by a Friar under the guidance of Jesus Crucified who spoke to him most familiarly during his prayers. If there is some grace you need, practise this Devotion and you will see how effective it is'. She went on to give me some facts concerning extraordinary graces obtained by means of this pious practice.

In that 1911–1912 academic year, I was in great danger of losing the right to run exams with legal status for our 1,050 pupils in our elementary schools. And so I thought I would put this Devotion to the test, and I had recourse to my Superior for permission to practise it in community and in the schools.

On January 31st 1912, the Brother Assistant of the Superior General wrote to me

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endorsing fully my request. And so the Brothers of the Christian Schools began to practise the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, and to spread it among their fellow Brothers, in class, in homes, and they obtained not only the grace requested for the pupils, but various other important graces, including that of the birth of the Union of Jesus Crucified, and a significant gift from certain benefactors. This gift – something really unexpected and most useful in all kinds of ways – consisted of a villa or country house at Pessinetto in the Val di Lanzo Torinese. This fine building and the land on which it stood, surrounded as it was by the tranquil solitude of the hills, by woods and the not too distant Alpine peaks, proved to be immediately a most suitable setting in which Brothers could spend their summer holidays, open a holiday oratory for the local young people and, during the school year, bring up groups of school children for retreats and spiritual exercises. And that is what happened.

### First contact with the Servant of God

In 1911 and 1912, various persons spoke to me about this Friar who was so favoured by God, but it was done very discreetly, because he had to remain hidden, and the order had been given not to divulge his name or his address.

On October 25th 1912, I took part in a funeral procession which brought together the principal propagators of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, and I heard a gentleman who, turning to a group of persons, said: 'I was at S. Tommaso, but Fra Leopoldo couldn't come'. These words made me think that Fra Leopoldo was the much favoured religious connected with the Devotion, and I conceived the desire to meet him, but the order given to leave him in hiding held me back. To resolve my uncertainty whether to go or not to meet him, I went into the church of St Francis of Assisi and made the Devotion before the miraculous crucifix which is venerated in that church in the chapel or entrance hall next to the sacristy.

Hardly had I finished the pious practice than all my perplexity disappeared and I made my way to the nearby church of S. Tommaso, where I was cordially received by Fra Leopoldo. We exchanged few words, because the work of the Servant of God did not permit him to stay, but we arranged to have another meeting on the 30th of that same month at 4 pm.

In the meantime, Fra Leopoldo, having asked Jesus in his prayers how he should act during the conversation we would have, heard the following words: '*Be humble and have confidence*'.

In fact, Fra Leopoldo said some extraordinary things to me, but with true humility and confidence, and his conversation in this exchange and in those that followed always had a special fervour and a supernatural efficacy which can be compared with that of a well-made course of spiritual exercises.

### How the Union of Jesus Crucified was born

The signs of honesty on the part of the Servant of God and a whole set of providential circumstances convinced me that it was God's will I should take into account what Fra Leopoldo had said to me.

In the spring of 1913, I decided to take advantage of the close relationship I had

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with Fra Leopoldo to share an idea I had had since 1906 during the Second Novitiate, that is, to set up an association of genuinely good young men who were zealous in the apostolate of the catechism, similar to those created by my fellow Brothers in Paris, Madrid and Lyons.

On April 23rd 1913, at 5.0 pm, I explained the above idea to him and added: 'Have the goodness to ask the Lord to deign to let us know whether such a work can survive, because I would not like to start it and then later have to disband it'.

Fra Leopoldo prayed with great fervour. and that same evening at 9.0 pm, as he was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the following words:

*Tell Brother Teodoreto to do what he has in mind.*

Shortly afterwards, three or four pupils from each of the top classes of the five elementary schools run by the Brothers in Turin, and from six technical classes, were picked out, and on the following Sunday, April 27th 1913, the first gathering was held at 14, Via delle Rosine.

At this meeting, after the religious service, the young people were told about the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, which became subsequently, either as a practice or as something to disseminate, one of the principle activities of the newly founded Association.

In the meantime, Fra Leopoldo prayed for the success of the Pious Association, and in his prayers on October 11th 1913, he said to Jesus: Lord, bless the Brothers of the Christian Schools, and may your blessing be shared by the children educated by them in your holy fear so that they are made strong by your grace when unfortunately they have a bad encounter with some treacherous wolf preying on their soul'.

He then heard these words:

*Yes, come closer. All that you have asked for yourself and for the Brothers of the Christian Schools . . . will happen, will be.\**

As he was praying on November 13th 1913, the Servant of God heard the following words:

*You're here, and you don't ask me for anything?*

Lord, ensure your holy Adoration is propagated by means of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

*Yes, but I wanted to hear it from you also.*

Lord, ensure that the young people admitted to be part of the Christian Schools, Brothers and pupils, have your grace to practise the Holy Adoration, and pass it on from one generation to the next; and that your Most Holy Cross, our salvation, is remembered, loved and adored in you, with the sweetest joy and blessed faith.

*A copy(of this conversation) you will write in your notebook, and another copy you will give to Brother Teodoreto of the Christian Schools.\**

Throughout the whole of 1913, weekly meetings of the young people continued to take place, and in the following academic year (1913–1914), the best students following evening technical and commercial courses were picked out also.

On March 14th 1914, at a meeting attended by all the students chosen from the day and evening classes, and presided over by Brother Assistant Candido Chiorra, the

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title of Union of Jesus Crucified was adopted unanimously, and after some basic rules of life for the associates were discussed and approved, I was entrusted with the task of drawing up a set of Rules.

### Encouragements

On March 6th 1914, while Fra Leopoldo was praying, he heard the following words from Jesus:

*I bless the first fruits of the Adoration–Devotion, that is, the Religious sons and all those who collaborate in and promote this Adoration of me, Jesus Crucified.*

And he was commanded ‘to make it known to the Brothers in Belgium, as well as to the Superiors, for holy encouragement’.

A few weeks later, on March 28th 1914, I went to the Generalate which, at that time, was in Belgium, and I had the good fortune to speak to my Superior General about the Devotion and the Union of Jesus Crucified.

I noticed on this occasion how extraordinarily attentive my Superior was to what I was saying, and his ardent faith in the protection of Jesus Crucified.

He encouraged me strongly to pursue my propagation of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, and the formation of young Catechists.

The day after, March 29th, Passion Sunday, while Fra Leopoldo was praying, he heard these words:

*Brother Teodoreto will bring you good news: his Superior, apart from being very pleased, is convinced with faith by what he said to him. Go and write this down. This also reveals my will.*

During prayers the following day, he heard these words also:

*Brother Teodoreto is longing to come and see you and tell you so many beautiful things.*

And you, my Lord, were you there at that time with his Superior General?

*Yes, I filled him with so much Faith in this.\**

### Rules and approbations

After drawing up the Rules with the help of some of my fellow Brothers, I thought I would let Fra Leopoldo have a copy so he could get the blessing of Jesus and Mary Most Holy for this manuscript.

This took place on the evening of April 29th 1914, at 9.25 pm, at S. Tommaso, in the chapel shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, according to what Fra Leopoldo wrote:

Before going to bed, I wanted to recommend the Union of the young people of Jesus Crucified. The Most Holy Virgin deigned to make me understand with the greatest of pleasure that she approved the Rules.\*

The frequent intervention of the Most Blessed Virgin in matters concerning the Union demonstrated that she wished to be, as Fra Leopoldo wrote a number of times in his *Diario*, the Protectress of the Foundation. In addition, when I took these Rules for approval to the Archdiocesan Office, the late lamented Canon Alasia said to me:

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‘If to the main title Union you add that of the Most Blessed Virgin, it will be possible to obtain from the Superior General of the Jesuits, membership of the Union in the *Prima Primaria* of the Most Holy Annunciation in Rome, which is very rich in indulgences’. For the reasons given above, to the title of Union of Jesus Crucified was added, on May 8th, the title of Mary Immaculate.

On May 9th 1914, His Eminence Cardinal Agostino Richelmy, Archbishop of Turin, founded the Union canonically and officially approved its Rules and, on May 12th, obtained for the Union membership of the *Prima Primaria* of the Most Holy Annunciation in Rome.

### Inauguration

It was decided to prepare the young people for an inauguration which would have a certain solemnity, and for this purpose, it was arranged to have three days of evening spiritual exercises, and to have on Sunday May 17th the Consecration of the members to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Crucified and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Fra Leopoldo prayed to Our Lady as follows :

Tomorrow, May 17th, the feast of St Pascal Baylon, in the house of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at 14, Via delle Rosine, the Union of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate will be inaugurated.

To you, Immaculate Virgin, to you I recommend by my feeble prayers, all these dear young people, and all those who belong to the pious and holy Union. Deign to take them all under your mantle, to defend them from the infernal monster, and enrich with the highest virtues all who will come to collaborate and to practise.\*

On May 17th 1914, Fra Leopoldo wrote:

At the inauguration of the Union of Jesus Crucified, the Most Blessed Virgin together with her Divine Son Jesus Crucified blessed all the young people and all those belonging to this Holy Adoration.\*

On May 20th, Fra Leopoldo prayed in these words:

O my loving Jesus, give many saints to the Union of Jesus Crucified you have begun among the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Shower with blessings these dear young people who have bound themselves to you with your love of chastity and innocence. My dear holy love, Jesus Crucified, ensure that in the Holy Union many exemplary holy religious come into the world, so that, with such instruments in your divine hands, the world may be converted; the turbulent vice in the souls redeemed by you may be scourged; and that beautiful virtue, the Most Holy Name, and with you, your Most Holy Mother the Virgin Mary, may triumph.

Before leaving his good Jesus to go to bed, Fra Leopoldo once again prayed for the pious Union of Jesus Crucified, and heard the following words:

*The young people prayed for, I shall bless them copiously and you'll see in the future you'll be pleased.\**

### The “triumph of the Holy Rosary”

The inauguration of the Union was celebrated by a solemn feast combined with that of St John Baptist de La Salle, Founder of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

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As a happy ending to this day, it had been arranged to go on a walk in the hills with the young people, and bring along refreshments, as was the normal practice in those days in Catholic associations. No one had discussed this decision with Fra Leopoldo, as it was thought to be something quite normal and therefore legitimate.

Fra Leopoldo, however, continued to pray every day for the Union and for the Brothers, and on the evening of May 22nd 1914, he heard the following words from Jesus:

*Let them be careful not to seek relaxation in pleasant walks: this would be a trick of the devil in such a serious and holy Pious Union as this, unless it was a true pilgrimage where the Holy Rosary held pride of place.\**

As soon as this warning was received, the walk in the hills was abandoned, and thought was given to the training of the young people of the Union in the spirit and pious practices which subsequently became normal, and which during the first pilgrimage to the Shrine of Belmonte produced excellent results.

The same spirit and the same practices were followed in all the excursions and pilgrimages made by the members of the Union in the years that followed, with the addition of the singing of hymns on trains or on the streets when circumstances permitted.

### **Pentecost 1914**

Guided by the writings and strengthened by the fervent prayers of the Servant of God, the Union laid down '*strong roots*', as the latter was heard to say, and a remark which was passed on to me to encourage me in my work.

As a way of strengthening these roots, we thought it would be a good idea to make a retreat at the Villa S. Giuseppe di Pessinetto, some 40 kilometres from Turin, in the Lanzo valley.

I spoke to Fra Leopoldo about this, asking him to pray for the success of this plan which presented serious difficulties.

Fra Leopoldo prayed with great fervour, and in his prayers he heard the following words:

*You ask me whether they do well to make a retreat? Of course, it's what I want!\**

The retreat was scheduled for Sunday May 31st, the solemnity of Pentecost. Hardly had the day been chosen and the young people informed, than there began a period of heavy and persistent rain, to the extent that everyone doubted seriously that it would ever take place.

Thursday May 28th arrived, and seeing that the rain was still falling and showing no signs of stopping, I went to see Fra Leopoldo and spoke to him about the need to have the chapel got ready at Pessinetto, as well as the beds, kitchen . . . and I concluded by saying: 'Ask the Lord and Our Lady to make this rain stop, otherwise it will be impossible to make this retreat'.

As Fra Leopoldo was praying to the Most Blessed Virgin on the morning of May 29th, he heard the following words:

*The rain will cease and they'll have a fine day on Sunday.\**

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And that is what really happened: the rain stopped at about midday on Saturday, and at 4.0 pm on the same day, as we waited at the station for the train to leave, the long-awaited rays of sun appeared out of the dispersing clouds.

The thirty fervent and brave young men recited the Holy Rosary on the train, sang hymns and arrived at the Villa S. Giuseppe under a perfectly clear and serene sky.

Sunday, May 31st 1914, was a splendid day in every way: the surrounding mountains, their snow-covered peaks sparkling in the bright sun, the beauty and the peace of the Villa in perfect harmony with the high aspirations of souls and with the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit so profusely poured into the hearts of these fortunate young men. That retreat on the Day of Pentecost was the Cenacle and the true birth of the Union, because grace and interior supernatural attraction led these young men to decide to make a retreat once every month. By such a decision, faithfully adhered to, the fount of Christian life was opened for all members of the Union.

On May 23rd 1914, Fra Leopoldo, involved increasingly in the special mission of the Union, prayed as follows to Jesus Crucified: 'Most Holy Jesus, I unite myself with the pious Union willed by you in your infinite Mercy and for your great glory, and I wish to adore you, love you, bless you, and make reparation for the ugly things evil people do to you, and for my many imperfections'. At this point during my prayer I heard the following words:

*Come, come here freely and without any embarrassment. Tell Brother Teodoreto to call (for help) all the houses of his Congregation, both by word of mouth and in writing, and not to tire ever, so that my voice and my will may be obeyed by my beloved sons of the Christian Schools.\**



## CHAPTER 15

# Development of the “Devotion to Jesus Crucified”

### The Imprimatur

The first printed copies of the *Devotion to Jesus Crucified* had the following approval : ‘With permission of the Ecclesiastical Authorities of Turin’. They were printed on two small pages which were then separated and glued, one on the right and the other on the left, of an attractively coloured picture of Jesus Crucified. In 1912, these leaflets ran out and, entrusted with the task of producing a new edition, I decided to adopt a form which would not involve any extra work.

With this improvement to that and to subsequent editions, the Devotion leaflets now had six pages: on the first, to the title in bold characters I added with the approval of the Servant of God, a note giving the purpose of this Devotion and the manner of performing it. On the second and fourth, I put the text of the Devotion; and on the third I had a picture of Jesus Crucified printed. All that remained was to obtain the *Nulla Osta* and the *Imprimatur* to put on the sixth page.

I went to the late lamented Canon Alasia, the Pro-Chancellor of the Archiepiscopal Curia, and I gave him a copy of the proofs of the leaflet. He received me with his usual kindness, and told me that there had been some difficulties regarding the approval of the leaflets which had been printed previously. The reason for this was that in the ‘Manner of performing this Devotion’, it was recommended to do so in front of a crucifix placed on the floor on a mat (or cushion). Following our conversation, a ‘Manner of performing’ more suited to all the faithful was suggested: they were now invited ‘to kneel down if possible in front of a picture of Jesus Crucified’.

### A distinctive picture

Until 1914, the picture of the Crucified Christ printed in the leaflets of the *Devotion to Jesus Crucified* was the work of a variety of artists.

One day, Fra Leopoldo described to me the following vision he had had:

In 1893, I had a vision in my sleep in the Castello di Viale d’Asti. I saw Jesus Crucified above me, and embracing his feet there was a beautiful figure with the most noble features; her eyes were modestly cast down, her head was slightly bowed, and her dress seemed to shine. I was enraptured by the sight. I fixed my eyes on this most sweet vision. After a few minutes it disappeared, leaving me with an indescribable joy I shall not forget to the end of my days.\*

I described this vision with great accuracy to a number of artists in Turin and elsewhere, asking them to reproduce it in a painting, but the results I obtained were

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unsatisfactory. And then I received from a firm in Milan a watercolour which was rather good. I took it to Fra Leopoldo who approved it in the following words:

This morning (January 11th 1914), at 10 o'clock, I received the picture of the most Holy Crucifix . . . it looked as if it had been copied from real life. Here also we see the work of God.\*

This picture of Jesus Crucified with the figure embracing his feet, "raised above", that is, detached from the earth and united with his God, was included in the reprinted leaflet of the *Devotion*, and on July 31st 1915, received the *Imprimatur* of the Archiepiscopal Curia of Turin.

From that time onwards, all the reprints of the *Devotion to Jesus Crucified* have included the picture of the Crucified Christ and the figure embracing his feet, based on the vision Fra Leopoldo had at the end of 1893.

### The fervour of dissemination

Beginning with 1912, there was a great increase in the dissemination of the *Devotion to Jesus Crucified*; so much so that, in that same year, 174,000 copies of the leaflet were printed.

In 1913, the *Devotion* was translated into seven languages, and 663,000 copies were printed.

After the inauguration of the Union of Jesus Crucified (1914), the Brothers of the Christian Schools were joined in the task of disseminating the *Devotion to Jesus Crucified* not only by the members of the Union, but also by the 'Zealots'. Included in their number was the retired Admiral Gian Pietro Sery<sup>1</sup> who, by his knowledge of foreign languages, contributed significantly to the translation of the *Devotion* into various languages, and set up in his home in Genova Sestri Ponente, a veritable dissemination centre.

He sent copies of the leaflet to bishops, abbots and ecclesiastical authorities all over the world, each despatch accompanied by a letter that was explanatory and which urged the adoption of this *Devotion*.

From his home he sent more than 300,000 copies, and in the last days of his life he expressed his regret for not having succeeded, despite repeated attempts, in sending the *Devotion to Jesus Crucified* to Bolshevik Russia: all the copies he despatched there were denied entry.

### Indulgence and Papal Blessing

At the beginning of 1915, the Servant of God thought the opportune time had come to have an indulgence attached to the *Devotion to Jesus Crucified*.

I agreed with him and, taking advantage of a visit of His Excellency Mgr Angelo Bartolomasi to Pope Benedict XV, I wrote a petition to the Holy Father, in which, as

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<sup>1</sup> *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, Year XVII, No. 5, September–October 1933.

August 14th 1933. Genoa paid solemn homage to its illustrious citizen, a most fervent 'Zealot' of our Union. The local newspapers ran long obituaries, praising him as a scientist, a valiant Commander and an eminent diplomat, held in high esteem by the Holy Father Pius X, our Royal Family, cardinals, Princes and numerous other leading civic dignitaries.

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Director of the Union, I asked for an indulgence for all the faithful who practised the *Devotion to Jesus Crucified*.

His Holiness not only granted the indulgence of 300 days, applicable to the souls in Purgatory, every time this *Devotion* was practised, but wished to add the following blessing, accompanied by a signed photograph of himself:

*We pray the Lord to bless abundantly the Director and the members of the Pious Union of Jesus Crucified, canonically established in Turin, because priests, by their words and example, and lay persons, by the holiness of their lives, must always “praedicare Jesum Christum et hunc Crucifixum”*

*At the Vatican, January 18th 1915*

BENEDICTUS P. P. XV

This event was for the Union and for the devout followers of Jesus Crucified the beginning of a series of supernatural graces which produced a fervour of interior life and constantly increasing activity in spreading the *Devotion*.

No sooner had we received these great favours from Rome than, with the agreement of the Servant of God, I prepared the new leaflet of the *Devotion to Jesus Crucified*, including in it the mention of the indulgence granted, as well as the text of the precious Papal blessing referred to above.

And so after His Excellency Mgr Angelo Bartolomasi, at that time the Auxiliary Bishop of His Eminence Cardinal Agostino Richelmy, Archbishop of Turin, had extended his most high patronage to the Union of Jesus Crucified, the definitive form of the *Devotion* leaflets was established, accompanied by the picture based on the Servant of God's vision.

Having obtained the new *Imprimatur* in July 1915, I began to print 454,000 copies of the *Devotion* in Italian, 128,000 of which in colour, which were so well received by everybody and especially by the Servant of God, who took upon himself to distribute them especially among the soldiers called up that year to fight in the war.

Next there followed the translation of the *Devotion* into the fourteen main languages and printing these leaflets. About eight million copies were sent free to the various countries of the world.<sup>2</sup>

### The task of dissemination

On June 29th 1914, Fra Leopoldo wrote in his *Diario*:

After having remained hidden for twenty years and more, finally, as it pleased the Lord, this year, 1914, in the month of May, the holy Adoration–Devotion took root in the Most Reverend Congregation, so humble for the love God, of the Brothers so dear to the Lord, of the Christian Schools.

This will be a true blessing for the Congregation.

The Lord is noticeably lifting the veil and is revealing himself a little: every moment has its time.

God lovingly presents the Cross to us, inviting innocent persons, by means of the fortunate Congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, to convert the world

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<sup>2</sup> On June 30th 1958, the total of leaflets in 17 languages had risen to over nine million.

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through the Most Holy Crucifix.

In the midst of society there are still souls of good-will; may these come to our help, spreading the Holy Adoration in order to change habits and glorify God, Jesus Crucified.

Sin and iniquity work hand-in-hand (to increase); the only remedy is to have recourse lovingly to the Cross which is the sole hope of peace and salvation.\*

On January 18th 1915, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard these words:

*It is my desire that you pass on to the Brothers of the Christian Schools what I have done with your help.\**

Towards the month of March 1915, Don Giuseppe Maria Pastorino, a Franciscan Tertiary and Fra Leopoldo's spiritual advisor, had some doubts about whether or not it was right to leave the task of spreading the Devotion to Jesus Crucified in the hands of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. Given such doubts, he insisted Fra Leopoldo ask in his prayers for the grace of knowing if he should really leave this task to the Brothers.

On March 6th 1915, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard these words:

*I want the plant of the pious Union of young people and of the Adoration (Devotion) of the Most Holy Crucifix to remain with the Brothers of the Christian Schools.*

*This is all that your spiritual Father Giuseppe Maria Pastorino wishes to know.\**

In the months of April and May of the same year 1915, Fra Leopoldo had to resist pressure from another highly placed person who, in the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, did not want the *Pater* and the *Ave* recited for each of the five wounds, but only the *Gloria*. He wanted also to take away from the Brothers of the Christian Schools the task of spreading the Devotion to Jesus Crucified.<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the prayers to be removed, the Servant of God was about to give way when, with the support of his spiritual advisor, he decided not to change anything. It was then that Fra Leopoldo, on the morning of May 2nd 1915, heard the following words from Jesus:

*I wish my Mother Mary Most Holy to be mentioned in my Devotion, as she is the Patron. However, leave the decision to the discretion of the Superiors.*

On that same day, as Fra Leopoldo was about to start reciting the rosary in front of a small statue of the Most Blessed Virgin of Consolation, he heard the following words:

*Ah! Leopoldo, you wanted to remove me from beside my Divine Son! Don't listen to anyone, leave things as they are.\**

Regarding the attempt to remove from the Brothers of the Christian Schools the task of spreading the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, the insistence of the highly placed person was so great, that the Servant of God had thought of going to see His Excellency Mgr Angelo Bartolomasi, the Auxiliary Bishop, to discuss the matter, but

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3 *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, Year XLI, No. 3–4, May–August 1957.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

then he wrote to me as follows:

On the evening of June 5th 1915, at 11.0 pm, as I was standing at the foot of the Cross thinking and asking Jesus how in the present circumstances to establish the Work of God, and the way I should conduct myself in the presence of the Bishop Mgr Angelo Bartolomasi, good Jesus let me hear these words:

*Allow the current of the Work of God run as fast as it has up to now; the Brothers of the Christian Schools must not abandon anything.\**

### The definitive settlement of the matter

While the picture of Jesus Crucified and the figure, based on the vision of Fra Leopoldo and executed in Milan, looked fairly good when coloured, the printed version was not well received.

When I sent the drafts of the first printed copies to Fra Leopoldo so that he could place them, as was the usual practice, at the feet of Jesus Crucified to obtain his blessing, the Servant of God heard the following words on the morning of July 25th 1915:

*For the time being, let it be done this way: if it is opportune to make changes, the future is in my hands.*

The Servant of God added:

This is a reference to the way of presenting the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, especially where the picture is concerned.\*

Various attempts were made by a talented painter and a skillful photographer, but they were not able to remedy the defects referred to above. On the other hand, the painter Luigi Guglielmino, a skillful disciple of the famous Reffo School, succeeded in interpreting in a definitive and successful manner the representation of the vision of Fra Leopoldo (at the time, still Luigi Musso), leaving the Union of Catechists with the distinctive picture of Jesus Crucified which would figure in all copies of the *Devotion*.

At the beginning of 1916, two priests belonging to the Congregation of St Joseph d'Asti came to see me to obtain permission to include the Devotion to Jesus Crucified in a pious book they were going to publish. I went to see Fra Leopoldo to find out whether permission should be given and on what conditions. He, as was his wont, set aside time to pray and on the evening of January 24th 1916, heard the following words from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament:

*Oh look, the matter is very simple to understand :what the Fathers of the Congregation of St Joseph are asking for should be allowed on the following condition: every printed version of the Devotion in the books must include the picture of Jesus Crucified and the figure, and under the prayers, the following indication should be printed: With the permission of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.*

The following morning, January 25th, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the following words:

*Tell the Brothers of the Christian Schools to preserve this privilege.\**

Fra Leopoldo told me that these words meant that the Brothers of the Christian Schools should retain the reserved ownership of the leaflet of the Devotion to Jesus

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Crucified. I let some time pass, but then, having heard Fra Leopoldo repeat this command with great insistence, I drew up the appropriate documents, and at the present time, the Superior of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, residing at the Generalate in 476 via Aurelia, Rome, retains the artistic-literary ownership of this leaflet.

On March 29th 1917, while Fra Leopoldo was making his Adoration at the feet of Jesus Crucified, he heard the following words:

*Get up and go and write that the words of the holy Adoration, that is, of the five Wounds, it is I, your Jesus, who guided you when you wrote them.\**

We know that Jesus Christ guides not only his Servants, but directs in particular the Holy Church; and therefore it is under the same Guide that the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary in Rome made some small modifications, demanded by the present time, to the words written by Fra Leopoldo, and had the *Devotion to Jesus Crucified* printed in the book *Preces et pia opera*, without anyone having asked it to do so, giving it in this way its definitive form and recognising its excellence.

On June 18th 1918, Fra Leopoldo wrote in his *Diario*:

Jesus said to me:

*Leopoldo, as long as you make the Holy Adoration, you can be sure nothing bad will happen to you.*

O my beautiful Jesus, who through the holy Adoration have freed me from so much misery, grant also that all the sons of the pious Union, all the benefactors, and more than ever, the dear fellow Brothers of the Christian Schools who, with so much love for you, Jesus Crucified, spend their lives leading to Paradise the souls of dear young people, your most loved flowers, my Jesus; as well as all the members of the pious Union, grant that they may all be protected from the infernal enemy, and through you, all may be saved in your most sweet Name, now and forever until the end of the world.

The Lord said:

*Write that down, because these words are important.\**

The Devotion to Jesus Crucified must, however, be disseminated free: who will cover the cost of printing and distribution? Divine Providence thinks of everything.

Together with the Brothers of the Christian Schools there are the Catechists of Jesus Crucified who also disseminate this Devotion, seeing to the collection of alms to cover the cost of printing and distribution to whoever asks for this material. The headquarters of the Catechists is at 2, via Bernardino Galliari, Turin (302).

## CHAPTER 16

# Development of the Union of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate

### Prayers of Fra Leopoldo

On June 12<sup>th</sup> 1914, Fra Leopoldo prayed as follows:

My God, beloved Jesus, spread the merciful wings of your Mercy, of your Divine love, and of your boundless goodness and charity for your most loved sons, the Brothers of the Christian Schools; sanctify them all, encourage them, O my Lord Jesus, so that your grace may work divinely in their hearts, and by their labours, blessed by you, may they transmit by your grace, faith and love for you, my Crucified Jesus, so that they may raise up innocent hearts to your most beloved heart, so that they may be an example to the world; raising these dear young pupils in the shadow of the Cross so that they become true children of virtue, able to save their own souls and those of others; forming a most brilliant crown around you, God our Most Holy Saviour, in company with the serried ranks of Angels and Saints in the place of beatitude, when it pleases you, my supreme Good.\*

On June 16<sup>th</sup> 1914, as Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the following words to pass on to the Brothers of the Christian Schools:

*The Crucifix is the way which leads to me, to glory. \**

On July 17<sup>th</sup> 1914, Fra Leopoldo said to Jesus:

Convert, O Lord, this world spoilt by so much iniquity, support your dear children in your holy Union. Preserve them from sin, and ensure all give you glory". Jesus replied:

*Yes, but a little more time is needed. \**

On April 17<sup>th</sup> 1915, Fra Leopoldo prayed:

My Jesus, make sure in your Mercy that I, a poor sinner, die happy, having seen the pious Union of your Most Holy Crucifix established; and that young people with lively faith pray, adore and thank you for your such great goodness, and give you eternal glory, they themselves and through others. Jesus replied:

*They will have to suffer some persecution and contempt for my sake, and this will be gold with which to buy Paradise. \**

### Retreats

After the consoling results of the first retreat held on May 31<sup>st</sup> 1914, made by the permanent members at the Villa S. Giuseppe di Pessinetto, it was decided to initiate

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also aspirants into the life of the Union.

On June 14th 1914, 32 aspirants made a retreat at the Villa, with such edifying silence and recollection, that the late lamented Fr Straggiotti SJ was filled with admiration.

The Villa S. Giuseppe di Pessinetto continued to be used for retreats, and in that same year, seven others were held with a total of 259 participants.

One of the most assiduous participants in these retreats wrote in the annual report:

In these sweet and dear days of retreat, spent in the company of Jesus, there took place spontaneous, important and affectionate conversations with the Most Holy Crucified Jesus. During these hours of recollection and silence, Jesus spoke to our hearts and said so many things necessary for ourselves personally, and for our families and for our Union.

On the retreat day, so dear to us, important decisions are taken to help us live our lives well, and for the smooth running of the Union and of the works of charity we wish to do. This is our greatest, most solemn event: a whole day spent in the company of our King.<sup>1</sup>

In the following year, 1915, at the beginning of the war, it was possible to hold only seven retreats with 264 participants; and in 1916, also because of the war, eight retreats with 232 participants.

### Pious practices

Apart from the daily spiritual exercises undertaken by members individually, such as Holy Mass, Holy Communion, spiritual reading and meditation, etc., there were also community exercises in the Union performed on a weekly, monthly and annual basis, as we can see from the following extract from a report given verbally by a Permanent Member to the ecclesiastical authorities in 1917:

Our regular meetings were held always on Saturday and included confession, spiritual reading, a talk and prayer.

These meetings served as a preparation for Sunday morning religious activities which are of the greatest importance for us, that is, Holy Mass, Holy Communion and the homily.

On the first Friday of every month we all go to the Divine Banquet to make reparation for so many, many insults that Jesus receives continually from those who do not know or love him. This religious activity is preceded by an hour's adoration before the Blessed Sacrament together with the young people belonging to the Catholic Action group.

On the first Sunday of every month there is a special religious activity for the men and women 'Zealots' who on this day join the permanent members in prayer.

On the last Sunday of every month our Union gathers at the feet of Our Lady of Consolation to beg for her protection.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, year I, No. 1, p. 5.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

This year (1916) very close to our hearts were the commemorative services for the repose of the souls of deceased members, “Zealots”, Associates, relatives and benefactors.

The feasts of the Immaculate Conception and St John Baptist de La Salle are always very impressive and solemn, and on these days new members are admitted to our Union.

Every year, on the last day of the Carnival, an hour’s adoration in reparation takes place, and on Good Friday, there is a service and a homily on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

At the end of each year, our Union gathers before the Blessed Sacrament for a holy vigil to end the dying year with Jesus and begin the new one with him.<sup>2</sup>

### Prayer for the young members of the Union

On June 21st 1914, as Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified at about midnight, there took place the following dialogue written down by him in his *Diario*:

And what can you tell me, my Lord: are you making saints out of all those dear sons of the pious Union?

*Not all, some yes.*

My most holy Lord, you say that not all are saints, but I most definitely do not want you to let them escape.

*But just tell me, Leopoldo, do I really have to obey you in everything? Come here, my dear Leopoldo: I have been waiting a long time for this moment. Go and write it down.*

So that means, Jesus, you will make them all saints?

*Go and write it down, I want to listen to you.*

Five days later, on June 26th, Fra Leopoldo prayed as follows:

Give me, O Lord, the gift of making reparation in the company of the dear sons of your Union, O my Crucified Jesus, in a way that makes you loved greatly, that gives you praise, that honours you, that blesses you and gives you glory, in the place of rude and gossiping sons.\*

### Seek the Kingdom of God

As was customary in Catholic associations members had to pay subscription charges and periodically the young people in the Union had to pay a sum to cover general expenses.

On June 24th 1914, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the following words:

*Tell Brother Teodoreto to remove everything that smacks of business practice.\**

From then onwards, general expenses were covered by voluntary contributions from the members of the Union and donations from benefactors.

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<sup>2</sup> *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, year I, No. 1, pp. 5 and 6.

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On July 1st 1914, Fra Leopoldo heard the following words from Jesus Crucified:

*The world no longer has faith, and old people are very hard to believe. There is therefore a great need to take young men who are still pure, and older men of good will; and by prayer and good example, make my most holy name worthy of me, God most high, Redeemer of mankind.\**

After hearing these words, the Servant of God wrote the following short dialogue:

*Don't worry; just go on and trust me, as you have up to now.*

I would not wish, O my God, the demon to go and trouble the dear sons of the pious Union who are consecrated to you.

*He will always throw some stones, but he won't be able to do much.\**

Like a street urchin, the devil tries to enter the closed garden of the works of God and, when he does not succeed, he throws stones which sometimes strike the fruit and make them fall . . . This is life as it is, which, however, has always confirmed and illustrated the goodness of the Lord to his sons.

### For the Brothers of the Christian Schools

On June 29th 1914, Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified when he heard the following words:

*Tell the Brothers of the Christian Schools to do as I do, that is, be good shepherds. If some sons of the pious Union of the Most Holy Crucifix come off the holy rails, let them be gently admonished. Let them do their best until they return to me. They will be well rewarded for their hard work.\**

On July 5th, as he was praying to the Most Blessed Virgin, he heard:

*Watch over the sons of the pious Union and work together.\**

On October 31st of the same year, he heard:

*Take the dear sons of the Union of the Most Holy Crucifix to receive Holy Communion at my house, the church of Our Lady of Consolation (a shrine in Turin): they are my delight.\**

On January 17th 1915, I heard Jesus Crucified say:

*Tell the Brothers of the Christian Schools, that I entrust and give them all the sons of the pious and holy Union.\**

And the following day:

*If the Brothers are able to lead the young people with faith and love to Me, their houses will be greatly blessed.\**

On January 24th 1915, he heard the following words from the Most Blessed Virgin:

*Tell the Brothers of the Christian Schools that when they accompany the sons of the pious Union of the Most Holy Crucifix to receive Holy Communion at my shrine, my heart dilates and I embrace them and bless them all.\**

These words gave rise to an article in the Rules which obliges the young members of the Union to make a pilgrimage every month to some shrine or altar of the Most Blessed Virgin.

On April 23rd 1915. Fra Leopoldo made the following prayer:

Great Mother of God, make holy all your sons, the Brothers of the Christian Schools. They have taken to heart the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, and they use it in speaking

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to the sons of the pious Union.

And he heard the following words:

*I will make sure, because of this treasure, that they will fly to Heaven, when they are called by the Lord.*

And he heard immediately the added words:

*Tell the Brothers of the Christian Schools in my name to treasure time: it will result in a great reward.\**

On July 10th 1915, as Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the following words:

*I say to all the Brothers of the Christian Schools that I (with the pious Union) have called them to a very exalted mission; and so let them recall each day the great good that is being done, and let none of them falter or fail by denigrating it. Let them remember that it is my work, and those who do not feel like promoting it should take care not to disapprove of it.\**

On January 12th 1918, while I was reciting the Holy Rosary, the Most Blessed Virgin commanded me to write down immediately the following:

*Blessed will be the Brothers of the Christian Schools who interest themselves in the pious Union of the Most Holy Crucifix, and who work on its behalf according to the will of the Heart of God.\**

On January 23rd 1918, while Fra Leopoldo was adoring the Holy Wound in the side of Jesus Crucified, he heard the following words:

*I have put the pious Union in the hands of the Brothers of the Christian Schools and they are fulfilling their task well.\**

On February 1st 1918, Fra Leopoldo heard more words from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament:

*Tell the Brothers of the Christian Schools that I have put into their hands the golden key to the doors of Paradise.\**

On March 14th 1919, Fra Leopoldo wrote in his *Diario*:

The Most Blessed Virgin of Consolation let me know that many very pious young people in the pious Union would come to visit her in her shrine not only once a month, but would come to receive Holy Communion there a number of times.\*

And on May 31st he wrote also:

Hardly had I made myself ready for my Holy Adoration, than Jesus said to me:

*Let all the pious Unions of the Most Holy Crucifix be entrusted to the Brothers of the Christian Schools.\**

And on June 10th 1919, Fra Leopoldo heard the following words from Jesus:

*I rely greatly on the Brothers of the Christian Schools regarding the pious Union. Go and write this down immediately; and this is called lasting peace.\**

## The Catechists

When I was drawing up the Rules of the Union, bearing in mind the volunteer catechist movements set up by my fellow Brothers in France and in Spain, I sought to introduce the same type of apostolate, leaving it, however, as a matter of choice for the more zealous youngsters.

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I soon realised that the catechetical apostolate was what God wanted of the members of the Union. In fact, by 1914, eight of the principal members of the Union obtained excellent results in an examination set by the Diocesan Commission which qualified them to teach religion, and received from the ecclesiastical authorities the relative diploma.

In 1915, a further twelve members obtained the same diploma, and in 1916, another 14 members followed in their footsteps.

As a consequence, the teaching of catechism was begun immediately in the parish of S. Massimo and in the Union Oratory, with a total of 92 pupils. The following year, 1915, this good work was extended to 4 parishes with 260 pupils; and in 1916, the teaching of catechism was begun in eleven parishes in Turin, with a total of 630 pupils.

Towards the end of 1916, I received the following two notes:

- a) In the holy name of God, encourage the members of the pious Union who find the studies difficult to become qualified Catechists. If it should ever happen that some of them, because of their bad memory, cannot pass the Diploma examination, let them be satisfied with teaching catechism to the youngest pupils: they will be equally rewarded by God. But all must work in the Lord's vineyard for the salvation of so many souls, and to enrich Paradise with the elect, and increase ever more the glory of God.
- b) The members of the Union must be catechism teachers in the midst of the world.\*

In addition to Sunday catechism in the parishes, a Religion School was opened on the Union premises for students in state secondary and technical schools, and which offered free after-school activities. The timetable was divided up between playground games, catechism and help with homework. At the end of each school year, prize certificates were awarded to the most diligent students. These sessions were attended annually by an average of 150 students and produced excellent results.

The facts reported above and the fervour with which the members of the Union devoted themselves to the study and practice of religion resulted in what was reported in a written account read out in public in 1917 by one of the Catechists:

In 1914, we formed a society with the sole aim of helping one another by word and by good example to live as good Christians. Initially, therefore, we had no other aim except our own sanctification. But then, Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, despite little reaction on our part, seemed to extend to us members of the Union a special kind of protection and, little by little, led us to the catechetical apostolate, and to establish, as a rule, the obligation for each member to obtain the Catechetical Diploma.<sup>3</sup>

The catechetical apostolate was pursued by the members of the Union and produced much consoling spiritual fruit among the 'Piccoli Rosarianti' of S. Massimo, which led Fra Leopoldo to write in his *Diario*:

Jesus said:

*It is good that the young men of the pious Union help and offer such good example to the young Rosarianti.\**

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3    *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, year III, No. 2, p. 12.

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### New edition of the Rules

By the beginning of 1917, all the copies of the first edition of the Rules had run out, and so with the authorisation of His Excellency Mgr Angelo Bartolomasi a new edition was prepared.

The specific dedication of the members of the Union to the catechetical apostolate, and the obligation spontaneously adopted by them to obtain the relevant qualification needed to teach catechism, made it necessary to introduce special provisions in the Rules and to alter the the name of the Union to 'Union of *Catechists* of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate'.

Likewise, membership of the Society of Italian Catholic Youth, granted to the Union by the headquarters of the Society in Rome, on April 18th 1916, and the accompanying rights to all the indulgences and privileges of this Society, required various additions to the Rules.

Another reason for such additions was the progress made by members in their interior life in those first fortunate years , as can be seen from the following extract from a personal diary which I (Brother Teodoreto) have copied from the private writings of a member of the Union:

This evening (11.30 pm, June 7th 1917), I felt more deeply than at other times what a great grace Jesus has given me by calling me to the Union. Today we had a great celebration: a celebration of love, and it was a real triumph for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. I was with friends before Jesus, and the example of their faith, piety and charity moved me to the depth of my heart. Tomorrow I shall be once again with them! From when I first came to know the Union, the most powerful thought, the sole ideal to which I directed all my youthful energy, all my affections, and with which all the actions of the day were connected, was the Union itself. Yes, because I have found in it the finest programme of life and activity for a young person; because every time I have been to it, I have left better for it; because in it I have my best friends, true friends, examples of perfection, young people with strong and bright ideals; because, in a word, I feel that this is my nest, where Jesus wants me and fills me with his grace – hidden grace, ineffable consolations which the world does not know, but which come directly from Jesus Crucified.. When I am with my friends and we speak about these things together I find reflected in each one of them this affection and these deeply rooted conviction. Jesus Crucified has called us to taste the sweetness of his preferences. He keeps us united by brotherly affection and makes us grow in his school of love! When I pray, I am never alone, but around me there are my friends. When I meet one of them on the street, it is a ray of sunlight which makes my soul rejoice. In joy and in trials, my sole desire always is to be with them. And tomorrow I shall see them again, and in the meantime I can pray for them, the whole Union, so that it can develop ever more, and the holy Kingdom of Jesus Crucified may spread.

The Crucifix! In the past, I had considered it to be a good and holy devotion, but ever since I joined the Union, it has become for me my most precious object; I have begun to experience new ineffable consolations, I had never had before. I have given it a place of honour, I always wear it: a glance, a kiss, it sums up all the promises, all the ideals, everything I desire here below! Yes, O God of my youth! For you the flower of my youth! All my strength, all my love! All this notwithstanding all those who do

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not want you, those who are ashamed of you!

Accept O Lord this outburst of my soul, and allow me to thank you once more for having called me to the Union, where you are the father, the teacher, the brother.

Taking into account the evident attraction and the blessings of Jesus Crucified on the conduct of the young people, and the useful advice from my contacts with Fra Leopoldo, I prepared the manuscript copy of the Rules, and on January 24th 1917, I took it to the Servant of God so that he could implore the blessing of Our Lord on this important document.

At this time he was in the Friary of S. Antonio in Turin, to replace a fellow friar cook who had been called up to the army. Here is the account of the Servant of God :

The morning of January 25th 1917 was the day I had to get up earlier to put the Rules close to the door of the tabernacle and prostrate myself in adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament to hear whether the Goodness and Mercy of Jesus God in the Most Blessed Sacrament would be pleased to say something to me.

I did everything I could to wake up on time, but not having a clock, I resigned myself to getting up at the call to office. Fr Berardo celebrated Holy Mass at 6.0 am, and I had the good fortune to serve it. I received Holy Communion and we went towards the communion rail to give Holy Communion to the faithful. On receiving the host, I felt a sweet taste of Paradise and I said to myself: "How come such a great favour this morning? When we went to give Holy Communion to four persons, I heard a powerful voice within me:

*Tell Brother Teodoreto that the Rules are very good',*  
and it repeated it three times.\*

### The newsletter

At the beginning of 1917, I had told Fra Leopoldo to pray so as to find out whether we should publish a Union newsletter.

On January 9th, the Servant of God heard the following words as he was praying:

*Regarding the newsletter, let everything be organised first, and after that let it be done.\**

After the Rules were completed, I spoke to Fra Leopoldo again about the newsletter, and this is what he wrote about it:

On the evening of April 16th 1917, I asked Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament whether it was right to publish a little newsletter so that the sweet Adoration Devotion became known to people for the glory of the Lord and the salvation of so many souls far from Our Beloved Jesus Crucified. God in his great goodness said to me:

*Let it be started straightaway; don't be afraid, Providence will come to your help.\**

On May 15th 1917, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to the Most Blessed Virgin, he heard these words:

*Call this newsletter as follows: 'Love for Jesus Crucified'. Let there be no subscription charges. The charity of those who wish to help shouldn't be refused.\**

A few days later, while speaking with the Servant of God about how to start the newsletter, we were uncertain whether we should start speaking about the writings of

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Fra Leopoldo or about the pious Union. That evening, when Fra Leopoldo asked Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament which of the two things they should start with, he heard the following words:

*With neither the first nor the second. You need to start by speaking of the faith which is gradually diminishing; of the good being done by the Catechists; by speaking of what is good; of the virtues to practise; of the vices to abandon, and of the punishments that will come as a result (if they are not abandoned); of the urgent need for the rich and priests to give one another a hand to work with these young plants.\**

Around this time, various persons, reciting with faith the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, received graces and, in gratitude, made offerings of money. This quite spontaneously raised the question: how should this be dealt with in the newsletter?

On the morning of June 24th 1917, as Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the words:

*Let the graces received be scrupulously noted; the offerings of benefactors should not be mentioned in the newsletter, but will be registered in Heaven.\**

On July 15th 1917, he heard the following words from Jesus Crucified:

*It is not important for the newsletter of the pious Union to be elegant and pompous. Let it rather be simple and be enough to make the Most Holy Crucified Jesus known and loved.\**

On the morning of February 15th 1918, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified for Prof. Luigi Andrea Rostagno, the main contributor to the newsletter, he heard the words:

*In the hearts of those who make me known by writing I shall write 'love'. Tell them to write fiery words, which speak of my love, because it is not known.\**

In 1919, one of my fellow Brothers had produced a new cover design for the newsletter including a crucifix and modern embellishments, in place of the original cover which was judged to be too simple. I gave a copy of this cover to Fra Leopoldo, and on the evening of May 14th 1919, he heard the following words from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament:

*Let the picture of the figure at the foot of the Cross and of Jesus Crucified be kept in memory of the apparition and as a reminder to mankind to return to the Cross and to Jesus Crucified.<sup>4</sup>*

In the month of July of the same year, Prof. Luigi Andrea Rostagno had told Fra Leopoldo to pray to know what basic theme should be developed in the main article of the newsletter in its various issues.

On July 14th 1919, as Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the following words:

*Make the pious Union known.*

Lord, my beloved Jesus, if bad people come to know about the great good that is being done, they will fight us.

*Well, we'll defend ourselves.\**

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4 There was no more question of replacing the distinctive crucifix of Fra Leopoldo's vision. In fact, when the newsletter later took its more elegant present form in line with the more demanding expectations of our days, the crucifix of the vision was given the greatest prominence.



## CHAPTER 17

# Some observations regarding the development of the Union of Catechists

### Protection of Mary Most Holy

The Most Blessed Virgin, Protectress of the Church, is likewise so of all the Congregations which are born in it for the sanctification of their members and the salvation of souls.

The Union of Catechists, born in times difficult because of the war and of social conflict, felt its members needed special protection.

On March 21st 1915, as Fra Leopoldo was praying to the Most Blessed Virgin, he heard the following words:

*Tell my sons of the pious Union that in whatever disaster suddenly befalls them I shall help them.\**

On the first day of April 1915, as he recommended all the members of the Union to the Most Blessed Virgin he heard these other words:

*I assure you that I take them all, especially the sons of the pious Union, under my direction: tell them to follow me.\**

Also, when Fra Leopoldo was praying to the Most Blessed Virgin on March 28th 1917, he heard her say:

*Tell Brother Teodoreto to take care not to let pestilential air harm the young people of the pious Union who are my sons.\**

### The predilection of Jesus

On March 9th 1917, as Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified for the young members of the Union, he heard the following words:

*I shall make the young people of the pious Union experience ineffable joys through my protection: I shall love them in a special way; I shall sanctify them.\**

Towards the end of April 1917, I had spoken to Fra Leopoldo about the desire expressed by a number of Catechists to gather in groups of two or three every morning in the parish or in the church nearest to where they lived, to receive Holy Communion and to perform their other pious practices. On the same evening, as Fra Leopoldo was speaking about this initiative to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the words:

*From this moment, I bless the sons who love to come and visit me.\**

And on February 1st 1918, As Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he these other words:

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*The pious Union must base itself on these writings, and those who observe them will be my true sons.\**

During the First World War, a member of the Union, a certain Savino Castello, fell during the capture of Gorizia,. He was a very promising young man, who died with spiritual dispositions ‘beyond all praise’, in the words of the army chaplain who attended him in his last moments. When Fra Leopoldo heard of this loss on March 27th 1917, he prayed for the deceased young man to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and with his customary confidence, he added:

Why, Lord, did you allow the young member of the pious Union to die in the war?”

In reply, he heard the following words:

*You speak because you do not know: know that I take the souls of the pious Union of the Most Holy Crucifix while they are mine.\**

On March 4th 1918, Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified when he heard the words:

*Tell the members of the pious Union that I love them immensely; that the work is little, and the reward is infinite.\**

And on May 25th 1919, also during prayer, he heard the words:

*The sons of the pious Union are the pupils of the eyes of God.\**

At the beginning of 1918 (the third year of the war), people suffered from a scarcity of food, and the Catechists wanted to organise themselves to facilitate the purchase of food for their own families also. I informed Fra Leopoldo of their wish, and on January 24th 1918, while he was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the words:

*If there is a real need, and for a short period, let them do it; but I don't want there to be any business transactions in the Union. The pious Union is something sacred. It is the treasure of souls in the midst of the world. However much I say so, they will never understand how much love I have for the members of the Union.\**

And on February 8th 1918, he heard the following words from Jesus Crucified:

*The Catechists attract young people to me, and I attract them to my Divine Heart.\**

## What pleases Jesus

On April 25th 1915, Fra Leopoldo, praying to Jesus Crucified, said:

Lord, if there is something in the pious Union which displeases you, remove it, and he heard the words:

*Son, I love above all humility.\**

At the beginning of 1917, I had expressed my doubts regarding whether or not the members of the Union should be obliged to gather on Sunday afternoon. On January 9th, as Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the words:

*It is a good thing to invite the sons of the pious Union, but not to oblige them; those who love me will be revealed. Those who come I shall consider as the favourite sons of my Heart.\**

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On the same occasion I had also expressed another doubt, namely, whether or not to provide a free breakfast for those who came for Holy Communion on the first Friday of the month. On the same day, as Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the answer concerning this question:

*To pay them for coming to me is a Protestant practice; my grace is enough for them.\**

On March 17th 1918, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the following words regarding the behaviour of young associates:

*Let the sons of the pious Union be exemplary at home and outside.\**

In 1918, negotiations were going on regarding the transfer to the Catechists of the Union of the Evening Commercial and Technical School, run by the Brothers of the Christian Schools for more than a century at Via delle Rosine in Turin. I spoke of the plan to Fra Leopoldo, and on November 22nd, while he was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard what follows:

*I wish to adorn the young people of the pious Union with virtue: the purity of heart, work, the glory of Heaven.\**

On April 30th 1919, Fra Leopoldo wrote in his Diario:

Jesus said the following words:

*I recommend great humility and charity among the young people of the Union.*

Towards the end of 1919, some fervent young members of the Union had the idea of collecting at their weekly meetings, in the way that secret votes are cast, anonymous slips of paper bearing spiritual bouquets, that is, Holy Masses, decades of the rosary, Communions, invocations, etc., entitled 'Treasures for Heaven'. I spoke of this to Fra Leopoldo and, on December 2nd 1919, while he was praying to Jesus Crucified to find out whether they should adopt such a practice, he received the following reply:

*Yes, if it's understood the aim is the glory of God. But if the spirit of the world comes into it, or the desire to show off, no: humility is the flower that is most acceptable to God.\**

The following question was put to Fra Leopoldo: "Can Catechists on their own initiative go to the theatre when there is no danger of sin, or at least, to Catholic plays?" On January 8th 1920, while Fra Leopoldo was praying about this matter to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the following words:

*I come to comfort in spiritual things those who abstain from worldly things. Suffering is little, glory is infinite; many are called, few are chosen.\**

### Only one spirit

At the beginning of 1917, there were some young members of the Union who had allowed themselves to adopt a tendency to contradict during discussions, and to introduce discontent and division among their companions. I do not remember speaking explicitly of this to Fra Leopoldo, but the fact remains that while the Servant of God was praying to Jesus Crucified on March 28th 1917, he heard the following words:

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*Whoever comes to disturb the good of the pious Union, and who shows little goodwill, should be expelled. The sons of the pious Union must be a single group united with me, Jesus Crucified. Even if they were in every town in the world, they must constitute one single spirit in God.\**

At the same time, one Catechist had the idea of forming a special group, side-by-side with the Union, with some special pious practices. He showed me its Rules, and I sent them to Fra Leopoldo, asking him to pray for guidance in the matter. On March 31st 1917, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the following words:

*There is no need for Rules.*

And he saw Jesus Crucified was not pleased.\*

And the Servant of God added:

What prevents those who wish to be more fervent to become so by restricting themselves to the indications of the approved Rules? There is a need to root out the weeds of disturbers as soon as they appear. So, be careful!

Later he told me to add to the Rules:

In the Union of Catechists, there will be no pious practices apart from those prescribed in the Rules.

The following year, on January 24th 1918, as Fra Leopoldo was praying to the Most Blessed Virgin for the young people of the Union, he heard the following words on this same and most important topic:

*The members of the pious Union must be one single heart with Jesus Crucified.\**

## Recruitment

In the spring of 1917, I spoke to Fra Leopoldo of my idea to pick out in the various parishes where the Catechists worked some young people to admit to the Union, to educate and instruct them, and then send them as Catechists back to their own parishes. On April 9th 1917, after praying about this intention, Fra Leopoldo wrote the following:

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament told me we should contact the parish priests, so that guided by him, they could choose the youngsters who were preferable because of their goodness and virtue. At that time, I saw very few such young people. Let us not be alarmed: if there are few of them, they will be like the seed that will germinate in its own good time, and abundantly.\*

The intention was to choose a good number of very young aspirants and initiate them in the pious practices, in the propagation of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, and then admit them to the Union of Catechists as soon as they reached the age prescribed in the Rules. I asked Fra Leopoldo to pray because such an initiative really needed to have the support of Jesus.

On December 20th 1918, Fra Leopoldo wrote to me as follows:

This morning, during the Adoration Devotion to Jesus Crucified, I prayed once again for the little boys, and I had finished at quarter to five the prayer to the wound in the right hand, when Jesus gave me a great surge of fervour by his heavenly love and

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said:

*Not only do I support the youngsters, but I shall help their work, and they will have proof of it in the future.\**

And on March 25th 1919, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified for the same intention, he heard the words:

*At the present moment there is no time to lose: let them take even the very young and bring them up in my Holy Name.\**

In 1919, my fellow Brothers at the Istituto La Marmora in Biella asked the Brother Provincial, after organising with great care the propagation of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, to send me one day with them to see if it was possible to establish the Union of Catechists in that town.

I spoke to Fra Leopoldo about this and, on May 2nd 1919, while he was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the following words:

*Listen to your Superior: go to Biella, but if you intend to start up a pious Union for young people there also, remember that first they need to be prepared and tested so that you do not choose those who apparently say they belong to the Union. And do this even if you have to start with one only. They must follow the same practices and observe the same Rules as the pious Union in Turin.\**

### Observe the Rules whole-heartedly

There was a doubt whether or not to expel a member of the Union. Fra Leopoldo was informed of the matter, and as he was praying to Jesus Crucified on July 5th 1917, he heard the following words:

*Let those who do not wish to comply with the Rules be expelled.\**

Another doubt was whether or not to change a point in the Rules which obliged young people to come to the Union of Catechists at awkward times.

On the morning of October 22nd 1917, when Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified about this question, he heard the following words:

*When there is a legitimate obstacle, make allowances; but the Rules are not defective.\**

And on November 27th, as he was standing in prayer before the Most Blessed Virgin's altar, he heard the words:

*There are those who wish to add to or take away from the Rules; but it must be left as it is, intact: it is the will of God.\**

There were some young people in the Union who observed the Rules half-heartedly, and took part in pious exercises unenthusiastically, almost giving the impression they would prefer to stop coming. I spoke to Fra Leopoldo about this and on March 9th 1918, he heard from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament these words:

*Regarding the three young men, treat them with charity, but if their lack of enthusiasm were to influence other young men in the pious Union, it would be better to let them go.\**

In the same connection, on August 29th 1918, Fra Leopoldo heard from Jesus Crucified:

*Tell Brother Teodoreto to make such young men as these see the good they*

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*can do by remaining in the pious Union for the love of Jesus Crucified, and that through his Divine Mercy at the moment of their death they will be happy. If they will not listen to you after that, let them go.\**

On April 24th 1918, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the words:

*Do not allow yourselves to be overcome by lukewarmness in the running of the pious Union.\**

### Not liking, but fraternal charity

In the 1917–1918 school year, there were in the Union of Catechists, without my knowing it, some young men who attended meetings simply because they liked some of their companions. Even Fra Leopoldo knew nothing about this, but he often prayed for the Union, and on January 29th 1918, as he was doing the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, he heard the following:

*Cursed be the man who puts his trust in man. Do not cooperate in the Lord's work only because you like someone, but with joy and purity. Otherwise, for these the Union would be only a place to meet people, and their work like a lamp without oil. When Superiors discover this, let these people be expelled, because they bring with them the reign of dissension.\**

The events which occurred in that same year demonstrated the importance of this warning and proved to be apt.

Another very important event occurred on August 9th 1919: as Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart attached to the parish of S. Tommaso, he heard the following words:

*I give a commandment to the sons of the pious Union to maintain always among themselves a good and holy harmony; not to sadden me by dissension and ill humour; to show compassion for one another, and be humble in my sight. Those who do this are true sons of God. Let them be humble and I shall fill them with my divine grace.*

*Tell Brother Teodoreto clearly to have these precepts recited in the form of a prayer at the beginning of the opening prayers at meetings, and to remind the young men that these orders come directly from the Lord.\**

This is the origin of the 'Prayer to obtain fraternal charity', which is recited by members of the Union at the beginning of all meetings.<sup>1</sup>

### Apostolate

In 1918, there was some uncertainty whether it would be right to give a report about

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<sup>1</sup> Prayer to obtain fraternal charity:

Lord Jesus Crucified, who sacrificed yourself for men, while they betrayed you, abandoned you and insulted you, and who from the cross prayed for those who crucified you, grant, through your most precious blood, to all of us, Catechists and Associates of your Union and that of Mary Immaculate Most Holy, to obey with ever increasing perfection your precept of fraternal charity, to live in perfect harmony, to show compassion for one another, and to remain in profound and constant humility before you, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, live and reign, God forever and ever. Amen.

(Indulgence 200 days, 11/11/1936, Card. Maurilio Fossati, Archbishop of Turin.)

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the work of the Catechists in the presence of Mgr Pinardi, the Auxiliary Bishop, and all the 'Zealots' of the Union. On the evening of June 10th 1918, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard these words:

*The work of God needs to be made known.\**

A note was given to Fra Leopoldo containing the following question: "Can we send groups of two or three Catechists to teach catechism also in parishes outside Turin?". On that same evening, May 2nd 1919, as Fra Leopoldo was praying before the tabernacle with the note placed beside it, he heard the words:

*These are the first fruits of the divine tree.\**

In the same note there was also another question: "Can we send the best Catechists to speak to the members of the various branches outside Turin?". As Fra Leopoldo continued his prayer before the Blessed Sacrament that same evening, he heard the words:

*Let their ability be tested by the Superiors; and let what they do and what they say be always in my love.\**

In October 1919, someone in the Union thought it would be a good idea if Catechists set aside some of their apostolic work and studied to obtain academic qualifications so that with the extra knowledge they acquired they could teach catechism better. I spoke to fra Leopoldo about this plan, and on October 18th as he was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament he heard the following:

*In itself it is not a bad thing, but it is not proper to abandon what is spiritual for what is material, on the pretext of teaching catechism better. There is something hidden here in a sinister way: it does not need much study to make me loved, it is enough to make me known.\**

Towards the end of 1919, a Catechist had submitted to me a well-thought out plan in 32 points to set up in the Union an organisation which would be perfect for the dissemination of the good press. I showed the plan to Fra Leopoldo, and on the evening of November 28th 1919, when he was praying about this matter to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the following words:

*Let no plans be ever accepted, even if they seem good, if they give an opportunity for Catechists to abandon their mission, even for a most imperceptible amount of time.\**

The branch of the Union in Biella wished to have its own newsletter, and so it asked me; "Can we use the following title for it: 'Newsletter of the Union of Jesus Crucified'?"

At the time, I felt afraid that some confusion might be created between this title and that of the Union newsletter in Turin. I took the letter from Biella to Fra Leopoldo, and on May 26th 1920, as he was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the following title was suggested to him for the Biella newsletter:

*Turin News of the Love of Jesus Crucified.\**

Another note was sent to Fra Leopoldo asking whether some catechetical congresses could be held with young people from other branches or Catholic associations.

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On October 27th 1920, while the Servant of God was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the following words:

*If those they intend to invite are as well brought up as their young men, let them hold congresses.\**

## CHAPTER 18

# Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri

### Schools for workers

Raising the minds of workers to a higher plane, introducing them to the ideals of the faith and in this way laying a solid foundation for a solution of social problems was always one of the concerns of Catholic leaders and the nagging preoccupation of the Church.

Much effort had been made in this area also by holy founders, such as St John Baptist de La Salle and St John Bosco, of religious congregations dedicated specifically to the vocational education of young people. It is not as if the opposition and the violent hatred of anticlerical sects and parties had not always sought the desired solution in the tempestuous open seas: much fraternal blood was spilled, and stained even some streets in Turin in the years 1919–1920, without the deceived workers finally discovering a good way forward.

The need was felt by all the best people, as it is still felt today, to educate workers and employers in the principles of the Holy Gospel and in the social doctrine coming from the Supreme Pontiffs.

By means of the school and the humble nature of their mission, the Brothers made their own not insignificant contribution to this work.

On March 13th 1919, Brother Isodoro di Maria was appointed Director of the community and of the school at 14, via delle Rosine, Turin. He was familiar with the organisation of the vocational schools set up by the Brothers of the Christian Schools in France and Belgium, and wished to establish one in Turin also. He began by reorganising the former students of the schools opened 90 years previously by the Brothers in the context of the *Regia Opera Mendicita Istruita*, intending to open a vocational school with their help.

On May 18th 1919, he called the first meeting of former students: they responded in great number and much enthusiasm to his invitation. On August 26th of that same year, a general assembly held by them approved the statutes of their association, which stated that its aim was “to support the free vocational school for the working classes”.

In the meantime, schools had reopened, and in the month of November, the Director and the President of the former students considered how they should promote the idea of a vocational school.

The enthusiasm to implement this magnificent idea was not shared by the Superiors who, while admiring the beauty of the project, had reasons for putting off its implementation because there was a great shortage of teaching staff, and the vast

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financial resources need to fund such an institution were not available.

### Providential intervention

These reasons would have prevented the implementation of the plan had not Divine Providence intervened through Fra Leopoldo. At the time, he wrote in his *Diario*:

Monday, November 24th 1919, 9.30 pm. During the Adoration Devotion to Jesus Crucified, when I reached the wound in the left hand, Jesus said to me:

*To save souls, to educate new generations, Case di Carita need to be opened to teach young people arts and crafts.*

And Jesus added:

*There is no need to skimp: several million are needed.*

And he said:

*If they do not do what I ask, they will dig a ditch for themselves.  
These words are addressed to priests and the rich.*

On November 28th 1919:

*Jesus said to do this with goodwill.*

On December 2nd:

*Now is the time for my will to be known: I want a Scuola Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri'. [School, charitable institution, for arts and crafts] (Sayings of Jesus).\**

Fra Leopoldo showed what he had written to Rodolfo Sella, one of the most fervent 'Zealots' of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, and to me. Sella, a man of lively faith, immediately decided to form a committee made up of the leading Catholic men in Turin, including himself and his own son, Riccardo, a lawyer, to share in the great merits of such an institution.

At the beginning of that month of December 1919, my Superior, Brother Assistant Candido, arrived from Rome, and when I went to pay my respects to him, I showed him a copy of what, as we have seen, Fra Leopoldo had written. There ensued the following exchange:

Does Brother Director Isodoro know what is written here?

No, he doesn't. I refrained from letting him read it, because I know he needs no encouragement regarding this matter.

He won't have gone to Fra Leopoldo to get him worked up about the vocational school?

When Brother Director goes to see Fra Leopoldo, he always has me accompany him, and during these visits there has never been any talk of vocational schools.

And he won't have gone by himself some time?

I don't believe he has ever gone there.

In the meantime, don't share the contents of this note with Brother Director.

What was written must have impressed my Superior, because he immediately had Brother Director Isodoro come to see him, and he questioned him about the organisation of former students, and their intentions regarding the vocational school.

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He ended up by saying to him that he would hold a meeting for the Brother Directors of our houses in Turin to sound out their views regarding the opening of such a school.

I also was invited to this meeting, and even though a lot of opposition was foreseen and Brother Director Isidoro was convinced his idea would be opposed and rejected, he was greatly surprised to find it was supported with sufficient firmness by the Superior himself, Brother Candido, against one sole objector who thought the plan was premature because of the lack of personnel, and because it was also risky.

It was agreed to open up discussion of the plan also to the former students of the *Collegio S. Giuseppe*.

In the meantime, Rodolfo Sella had gone to see Brother Director Isidoro concerning the committee which was being set up, and on January 9th 1920, he returned with a list of ten or twelve names of really highly-regarded persons who had agreed to join, and invited Brother Director and myself to the first meeting, fixed for the 12th of the same month in the residence of the Conte Emiliano Avogadro di Collobiano e della Motta.

Such activity on the part of Rodolfo Sella is explained not only by his own determination, but especially by the new incentive provided by the following words written by Fra Leopoldo:

On December 27th 1919, at 9.30 pm, at the shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart . . . Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament said to me:

*May the whole development of the Casa di Carita which will be established, be resplendently Christian and Catholic.\**

On the last day of the year 1919, at 5 am. As I was doing the Adoration Devotion to Jesus Crucified . . . Jesus said:

*Tell them to hurry up and not wait for everything to fall apart.*

Friday January 9th 1920. Our Lady Mary Most Holy said:

*I too want to be the Protectress of the great foundation Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri.\**

The first meeting of the Committee held on January 12th 1920 produced excellent results. The first speaker was Rodolfo Sella, who spoke of the establishment of a great foundation willed by God whose purpose was to regenerate society through the education of young people involved in industry and commerce. He then invited Brother Director Isidoro to explain his plan. He spoke of the education of technical workers and employers, the education system; of the need to have establishments capable of making the fruits of education long-lasting. His arguments, developed so competently, were appreciated so much that Brother Director was asked to put them in writing so that others could study them.

The discussion that followed concluded that the idea should be considered, developed and applied at future meetings. The Committee, kept working by Rodolfo Sella, met at the *Collegio S. Giuseppe* on January 29th 1920, and the presentation made by Brother Director at the first meeting was read out. Brother Isidoro himself was not present on account of his mother's death. While such a written presentation

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could serve as a programme determining the scope of the work and the aim to be achieved, it was not a technical plan outlining the teaching requirements of the school on which to base the expenses which the foundation would incur. It did not seem that there was anyone qualified on the Committee capable of providing the information and data it needed, but then the Lord provided someone in the person of Prof. Filippo Dematteis.

On January 31st 1920, he was passing near the Friary of S. Tommaso when a gust of wind blew a little speck of dust into his eye. As the eye was hurting, he decided to go into the friary to rinse it and stop the pain. There he met the parish priest who greeted him warmly and Fra Leopoldo who looked after him solicitously. He had known the two Franciscans for quite some time, because he was the secretary for the Daily Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament group, which was based on the parish church of S. Tommaso.

It was then that Fra Leopoldo informed him of the formation of a committee concerned with the foundation of the vocational school.

Filippo Dematteis, who, as professor of mechanical technology at the University, and of technology and design at the municipal Vocational College, was closely involved with these institutions, asked to join the Committee, and offered to go immediately to via delle Rosine to explain his interest to Brother Director. The latter had the impression of being in the presence of a person with great technical competence.. He was then invited to the meeting on February 5th, where he was introduced to the members of the Committee, whose hopes were raised by his presence regarding the successful foundation of the school.

A commission of three was immediately appointed, made up of Brother Director, Rodolfo Sella and Filippo Matteis. I was co-opted. Our task was to draw up a minimum and a maximum budget of expenditure to present to the general assembly of the Committee.

### Hints of opposition

Everything was proceeding with much fervent activity and hope that the foundation would succeed, when Fra Leopoldo wrote in his *Diario*:

Saturday January 10th, 5 am. Words of Jesus during the Holy Adoration:

*So, care should be taken to obtain a good address for the great foundation of the Casa di Carita.*

As I continued the Adoration, Jesus said that he, Most Holy Jesus, was the address of the holy foundation. I replied: "My good Jesus, do you yourself wish to be the Protector?" Jesus Crucified added the following precise words:

*I shall overcome all the tricks the Devil and evil people will use against it.\**

January 13th 1920, morning, 5 am. Words of Most Holy Mary:

*Let no one advise against the work of God.\**

The evening of Tuesday January 20th 1920. Words of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament:

*Speak to the rich about my Mercy, my love and my power. I speak of the rich:*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*let them listen to my advice, let them remember that they have had riches from me so as to help the foundation of the Casa di Carita.*

January 30th 1920. 10 pm. Words of Jesus Crucified:

*Where the foundation is concerned, no one should refuse, even at the cost of making a sacrifice. The sacrifice they will make will always be small by comparison with the good that will come from it.\**

### **Mistakes in presenting the project**

After the meeting of February 5<sup>th</sup> 1920, the commission gave itself no rest: long sessions given to examining and calculating were held at via delle Rosine on many weekday evenings late into the night, in which was established everything that was necessary for the vocational school, department by department: electro-mechanics, textiles, catering, paper-making, etc., in a word, for an institution composed of a whole family of departments, for a real polytechnic.

We did not concentrate simply on the area of departments, but on the various branches of industry which, because of their development in the country and their importance, were likely to attract a large part of the student body. The courses were divided into six years of study, with the addition of two years of advanced studies for some departments, and one year only for others.

To this plan for the industrial school was added a plan also for a first and second level commercial middle school. The estimated cost for all this was about 19 million Lire.

The activity of the commission was not satisfied simply with drawing up a budget: it extended also to looking for premises for the school. After much research, its attention was drawn to the former monastery of S. Croce, an enormous building, with a church attached, flanked by four main streets, served by various tram routes and facing a square. The two Brothers who took part in the discussions did not fail to point out that they agreed to study this vast plan, but stated that their suggestion was to start with something smaller. Despite this, the initial plan of the establishment had been conceived with too much haste, thoughts had turned immediately to purchasing vast premises, running numerous day and evening classes, without giving greater thought and weight to the objections that would be raised. It would have been better to examine and present a small-scale plan to begin with, reserving the larger scale one as an ideal to aim for in the years to come. But the budget with the maximum expenditure was completed, twelve copies were made and distributed to the members of the Committee, who met on March 3rd 1920. During the meeting care was taken to point out that the budget showed only the maximum expenditure that was acceptable; but that one could start out with the minimum budget the figures of which should not frighten anyone. Also, mention was made of the gifts of machinery and tools which firms would not fail to make. These details, however, did not cancel out the effects of the first impression of mistrust, which even increased when the question of premises came up, and it was insisted that it was a good idea to buy the vast S. Croce block. The assembly remained silent, and somewhat cold. It was then said that, for the purchase of the said property, there was a need to take advantage of the presence in

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

the town of the 'Commissario'. By delaying, there would be the risk of having to deal with the anti-clericals, the probable future authorities running the town.

The same coldness throughout the assembly and much hesitation. Fortunately, Count Emiliano Della Motta broke the silence with the following inspired words: "Since God wants us to establish this school, it is not good for us to remain undecided. Let us set about it with determination and get to work". After this meeting, three members of the Committee withdrew, others remained, maintaining their coolness, as if waiting for an opportunity to leave.

### Warnings and encouragements

On February 13<sup>th</sup> 1920, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, seeking advice regarding the location of the *Casa di Carita*, and after having received a reply, he heard the following words added:

*Let there be no rush.\**

On February 16th 1920. Adoration of Jesus Crucified, 10 pm. Hardly had I prepared myself for the holy Adoration when Jesus suddenly said:

*Tell Ingeniere Sella to proceed with moderation. For the time being, do as you have done up to now, as I guide you every day. You'll see that things will settle down and you'll all be pleased. A little time is needed for this: everything is ready for you to start moving forward.\**

On the same day, at 7 pm, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the following words:

*The faith of those who take part in the meeting is fixed on seeing thousands of Lire, and they will come.\**

On March 5th 1920, at 1 pm, while I was praying before the Blessed Sacrament, Jesus said to me:

*You're a bit discouraged. Cheer up! What are you thinking? I'm here also! The works of God have the distinction of being opposed. They are men of little faith those who refuse to support them.\**

The following entry in the Diario is significant:

1920, April 4th, Sunday 9 pm, at the shrine of Our Lady, at the foot of the altar:

*I am sad, very sad: if they don't want to reach the point of getting caught out and cutting short life, let them be very concerned about opening the Case di Carita Arti e Mestieri. More than ever before, the bishops have to be spoken to about these institutions; and in every town, the rich must be taught to be lavish with their wealth for this purpose, and not wait to be obliged to pay for delaying by losing their lives by a premature death'.*

Returning to my cell, Jesus Crucified told me to write all this down.\*

In the month of April, the necessary steps were taken and everything that was possible was done to obtain the premises of S. Croce for the *Casa di Carita*, but all in vain. Then we received the following note from Fra Leopoldo:

May 2nd 1920, 9 pm. I was making the holy Adoration to Jesus Crucified, and when I reached the last prayer, to the sacred side, Jesus said:

*If they cannot find impressive looking premises, it is because they ought to do*

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

*the following: start off with something small; bigger things will come, everything they want.\**

It was then decided to begin in a very simple way, that is, with two already existing primary school classes, forms 6 and 7, giving form 7 the characteristics and programme of a vocational school, and making form 6 a preparatory class for form 7. With this view, programmes were prepared for October 1920.

On May 17th, I was charged to take a letter to Fra Leopoldo asking him whether it would be a good thing to set up a society of shareholders to protect real estate and movable property that would be given to the *Casa di Carita*. That same evening, Fra Leopoldo placed the letter “against the tabernacle door” and began to pray. The following day he sent the following reply:

*They must arm themselves with whatever is necessary for the running of the foundation, so that it is long-lasting and truly very Christian.\**

An expert in these matters was invited, the much lamented canon lawyer Father Capitani, and after two meetings, on May 7th and 27th 1920, at which the question was studied, it was decided to register the goods of the *Casa di Carita* in the name of an already existing society connected with the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Immediately afterwards a note was sent to Fra Leopoldo with two questions: one concerning whether or not to include some particular signatures; the other to know whether a start could be made to draw up the various forms from the *Regia Opera Mendicita Istruita* in order to take over the church of S. Pelagia and the adjacent premises. Fra Leopoldo answered as follows: “At 1 pm yesterday, I prayed at the shrine, but however long I waited while praying I received no answer regarding the signatures. At 7.45 pm, regarding S. Pelagia, Jesus did not allow me even to pray, but said immediately:

*Regarding S. Pelagia, let them proceed.\**

On May 28<sup>th</sup> 1920, Fra Leopoldo wrote in his *Diario*:

*Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (venerated in the shrine attached to the church of S. Tommaso Apostolo, in Turin) loves the members of the pious Union of Jesus Crucified, together with the children from the Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri, to come once a year to visit her in memory of the favours and graces received and channeled by her to their advantage, and to receive Holy Communion in thanksgiving for the loving goodness shown to them by God and his Most Holy Mother.*

1 pm, Words of Our Lady\*

June 3rd 1920 Fra Leopoldo was invited to attend the meeting of the Commission of four. Initially, he hesitated a little, but after receiving permission from the Fr Guardian, he came and was satisfied by what he heard, as can be seen from the following entry in his *Diario*:

To tell the truth, I was really greatly pleased that I also attended this meeting, because what I didn't or couldn't do, Our Most Holy Lord did. The decision to start at the beginning of October was confirmed. May Jesus be Blessed, and with him, his Divine Mother, Patron and Director of the Foundation.

That evening, as Fra Leopoldo was thanking Jesus for having made him take part in the meeting, he heard the following words:

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*I too was present at the meeting.*

Feast of Corpus Christi, June 3rd. Oh, what a fine, golden day, chosen for a foundation so Christian and so great, all for the glory of God! May your Most Holy Kingdom come soon, O Lord! Water this poor sinful earth, to return it to your most sweet and ineffable virtues, because we wish to live only for you, O my Jesus, our Most Holy God!\*

On June 28th 1920, was held the first general assembly of the Committee set up previously on May 31st, sitting as the Board of Directors together with its Executive Council. Present at the meeting, in addition to Brother Director and myself, were six Councillors, plus the President, Count Alessandro Arborio Mella and the Secretary Filippo Dematteis. Among other decisions, it was decided to begin drawing up the documents needed for the use of the church of S. Pelagia, and of the rented adjacent premises.

Regarding these discussions we read in Fra Leopoldo's *Diario* the following:

Tuesday July 6th 1920, Brother Teodoreto came and said to me: "Could you do me the favour of asking Jesus how we should organise ourselves regarding the religious functions of the pious Union; and if we too of the Union of Jesus Crucified can make use of the church of S. Pelagia?"

Reply of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament:

*Let everyone be in cordial agreement – the young men of the Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri, and the pious Union of Jesus Crucified; and the young men of the Casa di Carita must all, with love and faith, become members of the pious Union of Jesus Crucified. Let there be no exceptions.\**

July 23rd 1920, 10 pm. During the Holy Adoration of Jesus Crucified, when I reached the prayer to the Sacred Side, Jesus said to me:

*Will this Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri go ahead properly as I want it? I would not like, with time, a long time ahead, that it became involved in financial speculation! Charity should always be appealed to to obtain help. It is not there to enrich anyone, but for souls redeemed by my most precious blood. In the end, it is my Divine Mercy that wants it to be like that. In first place, let them remember the admission of poor young men.\**

### A vision

During the night of October 9th – 10th 1920, Fra Leopoldo had the following vision as he slept:

High up in the sky I saw Jesus in his Passion carrying the Cross nobly and with much difficulty. Around him there were many wretches who were tormenting good Jesus, who turning his beautiful, divine face towards me, and looking at me two times, said to me:

*Even this will pass!*

The sky was half clear, as after a storm, and the sun's rays broke through from time to time and turned the sacred tunic of the Divine Redeemer gold.

Overall, despite the sadness, it seemed like a scene from Paradise. All around in the sky, there were myriads of bishops and some popes following Jesus.

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In my ignorance, I thought this was a sign of the persecution of the Church, but while I was making the holy Adoration of Jesus Crucified in my cell on the evening of October 11th, good Jesus, to correct my mistaken notion, said to me:

*The Passion in which you saw me indicates the torment my people continually inflict upon me. The bishops that you saw are all those who should take measures to set up in their dioceses Art and Craft schools modelled on those of Turin, for the reform of the world, beginning with young people, educating them in a Christian manner.\**

### Beginning of the school

In August 1920, while my Superior, Brother Candido, was at the Villa Nicolas, near Turin, following the Spiritual Exercises with the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Rodolfo Sella and Filippo Dematteis, accompanied by me, went to see this Superior to put the final touches to the agreements, but, despite the difficulties which had arisen because of the lack of personnel, they obtained what they needed to start the day and evening classes. Part of the teaching involved was entrusted to the Catechists of Jesus Crucified.

Classes began on October 18th 1920 on the premises prepared during the summer period. The main entrance was 21b via S. Massimo. Pupils attending the day classes numbered 60 and were split up into two classes; those attending evening classes numbered 70 and were also split up into two classes.

The mistrust which had caused a number of Committee members to withdraw did not prevent the others, more persevering even if reduced in number, to work with great alacrity to make the institution grow. By the end of the first year, the discipline and the serious approach to organising teaching programmes, in particular, suggested that a very bright future awaited the institution. Competing with one another by their efforts, the members of the Board and especially those of the Council, had succeeded, as early as December 1920, in getting the Italian Knitwear Association to send three members to negotiate the setting up, at their expense, of a knitwear workshop at the school, and an annual contribution to this workshop and to the development of the school itself.

Negotiations had also been begun with Fiat and other industrial firms in the town regarding the setting up of repair and forge workshops.

In addition, some members of the Council donated all the equipment necessary for a chemistry laboratory, and the tools, tables included, for the workshop for engraving precious metals. The need was already being felt to extend the premises and negotiations were already taking place to acquire the *Castelvechio* hotel adjacent to the school.

### Misunderstandings

From the writings of Fra Leopoldo it appears that the foundation asked for had to be based on Christian charity, that is, on the supernatural; and that the rich, through love of God and of their neighbour, had to create and support institutions in which the poor were to be educated in the practice of the same Christian charity.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

The name *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*, often referred to in these terms in the writings, was only partly understood.

The school opened, as has been said, under the best auspices in October 1920, and two months later, on December 17<sup>th</sup>, in the report of the Board of Governors' meeting was written: "It has been decided to call the establishment *Istituto di Arti e Mestieri*".

The word '*carita*' – charity – had been left out, not through ill-will, but through a misunderstanding, because, in practice, the substance of the virtue in question could still remain without the actual word appearing in the name of the school, in its regulations and in its spirit. This idea seems even to be confirmed in the following words written by Fra Leopoldo on December 23rd 1920:

Tell them, Jesus Crucified has agreed with what they wanted regarding the name to use.\*

All the same, the danger of excluding from the running of the foundation not only the word, but also the substance of supernatural charity, was a factor present in the purely human thinking and methods of the majority of the Board.

On February 17th 1921, Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified when he heard the following words:

*I put into their hands all that they need to develop the school of the Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri, but they should remember always to ask for charity. Tell them that I have told them three times to have faith in me and in what I say, and trust in working together with me.\**

Having re-examined more carefully the writings of Fra Leopoldo, it was decided to use not only the second part '*Arti e Mestieri*' in the name of the foundation, but to use the whole of the original name '*Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*'.

At the meeting of the Executive Council of the Board of Governors held on March 4th 1921, the President proposed the new name of the foundation "chosen by the express will of God, as has been announced to us by a Franciscan lay religious, who is in communication with the Lord who has given it specifically this name". The Director confirmed what the President had explained about the origin of the foundation, and testified to the close link between the Union of Jesus Crucified and the school, both providential institutions, whose purpose was the betterment of young people, from two points of view: the cultivation of the heart through practices of piety, and that of the mind by studies for a useful and practical purpose."<sup>1</sup>

The proposal met with opposition, rebutted however by the Secretary who approved the new name which, put to the vote, resulted in three members of the Council for, and three against. Six days later, on March 10th, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard the words:

*Tell them that I do not want a human foundation; I want a divine foundation: that is the way forward for the Casa di Carita, according to my Heart.\**

In the following month, the following question was sent to Fra Leopoldo: "Should the young people have to pay to go to the school of the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*?" This was the reply:

Thursday, April 28th 1921, 10.30 pm. When I finished saying the prayer to the sacred

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1 Register containing the minutes of Board and Council meetings, p. 12

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

wound in the right hand, Jesus said to me:

*If they follow the words that have been prepared, all will go well. But if they want to act differently, they will be sorry later. Everything is included: schools, Arti e Mestieri: Take money from those who wish to give it, not as payment, but as charity.\**

On May 6th 1921, Fra Leopoldo prayed as follows: “O Jesus, give the faith of saints to the members of the Committee, so that they believe your words and do not make the pupils pay” And he heard the words:

*And what has been missing up to now?\**

### Increasing difficulties

Because of the dissension that had arisen in the Executive Council of the Board, it was thought better to delay calling other meetings to give time for people to calm down, but the delay produced exactly the opposite effect.

In the first ten days of July 1921, the majority of the Executive Council sent in their written resignations, as did one of the Board of Governors. Under such circumstances, the President thought it his duty to resign also. Others resigned in practice and left the Foundation.

The meeting of July 11th 1921 was still attended by seven Councillors, and by Brother Director, myself and the Secretary; but in the absence of the President who had resigned, the Board took no decision apart from inviting him in a letter delivered by a Councillor to withdraw the resignation, and to meet two days later, to appoint some members to the Executive Council.

At the meeting held on July 13th, “the President declared he was withdrawing his resignation, but given that, apart from the Secretary, only two members of the Board were present, he declared there was not the legal quorum for the meeting to be held. Those who had resigned were invited to remain at their post until the beginning of the 1921–1922 school year”.

When the exams were finished at the end of the 1921 summer session, the Superiors called Brother Director Isidoro to the *Istituto Gonzaga* in Milan, and sent Brother Director Aquilino to replace him at via delle Rosine.

The new Director did whatever he could to restore the team spirit and harmony among the members of the Executive Council, and so, with the agreement of the President, called many meetings of the Council: October 13th and November 22nd 1921; January 7th and January 13th 1922. At these meetings were present, apart from the President and the Secretary, only two Councillors at the first, one at the second, one at the third, and one at the fourth. Then a general assembly of the Board of Governors was called and attended by five Councillors plus the President and the Secretary. At this meeting, Brother Director Aquilino read a report on the 1920–1921 school year, which was entered into the records and from which I take the following extract :

Called by the trust placed in me by my Superiors to be Director of this vocational school, I found that a serious issue was causing dissension among the worthy members of the Executive Council: the issue of

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

what name should be given to the new-born school. Some members of the Council, inspired by holy and honest intentions, supported wholeheartedly the proposal to give the new school the name *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*. Other no less worthy Gentlemen, for reasons of appropriateness ranged themselves resolutely against such a name. From this there arose such differences of opinion that many Councillors resigned. However, with a view to avoid damaging an institution whose need was recognised by all, nobly setting aside their own views – a sacrifice which must be mentioned in gratitude to all those who love the Foundation – some of them withdrew the resignations they had given, others declared they would postpone it until the beginning of the present school year.

In these harsh circumstances, having examined in God's presence and in my conscience the distressing state of things; having taken advice from authoritative and prudent persons, I thought that rather than restrict myself to questions of form, it was better to hold firm to what was substantial; and that basing on God alone all hope of a happy future success, it was not right to keep alive the dissension among the members of the Executive Council because of one name being given preference over another. I believed therefore it was my duty and a prudent judgment to save at all costs a Foundation that had begun so well; and if the proposed name was an obstacle to the continuation of the good desired by so many, I declared, with the agreement of my Superiors, at a meeting held on October 13<sup>th</sup> last, that the management did not insist on keeping the proposed name "*Casa di Carita*", and that it left the decision fully to the Council and the Board to either return to the original name, or to choose any other name that pleased everyone. I did this – and I feel it is important to say so – not to remove from the Foundation that distinctive religious and spiritual characteristic, indicated by a name which inspires charity and trust in God; but only to promote, with a unity of minds, the development of the Foundation itself, trusting I had interpreted correctly the thinking of the Board and of all who had at heart the future of our Institution.

I chose to refer to the distressing dissension, both in order to re-affirm the intention to maintain the clearly Christian character of the Foundation, and to justify my conduct in these difficult circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

Despite all the efforts made to re-establish agreement, it had to be agreed that it was no longer possible to rekindle the necessary fervour to bring such an undertaking to completion.

Two more meetings of the Executive Council were called, one on July 7<sup>th</sup> 1922, and the other on July 14<sup>th</sup>. The President and the Secretary were faithful to the end, but only one Councillor attended the first meeting, but none, the second.

### Spiritual purification

The events reported above regarding the school of the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*

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<sup>2</sup> Register containing the minutes of Board and Council meetings, pp. 22–23

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were for Fra Leopoldo the source of the most serious sufferings he had ever experienced.

He saw opposition to an undertaking which was to procure God so much glory and save innumerable souls, and he suffered greatly as a result. The sorrow accepted by him with resignation from the hands of God, was for him a spiritual purification and a source of much merit.

On July 4th 1920 he had written:

What I recommend in addition to the members of the Committee is that if it ever came into the mind of someone to cast doubt on the undertaking or make it turn back, he should think twice, for the love of Heaven. It is better if he himself leaves, because you don't play games with God.

They should remember the Venerable Don Bosco: how many humiliations, how many thorns, how many insults, what derision! He underwent a real martyrdom to found his schools, but now they prosper. On the other hand, works founded even by worthy people, but supported by the human means of vast inheritances and fixed incomes, do good, yes, but usually they remain where they are, they do not spread much; while those supported by the charity of Jesus Most Holy, cross oceans and spread to the whole world.

And this charitable foundation *Arti e Mestieri*, willed by God in his great Mercy for the salvation of the world, supported solely by goodness, by faith, by the charity of Jesus Christ, will spread in the course of years to the whole universe.\*

Such supernatural motives led Fra Leopoldo to insist on the name *Casa di Carita*; and the opposition encountered caused him suffering, because he thought such a name was a programme and a means of maintaining for the institution its supernatural Christian character, which it should never abandon.

To Brother Director Isidoro, who had already firmly insisted the institution should keep its name *Casa di Carita*, he wrote, to help him, the following note:

Live Jesus and Most Holy Mary!

February 27th 1921

My Very Dear and Venerated Director

Brother Isidoro di Maria

To my great regret, I have to let you know of the Lord's words where he says: 'I would not want the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri* to be hindered by the work of man'. There is so much difficulty at the present time about a name so small and humble.

Not to give a name wanted by the Lord is to disregard the work of God. Not conforming to the will of God is to take away his blessing from the *Casa*, and in its absence, how will we manage and what shall we do?

Yours in the Lord,

Fra Leopoldo Maria"

One of the Councillors who had resigned had gone to Fra Leopoldo's superiors, the Fr Provincial and the Fr Guardian, to put pressure on them to take steps against their inferior.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

As a result, the religious was forbidden to be involved with the school and to receive visits from outsiders.

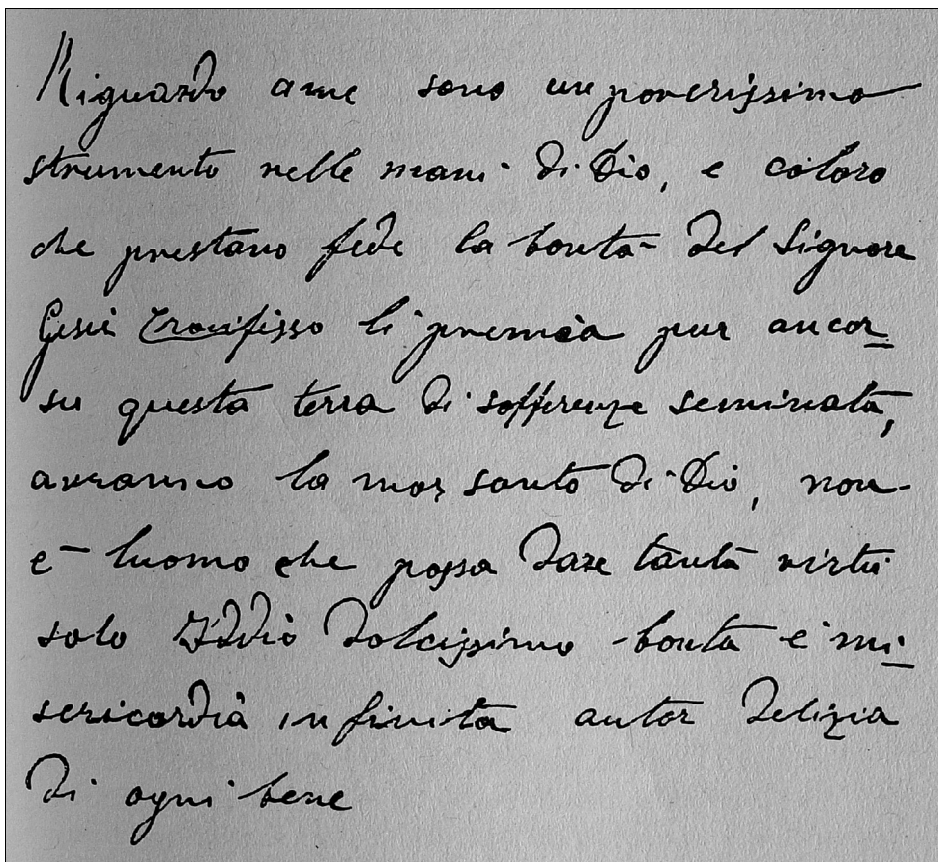
Fra Leopoldo supported all these things with patience, enduring his share of martyrdom for the love of God.

Among his writings I found the following:

December 14th 1921, 5.45 am, during the Holy Adoration: "O my Jesus, because I am poor, because I am not a noble, because I am simple, all have abandoned me! Jesus said:

*Be brave! Are we not two friends?.*

Oh, thank you Jesus! They did many worse things to you!\*



Riguardo come sono un poverissimo  
strumento nelle mani di Dio, e coloro  
che prestano fede la bontà del Signore  
Gesù Crocifisso li promette per ancor  
su questa terra di sofferenze seminata,  
avranno la loro parte di Dio, non  
è l'uomo che possa dare tanta virtù  
solo Dio dolcissimo bontà e mi-  
sericordia infinita autor delizia  
di ogni bene

6: An example of Fra Leopoldo's handwriting.

## CHAPTER 19

# The interior life of Fra Leopoldo

### The burning torch

The faith of Fra Leopoldo, coming from the true light which enlightens every man of good will, was a burning torch in his mind and heart, as he set out on the road to sanctity.

Faith pervades every page of his *Diario*, and explains its sublime contents. This is how he begins it:

Glory to God the Father, glory to the Son, glory to the Holy Spirit.

To the greater glory of God and to his Most Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary.

For us poor mortals, only passing through this earth, to gain eternal joy in Heaven, there can be nothing more useful, nor more consoling, than to begin here below that happy union, which will subsequently be completed perfectly in Paradise, through a truly Christian life, by making every moment of our daily life bear fruit for the Eternal, invoking continually for that purpose the goodness and Mercy of God which grants us days full of merit and virtue, and living in this way through God and for God Jesus Crucified.

Urged on by the most earnest desire of the very Reverend Armando Bracco, Theologian and subsequently Canon, of Fra Giovanni Caneparo of the Sacramentine Fathers, and advised by them to write down some record of what will be read later, in order to give always greater glory to God Jesus Crucified, it was difficult for me to listen to their advice, because my knowledge is too scant, but then I surrendered and listened to their wise suggestions. And before beginning to write, knowing that I succeed miserably in making myself understood, I knelt down on the ground and recited the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, so that the Divine goodness of the Holy Spirit would come to my help.\*

### The example of the saints

In 1887, I was cook in the employ of the noble family of Count Arborio Mella di Vercelli. Having quickly finished my work in the kitchen, I spent my time sewing or reading. My favourite reading material was the *Buona Settimana* which that year published lives of saints and, in particular, the life of the faithful servant of God, the Venerable Thomas More, who increased my fervour ever more regarding my faith and the practice of virtue.\*

October 11<sup>th</sup> 1908, Jesus said:

*Read, my son, the lives of the saints, so that you are fired with the holy Christian and Catholic faith, the infallible truth.\**

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

### A Roman spirit

Yesterday evening (May 18th 1907, Vigil of Pentecost), I made the holy Adoration at 10 pm in honour of the Holy Spirit, as also my Holy Communion this morning, imploring the Holy Spirit for the grace that he would come down on the head of the Holy Venerable old man, the Pope, whom I love immensely, and who stands in the place of my beloved Jesus, our Saviour, to enlighten him so that he allows the whole Catholic world to perform the holy Adoration of Jesus Crucified, as a support and sure defence of our Most Holy Christian Catholic Religion, granting the highest indulgences.\*

January 20th 1909: “Jesus, you have given us as a guide the Holy Pontiff, your Vicar on earth, so that he may lead us happily to you, and this Pope will be called the Holy Father of charity.”

“Beloved Father, tormented with pain because of the misfortune of the terrible earthquake in Calabria, you had no peace in your paternal heart until you saw your beloved sons helped and consoled by you.\*

February 6th 1909. May the charity of the Holy Father the Pope be blessed in all Calabria for the victims of the earthquake and be resplendent as the precious gem of the Papacy. May it also serve at the same time to make the charity of all the bishops of the world shine more brightly, a charity which can be found solely in the Catholic faith, brought to this earth by Jesus Crucified, the most precious pearl, charity fashioned according to the Heart of God. Evil persons seek to hide the work of religious, but in the eyes of God all is clear.\*

August 6th 1909: My Lord, I wish all the good in the world to your Vicar, our Most Blessed Father, to whom your flock is entrusted, and who with truly untiring ardour, strong as a lion, guides us on the path to holiness to finally reach you, if we are faithful (and let's hope we are!), you who have loved us so much, and have created us to make us share one day the glory of the Blessed in Heaven!\*

January 4th 1910: Allow me, O my Lord, to invoke blessings on your Vicar, and with your Divine power and wisdom shower him with gifts and heavenly graces; comfort our Most Blessed Father in the Vatican who with wisdom leads us, sons of Holy Mother the Church, your sons, to you, my and our infinite good, God, God alone. Defend him against his enemies; make happy that Holy Father, our beloved Father!\*

### The knight of the Holy Spirit against the pride of intellect

“For eight consecutive days (September 1st 1908), I am receiving Holy Communion for the Holy Father the Pope, so that the Divine goodness of my Jesus will console his Vicar on earth, raising up generous and holy souls to fight against the modern spirit, so that our faith can shine as clearly as crystal in the hearts of the faithful, for it is the most precious gem which can attach us to the Cross, to the pierced Heart of my Crucified Jesus.\*

Every morning, Mary Most Holy wants (October 25th 1908) me to ask her for a grace, and the first I ask her for is that the writings of the Holy Father may have the power to convert the world.\*

October 28th 1908): Ah, diabolical modernism, blot out immediately from your mind,

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troubled by imaginings, your diabolical claims; your work is turbulent, so much effort a waste of breath. Pray to God Most Holy to change your heart, and seek better advice, and you will see that the Mercy of a most wise God will give you the grace to see sweet peace, the blinding light of our Holy Catholic Faith, as in the days of the Apostles.\*

God directs and governs by his Divine Providence the Vicar of Jesus Christ, vigilant in his sacred mission entrusted to him by God. As soon as dawn breaks, he observes in minute detail whether it is heavenly light or heresy, in order to root it out, throw it away, so that the sons of God are not contaminated.\*

April 12th 1909: Give me the grace, O my Good, to love you always in the place of fellow brothers blinded by modernism, who seek to take away from you or reduce the halo of your glory, to the detriment of our most pure Catholic, Apostolic, Roman faith, causing so much disgust to our Holy Father the Pope.\*

December 25th 1910: You, Modernist, who claim to reform the world and exhaust yourself more and more seeking the truth; who with your stubborn and arrogant wisdom, refuse to bow your head in the most brilliant light, to the splendour of the Cross (this is really the wisdom of God which extends its reign, reforming and sanctifying souls, the world. This is the true wisdom of the Lord), do not be afraid to humiliate yourself too much; prostrate yourself at the feet of Jesus Crucified, and with reverence, humility and faith, pray rather that God heals your heart of the harmful wounds which prevent you from seeing clearly; study carefully and practise piety, and you will see how much usefulness and wisdom you will find in the holy Cross; you will find there the most holy truth! Bow your head, treasure it, and you will become a very wise person so you can reform yourself and thank the most high God for having given you in his mercy, light and faith to your intellect, and you will be, by the grace of the Lord, an example to others, and you will have peace and joy in the depths of your soul!\*

### **“The Crucifix is a big book”**

August 18th 1906. The Crucifix is a big book of most holy teachings, an exemplary Divine Teacher.\*

September 10th 1906: ‘O my good Crucified Jesus, your martyrdom on the Cross opened up for us a most beautiful, a most sure and a most holy road; you have given us the means to love you with all our strength, with all the power of our soul to lead us to happiness of immeasurable joy, of bliss, always by your Mercy.\*

September 17th 1906: ‘O Most Sweet Jesus, your Mercy is overflowing, your love for men is infinite! But I want nothing else except to love you, adore you, think unceasingly of how I can please you!’\*

October 13th 1908: ‘We want you, O Lord; we want our Crucified Jesus; we want the faith of the first Christians, of the martyrs in the catacombs.’\*

January 23rd 1909: ‘Give me, O my God, that by means of your Devotion, Jesus Crucified, I can visit all the families in the world so that you may be known. Ah, Lord, if everyone knew who you were, how much love they would have for you! Do this, you my God, who are powerful and can do everything!’\*

April 12th 1909: ‘My living God, Jesus, true Son of God and of Most Holy Mary,

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grant that the Devotion may spread and take possession of all hearts and bring to the world love and faith in you, Jesus Crucified, with the peace and serenity enjoyed by our ancestors as they professed and believed God , and as the saints nourished themselves with immense love at your feet, Jesus Crucified. My sweet Jesus, you are Paradise on earth, and only your name makes a soul fortunate. It will see you then as a glorious and resplendent sun in Heaven, surrounded by your Divine halo.’\*

June 15th 1909: ‘May your holy Devotion Adoration , my beloved Jesus, cross mountains and valleys! And for those who recite it, the precious gift of your Five Most Sacred Wounds, from the heart, may it be a powerful shield against the snares set for our most holy faith, which in our days is insulted so much, and let it be the highest reparation to you, Crucified Jesus! And you, goodness, most holy love of my good Jesus, shower generously your heavenly graces on your devoted sons and on their homes, in your infinite Mercy.’\*

### “Glory and eternal love to Jesus Crucified”

On many pages are recorded the profound sentiments of the holy religious, his intimate thoughts, his fervent invocations to God, and for this they are the source of great edification for souls.

December 10th 1910: The life of a chaste and innocent man is a unceasing feast of love between heaven and earth in Jesus Christ and in his Most Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary.

‘Deign to grant me, my Crucified God, that prostrate at your feet and adoring your most Sacred Wounds, I may be without stain of sin, and may lead a life spent entirely for you, my Lord; and through your infinite Mercy, make me perfectly clean at the last moment of my life, and receive me into heavenly happiness through the merits of your Passion!’

‘Lord my God, you are the gentle balm for our sufferings, you are our peace, the eternal example of the most beautiful virtues. Give me the grace, my Crucified Jesus, to prostrate myself every day at the foot of the Cross!’

More than ever, on Friday, I consecrate to you my thoughts, and I adore my Good, my most Holy Redeemer, who saved us.

‘My God, you are the delicious manna of eternal blessings; O my Jesus, you are my sole desire! Grant me the beautiful grace that will make me perfect, that will transform me more and more!’

‘My Lord, if I could only be consumed in you, O my God, with intense and burning love for your Most Sacred Wounds, O my Crucified Jesus! Make a new heaven out of my soul, a new love for your Cross, O my Jesus!’\*

December 22nd 1910: ‘O splendour of my God, and who does not yearn to love you? Yes, in you, O Lord, your Mercy shines wondrously; you are a victim for our salvation; you are worthy of every glory; you are all goodness; you are the true perfection of greatness, nobility, of admiration.’

‘You are power, majesty; you are infinite wisdom; you are our love; you are true holiness, the divinity; you are a model of humility; you are perfect innocence; you are the splendour of charity; you are an unceasing sacrifice for our good; you are our joy and consolation; you are power and truth, the unchangeable promise of Heaven for

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the just; you are the keeper of terrible power; woe betide those who seek to make our dear Mother the Church, weep!’

‘You are our defence; you are light, truth; you are above all things; you are our grace; you are the fount of the highest virtue; you are the eternal King; you are the pasture of the Blessed; you are our heaven; you are our greatness; you are the true Most High God; you are the holiness that sparkles eternally; you are our life in us; you are our prize; you are our union; you are our happiness; you are our Paradise; you are our all!’\*

### “With God in the Most Blessed Sacrament”

October 28th 1908. How beautiful it is to speak with God in the Most Blessed Sacrament when all is quiet! What heavenly language! ‘O my God! How short are these moments of intimacy with you, my Jesus!’\*

January 20th 1909: ‘We adore you, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in this consecrated host, as also in all the consecrated hosts which are all over the world. Through your great Mercy and love, you have made us the gift of remaining with us on this poor earth until the end of the world, to be our comfort and our great consolation.’\*

February 26th 1909. What a precious moment when I can have the happiness of being alone (before the tabernacle), alone with Jesus on this earth, even if it is full of distress and pain. And yet, I feel so good in such a moment of happiness, because my Jesus is near me and I can say so many things to him!\*

September 27th 1909: ‘My Most Holy Lord, when will the time come when, through your infinite Mercy, I shall be able to praise you, love you, glorify you, without any hindrance and unceasingly?’

The riches that God gives to the soul which visits Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament are inestimable. There is always a veil, but it allows us to see in part the great Mercy of God, and that is not enough: for there is there the infinite Love that God has for his Son and for the pious visitor who on his knees expresses to him from the depths of his heart respect, praise, blessings and adoration without pause. Ah, if the world only knew Jesus God Crucified and the Most Blessed Sacrament! There would no longer be a world, but Paradise!\*

November 25th 1909. Who can recount the immense love that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament gives to the soul that gives itself totally to Jesus? How many thoughts of Divine love does he make sparkle like sparks of blazing fire in the heart of souls!

‘Praise and glory be given to you Father, thrice Holy, who show Mercy to us poor sinners, who have given us the grace to draw close to the Sacred Heart of your Divine Son Jesus Crucified in the Most Blessed Sacrament!’\*

September 16th 1912. Precious time, even most precious, when we can stand at the foot of the altar, adoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, seeing that we are in the presence of Jesus our Redeemer, the living God. Oh, how many sweet thoughts a soul has, inebriated with the love of God! It would wish to throw itself into the divine arms of Jesus who allows her to see the beauty of his infinite Mercy. His presence is felt in the holy place where, more than ever, the Lord speaks to his servants. He invites us to love him, to imitate his divine example, gives fervour to our prayers,

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makes us virtuous, and with his beautiful and most serene grace, gives peace to our hearts and sweetness to our souls. He refreshes us with his heavenly blessings, he gives us perseverance in doing good in his mystical vineyard, guarantees us Paradise, making us walk in the path of his most sweet love.\*

April 19th 1914. Let us go to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; he awaits us there. There he opens our intelligence; the goodness of Jesus has so many beautiful things to say, and waits for souls to visit him. It is all for us . . . he treats rich and poor alike without distinction; and if we are sinners, he treats us with more sweet and gentle charity . . .\*

### “Most sweet dearest Mother”

Admirable, in the *Diario*, is the part relative to the Most Blessed Virgin who reigns in it as if on a throne of flowers.

September 16th 1906: ‘Dearest and Most sweet Mother, be merciful, listen to this your poor little brother, son of St Francis, who cries for your help, your pity and your mercy. You too know how fragile mortal man is. You know my promise made to your Divine Son, my Crucified Jesus, who in every moment of my life will never stop me thinking of him, whom I shall love and bless unceasingly so long as I live. Most Blessed Virgin, help of Christians, advocate of sinners, protect me, help me in all my needs, so that I may never break my promise, which I cherish so much and want to keep.’\*

May 19th 1907. I went to the shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, here in the church of S. Tommaso, alone because I cannot go with other fellow Friars to make my thanksgiving for the food Providence has given us, and I was overcome by interior and exterior distress.

Having completed my thanksgiving, I turned to the Most Blessed Virgin, asking her to deign to obtain for me the grace to bear patiently all adversity for the love of Jesus Crucified.

‘Oh, my dearest and most sweet Mother, great Mother of God, Our Lady, is all heart for anyone who has recourse to her: the mercy and the goodness of Mary Most Holy has no limits! After saying a short prayer, with more tears than words, a sudden sweetness filled my soul with pure and holy affection!’\*

October 13th 1908: ‘Sweetest and dearest Mother, teach me yourself how to make reparation, so that your most holy Name is honoured and sanctified.’

*I advise you to say the Holy Rosary and make the invocation: Blessed be the Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mother of God. Those are the two main points for reparation.\**

November 20th 1908: ‘Most Holy Virgin, blessed by God, you heard the prophecy of Simeon that a sword would pierce your heart. Be kind and show me, a poor sinner, how to suffer well during the life I have to live in the short time that still remains to me, and let the memory of your immense sufferings be for me the greatest of encouragements.

‘Most Holy Virgin, how much torment and pangs there was in your Heart when you accompanied your Son on the Via Dolorosa! O great Mother of God, sad Teacher of suffering, teach your servant how to suffer willingly for the love of your Divine Son,

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my good Jesus.’\*

November 29th 1908. The Most Blessed Virgin said that the Eternal Father has invested her with limitless power and grace, at that it is enough to pronounce the most holy Name of Mary, for the most merciful Mother of the Saviour to be present.\*

December 16th 1908: ‘And you, O Virgin, beautiful as Paradise is beautiful, whom God with his hand has made powerful, guide our steps and make us live virtuously, holy in your sight. Lead us yourself to the feet of our pure and holy Love, your and our Bread of life, Jesus Crucified.’\*

December 16th 1908: ‘Oh, Most Holy dearest Mother, I am small with no memory. However great my desire to turn my thoughts often to the great Mother of God, my mind goes elsewhere! Send my good Guardian Angel often to me; remind me of yourself at least every quarter of an hour, and I’ll send you a greeting to make pious reparation to your most holy Name.’\*

January 14th 1909: ‘Dearest Most Holy Mother, help me to spread, by order of the Vicar of your Divine Son, the holy Devotion all over the world, so that reparation may be made for so many evil things done against God, Jesus Crucified, my Most Holy Love.’\*

January 30th 1910. For all the time of my life, I will never tire of appealing to souls, so that they may have great love for the Mother of Jesus Crucified, our Most Holy Saviour. There, in that maternal Heart, they will find an abyss of sweetness, goodness, inexhaustible mercy; and joy in the course of their life and a most blessed fate in death. She is most tender and most sweet love; how many interior consolations she communicates to our souls, and what sweet intimacy unparalleled anywhere in the world. . . . She comforts us in our distress; with her ineffable sweetness, she beatifies the hearts of those who love her; gives back joyfulness to those who make themselves hers. If grace has been lost, with intense maternal love, she clasps us to her loving Heart, and with bonds of mercy, makes us all her own once more.

‘Who does not love you, O my Most Holy Mother, gift of Jesus Most High? You caress us in our infirmity; you visit us with angelic love; you comfort the distressed soul with the most sweet gentleness.’\*

February 2nd 1910. How many heavenly thoughts are suggested by the Most Holy Virgin!

‘Your name, O Blessed Virgin, is incomprehensible. You are the glory of Christianity and of the repentant sinner; we find our truest happiness in your love! Your most holy Name fills the heart with gladness, with heavenly joy! You are the defence, the medicine against all poisons of the soul and body. You are for your devoted servants heaven anticipated. You are the triumph of the Vicar of your Divine Son and of the Church. You are the salvation, the grace of those who invoke your most holy Name. You are the joy, the comfort, the delight of the dying. You are our glory, our happiness. You are the Mother with the greatest concern for our salvation. You are the peace of our soul, our comfort in sorrow.

‘You are the only consolation of repentant sinners and their sweetest refuge. You are the Mother who binds those devoted to you with golden chains, and gives them salvation and love. You are our repose, our ineffable joy. You are the most precious gem of the Eternal Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. You are the most

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merciful oracle: heaven and earth bow down to greet you. You are the masterpiece of the Divine hands which made you for us. You are the stairway of the Saints who through you achieved the highest perfection. You are the invincible, insuperable and powerful love which captivates souls, heaven and earth! You are the Mother of Good Counsel; console the Holy Father together with your Divine Son. You are the glory of the angels, the saints and the blessed: may heaven, earth and all created things bow down before you.’\*

### “Love and prayers to the Mother of God”

October 27<sup>th</sup> 1910. Morning prayer is a foundation for the sanctification of the whole day.

‘You, O merciful Virgin, who look kindly on our prayers, are the lily of innocence and purity. Adorn me too with these supreme virtues! I bless you, Mother of God!

‘You are the most sweet enchantment of our life, the passion and joy of holy love. You draw us to the foot of your holy altars with totally heavenly words and loving intimacy; and from your throne where you sit as Queen, you utter sweet words, saying: *“For you I have a passionate love: be my faithful devoted follower”* I bless you, Queen of the Angels!

‘You, great Mother of my Lord, are a prodigy of clemency and exultation for the pious faithful. I wish to serve you on this earth; make me share in your glory in heaven! I bless you, Our Lady!

‘You are our most tender Mother; your Name, O Mary, resounds with ineffable sweetness for those who serve you with ardent love and fidelity. I bless you, Mother Most Holy!

‘Hail, beautiful Virgin! With your blessed smile bind our heart with precious bonds, and instil in us trust and love on the path to holiness. I bless you, Mother of all consolation!

‘Most loving Queen, who open your lips only to bless; deign to bless also me, O merciful counsellor of souls, and you will make me blessed! May you be blessed, O Holy Mary!’\*

### “Love and prayers to the Mother of my Lord”

‘Virgin, most beautiful of the stars, you are a Queen, majesty, a flame of love! Obtain for me the grace that my will often turn to the foot of the Cross, assured to find the virtue there to fulfil my duties!

‘Sweet consoler, our delight in the midst of our sufferings, show us a little of the joy you had when you saw your Divine Son Jesus Crucified triumph over death!

‘You know, Mother of God, that we are destined to reign. In the dangers of life help us, and have compassion on our poor judgments! Queen of Angels, of heaven and of earth, give me so much grace that I can unite myself with the Seraphim of love to console you, by making reparation to your immaculate maternal Heart!

‘Most loving Mother, dearest Mother of my heart, fill my soul, my heart with flames, and with more grace!

‘Holy Mary, most loved Mother of God and of mercy, I bless you and I thank you! You accepted one day my poor prayers and, as I lay dying, you gave me back my

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previous health instantaneously, and returned me healthy to my poor old mother. She too was dying; and you gave her too a few more months of life, and then closed her eyes as she lay in my arms. I bless you!

‘Most Holy Queen, Mother of my thoughts, accept always in your mercy my poor prayers and carry them to the throne of your Divine Son, my Jesus!

Empress of heaven and earth, inflame my heart with holy love for the most holy Wounds of my all, Jesus Crucified!

‘Mother of God, I want to love you always! You are my peace, you are my blessing, you are my breath, you are the help of my faith; you are the perfume and the collection of the most beautiful virtues; you are the elect of the Eternal Father, fount of grace and of goodness!’\*

### “Love and fidelity to the Queen of Angels”

‘You, dear Mother of God, are the smile of our youth, the hope of our old age, the riches of our poverty, the victorious guardian of our Houses of God!

‘So, you, dear Mother of Jesus, the refuge of sinners, have the power to move the most hardened hearts, you welcome them under your heavenly mantle and promise them the most chaste kiss of your love!

‘You are the protectress of Christian families, the support of mothers, the sweet triumph of those who honour you, you are the invocation at the moment of death, our glory, our joy!

‘Holy Mary, all those who think of you, mend their ways, despising vice; and you make them lovers of chastity and of purity; you make them beautiful like the angels. You are the beauty of our souls, the triumph of our battles against our enemies; you are the splendour of our brow, you are our joy of heaven!

‘You, Virgin of beautiful love, are the joy of my life, you are the eternal happiness of my heart; there is no fatigue or suffering for those who love the Most blessed Virgin Mary!

‘Virgin most Wise and of infinite love for poor humanity, guide us along the sure path; we are inexperienced, you alone know the path of our sanctification, by which we can come to see the glory of God and your glory!

‘Most Holy Mother of God, in silence and in solitude, give me zeal in prayer, honouring and blessing God and his Mercy, and make the most sweet sound of his voice spread throughout the whole world, inspiring sweet virtue and love.

‘You, most exemplary Virgin, are the consoling refreshment of my soul, you are the conversion of the sons who have lost their way; you make sufferings sweet and give peace and life!

‘Virgin all goodness and clemency, from your blessed kingdom turn your merciful gaze constantly to us, so that we, your poor sons, may profess to love you always!

‘Great Lady, rule us always, guard us!

‘You are our Protectress, our happiness and sanctification, our help, our fortress, our model!

‘You, Holy Mother of God, are my grace; through your kindness you are my light; you are my counsel, you are my strength, you are my mercy.’\*

### **Interior life radiating faith**

The effects of lively faith are manifested essentially in practices of piety.

In the Cathedral at Vercelli, Luigi Musso attended every morning the first Mass of the day and performed his devotions with edifying piety.

In the parish of S. Dalmazzo in Turin, every day, he was among the first to enter the church. He served the first Mass and received Holy Communion. He joined the Catholic Men's Association and pursued an apostolate of amiable virtue among the Monferrato workers living in Turin.

At Viale d'Asti, by example and exhortation, he helped the parish priest to establish the recitation of the Rosary and the frequentation of the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion.

At Terruggia, he demonstrated his lively faith in the real presence of Jesus in the Most Holy Eucharist, by going each day, even in bad weather, and for more than a year, to the village of S. Germano to distribute Holy Communion. Then, under the direction of the parish priest of Terruggia, he set up a Catholic Action group for the frequentation of the sacraments; he taught young children catechism, and attracted the local population to the church of S. Grato for the recitation of the Rosary.

When, because of circumstances beyond the control of the Servant of God, this practice of piety was stopped, he did not stop working for the good of souls and, on Sunday afternoons, after the parish services, he gathered pious faithful in the cemetery for the recitation of the rosary for the dead.

At Casale, in both the church of S. Paolo and that of S. Antonio, he gave great example by his fervour and recollection as he performed his practices of piety.

Back in Turin, everyday he visited the shrine of Our Lady of Consolation where he rekindled his faith more and more.

Having joined the Friars Minor, he gave himself up to an intense life of prayer, which began at three or four in the morning, and continued with ejaculatory prayers during his work, and ended only around midnight.

For twenty years of misunderstanding and suffering, he sought no other comfort except that coming from Jesus Crucified, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and from his dearest and Most Holy heavenly Mother.

### **Faithful testimony**

Fra Leopoldo's apostolate was humble but very effective: he offered individuals good advice and kind reprimands.

Christian friendship was for him a great means for coming close to souls and inducing them to do good, but his main concern was for young people whom he was able to attract by his courteous approach. Ardent zeal drove him to do good to all, but in a particular way, to his professional colleagues who at Vercelli would call him 'the priest' because of his activities. Although aware of this, he continued on his way with renewed fervour, convinced that as a lay person he could go where priests found their way blocked; and in this manner he served as a precursor of God's ministers.

The practice of the Easter observances by his friends was one of the principal aims

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of his apostolate. Invitations, prayers, exhortations, insistence and a thousand other devices were used to ensure no one neglected the obligatory act of piety which renders the soul able to receive a greater abundance of grace.

Subsequently, he kept an eye on his 'little Easter people', and when he could get hold of them, he found a way of making them receive Holy Communion on other occasions also.

When he became a religious, he redoubled his zeal, and there was not a single boy in the little oratory of S. Tommaso who was not joyfully approached by him, and by his kind words, induced to do good and to pray.

The letters of Fra Leopoldo were almost all concerned with making people love God and practise our holy religion. In one of them, dated March 13th 1906, he wrote to his own brother as follows:

I recommend to your daughters never to neglect their devotion to God and Mary Most Holy. Mainly, they should often go to Holy Communion, and in this way they will obtain much grace and the most beautiful blessings for the house where they live. Let them be a good example of Christian piety; it will help them in the career they will undertake.

They should trample on human respect, that is, when someone laughs at them, they should simply carry on without paying attention to him, and the day that comes for everybody will come, and the victory will be for your good daughters. And you, who will have brought them up in a Christian manner, will have God's blessing.

Fra Leopoldo's influence was a decisive factor in the missionary vocation of Fr Giuseppe Maria Visetti in the Holy Land, working for the Latin Patriarch, where he spread the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, a sweet mission entrusted to him by Fra Leopoldo. He took this mission very much heart, overseeing the translation of the Devotion into Arabic, and having the consolation before he died of seeing it authorised by His Beatitude the Patriarch of Jerusalem.

In the Friary of S. Tommaso, he exhorted the young missionaries to go out with great enthusiasm to save many souls and, with holy envy of their future mission, he would add: 'If I were not old, I too would go to the missions!'

But it was the decision of Divine Providence that he should live in a city like Turin with its fervent activity, and in a parish at its centre like that of S. Tommaso, so that he could develop his missionary spirit.

During the 1915–1918 War, he greeted the soldiers who happened to come to the parish or to the friary, with great affability and he encouraged them in a pleasant way to practise the Devotion to Jesus Crucified and to Our Lady. When some showed they were not interested, he suffered greatly and he recommended himself to the prayers of others, seeking help in order to instruct them in the truths of the faith.

In his cell, he kept a small statue of Our Lady of Consolation and a crucifix, before which he unburdened his apostolic soul and received instructions for those recommended to his prayers, especially soldiers who came to him before leaving for the front, almost entrusting their fate to the efficacy of his prayers.

Having made them promise always to be good Christians, he blessed them as they set off, and placed a slip of paper with their name on it at the feet of his Crucified

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Jesus. Many came back to see him after the war to thank him and to assure him that they had kept the promise they had made in the time of trial.

In the last years of his life, his apostolic fervour was directed mainly to the young Catechists whom he ardently encouraged to persevere in the pious Union, calling them the chosen ones of Jesus, because they dedicated themselves to the teaching of catechism.

He recommended them in a special way to observe their Rules and follow the advice of the Brother Director, and to choose the best pupils in their catechism classes to make them also apostles of good in the world.

As a lover of the Seraphic Order, he recommended many to join it, or at least to become Tertiaries, assuring them that the Lord would help them to observe the Rules.

He advised them not to fear the temptations of the demon, but to be willing to fight them, trusting in the Lord's help.

He was also most zealous in promoting daily Communion, and involvement in the priestly functions open to the laity. He often concluded his recommendations with the following words: 'Help the Lord, and the Lord will help you'.

Consoling the afflicted and restoring confidence in the discouraged, Fra Leopoldo carried out a true apostolate of Christian perseverance in particular among young people.

The basis for all his activity was the Devotion to Jesus Crucified. One day during Lent in 1917, when he went into the S. Giovanni Hospital, where he was very well known, he was surrounded by a large group of Sisters of Charity, who cried out to him: 'Fra Leopoldo, how many crosses! How many crosses!' The face of the Servant of God became very solemn and he raised his eyes to Heaven. He then withdrew from his coarse cloth bag some Devotion to Jesus Crucified leaflets, and with a gentle and heavenly smile, he handed them to the Sisters, saying: 'Here is the medicine'.

Present at this incident there was the Catechist Giovanni Cesone, who met the Servant of God for the first time and was so won over by him that subsequently he had many conversations with him which were most useful for himself and for other Catechists.

Another one of his apostolates which was very successful was that of sending young men to the seminary or to religious life. By his words and writings, he took pains to support their constancy in moments of difficulty, and recommended them to benefactors for help with their expenses.

### The support of Hope

Very many passages of the *Diario* are vibrant with holy hope, inspiring souls with great trust in God, as well as a serene vision of his mercies.

October 12th 1906. Oh, repentant souls with humbled hearts! Good Jesus welcomes them with such Mercy, pity and love!

Ah, if sinners knew what lies hidden in Jesus Crucified, instead of blaspheming against his Most Holy Name, they would throw themselves prostrate to the ground; they would be consumed with grief, imploring God's greatest Mercy. How good the Lord is! Jesus Crucified awaits us to embrace us, to give us the kiss of peace, to call

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us brothers, speaking a totally heavenly language. He transforms us sinners, he turns us into angels with holy ways of acting; and finally he sends the spirit into raptures with seraphic sentiments, making our souls so beautiful that the mind of man is too small to understand it.\*

July 28th 1908. How Merciful is God! When people of the world are insulted they do not forgive so easily. Only God extends his arms to give us the kiss of peace.\*

December 15th 1908. Where are you, O my Lord? You're not speaking to me this morning? You have left me. But even if you are far away I shall follow you; I shall run without stopping until I reach you. Is it because I am a sinner? And you would want to leave me like that, abandoned, lifeless, without strength, without support? Ah, I know my Jesus well, and his immense Mercy! Certainly I do not want to become discouraged, I do not wish to tire myself out, before I have come close again to my Crucified Jesus!\*

February 4th 1910. The innocent soul is almost always smiling, leads a chaste life, united to God. What strength of soul, what sweet nobility! Only God can enable the soul dear to him to resist any obstacle however great. He conquers all that by loving God and the Most Blessed Virgin, our consolation and glory!\*

February 20th 1910. God is always seeking sinners! Do not be troubled, O man, if you have lost innocence of heart; you still have time to regain it by penitence, by confession. And so, we remain noble, and the Mercy of God grants us the grace to see him in his glorious bliss in the kingdom of Heaven!\*

December 27th 1910. You, O blessed Cross, you are our hope and consolation in distress, in suffering and affliction; you are a light for our mind, and come with the most loving kindness and charity to alleviate our suffering, pouring wondrously such peace into our embittered heart that our distress is changed into ineffable sweetness. Those are the characteristics of the love and Mercy of our Most Holy Crucified Jesus! \*

April 18th 1912. On the way mapped out by Providence in order to reach God, there are certain steep and thorny paths which present many difficulties for our minds and our courage. But the goodness of God being infinite, he extends his Divine and merciful arms to us, he supports us, he helps us to climb the holy mountain, and brings us close to eternal happiness to enjoy the beautiful brilliant glory of the Lord.\*

### **Divine comfort in the trials of life**

Between the ages of 20 and 50, Luigi Musso, having placed himself completely in the hands of Divine Providence, lived in very financially straitened circumstances in order to provide for his poor and infirm mother.

Dismissed from the *Collegio Dal Pozzo* in Vercelli because of the calumny of his fellow-servants; and although he saw all sources of income taken away from him, seeing himself barred from access to any other employment in the town, he never lost hope and, as a witness testified, 'even in such circumstances, he did not lose his usual calmness'.

In Turin, while speaking with close friends, he was sometimes asked, how he would manage after the death of his mother, and 'although such thoughts could be a reason for concern for him, he would raise his eyes to heaven and immediately

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recovered his smiling composure, as one who has placed all his hope in God’.

Back in his home town, he suffered moments of depression and prostration because of the way he was abandoned by some, even by the parish priest and some relatives. He was afflicted also by painful trials and quite serious difficulties regarding his faith, but firmly anchored in the unshakable foundation of the love of God, his hope never wavered, hope which had the remarkable ability to penetrate even the most disheartened souls.

### The love of God

Regarding this topic, here is the passionate testimony drawn from the *Diario* which bears eloquent witness to the intense and highly spiritual life of the Servant of God.

September 24th 1906. Ah, not to be able to write words of passionate love to let the whole world know of the greatness and goodness of God!\*

June 25th 1908: ‘Sweet Jesus, you are my powerful arm; I would prefer to be pulled to pieces rather than disappoint your love.’\*

July 30th 1908. Better to spend an hour speaking with Jesus Crucified, than enjoy a hundred years of pleasures in this deceitful world, which promises happiness it has never possessed.\*

August 7th 1908: ‘Give me, O Lord, the grace to adore you; give me all the crucifixes which once were displayed for adoration and veneration, and now, with such disdain, people no longer want. Give me so much grace, O my Crucified God, that, adoring you, I adore you also on all the Crosses that have been treated with such disdain. People want you forgotten even by believers, and make you hated, tearing away what is most sacred, that is, the halo of the Divinity. My God, what horror! Ah, my Lord, raise up again in our days, generous souls such as St Bernardine, St Anthony and other saints for the confusion of the wicked, so that just reparation may be made to your Most Holy Name. Unceasing praise and thanksgiving to Jesus Crucified, true Son of the living God and of Mary Most Holy, and to the Most Blessed Sacrament!’\*

September 17th 1908. My good Jesus is always asking for love and I answered him: ‘My sweet God, give me love in exchange for those who do not love you, and by your power and charity seal my heart when sweet and holy love reaches its peak. May I not depart from your Mercy for as long as I live! While to others you have granted great learning and other gifts, and they are consecrated to your service, to me, my God Jesus Crucified, give me your love. Although I am ignorant of learning, I desire to love you passionately in your immense Heart, so as to make reparation, by your grace, for the errors of those who ought with good reason be examples for others.’\*

October 5th 1908: ‘How I love you, O my God! Yes, because you were moved by my distress; you have done everything for me; you have clothed me in a white garment and have handed me your Heart for safekeeping!

‘O, Heaven, Heaven! And who can take us away from the pierced Heart of Jesus, furnace and fire of immense love? My Most High God. When will I be set free from the bonds that hold me here below? When will I see your Divine face?’\*

November 19th 1908: ‘As for me, I want only you, my Jesus, I do not want to know anything else except you. May your Most Sweet Name resound unceasingly in my

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mind, in my mouth, in my heart. I want to die with my Most Holy Jesus.’\*

January 5th 1909: ‘My beautiful Jesus, my Holy love; you know, my Lord, that all the honours and riches of this world are worthless in my eyes! I want only you, my God; your grace, your love for me is Paradise. And if no one cares for me, so much the better! My Jesus who watches over me, in his Mercy, is everything for me.’\*

January 13th 1909: ‘My beloved Lord, God Most High, my Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, put love and adoration in me, in the place of those unhappy rebellious brothers who would wish to divest you of your Divinity. Enable me, O infinite goodness, by means of your Devotion, O Jesus Crucified, to find millions of souls who will make reparation.’\*

July 13th 1909: My glory, my love, all my most precious joy is my Most Holy Crucified Jesus, and with him, of course, the great Mother of God, the Virgin Mary! And even if I owned the whole world, I would leave everything to follow my Jesus. And rather than fail to respond to his love, it would be better, in God’s Mercy, if he took me out of this world by the death of my body.\*

October 10th 1909: ‘Lord, it seems like eternity the time I have to wait to come to you, my good, my love; and when I am in intimate conversation with you, my Crucified Jesus, time passes like a flash, and I can never have enough. What happiness to be with God Jesus Crucified, to love him, praise him, bless him, adore him, glorify him, repeating with the Church, our most pure Mother: *Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat!* Yes, my Lord, he reigns in my soul, in my heart, in my body. Take me with you, with all your virtues, and make me worthy to bless you and glorify you for all eternity.’\*

### The transfiguration of life through charity

September 2nd 1908. The Most Holy Virgin told me that whoever wanted to become holy quickly should love Jesus, and she would give to those who loved her Divine Son a foretaste of heavenly sweetness.\*

Love for his Crucified Jesus woke Fra Leopoldo early in the morning and kept him praying prostrate at his feet for two hours.

This same love made him ‘impatient’ to receive Jesus in Holy Communion, drew him back to his room after breakfast, where he stayed for an hour or so performing the Devotion in thanksgiving for Holy Communion. Fervent invocations to Jesus Crucified and Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament broke from his lips throughout his work.

After lunch, love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament brought Fra Leopoldo into the Church where he remained for a long time.

In the evening, after supper, such was his longing to visit the Blessed Sacrament that he had to make great efforts not to go into ecstasy in front of his fellow friars, when they delayed leaving the refectory. As soon as he finished his work, he went to the foot of the altar and there, in silence and alone, he climbed up the steps on his knees, praying, until he was close to the Holy Tabernacle, where he remained at least until ten o’clock in intimate conversation with his Jesus.

On returning to his room, he would prostrate himself at the feet of his Crucified Jesus, and remained there in fervent prayer until midnight. This was the kind of life

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Fra Leopoldo led for twenty years of life in the cloister.

### Love of neighbour

August 9th 1908. I invite the pious reader to follow the advice given in the lines that follow if he wants paradise on this earth. Even in the midst of sufferings, the Lord will grant him so much grace at times to taste heavenly sweetness, that it would be a preparation for the last day of our life. Are you rich? Leave your riches, or if you don't want to leave them, live as if you didn't have them, that is, use them for good. Do you have many highly-placed people around you? Leave them in peace. Do you have relatives, affectionate friends? Pray for them!

The secret for coming close to Jesus Christ is to love seclusion and solitude. Live only for Jesus, and good Jesus Crucified will surely manifest himself in all his goodness, which will seem to have only your beautiful soul on which to shower in profusion the most exquisite graces.\*

September 25th 1908: 'My Jesus, through your Blood shed for us poor mortals, have pity on all dying people who will die this night.'\*

December 27th 1908: 'My God, my Lord, I am not content that you love so much only me: I want you to love all the sinners in the world; I want you to call them to the straight path by means of your Vicar the Pope; call them, O Jesus, show your cross, marked by your most painful Sacrifice, that is, stained with your Blood; and by means of the Devotion to the five Wounds, imprint on their minds and their hearts the thought of the love you showed by your painful death for the salvation of all; show your most sacred hands and feet, pierced by the nails, and the Side, so that man can mend his ways and be saved by your infinite merits.'\*

December 29th 1908: 'O most sweet and dear Mother, more merciful than all the mothers of the world put together, make your pity manifest itself in all its power for the honour and glory of your Divine Son, who redeemed us and made you so great; and with that Mother's heart of yours and through your immense charity, make all those poor unfortunate people who have the hideous misfortune of despising what is good, mend their ways, and may the Mercy bestowed upon them be copious.

'By virtue of the Most High, through your powerful intercession and through your merits, give them back their faith, pardon, light, love.

'In short, my most sweet and dearest Mother, you have to save everybody; remember that we are all your sons redeemed by the most precious blood of your Divine Son Jesus Crucified, true Son of God.'\*

December 30th 1908: 'Teach me, O my God, the way in which the whole world can come close to you and experience how sweet it is to serve and love the Lord! O most holy Sun, who with your Divine light you enlighten minds, change the hearts of the whole human race so that faith and love return to the souls which unfortunately have lost them.

'O Love of all most chaste and innocent loves, O Lord, by your power bind in chains all the hearts created by you; inflame them with your divine fire, and make them all practise, with immense joy, the most beautiful and the sweetest virtues which make all the angels in Paradise rejoice!'

January 4th 1909: 'My Jesus, in your infinite Mercy, grant that the whole world may

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taste how sweet and delightful it is to love you with the love of the angels by means of the Devotion which you have given us.’\*

January 7th 1909: ‘O Jesus, O Mary, call back once again, and then again, the poor sinful brothers so that they may return to the path of salvation, and make them worthy, in your Mercy, to praise and bless you for all eternity!’\*

April 3rd 1909: ‘Well, my Jesus, I won’t get up from the foot of the Cross until you, O my beautiful and Most Holy Jesus, promise me the salvation of the world and of all the souls who enter eternity.

‘My Lord, my God, through all your sufferings, pain, martyrdom; through your most precious Blood, and through all the prayers said during the Adoration of your most sacred Wounds, save all the stubborn people who have offended you so much. Give them a long Purgatory, if you wish, but let all of them be saved. You have said to me that I am the master of your Divine Heart, and so I won’t get up from your feet until you grant me this grace.’\*

April 7th 1914: ‘Heavenly God the Father, through the merits of your Divine Son Jesus and of Mary Most Holy, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, grant that, by adoring the only begotten Son, Jesus Crucified, the young people who before the Divine gaze are becoming the new generation, may grow up strong in their faith, in your love, in holiness.’\*

### The constructive power of Christian love

Such ardent tones were always confirmed by the conduct of the Servant of God: zeal, generosity in forgiving, fraternal concern for the afflicted were a constant component of his life. And at Vercelli, he was seen to continue his Christian apostolate with a young man, and in the face of and despite others’ silent hostility; in Turin, he gathered young people from the parish of S. Massimo to teach them catechism; and on tired evenings, he brought together young workers from Monferrato to instruct them and induce them to adopt pious practices. In Terruggia, he extended wherever possible this same charity to young people entrusted to him by the parish priest, and to the young people he prepared for their monthly Communion . . .

For the ill people of the town, he was with tireless zeal, an infirmarian, a helper and a cook.

As a good servant of God, he suffered persecution: he was a victim of the arrows of calumny but he was not slow to pardon, and was generous in forgetting. And, in Viale d’Asti, the relatives of the Conte di Chiusano were much edified by his Christian heroism when they saw him treat one of his calumniators with great courtesy.

A cousin and a resident of the same town recalls that the parish priest, on whose account Fra Leopoldo had been obliged to go to another town to receive Communion, and who had put an end to the recitation of the Rosary in S. Grato, had occasion to go to the Friary of S. Tommaso in Turin, where he was received by Fra Leopoldo with such kindness and sincere affability, that he was much moved, and on returning to Terruggia, told the cousin of the excellent impression he had made on him.

The witness attests also that Fra Leopoldo always treated this parish priest, in a

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variety of circumstances, with kindly considerateness.

He never harboured resentment against those who made him suffer. In the ten years I was in contact with him I did not hear a single word of complaint against anyone.



7: 14, Via Rosine, Turin, the cradle of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate. Fra Teodoreto spent most of his life here, as the headmaster of the local Vittorio Amadeo III school, and he would leave from here when he went to visit Fra Leopoldo.

## CHAPTER 20

# The moral character of Fra Leopoldo

### Basic orientation

When Luigi Musso realised in Vercelli that he had come across an unworthy employer, he left no stone unturned until, in the person of Canon Mgr Miglioni, he had found another in tune with his religious aspirations.

It was then he adopted the habit of working for the honour of God, in order to avoid occasions of sin. He taught himself to cook, to sew and to make artificial flowers for the church.

From that time onwards until his death, with such occupations added to his regular job, he was never seen to be idle.

In Turin, he joined the Catholic Men's association in the parish of S. Dalmazzo, and was always assiduous and punctual at these meetings from he drew the help he needed to persevere in his pursuit of good.

From this same parish, he chose a Fr Giulio Giuseppe Cozzi as his spiritual director, and he continued to follow his wise advice even after leaving Turin.

At Viale d'Asti, he pursued an apostolate on an individual basis, inducing the local people to take part in the religious functions of the parish, and he took advantage of any opportunity that presented itself to extend his holy invitation. He did all this with great reserve, as a good mother of a family noted:

He greeted everyone, without, however, looking at anybody straight in the face, especially if they were women or girls.<sup>1</sup>

His kitchen assistant wrote:

Not only during the time we spent together at Viale, but also when he lived at Turin, Luigi Musso always led a most pure life, that is, reserved, modest and very religious.<sup>2</sup>

At Terruggia, when he was refused Holy Communion by the parish priest, the Servant of God behaved himself with such prudence for so long that he won over the full confidence of the same parish priest, who went on to appoint him the President of the parish Catholic Action group.

Always calm and serene, in his family life he spoke little and did not allow anyone to speak badly of his neighbour, especially of priests or religious persons';<sup>3</sup> his face was kind and joyful, and 'he would speak of some edifying fact and then, taking his leave politely of those present, he would retire to his own room to perform his

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1 Clara Conti from Viale d'Asti.

2 Luigi Francesco Nebiolo.

3 Luigia Musso, niece of Fra Leopoldo.

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exercises of piety.<sup>4</sup>

Later, when there were hostile demonstrations against the parish priest, organised by some to protest against the prohibition to recite the rosary in S. Grato and the closure of this church, the Servant of God not only refused to play any part in these protests, but advised against them, opposed them and was displeased by them.

Although initially some of the local people had thought Luigi Musso was the main instigator of these protests, once the full facts were revealed, they recognised that he had behaved in an 'irreproachable' way, and that the decisions made by the authorities were due to causes extraneous to the Servant of God, for whose conduct the parish priest himself, questioned by me, had only the highest praise, leaving me a written account of the events in which it is attested that 'Luigi Musso in Terruggia, has always behaved in an excellent manner, as a fervent Christian.'<sup>5</sup>

While he was still in the world, the Servant of God was greatly esteemed for his advice and his efforts to induce his companions to lead a Christian life. He was held in great consideration by everyone because his advice was truly prudent.

His prudent cautiousness was manifest also in the choice he made of the religious state, a choice preceded by much prayer and practical experience as a servant-cum-cook in the friary of S. Paolo at Casale Monferrato.

Once he was a religious, his life became very secluded and completely concentrated on his Crucified Jesus.

To the Servant of God, Paolo Pio Perazzo, a very close friend of his, who was urging him to make a visit, he replied: 'I became a Friar in order to abandon the world, and I have no intention of making new acquaintances.'

Fra Leopoldo did not trust himself, but would recollect himself in prayer, ask advice from priests and especially from superiors and spiritual directors, to whom he submitted his doubts and the communications he received from God.

In his principal undertaking, that is, the spread of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, Fra Leopoldo showed an uncommon prudence. Finding himself among people who for the most part could not help him, and some of whom, through a lack of understanding, hindered his activities, he was able, without upsetting anyone, and without leaving his seclusion, to spread knowledge about the Devotion to Jesus Crucified in a way that attracted the admiration of all.

'I shall pray and then I shall give you an answer' was the answer he gave to those who asked him about various things, and at the same time, he recommended with much insistence that people should make discreet use of the answers he gave them as being the result of prayer. That is why all those who came to him were greatly impressed not only by his simplicity, but especially by his great prudence and precise certainty of his advice.

Fra Leopoldo's advice was sought also by persons belonging to the upper classes of society, such as, teachers, magistrates, nobles, officials and ecclesiastics, including even prelates renowned for their high quality and expertise.

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4 Angela Cavallone, cousin of Fra Leopoldo.

5 Mgr Gerolamo Robba, parish priest of Terruggia.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

One religious wrote: 'At a time when I was in disagreement with my superiors and was tempted to leave the Order, the advice of Fra Leopoldo to whom I had had recourse, saved me from that danger.'

### **The man yearning for justice**

The sense of justice was very strong in Fra Leopoldo. At Vercelli, because he did not allow any of the pay he received for his work in the kitchen to be deducted, he drew down upon himself the anger and opposition of some of the other servants who, seeing his intransigence, ended up by levelling calumnies at him and having him dismissed from his employment.<sup>6</sup>

When he worked for Canon Mgr Miglione, he looked after his interests as if they were his own.

With his friend Giuseppe Necco he fulfilled the duties imposed by true friendship, not only at Vercelli, but also in Turin and up to the time of his death.

Nor did he fail to give God what belonged to God. Most exact in his attendance at services in the cathedral at Vercelli, he made every effort to induce his fellow workers to fulfil their duties as Christians.

In Turin, he received a fixed sum from his employers for each of his table companions, and with that sum he had to provide what was needed each day. The sum was somewhat small, and in order to provide a large amount for little money, he did not spare his efforts in combing the town in search of shopkeepers who charged honest prices for foodstuffs. It often happened that the provisions he bought with the fixed sum did not amount to much, and then the Servant of God sacrificed his own share to satisfy his employers and fellow servants.

Later, at Viale d'Asti, where there was no choice of suppliers, and one had to accept the prices of the local people who were not slow to take advantage of an opportunity to make the lords of the 'manor' pay for their holidays, the fixed sum was not enough to provide enough food to satisfy the appetite, in particular, of the young people. And although there were complaints about the lack of food, neither the employers or the fellow servants ever expressed any doubt about the honesty and justice of the Servant of God in his use of the money entrusted to him.

One of his companions and a friend, first at Vercelli and then in Turin, wrote of him:

Where conscience and justice were concerned regarding his employers or the carrying out of his duties, I can attest that he was careful to the point of scrupulosity.<sup>7</sup>

When he was employed by the Camillian Fathers of Casale Monferrato, they told some Franciscans that 'he fulfilled his duty as cook in an excellent manner and saw to the shopping for the house with great honesty.'

One of the Vacca brothers, who ran a hostel in Turin for workers from Monferrato, wrote:

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<sup>6</sup> See appendix.

<sup>7</sup> Giuseppe Necco.

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If our good Luigi heard one of the youngsters using bad language, he would say kindly: “Don’t say things like that, it’s bad, it offends Our Lord”, and he acted in such a way that everyone obeyed him.<sup>8</sup>

For thirty years, that is, as long as his mother was alive, he fulfilled his duties towards her in an admirable way, making any sacrifice necessary to give her pleasure.

When he became a religious and worked as a cook, he was very accurate in the way he kept the shopping accounts, and in all his other duties in the friary.

His conscience was so delicate that he edified all those who came into contact with him. He was fair and sincere, and treated everyone well without distinction. When he rendered a service it was always with the most exquisite courtesy, and he did so as if it was for him to thank others for calling him to render this service, which he saw as being rendered to Jesus.

Even with importunate persons, he kept his usual smile, and with a combination of kindness and frankness, he pointed out he was obliged to follow the timetable and rules of the community, and the orders of his superiors.

He showed gratitude to anyone who did him the smallest favour, or who had been even very slightly kind to him. He never let the occurrence of events or feasts pass without expressing sentiments of thoughtful gratitude to benefactors and friends.

He had a great love for Italy and prayed and offered many sacrifices for it, especially during the 1915–1918 war. During general and local elections, Fra Leopoldo advised people to fulfil their duty to the country as their conscience dictated.

The Servant of God was never known to say a word or act in a way that lacked respect or deference for superiors, even if the latter had at times been somewhat demanding in his regard.

One of his superiors wrote:

Regarding the virtue of justice, I affirm that Fra Leopoldo never failed in his duties to God, towards himself and towards his neighbour. He always fulfilled them exactly and precisely, without exaggeration. He also fulfilled the duties of his state to the point of sacrifice accomplished simply and without ostentation.<sup>9</sup>

With practice and prayer, Fra Leopoldo had achieved constant mastery over himself, to the point of controlling completely his sensitive nature, and remaining calm and serene even in most difficult circumstances.

In Vercelli, when he was dismissed from his job because of slanderous accusations ‘he did not lose his usual calmness’,<sup>10</sup> but after having done all he had to to demonstrate his innocence, he accepted the trial with Christian fortitude.

Invited to replace the sacristan of S. Dalmazzo in accompanying the Holy Viaticum through the streets of Turin, Luigi Musso was assailed by a temptation of human respect, but a few moments of reflection were enough for him to win a total and definitive battle regarding this question.\*

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8 Luigi Vacca.

9 Fr Vincenzo Vallaro, OFM, parish priest of S. Tommaso in Turin.

10 Antonio Averone from Vercelli.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

A close friend of his from Turin wrote:

He was always patient, so much so that I never saw my dear Luis in a bad mood. He never complained about anybody, and he was always serene in the face of crosses and adversity.<sup>11</sup>

Also, one of his fellow servants from Viale d'Asti wrote:

I never saw him angry: he accepted with serenity and resignation the trials of life, and was always in a good humour and smiling.<sup>12</sup>

At Terruggia, the Servant of God 'was edifying by his practice of patience, and never complained about his crosses which he accepted in a spirit of sacrifice, smiling and almost joyfully.

As he sought to draw souls to God, various local people opposed him, and even some relatives laughed at him because of his lifestyle. His adversaries increased in number and boldness when the parish priest forbade meetings to say the rosary. He bore this trial with fortitude and obeyed without complaining.<sup>13</sup>

When he entered religious life, Fra Leopoldo made further progress in the virtue of fortitude at the feet of Jesus Crucified and before the Blessed Sacrament.

One of his kitchen assistants in the friary of S. Tommaso wrote:

Fra Leopoldo possessed a special virtue of patience and he always said "May God's will be done". I never once saw him irritated (in 18 years of being together), and no obstacle, no insult could upset him. Always serene, he forgave without ever complaining about anybody. I know, however, that he had special struggles with the demon. That damned spirit came to trouble him even in the kitchen, as he frankly admitted.

One day as he was praying in his cell, the demon shook and struck him violently, and in order to free himself from him, he took up his discipline, redoubled his prayers, struck his own body, and freed himself.<sup>14</sup>

A priest who knew him intimately wrote: 'At the beginning of religious life, the demon visibly tormented him.' But he put his trust in the Lord and by prayer and penance came out victorious.

The fortitude of Fra Leopoldo showed itself also in the way he bore bodily infirmity. In the seven years he spent in the basement kitchen of the Conti di Chiusano, at 12 via Bogino, he developed rheumatism which caused him much suffering. Constantly feverish, especially in the last years of his life, he had the fortitude necessary to fulfil his duties as cook as well as other responsibilities in the friary up to the last week of his 72 years, when he fell victim to the illness which carried him to his grave.

From reading the personal *Diario* of Fra Leopoldo, it is clear that, sustained by supernatural help, he achieved the greatest heights of the virtue of fortitude.

One of his superiors at the friary of S. Tommaso wrote:

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11 Luigi Vacca.

12 Emilio Navone.

13 Assunta Scagliotti.

14 Sebastiano Ellena, Fra Leopoldo's assistant cook in the friary of S. Tommaso in Turin.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

I never Fra Leopoldo angry (in 19 years of life together); he was able to master himself, to halt movements of anger at times of confrontation. He bore with the patience of the saints the tribulations of life, and the sting of unfriendly tongues. Casting a glance to heaven, and with a smile on his lips, he would repeat “Everything for you, O Lord!”. He had a regular life, without its highs and its lows, always the same, in *prosperis* giving praise to God, and in *adversis* imploring the help needed to bear the cross.<sup>15</sup>

A Franciscan priest wrote:

That Fra Leopoldo had to suffer at the hands of certain people, I learned from others, but not from him: he was able to excuse and defend everybody’. What was closest to the heart of the Servant of God was the fulfilment of the mission Jesus and Most Holy Mary had entrusted to him: to spread the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, promote and support the pious Union and the foundation of the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*. It was precisely in this that he had the most opposition and disappointments, which he bore with heroic fortitude.

He suffered but he never lost his confidence and calmness, because he drew his strength from Jesus Crucified. He recognised he was simply the spokesman for the Lord, and while he was most compliant in what depended on him personally, he was on the contrary precise and firm regarding what he had to transmit by order of Jesus and Most Holy Mary.

When uncertainty arose regarding what name to give to the vocational school, various written requests came to him regarding the matter, and these he was careful to place at the foot of the crucifix and beside the tabernacle in order to receive an answer there.

Since subsequently he always heard the name *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*, he simply transmitted it, affirming simply: ‘This is name wanted by God’. His constancy in affirming this wish of Jesus, cost him most bitter suffering, which left him always calm and resigned.

The most serious trial, borne with supreme fortitude, beset Fra Leopoldo a few months before his death.

In December 1921, after he had suffered so much because of the disagreement regarding the name *Casa di Carita*, I heard some derogatory remarks about the servant of God, and a mention of an investigation into his life. I searched my mind to see if there was anything vulnerable about him, so as to help him, as a close friend, to be exonerated by the investigation, but it never took place. Despite my diligent research I found nothing about Fra Leopoldo that I could fault, but I wondered whether after the departure of his spiritual director he had chosen another one who was aware of his extraordinary conversations. I thought then I would go to see the Servant of God to urge him, if he had not already done so, to choose a spiritual director, so that in the eventuality of an investigation he would not be found lacking in some way.

In the meantime, still in connection with the *Casa di Carita*, Fra Leopoldo’s superiors had remonstrated with him, and had ordered him not to receive visits from

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<sup>15</sup> Fr Vincenzo Vallaro.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

any outsiders, and to have nothing more to do with the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*.

Someone had told Fra Leopoldo – there was no truth in it – that it had been decided to submit his writings for examination by a commission, and that I had been charged – something that was neither true nor likely – to find competent judges to do so. I went therefore to see the Servant of God, and in support of my suggestion regarding a spiritual director, I had to outline to him what I had heard about him.

The account I gave then to Fra Leopoldo, at a time when so many false things were being said about him, and possibly in an excessively serious tone of voice, convinced him – with God's permission – that I agreed with all the negative things said about him, and that I had completely abandoned him.

That conviction was a sword that pierced the heart of the Servant of God, because only to me had he communicated the most intimate things regarding his soul, the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, the Union of Catechists and the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*, undertakings he had prayed so much about, suffered so much, and that now, on a human level, he saw failing.

He bore this trial with truly heroic fortitude, and continued, despite everything, to trust in the help of Jesus Crucified and of Mary Most Holy regarding these undertakings. It was only after his death that I discovered these these particular reasons for his distress. Had I known before, I would have hastened to resolve his misunderstanding about what had happened.

The prohibition imposed on him to receive visits from outsiders prevented this misunderstanding from being resolved.

### Discipline of the senses

The basis for Luigi Musso's virtue of temperance was the good habits of his family which brought him up in the observance of sobriety, abstinence and modesty.

In the town of Vercelli, he kept the same lifestyle he had had at home, and when he went out for a short time with his fellow servants, and they were happy to drink wine, he would order only a cup of coffee.

In the *Collegio Dal Pozzo*, he was satisfied, where food and drink were concerned, with what was strictly necessary, and it happened that he would deprive himself so that the others lacked nothing. He took very seriously days of fast and abstinence, which he observed with great scrupulosity. He slept little, and he had no liking at all for a comfortable life. He mortified himself in everything.

In Turin, a fellow servant who helped him in the kitchen wrote of him:

Regarding food, he always gave the best portions to others, and where he was concerned, for one reason or another, he always found a way of mortifying himself, edifying us by his virtue.<sup>16</sup>

At Viale d'Asti, another of his fellow workers wrote:

Luigi Musso controlled very strictly what he ate and drank. He slept very little because he worked until late evening and got up early in the morning.<sup>17</sup>

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16 Francesco Nebiolo.

17 Emilio Navone.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

When he became a religious his temperance was perfected more and more.

Because of his work, he always arrived last for meals; he collected the leftovers on a plate, said grace, and ate the little food he had collected. He always had finished his meal by the time his fellow religious left the refectory, and he stayed behind to clear the tables.

No one ever saw the Servant of God eating outside of meals, and during them he was so abstemious and mortified, that his fellow religious could not understand how he could keep his strength up. And yet he never failed to fulfil his duties. Likewise he observed faithfully the fasts of the Church and of the Franciscan Rule.

A fellow religious who had lived with him for all the years he spent at S. Tommaso, wrote:

Most temperate where food and drink were concerned, Fra Leopoldo never seemed to have an appetite. Likewise, where sleep was concerned, his temperance was exemplary: normally he needed only three hours of sleep, and the rest of the time he spent in prayer or, when necessary, in tending to the sick of the house.<sup>18</sup>

### Radiant humility

The humility of the Servant of God is attested to by some of his fellow servants:

Luigi Musso did not accept signs of esteem which highlighted his virtues, but fended them off gently with great humility.<sup>19</sup>

The parish priest of Viale d'Asti asked Luigi Francesco Nebiolo, the Servant of God's kitchen assistant, whether the latter had ever used contemptuous language towards him, as his inferior. He answered:

I never heard him say anything that was not Christian and holy: I can swear to that regarding the seven years we lived together.

And he added:

When the Conte di Chiusano held banquets, Luigi Musso appeared whenever his presence was necessary, but once he was no longer needed, he quickly retired and was happy to stay out of sight in the kitchen. When he needed something, he always asked with humble words and gestures. He considered himself to be the least of the servants, and if he could do a favour, he would do so willingly. With everybody, his language was simple and affable, and with his fellow workers, he was completely unpretentious.<sup>20</sup>

As a religious, Fra Leopoldo practised the virtue of humility to a very high degree, as can be seen from the following declarations made by his fellow religious and by persons who knew him intimately:

Fra Leopoldo treated everyone as if they were superior to him, and he accepted easily the opinions of others regarding things not directly concerning God. In his work, he could distinguish himself, but he fled praise.<sup>21</sup>

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18 Fra Guido Franchino, OFM, sacristan of the church of S. Tommaso in Turin.

19 Giuseppe Necco, companion and friend of Fra Leopoldo at Vercelli and Turin.

20 Luigi Francesco Nebiolo, companion of Fra Leopoldo at Turin and Viale d'Asti.

21 Sebastiano Ellena, kitchen assistant.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

He was most humble in his words and in his actions, considering himself very happy with his work as a cook.<sup>22</sup>

He considered himself to be a great sinner, a worthless person, and any good there was in him he attributed to the grace and goodness of God.<sup>23</sup>

This is how he prayed on September 8th 1906:

Who am I, my good Jesus, that you treat me with such delicate care? My sweet God, I consider myself to be simply an earthworm; but you, Most Holy Teacher, teach me what to do to please you, to love you, to bless you.\*

September 10th 1906: 'Oh, Good of all goods, you my beautiful Jesus, you have often told me to love you. It was certainly to teach me to be always humble, but, poor sinner that I am, how ever great my good will may be, it is not enough: I need your divine help.'\*

When speaking to persons distinguished by their social rank or learning, he never lost his humility, and the others felt drawn to share in this humble atmosphere and to put aside their air of authority and learning. If he had to mention vaguely things which, while being above all to the glory of God, necessarily regarded himself and were a holy reflection on him, he would go very red in the face through modesty, and, bowing his head, and with a gesture, sought immediately to play the matter down, and turned to some other topic. The supernatural played a constant part in this life that was so humble, so secluded and unknown to most people. Fra Leopoldo was skillful in secluding himself, so much so that some of his superiors did not know what kind of person he was and marvelled at the number of visitors he had.<sup>24</sup>

On August 27th 1908, he said to Jesus:

'To you, my most sweet God, we owe everything. I thank you from the depth of my heart for all you have done for me, O Divine Saviour, and for all you wish to do for me in the future. Glory to you! And with every part of my heart and of my nothingness, I submerge myself in my humility and I thank you, I bless you, O my adorable Lord Jesus Crucified, and with you, your Divine Mother Mary Most Holy'.\*

September 12th 1908: 'Being only a poor instrument in your hands, please imprint on my forehead and on my mind the words: *He who acts is God, Jesus Crucified!*'\*

March 29th 1909: 'My God, but I am always afraid of failing. Could you not, my beautiful Jesus, make me die before I disgust you?'\*

In Fra Leopoldo I admired a very humble man. When he was praised, he sought to play it down, not for form's sake; for not only did he take no pleasure in it, but he showed his disgust of it, and cleverly changed the topic of conversation.<sup>25</sup>

Fra Leopoldo was humble to the point of considering himself unworthy of wearing the habit of St Francis.<sup>26</sup>

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22 Fra Guido Franchino, OFM.

23 Fr Mariano Manni, OFM.

24 Luigi Andrea Rostagno, Professor of Letters and Philosophy.

25 Fr Vincenzo Vallaro.

26 Fr Vittorio De Laurenti, OFM, Guardian.

## To acquire heavenly riches

The Servant of God practised the virtue of poverty throughout his life even before making it the object of a solemn vow in the Order of St Francis.

Beginning when he was at Vercelli and as long as his mother lived, he did not think about himself, but only about supporting and taking care of his poor and infirm mother.

A Franciscan Tertiary from Turin, the mother of the Ferraris family where the Servant of God had his best friends and confidants, wrote of him:

Every month he sent what he could to his mother, keeping for himself only what was strictly necessary, and at times it happened that he sent everything to his mother and then found himself in financial difficulties as a result.

When he entered the friary, he said he wanted to be poor like St Francis.

Having achieved his ideal, he would often say that he felt so good, so good poor, without any attachment to the world or to things. He would repeat this, manifesting great joy, like someone who, after making great efforts, has been able to win a victory.<sup>27</sup>

This is what he said to the Most Blessed Virgin on April 14th 1909:

Dearest Most Holy Mother, I can't bear it any longer, I want so much to write to my brother to tell him to take on a permanent basis the house and the land which I have let him use for years. The Rules command us to renounce everything, and this is for me a joy in advance. In this way I shall be free of all the harassment of earthly goods, and I shall breathe most freely and will be able to love more closely my dear Jesus and his Most Holy Mother. For the greatest ruin, the worst evil, is that of a person who, because of the goods of this earth, is impeded from loving God and his Most Holy Mother, the Virgin Mary.\*

Having ceded to his brother Vincenzo his share of the land and of the little house in Terruggia Monferrato, he sent the small remuneration to Fr Vallaro, his superior, so that, he could set up at the Archbishop's office a bequest fund for the benefit of the Archconfraternity of Daily, Perpetual Universal Adoration.

On April 26th 1909, feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel, he was able to pronounce, with the greatest of joy, the solemn vow of poverty.

Life in the friary did not offer great opportunities to manifest the spirit of holy poverty which inspired Fra Leopoldo, but the proofs he gave of it, even if small, indicated his love for a particularly Franciscan virtue.

His clothing was very poor, completely patched internally; his cell could not have been barer, containing nothing superfluous.<sup>28</sup>

He did his own sewing, and his clothes, although old, were always clean. Perfect poverty: he never mentioned money or the goods of this world.<sup>29</sup>

His great love for the virtue of poverty led him to propagate in the world detachment from the goods of the world and to remedy the great evil produced in the world by the unbridled love of things.

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27 Angela Ferraris from Turin.

28 Fra Guido Franchino, OFM.

29 Luigi Andrea Rostagno.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

On October 30<sup>th</sup> 1909, he wrote:

Ah! May the Lord make, by means of his sons (Catechists), souls full of good will, much work to be done to root out impious and satanic financial interest!\*

Fra Leopoldo's wish must have been heard by God, who made use precisely of him to found undertakings with this splendid aim.

In response to his directives, anything smacking of financial interest was removed from the Union of Catechists; the Devotion to Jesus Crucified was disseminated free of charge, and the "*Love of Jesus Crucified*" newsletter was sent out free also. However, donations from those who wished to help the Association were not refused. He was particularly insistent in ensuring that the schools run by the "*Case di Carita Arti e Mestieri*" were gratuitous and supported by donations from rich persons, priests, former students and even from parents of pupils, as spontaneous manifestations of gratitude (and made to the persons specifically charged with receiving them).

In this way, Fra Leopoldo was not only a model, but also an apostle of the virtue of poverty.

### Heart consecrated to God

The Servant of God practised the virtue of chastity with such diligence that it imprinted, as it were, on all his being the characteristic of virginal purity, the clarity of a crystal clear and lily-white conscience.

At the age of about 19, an employer of his took him one day to the town of Vercelli, and told him to wait in a particular place as he went to deal with some business. Luigi Musso took advantage of his free time to visit the Blessed Sacrament in a neighbouring church. His evil employer returned and took him to a house of corruption, leaving him in the entrance hall.

The visit to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, made shortly before, brought him so much grace that it made him an apostle of chastity in that very house of vice. As soon as he realised in what kind of place he found himself, he recommended himself to God and then started speaking about the ugliness of vice and the beauty of virtue. He did this so effectively, that he convinced the poor miserable woman who served as a doorkeeper to recognise her fault and to promise to leave that place of ill-fame as soon as possible.

A friend of his and companion from Vercelli wrote:

The outstanding virtue of the Servant of God in the years in which he was in the employ of Canon Miglione, a virtue recognised by all his work companions with whom he spent some leisure hours, was that he was very reserved with women, and in his presence, regarding this matter he would not allow anyone of those with him to say or do anything that was in any way improper. His presence imposed this line of conduct on everybody.<sup>30</sup>

None of his companions could ever find fault in him regarding this matter. In fact, people knew that Luigi had no intention of marrying, and so respected and admired his reserve regarding persons of the other sex, illustrated in particular by his most

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30 Giuseppe Necco.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

careful vigilance over his eyes. But, given all that, he was always happy, and fond of a kind of cheerfulness which made the persons he spoke to better.

Luigi Musso took the already outstanding purity of mind and heart to new heights when, having settled in Turin and taken Fr Cozzi as his spiritual director, he began the practice of receiving Communion daily.

He recommended Holy Communion and devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin as most effective means to preserve the beautiful virtue.

A friend and work companion from Vercelli who also had settled in Turin, wrote of the Servant of God:

When his fellow workers told jokes or stories about things which could offend against the beautiful virtue, he very politely reprimanded them and ensured that they changed the topic of conversation.<sup>31</sup>

One of his kitchen assistants who was with him for seven years wrote:

Not only during the time we were together at Viale, but also when we lived in Turin, Signor Musso Luigi always led a most pure life.<sup>32</sup>

The following was written about the chastity of Fra Leopoldo by those who lived with him, or who knew him intimately after his religious profession.

Chaste and pure, he was most reserved with persons of the other sex. Modest in word and deed, he showed he valued most highly the virtue of chastity.<sup>33</sup>

His purity shone out in all his actions and behaviour; he was modest and pure.<sup>34</sup>

What struck you about him was the innocence, delicacy and reserve when he spoke, and in everything. He had a truly angelic purity which shone out of his whole person.<sup>35</sup>

The virginal innocence of the venerable old man was manifest even in his lack of knowledge of the evil in the world, and his noble face would blush with a holy redness at any even remote mention of things of that kind.<sup>36</sup>

His very person, his noble bearing, the innocence of his looks and of his very clear eyes imposed respect, and no one would have dared to offend in the least way the outstanding angelic virtue of Fra Leopoldo. Familiarity with him only increased in everyone the conviction they were dealing with an angel in human garments.

What was impressive about Fra Leopoldo was his majestic, smiling looks which manifested a sense of celestial purity which shone in his eyes and on his serene brow.<sup>37</sup>

### The will of the mystic docile to authority

In the faithful practice of the *terribile quotidiano* which on the face of it has nothing

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31 Giuseppe Necco.

32 Francesco Nebiolo.

33 Fra Guido Franchini, OFM.

34 Fr Pietro Palena, OFM.

35 Fr Vittorio De Laurenti, OFM, Guardian.

36 Luigi Andrea Rostagno.

37 Fr Augusto Maria Visetti, theologian.

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attractive about it, but whose exact and constant pursuit calls for heroism, the Servant of God's virtue of obedience was revealed.

From his earliest youth, Luigi gave proof of prompt and willing obedience to his parents for whom he always had great veneration.

When he grew up, he began under his first employer, Dr Boltri, a most obedient lifestyle, which distinguished him subsequently under other superiors, even under the most demanding ones.

He was not satisfied in fulfilling what was strictly his duty, but he extended his obedience even to what his superiors wanted.

A friend of his and a fellow servant at Vercelli, wrote:

At the time when he was in the employ of Canon Miglione, the docility of Musso was such, that he did work that was not strictly part of his duties, that is, he ironed and mended for his employer, including ornaments for the church.<sup>38</sup>

One of his fellow servants at Viale wrote:

Luigi Musso always fulfilled exactly all his duties to his superiors.<sup>39</sup>

The obedience of Fra Leopoldo in the friary of S. Tommaso is attested to by his fellow religious and those who lived with him, by such remarks as the following:

The spirit of obedience of which he gave proof induced the superiors to admit him to the novitiate.<sup>40</sup>

Most observant of his Rule, he showed the greatest diligence in fulfilling his duties. For all he was a perfect image of obedience. . . . He obeyed the commands of his superiors willingly, and was prompt in going to where obedience called him.<sup>41</sup>

He was most obedient and responded quickly to signs from superiors. Among equals, he considered himself to be the least important; he listened to them, he obeyed them.<sup>42</sup>

He was most respectful to superiors. I noted this in the particular circumstances of painful incomprehension. But, no complaint, not a word of criticism.<sup>43</sup>

Fra Leopoldo was a virtuous religious in all senses of the word. His obedience was cheerful and prompt, and it can be said that he was never seen worried, but always with a childlike smile on his lips, bearing witness to his clear conscience.<sup>44</sup>

During his final illness, Fra Leopoldo took to his bed in obedience to his superior, and even when he was sure he was dying, having predicted his death, he continued to be obedient to the prescribed treatment up to the last moment of his life.

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38 Giuseppe Necco.

39 Emilio Navone.

40 Fr Luigi Maria Borgialli, OFM, Provincial superior.

41 Sebastiano Ellena, kitchen assistant.

42 Fr Guido Franchino, OFM.

43 Don Augusto Maria Visetti, theologian.

44 Fr De Laurenti, OFM.

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8: The Church of S. Tommaso in Turin, with the friary attached, where Fra Leopoldo spent all his religious life. On the left, just beyond the bell-tower, can be seen the entrance to the friary, where so many visitors came to see the holy lay-brother.



9: The *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri* in Turin in 26, Corso Benedetto Brin.

## CHAPTER 21

# Heavenly gifts and odour of sanctity. The transition to the Eternal Country and Blessed Memory

### Heavenly gifts

Fra Leopoldo had the special gift of knowing about certain events before they happened, and the rules to follow when they came about.

On August 29th 1908 he wrote:

*The Order which will arise, let it be cultivated first of all with piety, with mutual help and humility, with activity and modesty and fraternal charity: in union with Jesus Crucified, carry the cross with joy.\**

On January 17th 1912 :

*The Order which will come, will be worldwide and will produce most abundant fruit as the principal tree.\**

The spread of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, the institution of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate established as a Secular Institute, the beginning of the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*, as has been described in previous pages, and as it will be in the following ones, all that, was the confirmation of the truth of what the Servant of God had predicted.

It should be noted that such predictions were carried out, for the most part, by persons unaware of the predictions.

In 1914, when the war between France and Germany broke out, the French Brothers of the Christian Schools living at Rivalta Torinese, with more than a hundred young boys, all of them French, were unsure what they should do, as they had no contact with their superiors who were blocked in Belgium: they did not know whether to remain in Italy or return to France. The Brothers in Turin contacted Fra Leopoldo who, after praying answered them first verbally and then in writing:

*Turin, August 12th 1914*

‘Very Dear Brother Teodoreto,

I prayed to Jesus Crucified as you asked: Jesus said that the answer is the one already given at the time when you came to see me, that is, *War between Italy and France will not take place*; but regarding the young French boys, he urged me to answer quickly, he told me twice to hurry, because the young teachers were troubled. He told me to encourage them and added: “*I hide them in my Divine Heart*”.\*

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The French Brothers and the children entrusted to their care remained at Rivalta and, in gratitude, began to spread the Devotion to Jesus Crucified in their country.

At the beginning of August 1918, a decree was published calling to arms the five senior classes. The superiors of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, having identified the candidates who would have to respond to the call to arms, saw they were in danger of having to close many houses. The beginning of the new school year was imminent, and the respective local authorities had to be quickly informed. They turned to Fra Leopoldo, asking him to pray to the Lord for enlightenment about what they should do. Fra Leopoldo prayed and replied on August 18th:

I prayed in the shrine of Our Lady before the Blessed Sacrament, and placed the letter next to the tabernacle door. I had the following words from Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament:

*The war is about to finish, let them get their houses ready.\**

On November 14th, the hostilities ceased.

Other exceptional gifts were the conversations the Servant of God had before the crucifix, with Our Lady, before the tabernacle; as also the door being opened for him so many times between the friary and the church, so he could make his visit to the Blessed Sacrament and to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart.

### The odour of sanctity

A valid proof of what is true is popular acclaim of sanctity. Fra Leopoldo was already considered a saint before he became a religious. This is what Luigi Vacca of Turin wrote in his name and in that of his family: 'In our judgment and in that of those who knew him, Fra Leopoldo, at that time Luigi Musso, was a saint' and he added: 'I affirm that in the years in which we had the good fortune to have that holy man in our house, we learned to live as good persons'.

At Viale d'Asti, he was considered a saint by the whole population, and Rosa Cassinelli, the wife of the sacristan, wrote: 'I can say that Luigi Musso was already a saint at that time'.

But the person who knew him intimately was the parish priest Don Antonio Gambino, who said a number of times and repeated with conviction, even to me when, in 1917, I went to Viale, the following words: 'Luigi Musso is a real saint'.

The present parish priest of Viale, Don Giovanni Battista Vallero, wrote: 'I never knew Luigi Musso, but I can affirm that all my faithful remember him as most holy'.

In the friary of S. Tommaso, Fra Leopoldo, although unknown to many, because he was "skillful in the art of hiding himself", could not prevent his reputation of sanctity from spreading and, as a result, very many people came to him, to consult him and to obtain the help of his prayers. Many then wrote long letters to him to speak of their problems and the confidence they had in his prayers. Leaving aside those which were lost, I have counted more than 140 letters sent to him by all kinds of people, and having as their sole motive, the Servant of God's reputation of sanctity.

This is what people who knew him at close quarters wrote about him:

During the period of the other great war, I went to Terruggia with the Servant of God, where I immediately noticed the veneration his relatives and the local

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

people had for him. In my opinion, I think that Fra Leopoldo had never lost his baptismal innocence. A good parish priest in Canavesano, whose name I don't recall, told me one day, as if confiding a secret: "But don't you know, there are people who obtain favours from God asking for them through the intercession of this Friar who is still alive!"<sup>1</sup>

Fra Leopoldo directed all his actions to achieve sanctity. I continue to consider him as a holy religious.<sup>2</sup>

Fra Leopoldo was considered a saint and many had recourse to him as such. The first of all of these was Paolo Pio Perazzo, who poured out all his sufferings to Fra Leopoldo. Fra Leopoldo was his consoler and support, and Paolo Pio Perazzo consoled also his friend.<sup>3</sup>

From the day I met Fra Leopoldo, graces were showered on me in great profusion: he was held in great esteem as a saint.<sup>4</sup>

Those who approached Fra Leopoldo went away with the same impression as I had, one of having met a saint. His conversation, although plain in language, had a kind of holy influence which went straight to the heart of the person listening to him, so much so that conversations with him, even the longest ones, always seemed too short.

In 1919, I accompanied Brother Director Isidoro di Maria on a visit he made to Fra Leopoldo. This was his impression:

At this first meeting, I had the impression I was in the presence of a man of God, and my impression was confirmed by what Filippo Dematteis said about him to me.

From this visit and from other meetings, I concluded that he was truly a simple and sincere man, with a friendly jovial nature, witty and courteous. His words and his demeanour were marked by a great piety. I subsequently saw that the Servant of God, although still alive, was surrounded by great esteem for his virtue and holiness. He had this reputation among educated persons, intellectuals, some of them university professors, professional people, priests, religious, etc.

When Conte Federico Sacconi came to Turin, sent by His Holiness the Pope Benedict XV to present gifts to the Consolata church, during the ten days he was in the city, he went every day to speak with Fra Leopoldo, and had so much esteem for him that, having returned to Rome, he continued, while the Servant of God was still alive, to correspond with him on intimate terms.

Angelo Bartolomasi, Archbishop to the Forces, wrote as follows:

My admiration for Fra Leopoldo Musso, as a great Servant of God, blessed by Jesus with special graces because of his simplicity and humility, is not based on my personal knowledge of him – I hardly saw him when I was the auxiliary bishop of Cardinal Agostino Richelmy, who had great esteem for Fra Leopoldo.

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1 Fr Nazareno Barbero, OFM.

2 Fr Mariano Manni, OFM.

3 Luigi Andrea Rostagno.

4 Don Carlo Gadda, parish priest of Saint Pierre, Aosta.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

I remember that Achille Cavallotti, who visited him regularly, often referred to him when he spoke to me, as the Holy Friar.

I hope that the holiness is recognised and exalted of this person who was the apostle of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, and founder of that form of devotion to the five Wounds, with which I am familiar.

### Transition to the Eternal Country

The death of Fra Leopoldo was that of a saint. He had a premonition of his death, and he told some of his close friends of it, among whom, the Catechist Giovanni Cesone, in the following words: 'As soon as I fall ill to the extent that I have to take to my bed, it will be in order to die'.

Don Carlo Gadda wrote:

When Fra Leopoldo congratulated me on receiving the tonsure (1921), he sent me, at the same time, best wishes for my priestly ordination, because he said he would be dead by then. And so it was.

Fr Vincenzo Vallaro, parish priest of S. Tommaso wrote:

In his last illness, Fra Leopoldo spoke ecstatically of Paradise; and while I urged him to hope for a cure as had happened other times, he replied to me with great assurance: "This is my last illness; I'm going to meet my dearest Mother."

Fr Ernesto Ferrarotti, OFM, wrote:

Fra Leopoldo spoke of the time of his death with two persons, I have been told. The seminarian, Fra Bernardino Borla, who was attending to his needs during his last illness, was asked by him: "What day is it today? The seminarian answered: "Thursday". The Servant of God added: "Thursday, Friday..Saturday is the last one. What a great grace the Lord has given me! This time I'm going to Paradise!". And in fact, the Servant of God was buried on Saturday.

Another person came to see him about a year later and, on hearing about his death, he said: "He told me he was going to die. When we were speaking he came out with the following words: This year (1921) is the last for me, because the Lord is calling me to Paradise.

He took to his bed through obedience to his superior, because the first illness, hiccups, did not require his going to bed, it was treated and cured; but then he developed bronchial pneumonia, from which he died after three days.

During his illness, he received Holy Communion every day, and gave proof of his resignation to the will of God, and of great piety. The Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction were administered by me . Although the religious community was still unsure, not believing the illness to be serious, all the same because of his repeated insistence, Fr Guardian asked me to administer them to him. He received them with great edification and then could not thank me enough. After midday (Thursday January 26th 1922), at about 1.30 pm, to the great surprise of everybody, he lost the power of speech. To the words of comfort from the parish priest, he replied with signs of great serenity and gentleness.

## An Intimate Relationship with Jesus Crucified

Between 10 pm to 12.30 am of the 27th (the time of his death), I stayed at his bedside with the seminarian Fra Bernardino Borla. Every quarter of an hour, on orders from the doctor, I administered to him alternately a spoonful of water and a spoonful of medicine; and he willingly fitted in with this arrangement until the last quarter of an hour of his life. In the meantime, as I was watching his face attentively to note any changes, I saw him look two or three times towards the side of his bed, towards the wall, with a fleeting smile, over in an instant, and one I had never seen on his lips before. A few moments later, at 12.30 am, as I called him and was about to administer a spoonful of medicine, I saw he was still, and then he sighed once and then again, and then he bowed his head as if going to sleep, and he was dead.

The body of the Servant of God was exposed on that same Friday January 27th in the large hall on the ground floor of the friary where parish associations hold their meetings.

A great number of the faithful of all kinds came to see him, and all showed their great esteem for the deceased. Many touched the body with religious objects, and some asked as a memento for something belonging to the Servant of God.

Visitors continued to come all day Friday, stopping longer or shorter, kneeling or standing, and many of them ending by saying, very subdued, to the bystanders: 'He was truly a Saint!'. Even his face kept his usual fine calm look; he seemed to be asleep.

The Catechists of Jesus Crucified kept vigil during the night from Friday to Saturday, and wanted the privilege of carrying him into the church and then to the hearse.

The funeral was impressive and took place in the church of S. Tommaso; and even though announcements of his death had not been sent out, and much snow had fallen, the number of faithful present from all strata of society was most impressive, to the extent that the church was literally packed.

The parish priest Vincenzo Vallaro who celebrated Mass and the funeral rites, noted especially during the latter, 'the deep feeling that had gripped the faithful' and added: 'This tribute of esteem and veneration for the Servant of God was truly solemn, spontaneous and unanimous'.

After the funeral, even though the snow had already reached a depth of 30 centimetres and continued to fall thickly, a large crowd of us, men and women, continued to follow the body to the burial in the mausoleum of the Friars Minor, in the third expanded section of the Turin cemetery.

### **His blessed memory**

The reputation of sanctity the Servant of God had while still alive, did not stop after his death, but in fact continued to spread far and wide. Fra Guido Franchino, sacristan in the church of S. Tommaso, who had occasion to speak with persons who had known the Servant of God, and who after his death, visited the church or the friary, confirmed the increase in his fame with the words: 'After his death, there was like a cry repeated in so many places and by so many people: 'He was a Saint.'

The commemorative gathering held a year after the death of the Servant of God,

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in the chapel of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in the parish of S. Tommaso, was attended, despite the delay and the mistakes in sending out the announcements, by such a number of people that the organisers of the gathering were themselves astounded.

Fr Ernesto Ferrarotti wrote:

After the death of Fra Leopoldo many people asked for pieces of his habit to keep as a memento . . . A year later, on the anniversary of his death, in the chapel of Our Lady, a commemorative gathering was held: the chapel was packed, although there had not been much publicity. At this gathering, I heard people speak about visions, conversations with Jesus Crucified, of great familiarity with the Most Blessed Virgin, about extraordinary graces.

On January 31st 1932, the tenth anniversary of the death of Fra Leopoldo was celebrated in theatre-hall of the *Collegio S. Giuseppe*, in Turin.

It was a magnificent paean of praise to the Servant of God. The Mayor of Terruggia and a group of people from the town attended, and even though they already held the holiness of their fellow townsman in great esteem, they returned home filled with great enthusiasm.

In fact, the commemoration was moving because of the things said and impressive because of the persons attending: OFM superiors and priests, superiors and Brothers of the Christian Schools, Catechists, men and women 'Zealots', men and women associates of the Union of Jesus Crucified.

The following year (1933), Fr Vincenzo Vallaro, parish priest of S. Tommaso wrote:

Even today, after eleven years, the memory of Fra Leopoldo not only has not vanished, but is spreading. This is confirmed by the visits paid to his tomb where he is buried, and the search for mementos of him to keep.

### **The transfer of the body**

The desire of many people to have the body of the Servant of God transferred from the cemetery to the Friary Church of S. Tommaso was fulfilled on April 26<sup>th</sup> 1948.

A small procession led by the late and lamented Canon Pio Battist, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Turin, Carlo Tessitore, President of the Union of Catechists, and three Catechists, accompanied the coffin from the cemetery to the Friary of S. Tommaso where a chapel of rest had been set up.

Let us now turn to the 'Love for Jesus Crucified' newsletter, Year XIII, No. 3, for an account of the following day and of the details surrounding the transfer of the coffin to the chapel of Our Lady.

*April 27<sup>th</sup> 1948*

It is 9 am.

The uncaring grave-diggers have gone. It is the Catechists who raise onto their shoulders the coffin with the mortal remains of Fra Leopoldo. Their sure steps match the rhythm of their heart-beat. They pass through the doors of the Friary, go into the street, follow the wall of the church, go up the stairs leading to the shrine. The representatives follow through the crowd of devout faithful who form a reverent hedge as they pass and then follow. Those who

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can, touch the coffin with their fingers and cross themselves. At the head of the stairs, flowers are strewn over the coffin, handfuls of flowers, flowers and more flowers. Petals rain down on the steps. A great fragrance fills the air of that misty morning, suffused with timid rays of the sun. Such homage has caught people by the throat, overcome by emotion. These flowers take the place of applause. In heaven, the effusion of sentiment is surely like the fragrance of flowers.

The church is packed. Adorned for mourning. No pomp. Everything as usual. The pontifical Mass and funeral rites are celebrated by Mgr Petronio Lacchio, OFM, Archbishop of Chang-Sha, in the Chinese province of Hunan. The body is in the middle, in front of the communion rail. In front, the banners of the representatives. Attending are: Fr Alessandro Negro, OFM, representing the absent Provincial; nieces and cousins of the Servant of God; eighty or so of his fellow townsmen, reverently proud and excited, led by Don Giuseppe Rota, parish priest of Terruggia Monferrato, the birthplace of Fra Leopoldo; Brother Teodoreto of the Christian Schools, confidant of the Servant of God and founder of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified, accompanied by all the Catechists; representatives from the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*, at 8, via Feletto; from the *Istituto Arti e Mestieri*, at 25 corso Trapani; from *Collegio S. Giuseppe* and *Istituto La Salle*; a large group of men and women “zealots” of the Union of Catechists; men and women Franciscan Tertiaries.

The commemorative address is given by Fr Francesco Maccono, OFM, vice postulator for the cause of beatification of Fra Leopoldo. He speaks with the simplicity of a Franciscan, in language that abhors high-sounding words and the hollow sonority of grandiloquent sentences. The words go straight to the heart because they are transparent. He mentions the life and virtue of the Servant of God, the intentionally low-key ceremonies, made necessary by respect which requires rejoicing to be restrained and stifled; rejoicing which cannot break out while waiting for the Church to declare that it will do what is in the minds of everyone present: the glorification of the humble cook. And when the speaker welcomes the mortal remains of Fra Leopoldo, now back in his friary, in his home, in his church, those present choked with an unbearable and deep emotion, which was repeated at the saying of the Our Father during the funeral rite. There were tears in all eyes.

It was not sadness because of an absence. But the feeling of a presence which could still move, because it was purely spiritual, and therefore more present, more beneficial and salutary.

### Tribute of the people

The body was then moved from the church to the chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, the door to which was immediately to the right of the main altar. It was accompanied by all present, among the first, by a little boy, whose miraculous cure had been attributed to the intercession of Fra Leopoldo,<sup>5</sup> pushing, crowding in through the narrow doorway. No one wanted to be the last in the throng and to pay this tribute of affection.

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5 See appendix.

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The coffin, covered by a funeral cloth, was placed in the middle of the chapel. It was the same chapel where Our Lady had opened the door for the Servant of God; where he spent many hours praying at night, going up and coming down the altar steps on his knees, reciting the rosary endlessly, without stopping, decade after decade, and at the top, placing next to the tabernacle the notes with requests that had been made to him; where the darkness was lit up by unusual splendours, during the mystical, fervently intimate conversations between the creature and the Creator. If only the walls could speak and recount the heights of ecstasy, the fire of those burning glances, the ardour of those words, the sinking of that soul into the bottomless depths of the infinite ocean of the Eternal!

The body was left on public view uninterruptedly from April 27th, bringing together a compact and silent crowd of friends, acquaintances and devout persons, reciting invocations unceasingly, up to May 3rd, the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross (a date that was not planned, and so makes one think of the particular call to worship, the Servant of God had received from the Cross). On that day, the body was placed in a niche which had been made – an inspired choice – in the wall of the chapel in front of the altar, and walled up. This niche is sealed off by a stone plaque of reduced size. At either end there is a marble panel. On the left-hand one, we read: Servant of God, Fra Leopoldo M. Musso, OFM, b. 1850, d. 1922. On the right-hand one is written :Transferred here from the General Cemetery on April 27th 1948. In the middle there is a reproduction of Fra Leopoldo's holy contemplative face, based on the now very well known effigy, whose clever clear patina contrasts sharply against the splendid whiteness of the marble panels on either side. The features are skilfully modelled, and the shadows help one to read the expression on the noble face turned towards God. The sculpture is by Stefano Vigna.

After a gap of 27 years, from that snowy morning at the end of January 1922, in the dim light and faint echoes, as the thick snow slowly fell, laying a mantle on the silent procession of innumerable footsteps deadened by the increasingly thick soft white carpet (even nature put on white garments and laid a pure white carpet as that innocent body passed by); after a gap of 27 years, Fra Leopoldo returned among the living, before the altar of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; that altar which was his and now, in his dear memory, is ours, we who have such a great need to pray and to be helped; and where his mortal remains will be definitively buried on that blessed day in the future, if it is God's will, and we humbly beg him to make it so, that from the holy Cathedral of Peter, among the blasts from the silver trumpets, echoing endlessly under the gigantic arch of the great dome in Christendom, the heroic virtue of Fra Leopoldo will be declared before the whole world, and his dear, noble ascetic image will be raised to be seen by all in the Glory of Bernini.

### **His memory does not diminish but grows stronger**

Now about ten years after the transfer, the tomb of Fra Leopoldo has become the goal of pious pilgrimages of devotees who hope to receive the help and intercession of the Servant of God.

Graces and favours are registered and published in the 'Love of Jesus Crucified'

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Newsletter produced by the Union of Catechists, and on the 27th of each month, in the Chapel of his “dearest Mother” where he lies at rest, a Mass of thanksgiving and supplication is celebrated and attended by many faithful.

Every year, on the anniversary of the pious death of Fra Leopoldo, the students of the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*, accompanied by their teachers and instructors, make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, in response to the wish expressed by Our Lady to the Servant of God: “Our Lady of the Sacred Heart likes the pious Union of Jesus Crucified to visit her once a year in memory of the favours and graces received by them, together with the children of the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*, and to receive Holy Communion in thanksgiving for the loving goodness of God and of his Most Holy Mother for them” and at the same time to visit the tomb of Fra Leopoldo and, by this return to the past, remain in constant contact with the genuine spirit of the founders.



## CHAPTER 22

### Completion of the Union of Catechists

The efficacious intercession of Fra Leopoldo manifests itself not only in the graces and favours attested to by the persons privileged to receive them, but also by the blessings he showered to such great effect on those undertakings which sprang from his heart and were considered by him as a precious heritage for the good of souls.

Above all, the Union of Catechists was completed, demonstrating in an uncommon way the truth of what he, enlightened by divine light, had written.

#### Predictions

On the morning of August 29th 1908, at 4.30 am, as Fra Leopoldo was absorbed in the pious practice of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, he had heard these words:

*The Order which will arise, let it be cultivated first of all with piety, with mutual help and humility, with activity and modesty and fraternal charity: in union with Jesus Crucified, carry the cross with joy.\**

These words remained something of a mystery for Fra Leopoldo who could not see how a religious Order could come into existence, devoted to the Devotion to Jesus Crucified which he, a humble cook, practised and spread. For this reason he did not let others know about them, and spoke of them only in fairly veiled terms. When in 1914 he saw that in the Rules of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified, I had, without knowing it, revealed the contents of these words, he saw a ray of light, but not complete enlightenment, because the people involved were only associated Catechists, made up of aspirants, permanent members, senior members, that is, married persons, so that they did not suggest any kind of religious Order.

On March 17th 1915, Fra Leopoldo wrote the following: ‘While I was praying to Jesus Crucified, I had the desire to know what would happen to the pious Union, but I feared to ask out of curiosity. Good Jesus in his kindness chose to satisfy my curiosity, saying:

*From the pious Union will come holy fathers of families, and many vocations. I want religious to help by word and example to purge society of evil and to save souls.*

On December 6th 1920, Fra Leopoldo wrote as follows:

As far as I can see, Jesus does not wish the name of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified to be replaced by any other name, because in his writings Jesus speaks of a principal tree which will yield much fruit, and of the Order which will come from it. I think that Jesus Crucified will enlighten us little by little and will guide us along the sure path, as he has done up to now and without any noise.\*

On the evening of December 22nd 1920, Fra Leopoldo received confirmation of

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the above, because as he was praying to Jesus Crucified, he heard these words:

*Regarding the pious Union of Jesus Crucified, the name should not be changed: it is the name the Order that will come will take.\**

On July 8th 1918, Fra Leopoldo wrote in his *Diario*:

When I had finished the Adoration-Devotion, Jesus said:

*It is my will that the pious Union spread throughout the world, to make reparation for so many insults levelled at me, and because from it will come the reform of the world brought to educated youth in the name of God.\**

### Fruits of heavenly blessings

That in the Union of Catechists it was piety and involvement in works of zeal that were primarily cultivated can be seen from the following extracts from two reports read, one on December 28th 1924, at a general assembly of the Catechists, men and women 'Zealots', presided over by Mgr Giuseppe Gamba, Archbishop of Turin, and the other, also a general assembly, at the end of 1925.

*Means of sanctification.* The primary and fundamental aim of our Union is to care for its members and make them tend to Christian perfection. Therefore, in addition to the particular prescriptions in the Rule which effectively lead the young people who observe them to personal sanctification, there are the following means :

- a) Weekly meetings on Saturdays and Sundays, which bring about a real moral renewal in our members, who feel the need to be spiritually united in prayer each week, and to receive the moral instruction suited to their needs. The explanation of the Holy Gospel and of the Epistles of the liturgical year and its application to us, truly gives guidance and tone to the week about to begin, urging all to the constant practice of love of God and of our neighbour.
- b) But the best days for our spiritual improvement are the monthly retreats. It is consoling to see our young people, attracted by Jesus Crucified, set aside their other occupations one day every month, and for a whole day, concentrate their attention solely on the good of their soul! On those days, souls are reinvigorated, new energy is stored for personal improvement and that of our Association. And above all, in this calm atmosphere and recollection, they pray for and obtain the help necessary for the development of our programme to help young people.
- c) Better than all the other means of sanctification are the sessions of the Spiritual Exercises lasting several days which we have followed every year. These are days marvellous for the spiritual fruits they bear, because they are devoted solely to the good of our spirit. During these days each one is helped to think about his own needs, to ask for so many graces, to renew his soul in the love of Jesus Crucified, and to find new impetus in the pursuit of our great Christian ideals: sanctification, reparation, apostolate.
- d) Our Rules ask of us a filial and tender devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, and so, in addition to the Rosary and our daily personal devotions, on the last Sunday of every month, we have regularly visited the shrine of Our Lady of Consolation to rekindle in our hearts our love and our confidence in

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our heavenly Mother, and to honour her with hymns of praise and thanksgiving.<sup>1</sup>

*Religious reparation:* The second aim of our Union is reparation for the offences against God and the Most Blessed Virgin, a duty imposed on us by piety and the Rules. This explains the fight against blasphemy which is of supreme importance for the Union. Reparative invocations, severe or loving reproaches inspired by Christian charity, one's status as superior, or by friendship; reasoning or even disdain, are the most common means which, combined with the distribution of leaflets, brochures, cards, stamps, seals, etc, our holy efforts invent to root out blasphemy of our beloved Italy, the cause of so many evils. Intended for this same purpose is the service on the first Friday of every month in reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which every member of the Union makes a point of attending despite the early hour of the morning.

And there are also the pilgrimages to the shrines of the Most Blessed Virgin and to that of S. Pancrazio in Pianezza, always made fervently, accompanied by decades of the rosary, hymns and prayers of reparation.

On the last days of the Carnival we gather for special services of reparation. And so, while the people of the world are intent on their own amusement, the members of the Union seek to console the Heart of Jesus Crucified and that of Mary Immaculate. However, the principal means of reparation is nocturnal Adoration. During it, prayers, adoration, the Sacrifice of the Holy Mass combine to raise to God the incense of gratitude and reparation. Nocturnal adoration at the end of the year always brings together all the active Catechists and many aspirants before the Most Blessed Sacrament solemnly exposed, to thank God for the benefits received and to implore his abundant graces for the coming year.

*Pursuit of the catechetical apostolate.* Strengthened by retreats and guided by instruction, the members of the Union involve themselves with great fervour in the teaching of catechism. In 1914, armed with the necessary authorisation, they began their apostolate in the parish of S. Massimo and in the headquarters of the Union. In 1915, they extended their teaching of catechism to other parishes and Oratories – an increase which gave them much consolation – and in 1925, they had 31 Catechists exercising their zeal in 12 parishes in the city of Turin.<sup>2</sup>

‘Catechists, helped by the gallant efforts of excellent young Catholics, were also working in another similar apostolate, under the direction of the Brothers of the Christian Schools. I am referring to the former *Scuola Serale della Regia Opera Mendicita*, in via delle Rosine, in Turin.

Here there are 4 Commercial classes and 5 Industrial classes, with about 250 pupils in all. In these, in addition to being taught the material contained in the courses offered, students also have a half-hour catechism lesson every evening. The catechism programme is so arranged that students receive a complete course of instruction while attending the various classes.

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1 *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, Year VIII, No. 4, pp. 4–5.

2 *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, Year X, No. 4, pp. 6–7.

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This area of the apostolate is of special concern for the Union, and so students are invited to attend spiritual exercises either spread over a number of evenings, or at the end of the school year.<sup>3</sup>

In 1924, the catechetical apostolate began outside Turin, more precisely, at the Oratory in Poirino, and subsequently spread to Altessano, Caramagna and S. Mauro Torinese.

In the parish of Our Lady of Peace at Poirino, Catechists, advised by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, opened very popular Sunday courses in design, arithmetic, typing and book-keeping, in order to attract young workers to catechism classes.

I need to mention also the special concern regarding priestly and religious vocations. By 1925, the number of members nurtured by the Union, and who felt the need to make further progress by following more closely the mysterious and gentle Author of the Evangelical counsels, had risen to 35.

With the wedding celebrated in 1925 of one of our members, the families of Associate Catechists with whom we are always closely united by affection, prayer and apostolate, now number 16. On these may heavenly blessings be showered, so that they can, in the intimacy of the family home, bring up in a holy manner future aspirants of our Union.<sup>4</sup>

### Rules of Associate Catechists

In the same report referred to above, the establishment of the Rules of Associate Catechists was mentioned as an important event.

The year 1925, we read there, will always remain particularly dear to the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified because of some favours from God. The first of these was the Rules, which had been the focus of attention literally all 1925.

For ten years, the Union had lived pursuing its activities on a simple but sure basis laid by men who loved Jesus Crucified. The rule of life of the members, while precise, was, one could say, experimental: things were adjusted in the light of events.

On the basis of this experience, and guided by the extraordinary advice of the Servant of God, Fra Leopoldo Maria Musso, OFM, who was consulted when doubts arose, the new Rules were studied and drawn up. Brother Director was heavily involved in this work: his long experience suggested articles and words more suited to the life of members, to bring about in them the gradual spiritual transformation which would lead them to an ardent love for the glory of God and the conquests of the apostolate.

Once the chapters were drawn up, they were studied and discussed by the members themselves and made feasible for them and their successors, so as to avoid future regrets or misunderstandings.

The Union of Catechists could finally proceed safely along the path traced out by the Rules. All the members made a solemn commitment to follow it in

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3 *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, Year VIII, No. 4, p. 6.

4 *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, Year X, No. 1, p. 8.

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order to comply completely with the will of God who with such precision and goodness had shown them the path to follow.<sup>5</sup>

Here is the approbation given by Mgr Giuseppe Gamba, Archbishop of Turin, to the Rules of Associate Catechists, and the few words he added when he sent it:

*The above Rules have been examined; their beauty and perfection are admirable; and they are approved by way of experiment.*

*Remember, however, that they should not be a dead letter, but a way of life, and their beauty not be simply a source of harm for you. If you observe them, I promise you Paradise, certainly”.*

Turin, October 24th 1925

Giuseppe, Archbishop

### Mass for the poor

On September 16th 1918, Fra Leopoldo wrote in his *Diario*:

The young people of the pious Union, full of zeal for the love of God and their neighbour, are asking to go to visit the poor and suffering and, as far as they can, come to their help. Brother Teodoreto came to see me at about 5 pm, and spoke to me about their request, and asked me to pray to the Lord that he would deign to advise us what we should do. I prayed during the Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament and Jesus let me understand that during my Adoration-Devotion in my cell he would tell me what should be done. And that is what I did: in the evening I began the prayer of the Adoration of the Wound in the right Hand. Before I could finish that prayer Jesus said to me:

*I don't want young people to be neglected so that they can do good elsewhere; but when their education in piety and the road to Heaven has been completed, and the holy exercise for the formation of young Catechists has finished, let them do works of charity such as helping their neighbours in their soul and their body. Everything serves to accumulate great merit for eternal heavenly happiness.\**

And so no action was taken until the young Catechists had completed their formation, and then their wish was realised in the providential circumstances described in the following extract from the Union of Catechists' Newsletter.

Among the works Christian charity inspired to help the disinherited, we should mention also the 'Mass for the Poor'. In 1928, in Turin, the lamented Sister Luisa Beltramo, superior of the Daughters of Charity, at 21 via Villa della Regina, advised and supported by Canon Stefano Bertola, began gathering a number of beggars on feastdays to make them attend Mass, and receive some words of comfort from the celebrant. After the religious service, the Sister gave them soup and bread.

Her clients quickly grew in number, until they numbered about a hundred, and difficulties multiplied. The good Sister called on the help of her fellow Sisters, but as the resources of the house alone were not enough, there was a need to approach the public for help.

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5 *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, Year X, No. 1, p. 5.

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*New strength.* In addition, a question regarding educational discipline arose: how could the good Sisters guide a hundred or so men, and provide them with an effective educational service? The presence of men was needed, and so they called on the help of the Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, founded by the Brothers of the Christian Schools and Fra Leopoldo Maria Musso, OFM.

The Catechists came: they were a group of Associate Catechists, with experience already of dealing with poor people, through long practice with the Conference of St Vincent. They were able to develop and complete the work, by means of various initiatives which brought them into greater contact with those they were helping, and enabled them to help them more efficaciously in all their spiritual and material needs. In addition, they were able to open a new centre at the opposite end of the city, at 2, via Saccarelli, near the *Casa di Misericordia*, increasing the number of persons helped from a hundred to over two hundred.<sup>6</sup> In both centres, the poor attend Mass, receive religious instruction and, when possible, a copious hot meal.

*Various types of help* And then the Catechists turned themselves into barbers, and cut their clients' hair and beards, which usually were shaggy and unkempt, and who, as a result of their services, took on immediately a more decent and pleasant appearance.

In the meantime, while the Catechist barbers were busy at work, chatting with their clients, listening to them as they spoke about their own lives, as people do in such circumstances; others were setting up a first-aid service to treat sores; others were mending clothing and shoes with the valuable help of 'Zealots'; others were doing secretarial work, noting down a variety of requests, such as searching for jobs or admission to hospital, the provision of documents, etc.

In the most serious cases, the assistance given continues after the festive gatherings. Sick poor people are visited and at the point of death are accompanied by a group specially set up for this service, whose members include other poor people, trained in providing help to others.

*A new field.* In 1941, with a view to help all the beggars in the city, the Catechists decided to extend their work to the city hostel on via Monscrivello, which is like a 'city of the poor'.

This hostel which is a magnificent godsend for beggars does honour to the city of Turin. What was lacking, however, was spiritual help, and it was this the Catechists wished to provide.

The city authorities were happy to welcome this offer, and today, spiritual help for the inmates of the city hostel is a reality. In one of the hostel reception rooms, Mass is celebrated on feast-days, during which the celebrant never fails to speak in an appropriate manner to the packed congregation of about 300 poor people, many of whom approach the Sacraments. Special attention is given to children, of whom many were prepared to make their first Communion and to be confirmed'.

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6 The present figure (1958) is 300.

### **Catechists as consecrated religious**

After attending the general assembly on December 28th 1924, Mgr Giuseppe Gamba expressed his satisfaction with the activities of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified. He went on to visit the evening classes at via delle Rosine, where the Catechists pursued their apostolate, going into each of the classrooms, and expressing in each his satisfaction and encouraging those there.

The Rules were revised and approved in 1925, and the Archbishop, who had been able to learn about the life of the Catechists from them, sent me a message, through his secretary, to choose a given number of the most fervent and to bring them to Archbishop's palace.

Twelve Catechists were chosen, and on the evening of June 25th 1926, we found ourselves in the Great Portrait Hall in the presence of our much-loved Archbishop.

With paternal affability, His Excellence, spoke to the Catechists for about an hour and a half. He traced out in very clear terms a whole programme of religious perfection; he spoke of the practice of the evangelical counsels, even in the midst of the world; of the great good that such religious can do by word and especially by example, in the home, at work and above all, in the catechetical apostolate.

When His Excellency saw the young men were enthusiastic about the ideal presented to them by him, he turned to me and said: 'Draw up a special set of Rules for these young people. Include in them the observance of the Holy Vows, and then bring them to me and I shall see about approving them'.

All this was not the result of any pressure put on him, but a spontaneous initiative on the part of His Excellency the Archbishop. It made a great impression on all who had known ever since 1908 of the prediction written by Fra Leopoldo, and reported at the beginning of this chapter. It should be noted that Mgr Giuseppe Gamba, not yet a cardinal, had only recently arrived in Turin, and knew nothing of the existence of Fra Leopoldo.

And so, by a disposition of Divine Providence, from that day onwards, in the Union of Jesus Crucified, there came about a fulfilment of the highest spiritual aspirations on the part of these young men who, with the name of Consecrated Religious Catechists, consecrated themselves to the life of perfection without leaving either the Union or their own family.

Their special Rules include and go beyond those of Associate Catechists, but do not cut them off from the latter; rather, they constitute a single Union. They do not impose any distinctive role on the Consecrated Religious Catechists, apart from that of having a greater spirit of sacrifice in bearing the onus of the various apostolates, and of a stricter duty to offer good example in the practice of all the virtues.

In this same context, young Associate Catechists, while having at their disposal the same means of sanctification and participating in apostolic work, can aspire to the life of the Consecrated Religious Catechists and adopt their special Rules.

The Senior Associated Catechists, that is, married people, taking part as far as their family duties permit, in meetings of a religious nature and in the apostolic work of the Union, make a valid contribution to the Union by their work and experience.

## Rules of the Consecrated Religious Catechists

His Excellency, Mgr Giuseppe Gamba, Archbishop of Turin, raised in 1926 to the dignity of the Cardinalate, by prescribing, as was said earlier, special Rules for the Consecrated Religious Catechists, and by involving himself in matters relating to the future of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified, gave proof of an insight and foresight which can be explained only by the conclusion that he, as a successor of the Apostles, was enlightened by the same Spirit who came down in the Upper Room.

When he came to know about the various Union branches and centres, created on the initiative of the Brothers of the Christian Schools at Grugliasco, Vercelli, Biella, at the *Collegio S. Giuseppe*, at Parma and at Rome, etc., he understood that they could not survive – and in fact, they closed – because they were not connected to the headquarters in such a way as to form a single institution, led by the Catechists of Jesus Crucified bound by religious vows.

This enlightened Prelate saw also that the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified, if it wanted a healthy and long-lasting existence, had to be directed by Consecrated Religious Catechists, but not cut off from the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who were called to prepare from among their pupils, the members, “Zealots”, Aspirants and the active members of the Associate Catechists.

All these individuals, the Brothers would subsequently entrust to the Consecrated Religious Catechists, to whom they would offer advice and practical help in the educational establishments run by them the world over.

The Cardinal gave proof of such foresight at various audiences granted to me and to the General President of the Catechists. At one of these audiences he concluded with the following words:

*I could entrust these young men to a priest, but I am not doing so because I am sure that a priest, however holy, would set them on an individual way forward, whereas the Catechists of the Union need to preserve what they have already received.*

The Rules of the Consecrated Religious Catechists, containing such prescriptions, were submitted to Rome by His Eminence the Cardinal where, as was reported in the newsletter of the Catechists, ‘he promoted our cause to such an extent that he brought back well-founded hopes of success’. But, in the meantime, that is on December 26th 1929, there occurred the sad death of this most loved pastor! ‘And here, with tears in our eyes and sadness in our hearts,’ the newsletter went on, ‘let us humbly bow down before the inscrutable designs of God who, often, lets one of his workers to sow the seed, for the fruit to be reaped by others. God be ever blessed in all things!’<sup>7</sup>

The profound sorrow which took hold of the Catechists at the death of their holy Prelate was only alleviated when they discovered in his successor, His Eminence Cardinal Maurilio Fossati, the same sentiments of paternal affection and lively concern for the approval of their Rules.

In fact, the repeated and effective insistence of the illustrious Cardinal to His Holiness Pope Pius XI, obtained from the great Pontiff the following statement which

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<sup>7</sup> *The Love of Jesus Crucified Newsletter*, Year XIV, No. 1–2, p. 4

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put an end to all opposition:

If time moves on, we must not stop. If it becomes necessary, we will change even the Canons.

The Holy Roman Congregation of the Council, after having examined at a plenary session the Rules of the Associate Catechists, and the Constitutions of the Consecrated Religious Catechists, by a letter dated January 18th 1933, communicated the dispositions of the approbation brought about by the efforts of Cardinal Fossati, as is proved by the document which we reproduce here:

Having seen the request of the Catechists, members of the ‘Council of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate’, for the purpose of obtaining the canonical approval of the Union and of the statutes that regulate it;

*In accordance with the dispositions given to us by the Sacred Congregation of the Council on January 18<sup>th</sup> inst.*

The statutes having been examined and found in accordance with the prescriptions given by the above mentioned Sacred Congregation of the Council;

Canon 492 of the Code of Canon Law having been consulted;

By our present decree “for a period of 5 years” , by way of experiment, we wish to erect, as in fact we now declare to be canonically erected, the “Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate”, subject to the observance of the statutes presented and attached to the request, fully confident that they will have many groups of Catechists, inspired by the spirit of piety, reparation and zeal, through whom we intend to see a true awakening of Christian life.

We are sending this decree with the statutes of the pious Union to be added to the documents at our Curia, and we are releasing this authentic copy of it for the use of the Council of the Union of Catechists’.

Given at Turin, June 23rd, Feast of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, 1933.

Canon Agostino Passera  
*Chancellor*

+ MAURILIO CARD. FOSSATI  
*Archbishop*

## The Secular Institute

All the same, the legal status granted to the Union of Catechists could not be considered definitive. The above decree conferred on it a form which did not allow it to identify with either lay associations governed by the Sacred Congregation of the Council, because of the vows which made it more like a state of perfection, or with religious congregations, governed by the Sacred Congregation of Religious, because it lacked some of the requisites considered essential for the state of perfection – common life, cloistered novitiate, etc.

The Union of Catechists was one of the most typical examples of a movement which was fermenting in the bosom of the Church, which was seeking to bring structures into line with the demands of the new times, and sought the inclusion of norms regarding states of perfection.

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This situation, noted and closely followed by the vigilant and prudent eye of Holy Mother the Church, was resolved by the Supreme Pontiff Pius XII in the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, dated February 2nd 1947, which made it possible finally to give the Union of Catechists a definitive status, placing it among the new states of perfection. The Union was established as a Secular Institute, and was among the first five immediately approved by the Church.

And so, the 'Order' predicted by Fra Leopoldo as early as 1908, became a reality forty years later, and now another sentence recorded by Fra Leopoldo and referred to earlier, was understood: 'From the pious Union will come holy fathers of families and many vocations'

In fact, the new Secular Institute does not include only the central core of the Union, but it is the whole Union itself which has taken on the form of a Secular Institute, and it has two categories of members :

1. The members properly so called, who are Consecrated Religious Catechists, who tend to religious perfection through the observance of the vows;
2. Associated members and, therefore, Associate Catechists, who aim to lead an intensely Christian life, while at the same time leading the ordinary life of the faithful, devoting themselves in particular to promoting the sanctity of the family, and sharing in the spirit of the Institute, working indiscriminately side-by-side with the Consecrated Religious Catechists, in the same works and activities.

We give below the text of the decree of erection, dated June 24th 1948, and that of the subsequent decree of approval of the Rules and Constitutions, dated February 22nd 1949.

The beginnings of the divine kingdom established by the teaching of Jesus Christ were perfected and brought to completion by means of the Cross of the Redeemer himself. In fact, the Son of God, 'immolated, became the cause of salvation of all who obey him' (Heb 5:9), according to the prophetic words 'when I shall be raised above the earth, I shall draw everything to me' (Jn 12:32). The effects of this exaltation, in the preaching of the Gospel, are being made so manifest every day to the minds of men, which need to be illuminated by means of the faith, and to their souls which must be renovated by grace, that all the knowledge of Christian salvation has no other aim except Christ and Christ crucified (1 Cor 2:2).

We know that study in order to pass on and explain this divine knowledge, study necessary for anyone who believes in God, was undertaken for many centuries by some religious orders as their particular task. But since these human institutions grow old by their very nature, and their rules with time fall into disuse, it is necessary for religious associations to develop from one another. This is why, our most dear Brother in Christ Teodoreto Giovanni Garberoglio, member of the Congregation of the Christian Schools, after having meditated piously and long, and in association with the man of God Frate Leopoldo Maria Musso, of the Order of Friars Minor, founded a Union which took the name of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, whose purpose was to worship Christ Crucified by adoration, and to conform oneself

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to him by the study of evangelical perfection, and to make known to others the glory of his divine charity by means of teaching catechism.

The success of the Institution moved our predecessor Card. Agostino Richelmy by a decree dated May 9th 1914, to proceed to the first canonical erection of the Institute, which we ourselves confirmed with greater praise by the decree dated June 23rd 1933. Because, at the time, there were no norms based on a common and sure law, even the status of the Institute was precarious because of the uncertain legislation, to the point almost that it was unable or feared to imitate in some certain way the rule of life of religious orders founded previously.

This uncertainty was removed by the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, dated February 2nd 1947. This document, establishing again the entire category of secular religious congregations, moved our mind to renew this Union and adapt it to the recently established law. Subsequently, the Roman Congregation charged with expediting matters relating to religious congregations, replied to our letter on February 1st of this year, saying that as far as it was concerned, there was nothing to prevent us, according to article 6 of the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, from proceeding with the canonical erection of the reformed Union. Knowing therefore that all the conditions laid down by the law were observed, aware of all the good we presumed had to come from the Lord to so many faithful followers of Christ, with this decree we erect as a Secular Institute of diocesan right, in accordance with the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, established in the City of Turin. We declare that its special purpose is the spiritual perfection of its members, pursued above all by meditation on the Cross of Christ Our Lord, and equally by the catechetical instruction of the faithful, which is to be carried out by good methods, even by the best of our time.

All members, if they wish to persevere in their holy undertaking, should renew, in the recently erected Institute, the consecration they made in the pious Association, either perpetual or temporary, following the same procedure. But the time of consecration spent in the Secular Institute, and equally the time of probation that each member has completed in the pious Association, are valid canonically from all points of view. As soon as it is opportune, we shall take care to endorse with our authority, by means of another decree from us, the text of the special Constitutions, according to which the Institute regulates itself by its own Rule.

*Given at Turin, June 24th, Feast of St John the Baptist, 1948th year of the Redemption.*

+ MAURILIO CARD FOSSATI

Fr Battist, Chancellor.

The Secular Institute of the Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate having been established on June 24th of the year recently ended, we postponed the approval of its Rules and Constitutions so that it would be possible to make, with a clear mind, the changes requested by the Sacred Congregation of Religious, in a letter dated July 15th, changes which would ensure a more perfect conformity with current legislation. And now that the

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Catechists, having taken advantage of these observations, have studied the matter with greater care and at greater depth, we are gladly led, for our part, to grant this approval to the full extent of the law.

Hence, by the present decree, in virtue of the full authority of our rank, we approve after examination the text of the Rules and Constitutions of the Secular Institute of the Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, and we promulgate them in the form or copy attached here.

Given in Turin, February 22nd, Feast of St Peter of Antioch, 1949.

M. Card. FOSSATI

*Archbishop*

## CHAPTER 23

### The work flourishes

The works that Fra Leopoldo had seen develop with great difficulty from the small seed planted in souls, also flourished admirably subsequently, and were destined to bear new fruits of goodness in the Christian education of young people, and especially, of young workers.

The Servant of God foresaw marvellously that the new task of Christian educators would be not only to give a Christian education to young workers, but by this means, to free every human heart from the slavery of material things through the sanctification of work.

#### *Istituto Arti e Mestieri*

According to the directives and predictions contained in the writings of Fra Leopoldo, the *Istituto Arti e Mestieri* was to be the model for so many other *Istituti* or *Case di Carita* to be established in all dioceses for the conversion of the world through Christian charity, and for the solution of the serious problem which continued to pit workers against employers. The Committee responsible for promoting the *Istituto* did not succeed in doing this because of the dissensions which arose, but since many of its members, inspired by a supernatural spirit, worked in it at the price of great sacrifice, God endorsed their efforts and continued to bless the Institute.

In reality, the Committee was not dissolved by a formal act: given the extent to which its members absented themselves from meetings, with the result that there was not the quorum necessary to take necessary decisions, the point was reached when meetings were no longer called, except on festive Institute occasions.

It should be noted, however, that many Councillors did not attend meetings because they saw that the Institute was making excellent progress under the sole direction of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who needed no other help except funding. The Providence of God, drawing good out of the conflict which afflicted the Committee, offered to the Brothers institutes for the education of the poor, a new type of gratuitous school which was to replace those which were disappearing, and which depended on administrations and committees who always found it difficult to agree. And so the Brothers became the link between the poor and the rich, to stimulate the charity of the latter for the former, and to educate the children of the poor in Christian charity.

In the writings of Fra Leopoldo, the following expressions are often repeated:

Jesus recommends the rich to come to the help of the *Opera di Carita Arti e Mestieri*.

Charity must always be asked for, so that help comes.

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Words of Jesus:

*Let them always remember to ask for charity.\**

The Brothers who supported the *Istituto Arti e Mestieri* in its infancy, had really held out their hand to beg alms for it. But the supernatural factor was visibly present in their undertakings, and especially at harsh moments. God inspired chosen souls, whose memory still has the power to move those who knew them.

Rodolfo Sella, a fervent enthusiast and very active, was the first instigator of the institution. At the height of the storm, when he saw that the name intended for the school could not include the word “charity”, he advocated very strongly that its spirit be most jealously preserved, and donated anonymously a large sum.

Giuseppe Poma, a most humble industrialist, who never wanted to be listed as a benefactor, a fervent Christian, an exemplary father, was one of the most solid supporters of the Institute, as was the *Conte Celidonio Airaldi*, and many others who are not named because they are still alive.

Fra Leopoldo was asked: ‘Should we publish the names of benefactors?’

On October 27<sup>th</sup> 1919, while he praying before the Blessed Sacrament, he heard the words:

*Persons who aspire to heavenly life offer willingly in a way that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing: donors know also that their offerings go into good hands, and are spent in a most charitable manner as the Heart of God wishes.\**

The Brothers at via delle Rosine received most of their charitable donations from their fellow Brothers at the *Collegio S. Giuseppe* in Turin, and from the *Istituto Gonzaga* in Milan. With these and other donations, great and small, from many other sources, and with the visible blessing of God, they were able to construct the big educational establishment at 25, Corso Trapani in Turin.

Magnificently large, beautiful in its architectural symmetry, generous in its number of classrooms, laboratories, modern equipment, it was not afraid of competition from the best state establishments of this kind.

Fortunate, unforeseen coincidences provided machinery and large donations which arrived on the anniversary of Fra Leopoldo’s death. Such facts demonstrate the special benevolence of Jesus for the *Istituto*, and his wish to see it supported solely by Divine Providence.

On July 30<sup>th</sup> 1920, while Fra Leopoldo was praying to Jesus Crucified for the success of the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*, he heard the following words:

*Fra Leopoldo, we shall make something which will amaze the world: it will need time and much work, and there will even be intrigues which do not suit us.\**

The *Istituto Arti e Mestieri* built by the Brothers of the Christian Schools of the poorest community in their Province, at a very high cost, and which in the space of a few years could count more than 600 students starting work, really amazed the members of the Committee who knew of the poverty of the Brothers and the difficulties behind the great success of a scheme, which many considered utopian. Without special protection from God, the Brothers would certainly not have been able

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to succeed in an undertaking far beyond their strength.

Brother Director Aquilino, who had developed the *Istituto* to such an extent that it could no longer fit into the premises at via delle Rosine, was succeeded in 1934 by Brother Director Ippolito, who had the *Istituto Arti e Mestieri* building constructed in Corso Trapani. In the course of its construction, the new Director told me he had received on numerous occasions extraordinary help from Divine Providence. One of these occasions was when there was an urgent need to find a bank willing to lend a rather large sum of money in order to pay the builders as per the contract. After much unsuccessful research, people were convinced that it was impossible to obtain such a loan, but then it was suggested to Brother Director Ippolito to make a novena to Jesus Crucified, calling on Fra Leopoldo's intercession. The novena ended precisely on the day that the Brother Provincial signed a contract in Milan for a large loan from a bank.

Perhaps the *Istituto Arti e Mestieri* could have been even more imposing, as had been envisaged by its architect Paolino Napione in an early plan, but even as it is, if we consider not only its construction but also its progressive development, one is obliged to admit there was special help from Divine Providence involved.

That the *Istituto Arti e Mestieri*, in order to fulfil the mission for which it was destined, had to rely more on the charity of many than on that of the few, can be seen from the following words of Fra Leopoldo:

On the evening of Wednesday December 22nd 1920, Jesus Crucified said:

*Cheer up! Cheer up! My beneficiaries, that is, the young students at the Arti e Mestieri, will come to help at the right time. The world will be converted, the land of paradise will come.\**

### Evening and holiday courses

Industrial evening classes were started in the *Istituto Arti e Mestieri* when it was at 14, via delle Rosine, in 1920, with the teaching of religion and some other subjects entrusted to the Catechists of Jesus Crucified.

In 1925, the Catechists themselves started similar industrial holiday courses in the parish of Our Lady of Peace in the *Barriera* district of Milan.

In the space of a few years, these holiday courses expanded so much that the Catechists had to look for much larger premises to fit in all the young people who insisted on being admitted. They then had the idea of adopting the name *Casa di Carita*, which had hampered the setting up of a gratuitous school for the poor, and of writing it in large letters on the walls of the building which would be chosen to accommodate the classes.

When the idea was mentioned to His Eminence Cardinal Giuseppe Gamba, the Catechists received from the paternal heart of their Archbishop much encouragement to pursue their plan, and the following letter:

Having examined the above plan, intended to give life and stability to the holiday courses run by the excellent Catechists of Jesus Crucified at the parish church of Our Lady of Peace, I approve and bless it whole-heartedly, with the sincere hope that they will find many generous benefactors so that

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the work they do will reap abundant fruit among the good people of this parish.

Turin, April 16th 1929

GIUSEPPE, Card. ARCHBISHOP

Hardly had the name *Casa di Carita* been chosen, than help of all kinds started to come in to help the undertaking.

In the month of May 1929, the Catechists, without having any funds at all in the house, signed the contract for the purchase of property at 8, via Feletto which, having a detached house, made the name *Casa di Carita – Scuola Professionale Festiva e Serale* more visible. After a few months, they were able to hand over to the seller an interim payment of more than 100,000 Lire in cash.

To cover the remainder of the debt, the Catechists took out a loan from the Turin *Cassa di Risparmio*, and signed a promissory note for 100,000 Lire. If they redeemed it before December 31st 1929, there would be a discount of 20,000 Lire.

In view of this, the Catechists made a novena to Mary Immaculate, in the course of which a woman ‘Zealot’ of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified brought them the required sum. Many years earlier, this lady, on the advice of Fra Leopoldo, had accepted a bequest with which she would be able, at some time in the future, to fund the work of the Union.

Feeling that she was now old, she was inspired to give this money to the Catechists who, with this and other donations were able to collect the sum required to redeem the promissory note. And the date she came with this money was December 7th 1929, the vigil of the feast of their heavenly Patron.

Considerable donations came from other men and women ‘Zealots’ of the Union who, in the space of a few months, collected more than 10,000 Lire in the working-class district of *Barriera* in Milan.

In October 1929, in the same premises next to the parish church of Our Lady of Peace, evening classes were added to the holiday classes, and on June 15th 1930, His Excellency Mgr Angelo Bartolomasi, Protector of the Union of Catechists, blessed and opened officially the *Casa di Carita*, and the accompanying celebrations inspired enthusiasm throughout the parish.

In October 1931, the industrial evening classes were transferred from via delle Rosine and added to the holiday and evening classes at the *Casa di Carita*, at 8, via Feletto where, in the course of a few years the school population made up of low-income workers, rose from the 370 admissions in 1932 to 800 admissions in 1939.

### **New location for holiday and evening classes**

In 1939, the Catechists faced a crossroad: should they reject new requests for admission and reduce the number of students, or look for a new location?<sup>1</sup> To reduce and limit their undertaking, when their whole past had been characterised by constant encouragement from Divine Providence, would have been unworthy of the Catechists,

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1 There were also problems regarding the rooms which were not really suitable for a school.

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who decided to purchase a piece of land large enough for a good-sized and suitable building. It was a daring undertaking, and to be successful, it needed the help of God. To obtain this help, the Catechists wished to choose as the name of their school, the complete name recommended so often by the Servant of God, the *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*, and they placed their plan under the protection of St Joseph. On June 16th 1939, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, one of the Catechists happened to see a usual kind of advertisement: 'Land for sale, easy terms, Contact . . .'. The site was ideal, factories all around, plenty of space, an honest price, and good conditions of payment. On September 3rd 1939, the beginning of the second World War, the purchase agreement was signed for a piece of land measuring some 10,000 square metres, with the undertaking to pay a good sum as a deposit in the short term. On November 15th 1939, the Catechists confirmed the purchase agreement and paid the required sum. On the same day, a woman 'Zealot' of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified made her will, bequeathing a villa to the Catechists, which served to cover a part of the price of the land purchased.

The contract for the definitive purchase of the land had to be delayed because of some practical problems that needed resolving regarding the legal transfer of the property, and was fixed by the same lawyer for May 31st 1940. By choosing this date, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the end of the month of Mary Most Holy – a date whose significance he was probably unaware of – for the purchase of the land, he increased the confidence of the Catechists that they would find the money to pay the remaining debt, and construct when the time came, the new *Casa di Carita Arti e Mestieri*.



## CONCLUSION

### **Providential mission and votive offerings of the Christian heart**

The brief account of the life of Fra Leopoldo Maria Musso of the Friars Minor is a confirmation for us that the Lord is wonderful in his Saints, and notwithstanding the most humble status he wanted his Servant to have, he entrusted to him the highest responsibilities.

Depositary and herald of a form of 'Devotion to Jesus Crucified' which produces marvellous effects of conversion and sanctification in the persons who meditate on it and practise it with faith and love, he – a devoted son of the Church, a most faithful supporter of the Holy Father the Pope, of bishops, parish priests – speaks to all Christians, assuring them in the name of Jesus Crucified that the sole way of returning to the right path in order to be saved is to establish in all homes the practice of the Devotion to Jesus Crucified, from which comes the spirit of humility, reparation and zeal.

Subsequently, the Servant of God, put wondrously into contact by Divine Providence with the Brothers of the Christian Schools, encouraged by means of divine messages the foundation of the Union of Catechists of Jesus Crucified and Mary Immaculate, promising through it great blessings from his Lord and from Mary Most Holy, the Mother of God, for those who, inspired by a profound spirit of humility, mutual charity and holy zeal, correspond with God's plans.

Such blessings are now evident from the approval obtained from ecclesiastical authorities for the establishment of the Union as a Secular Institute, and from the expansion of the work of the Catechists who, in Turin, in 44 years of existence (1914–1958) have been meritorious in announcing the Kingdom of God to little ones and to the poor.

The Union of Catechists, working side-by-side with the spiritual Sons of St John Baptist de La Salle, will extend the latter's catechetical apostolate and will make it bear increasingly more spiritual fruit.

Fra Leopoldo had also the task of showing to a world afflicted by hatred and social division the most effective way of mending its ways, that is, through the Christian education of young workers.

Free industrial, agricultural and commercial schools for the poor, as they will be promoted by bishops and parish priests, according to the indications of Fra Leopoldo, will contribute in a safe way to the peaceful resolution of the social problem in an atmosphere of charity which will harmoniously dissolve the disparity between the thinking classes and those who work with their hands.

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In this task, the rich will have to help priests, and the latter will have to turn their efforts and the alms they receive to promote the education of young people, according to the wish expressed by Jesus to the Servant of God.

Even in this context, the establishments founded in Turin by the Brothers of the Christian Schools and by the Catechists have visible signs of God's protection, a sure proof that the ideal proposed by Fra Leopoldo is not only possible but a consoling reality which awaits '*as a main driving force*' only for an opportunity to extend it throughout the world.

In the meantime, may the Servant of God continue to protect from Heaven these institutions, so that they grow not only in number but especially in the spirit of the love of God and of the neighbour, so that they can multiply the admirable fruits already produced as well as those predicted.

All this, while waiting for Holy Mother the Church, interpreter of the thoughts of God, to give its solemn and infallible judgment regarding the virtues of the humble son of St Francis of Assisi – the most brilliant gem of the Religious Family of Friars Minor in Turin – to whom Jesus Crucified and the Most Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, manifested the mysteries of their Hearts, and released new torrents of divine mercies for a repentant and reconciled mankind.