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YEAR 1826

Letter 23

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She proposes devotional practices for Carnival Time.

THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

From time to time miracles still do happen nowadays. This time I want to work one myself by being prompt, or rather very prompt, in answering your welcome letter. I do hope that not even Marianna will charge her Bortolamea with laziness and slacker, because she does not deserve it. I am very happy that you liked what I proposed in my last letter. Now you are asking for something to do in Carnival time. I do appreciate your fervour and I wish to satisfy it, even though you could have very well written out yourself what I, and the other two friends, have to do. Oh well! This time your humility has prevailed, another time your companion's pride, perhaps, will have the upper hand.

Let us do our best, by prayer, to obtain from God the repentance and forgiveness of so many sins, and so we shall every morning recite three times the *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* and

Glory be and three times *Hail Holy Queen* with arms outstretched, and every evening '*Miserere*' (Psalm 50) and seven *Hail Marys* with hands under the knees. Each one of us will offer one holy Communion a week for the salvation of sinners: Lucia will see to it on Saturdays, Giulia on Fridays, Marianna on Tuesdays and Bortolamea on Thursdays.

These days were drawn by lots. If anyone of you is unable to do it on the day assigned, she can do it another day, provided she offers one Communion a week. We shall also fast one day a week: Lucia on Thursdays, Giulia on Saturdays, Marianna on Tuesdays and Bortolamea on Mondays. For the same purpose each one of us shall take the discipline twice a week, on days of our choice. We shall restrain our curiosity, even in innocent things, to make up for so many abuses done in Carnival time. We shall abstain from fruit and titbits in order to make up for so much intemperance committed during this time by unfortunate sinners. At the sound of the *Angelus* bell: morning, noon and evening, we shall retire in spirit at the feet of Jesus Crucified and there all four of us will together pray to our most gentle Spouse for unfortunate sinners.

Lastly, since in this period Jesus is left practically alone, we shall do our best to keep him company: we shall therefore remain prayerful and avoid all useless talk.

This is what I am able to tell you. If you or the other two, write to me anything else, I will be very happy with it and will make it a point to carry it out. Please share all of this with our

dear Romelli sisters; give them my warm wishes and tell them that I am waiting almost impatiently for a letter from them.

There is another thing I should like to do together with you, which I hope will do us much good. But before I share it with anyone, I wish to receive a letter from the Romellis.

I cannot fulfil your desire here and now with regard to what I told you: Our Lord does not want it. Meanwhile, please pray, and I will do as you wish some other time; practise self-denial. I am sending you the Crucifix blessed (with a plenary indulgence) at the point of death and the beads: if you recite the Rosary every day, you can receive a plenary indulgence once a month with the understanding that you go to Confession and receive Holy Communion any day you wish. You can thus gain very many partial indulgences with every prayer.

Since you want to know, the cost of the Corporal cloth and 'Animetta': they amount to 17 pence in all. I shall put off for another time my congratulations for the new Sodality of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Lovere, 9 January 1826.

Your loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 24

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

Covering letter sent with spiritual scripts.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am sending you a couple of papers in which I have noted the defects of pride I have committed. I am enclosing also two more papers, with permissions I am begging you to give me. I beg you to be more liberal this time, since this is the right season for penance.

Along with these papers you will also find my method of life: in this regard, you already know what I have in mind. However, do as you think best, according to what the Lord will inspire you, for I hope He has given you some inspiration for me as well.

I earnestly commend myself to your prayer. With profound esteem and gratitude I kiss your hand and declare to be

21 January 1826.

Your devoted Daughter in Christ

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 25

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She has not been keeping so well.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

My dear Sister,

Lovere, 13 February 1826.

You have guessed: I was sick, and I am still out of sorts though I have been up and doing for several days now. All this time, you were always in my thoughts and three or four times in the night I even dreamt about you. I was very sorry I could not write to you, as there are many things I am anxious to tell you, but my natural laziness and listlessness prevented me from doing so. I shall write to you at greater length on Saturday, and I will explain what I had promised you, provided I am given permission to sleep less than I am told to at the moment, because at present I have no time left free.

May God grant you abundant graces in this Season of Lent, and for you, also of Spiritual Exercises. This is my heartfelt wish for you. Please pray the Lord for me, too, so that during this time, in which He is granting me some little cross, I may not abandon Him because of it.

Please give my best wishes to our friends Giulia and Lucia Romelli; let them know that they have always been in my thoughts, and that as soon as possible I will write to them as well.

Goodbye, dear. I send you a loving kiss. Once again I commend myself to your prayer, because my need is very great. We shall meet one day in that blessed Heaven, provided I do manage to get there.

Your loving Sister in Christ

B. CAPITANIO

To Esteemed Lady

MARIANNA VERTUA

MALEGNO.

Letter 26

TO MARIA DÒ

She hopes for better news about her health - Sharing in the Cross of Jesus is a true comfort.

Dearest friend of mine,

I wonder what news of your health will reach me. God grant that it be good; I would be very sorry if it turns out the opposite. However, I don't want to give up hoping for the best.

Have courage, Maria. You are on the cross, and this enriches you with infinite merits. Bear it gladly and thank the Lord who in some manner wants you to be like him. How comforting it is for a person who loves Jesus Christ to have something for which she can rightly say: «In this I am like my dear Jesus»!

As a matter of fact, you are now in the best situation that can ever be desired, because you are thus greatly pleasing to the Lord: He looks on you with predilection and is saying: even if many offend me, I have my dear Maria who suffers something for my sake. I tell you quite frankly that I feel jealous of you, and while I do feel sorry for the pain you endure, I have within

me a desire to share in it, provided I have also the same patience that you have.

Give my sincere regards to all your family, especially Bortolomea. My Parents send you their best wishes. So too my sister, Maria Merla, Maria Cotti, Maria Cottinelli and all your friends.

With this great desire I have to see you, I commend myself to your prayers.

Love, 25 February 1826.

Your loving and grateful Friend
BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Esteemed Lady
MARIA DÒ

MONTECCHIO.

Letter 27

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She submits a method of life for her Confessor's approval.

Very Reverend Spiritual Father,

I could no longer resist inner inspirations the Lord has been giving me to reform my life by drawing up a method of life through which all my actions could be regulated by virtue: by carrying it out perfectly well I could truly please my most gentle Spouse and become a Saint.

I have prepared it according to the inspirations I had; I have put down without any order whatever seemed to me most conducive to saintliness. Now I am sending it to you, Reverend Father, so that you may examine it and see if it is suitable for me and if you can allow me to follow it, while on my part I assure you that by God's grace I am resolved to do my best to put it into practice in all its details. I beg you to add to it any omissions you consider profitable for my poor soul.

If on the other hand there is anything that you don't deem suitable for me, cross it out, and I will be equally happy,

particularly regarding penance practices. I have decided to insert them because I felt moved to do so, trusting that if they are truly inspirations communicated by God, He will also give you the readiness to let me do them; if, instead, they are prompted by self-love or by the devil who seeks in that way to prevent a greater good, in that case I too prefer that you withhold your permission. Do what before God you deem the best, and I will be quite happy with everything.

I beg you to remember me in your prayers: this is for me a time of some crosses, and so I am in extreme need of your prayer. Excuse me this new trouble. Reverently kissing your hand I gratefully profess the honour to be.

Lovere, 26 February 1826.

Your devoted Servant and Daughter in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Very Rev. Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 28

TO THE SAME

Inspirations on the proposed transfer of her Confessor - Her full conformity with God's will.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am writing this letter on the basis of what I can understand, and I really want to tell you quite openly what I felt about the matter known to you. Wednesday evening and that same night, I tried hard to convince myself that it may still be God's will that you remain here, particularly when I thought of our dear Institute, the Hospital, the Oratorio¹, the preached Missions, the youth, and so on, but each time a voice within me seemed to reply that you could do much good there, too, and that if God really wanted you there, you would please him more even if you did less work, and you would acquire greater merit as well. I kept this thought in mind till my Holy Communion on Thursday.

¹ See footnote pg 55.

As soon as I received Jesus in my heart, I started recommending the whole matter to him, and this thought struck me: «Tell him to accept God's will totally, and that he should prepare to go at his Superior's command; and then - who knows - God may do as he did with Abraham, just be satisfied with his good will and leave him at peace».

Then I thought I could pray fervently the Holy Spirit to enlighten the Bishop that he may discern God's will aright and at the same time bring to his mind another person fit for the task. This thought cheered me somewhat, because it had come to me unexpectedly, and it seemed to me that God was pleased to hear me. I therefore did my best to get as many devout people as possible to pray, as a result of which I now owe a good number of holy Communion because I had to promise them I would do the same for them if I obtained the grace I sought. On my part, I did not neglect to pray hard to the Lord, my gentle '*Mamma*' (Mother Mary) and also my dear St Aloysius. I can assure you that I seem to have prayed truly, and from my heart: I say this because at times it happens that I pray for some grace but my heart is not really in it, for I feel that if I prayed from my heart, the Lord would hear me; but even if I tried very hard, I cannot pray with my heart but only with the lips, and so I obtain nothing.

But this time it was not like that. It really seems to me (unless I am mistaken) that I prayed more with my heart than with my lips. During my Communion this morning I had the same thoughts as yesterday's, and this evening, when I heard that the Parish Priest had gone to Brescia, being sure it must have

been in connection with this matter, I felt so confident that the grace seemed to me practically granted. How things will turn out, I do not know. The most proper thing is to place ourselves in God's hands, that he may do what he thinks best, for his glory. I frankly confess to you that the news was a real blow to me in many ways, and I, who hardly ever weep, could not restrain myself from shedding tears, and freely, too. However, I could not resign myself to the idea until, fully reassured by the Lord, I said to him: «Lord, if you want him, take him; as for me, I accept your Holy Will. This is a sacrifice that costs me very much, but I offer it to you». There, I have revealed my heart to you sincerely, just as it is.

I too beg you, for charity's sake, to say just one *Hail Mary* for my intention.

If you don't mind, tomorrow I shall come to refer a word said to me by a Nun; I will come a bit early not to rob other people of the time.

I humbly beg you to bless me, while I gratefully express my deep reverence for you.

3 March 1826.

Your grateful devoted Servant and Daughter in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 29

TO GIULIA & LUCIA ROMELLI

She distributes devotional practices for each month of the year among the four friends - Postscript.

GLORY BE TO THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY. AMEN

Dearly beloved Sisters,

At last I am able to do as you, and I, wanted to. I would have liked very much to write to you earlier, but a slight illness forced me to repress my desire. Don't think, however, that in the meantime I forgot all about you: No, beloved Sisters, the thought of you is too deeply engraved in my mind for me to forget; in fact I must tell you that even at night I have dreamt about you five or six times, to my own great delight. Let this be enough to assure you of my sincere affection for you.

Now I must tell you what I had promised you time back. My plan would be this: to dedicate each month to a particular devotion and observe it through various practices. Then to assign three months to each of us by drawing of lots, so that the four of us put together will cover the whole year. I have

fixed the devotion for all the months and I have also drawn the lots for the months each one of us will see to. Now let me tell you what each one has drawn. The months that came to me were: «May dedicated to Our Lady, June dedicated to St Aloysius and November dedicated to All Saints».

M. Vertova's months are: «January dedicated to the Sacred Heart, for unfortunate sinners, March dedicated to Jesus Crucified and September dedicated to our sweet Mamma Mary». Lucia got: «February dedicated to the Blessed Trinity, July dedicated to the holy Souls of Purgatory and December dedicated to Baby Jesus». Giulia got: «April dedicated to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, August to Jesus Spouse of our soul and October to our Guardian Angel».

Before a month starts the one who according to the lots drawn has to see to it, has the duty to draw up a good number of devotional practices suited to the month and writes them out for the others so that all four of us observe them together. Besides, if in that month there is some Novena, she will have the added task of forming another list and send it to everyone. If anyone in the group fails to do any of the fixed practices, she will do an act of humility and report it to the one who has proposed it. Each one should, of course, make it a point to send in good time to all the others the information on what has to be done, to ensure a good start.

We shall let this month be; we shall start next month, which is M. Vertova's lot. If you like this plan, well and good - we'll do it. If not, we shall drop the idea. Please tell Marianna as well,

because I had no time to write to her, and give her my warm wishes. Give my sincere regards to your Uncle Don Carlo and Lady Angelina. I beg you to say three *Hail Marys* for a very urgent need of mine. We shall meet again on Mt Calvary, where our most gentle Spouse expects us to be close to him in his suffering. Ever yours in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your faithful Sister and Friend
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

The shirts will be attended to, so do send them.

But send them through me, because I have spoken with Sr. Alma; you would not know who they are meant for.

To my dear three Sisters,

P.S. I have received your welcome letter this very minute. Thank you for your concern for me. My laziness along with a slight sickness prevented me from writing to you sooner. However, I wrote this letter many days ago, but I had no opportunity to send it. I received the wishes you sent me through Maria Triaca: thank you very much. Oh well! I do apologize for my indolence, and in future I will be more faithful to you.

I beg all three of you to offer a Holy Communion for my intention. I sign off in a hurry, leaving you on Mt Calvary, filled with compassion for Jesus who dies for our sake.

Goodbye, please excuse me. Pray for me, because I tell you quite frankly that I am in great need of it. You will fail in 'charity' if you don't do so!

Give a kiss for me to Our Lady of Sorrows and tell her that I am waiting for the grace I asked Her for. Once again, goodbye.

Lovere, 3 March 1826.

Yours faithful Sister

B. CAPIT.

To Very Esteemed Ladies

sisters GIULIA & LUCIA ROMELLI

CIVIDATE.

Letter 30

TO GIROLAMA TABONI

She encourages her to strive for Heaven.

HAIL TO JESUS CRUCIFIED

My dear Friend,

Love, 9 March 1826.

As First of all I must apologize most sincerely. My laziness along with a slight illness have caused this long delay in answering your most welcome letter. Forgive me this time, too. In future I promise I will faithfully write to you more frequently and answer all your letters more promptly.

Not to let you remain anxious about my *rampinello for knitting gloves* I assure you I have it with me, a long time since. Let it not worry you. It's nothing.

Dear friend, what shall we do for Heaven? I already seem to see you running speedily towards that blessed Homeland, yearning for it and eagerly looking forward to enter it! ... And if I too will be fortunate enough to reach it, how happy we shall be to find ourselves united at last to our most gentle Spouse, in

whom lies all our delight even here on earth? Ah, dear friend, let us strive to enter it; however much it may cost us, it will never be too much. I know you are very charitable, and so I too make bold to come forward and ask an act of charity, and it is this: to offer three Holy Communions for my intention. I beg it earnestly of you, please don't say No. I want to obtain a grace from God, but I do not deserve it and so I beg others to pray and get it for me. Give my sincere regards to Miss Giustina and Miss Lucia, and please ask them, too, to offer a Holy Communion for my intention. Tell them to excuse the liberty I take and that I will be very grateful to them. Let me know when you write if you have told them and if they agree to do it. Goodbye, my dear 'Momolina'. See you again on Mt. Calvary where Jesus expects us to be compassionately close to him in his terrible suffering. Goodbye.

Your faithful, loving Friend
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 31

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

*She apologizes - She urges her to keep company to Jesus in his Passion
- She hints at the future Institute - Postscript to thank, etc.*

PEACE BE WITH YOU. AMEN

Dearest Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 9 March 1826.

What shall I say to you? I must apologize for my delay in writing. In your kindness forgive me this time as well. If you have to fulfil your Easter obligations, you must be on peaceful terms with Bortolamea who excels in breaking her word. I do like this with everyone. I make a thousand promises and never keep one. Sometimes they tell me I am like my Confessor, but he does it out of humility, while I do it out of laziness. However it may be, I am able to make my dear Mariannina practise patience, and in Heaven she will be rewarded for that too. Oh well, let us pass on to other things.

Dear Sister, what shall we do for Jesus? Could we have the heart to forsake him while he weeps and grieves? That would be most unbecoming of us! Let us remain close to the adorable Cross; let us love it, kiss it and do our best to carry it gladly.

To be frank with you, I am now unable to find Jesus if not on Mt. Calvary, on the Cross, where he endures terrible pain for me, and the thought of it gives me the strength to bear quite happily a few crosses that He sends me. However, do pray that he may give me the grace of full conformity to his most loveable will.

I am eagerly waiting for a letter from you, setting a few practices to do for the current month. Tell me the truth: are you perhaps planning to join Miss Giustina and others to form an Institute? I am not putting this question to you out of idle curiosity. On the contrary, it is out of concern for your good. If you on your part are open with me, I too will at once tell you something I had some time back promised to speak to you about. I must ask you, for charity's sake, to offer three Holy Communions for my intention, and ask Giulia and Lucia Romelli to do the same, and if both you and the Romellis do it, write to me of it. I am sending you the book, the cost of which is Lire 1.8; and the Corporal and 'Animetta' which amount to 17 pence, as I had told you. Goodbye, dearest. See you again in Heaven.

I am your Sister who breaks her word.

CAPITANIO BORTOL.

P.S. This evening I received your letter. It brought me an overwhelming pleasure. I like the practices very much, and by God's grace I will do my best to carry them out.

The Corporal and 'Animetta' are not blessed.

Concerning the young girl you mention, I spoke to the Nuns about her some time ago, and they told me they have no room, and so I did not take the trouble to procure the papers. I thought I had already written to you of this, but I must have forgotten. If you wish me to have the formalities done all the same, tell me and I will get the papers for you.

Goodbye, dear. Pray to Mary for me. I will offer a holy Communion for you provided you do the three I had asked for.
Ever yours in Jesus Christ

10 March 1826.

Your loving Friend and Sister

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 32

TO THE SAME

Advice relating to choice of state-in-life - Hints at the idea of a new Institute - Proposal to honour Mary in the month of May by 'gaining souls' for her - Thanks for prayers that have been effective in keeping Don Bosio at Lovere.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

My dearly beloved Sister,

As I am very glad to have this time to spend in holy conversation with my dear Marianna. May it please God that it be of some benefit to either one or the other! I could see from your letter how troubled you are over the choosing of your state-in-life. This time I feel I must try to comfort you. Dear Marianna, let me be frank with you: the Cloister will not suit you. For some time the Lord wants you to labour tirelessly in your own town and win over all the youth to him. But since I don't wish to keep anything from you, may I add that I don't think the Lord expects you to stay always at home; no, this does not seem to me likely at all. I should rather think that His plan is that you will join me in doing something for Him. I cannot tell you more than this yet, because I am bound by the seal of secrecy. I asked permission to tell you everything, but

for the time being I am not allowed to do so. However, I hope you will soon come to know. But to come back to what I was saying: would you be willing to join me in doing some good work for the Lord? However hard I try to drive away this thought from my mind, there is still an inner voice saying to me: – Marianna is meant to be a companion of yours¹. – I spoke to my Confessor about this, but he told me to keep silent for the time being. However, it will not be for long.

What I am writing may make some impression on you: you may feel inclined one way or the other. In either case, please tell me frankly what it is. You will not repent it if you do, because I am asking this of you not out of curiosity but because I really care for your spiritual good. Above all, keep what I have told you absolutely secret: nobody is to know of it. Woe to me if people come to know of it. I beg to pray earnestly, as hard as you ever could, so that God may give you light and also to favour the undertaking. Let this suffice for the present, because I am afraid I will end up disobeying if I go any further.

The month of our most gentle and dearly beloved Mamma is close at hand. What shall we do, dear Marianna, to honour her? I'll tell you what to do. We shall bring her as many souls as we can: that would be a service that Mary will be supremely pleased with, and in order to please her, we must do it promptly and most fervently. In my case, certain

¹ She helped in preparing members for the Institute, but she herself never formed part of it, and remained a lay person.

obstacles prevent me at the moment from calling girls to me; but nothing will prevent me from accepting to suffer and doing what will give greater honour to Mary, and what I will be advised to do. I don't know who is at the bottom of this situation: whether it is the devil trying to disturb a good thing or else Mary because she is not quite pleased with what I do, because it is done badly and out of pride. Do pray Mary to find a remedy for this. However, you are very fortunate because there is so much that you can do: do it gladly and Mary will reward you for it. I will without any trouble hand to Giulia and Lucia Romelli the practices for the month, since I happen to be the one who should propose them. Your Holy Communions have had a very good effect; they were meant to let Don Angelo remain here in Lovere, God willing, and at this point we are practically sure he will stay. Thank you very much; I will repay my own debts to you. As to the letter you mentioned, I handed it straightaway to Don Angelo. In fact, after we had talked a good bit about you, he admitted that he had not yet written to you. If you want me to tell him anything on your behalf, write it out to me. Giovanna Bosio sends you her best wishes and asks you to remember her in your prayer. All your other friends do the same, and so too my Parents and Camilla. Most beloved in the Lord, goodbye.

Ever yours

28 April 1826

Your loving Sister and Friend

B. C.

Letter 33

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She sends them devotional practices for the month of June dedicated to St Aloysius - She enquires about the health of a fellow member - She recommends not to overdo in devout exercises.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY & ST ALOYSIUS

My dearest Friends and Sisters,

The shirts are practically ready were it not for lacking material for the shoulders of one of them. Please see if they have forgotten to put it all that is needed inside, and send it at the earliest opportunity, and they will be at once attended to.

I am enclosing the practices for the month of June dedicated to our most loveable St Luigino. I really love this Saint. Though I have no doubt that you are most diligent and fervent in honouring this Saint, yet I cannot help recommending him to you very earnestly and more especially to pray that he may obtain for me the grace of imitating his virtues and of being grateful for the graces that he obtains for me. I am sending you a single copy, asking you to be so kind as to make another copy and send it to M. Vertova, news of whom I am very eager to have. For more than a month I have received no letter from her, which makes me very anxious because I fear that she may have fallen ill.

Please give her my warm wishes and if, happily, she is keeping well, tell her that I am waiting for a letter from her.

In the course of last month, there were several novenas due, but I decided not to send you any practices for them, lest I should overburden you with too many things, since the whole of the month was taken up with particular devotions in honour of Mary, and more especially because I calculated the burden according to my lack of fervour. This coming month I will not do the same thing.

Give my sincere regards to all those who enquire about me. To you I wish to convey the greetings of my Parents, my Sister and Bosio sisters.

I beg you, my dear friends, pray that the Sacred, Divine Heart may inflame my heart wholly with his love; tell him that on his feast day I am expecting to have some special grace from his gracious heart.

Farewell, dearest friends. May the most sweet Heart of our beloved Spouse be the place where we rest and stay. See you again in Heaven.

Love, 27 May 1826.

Your faithful, loving Sister
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Esteemed Ladies
Sisters LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

CIVIDATE.

Letter 34

TO THE SAME

She congratulates them on the good done in the month of May - She urges them on to zealous works, as a kind of preparation for the near future, especially in occasion of the Jubilee Year.

HAIL TO JESUS CRUCIFIED AND OUR LADY OF SORROWS.

GLORY TO THEM

Dearly beloved Sisters,

Just I was very glad to have news about your month of Mary, heard from the lips of your Mother who has done me the honour of paying me a most welcome visit. Mary, our dear Mamma, must have surely been very pleased with the zealous care and kind concern you have had towards so many girls in your desire to serve and honour her! Have no doubt about it: She will reward you a hundred times over, as becomes her noble heart, for such services so dear to Her. In fact, I am sure she has by now made you feel the effects of her tender love. This should give you a new eagerness to work hard for the sake of Jesus and Mary. The thing that will please them most is that of gaining souls for Heaven. If we had to labour hard for a thousand years just to prevent a single venial sin, our labour would have been well spent; what should we say if we could win over a soul to God? Ah! What rejoicing there would be in

Heaven! And so, dear Sisters, take heart and redouble your courage. As to that blessed Oratorio¹ that God in his Providence has well established in your town, you must make it flourish, first of all by your example, as you have always done, and then by watching over it with great care, so that very many young girls may join it, that they may faithfully observe the prescribed rules and, in a word, that they may be true daughters of Mary. Consider all possible means by which you can render your Sodality most pleasing to Mary and your young girls more fervent, and so sanctify the whole town, if possible, by the grace of God. May it be pleasing to God that all of us now may prepare for the tenor of life that he may have in store for us in the near future. But enough of this. We shall do whatever God wills for us.

For charity's sake, in occasion of the Jubilee Year you must do your very best and pray hard to the Lord that all may avail themselves well of this excellent opportunity that God is sending us. And so, Holy Communions, penance practices, prayers, mortifications, deeds of charity and virtuous actions, and everything else, we shall offer for this intention: that all may be well-disposed towards the Holy Jubilee, particularly those in the greatest need.

Pray hard for me as well; my need is very great. In particular, recite 3 *Glory Be* to the Holy Spirit, and one to St Aloysius, and 3 *Hail Marys* on the day you receive this letter, for a cause of great importance.

I am sending you the Shirts, with the cost attached.

¹ See footnote pg 55.

Give my sincere regards to Miss Angelina: please tell her I am very much obliged to her for thinking of me so kindly; assure her that on my part I also think of her all the time and of all the courtesy she has shown me since I had the pleasure of making her acquaintance.

Bosio Sisters send you their best wishes, as also my Parents and Camilla.

May our loveable Luigino be our model during these days, and may Heaven and Calvary be our abode.

I am gratefully, in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Lovere, 9 June 1826.

Your loving and grateful Sister and Friend

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA in future SR. LUIGINA

Letter 35

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She faces opposition to the founding of her Institute - Her firm determination.

PRAISED BE JESUS CHRIST

PRAISED BE OUR DEAR MAMMA (Mother Mary)

My dearest Sister,

I have come to know what you think, from your precious letter, and that is enough for me. I cannot tell you anything yet, but soon you will come to know everything. For the time being commend the affair earnestly to the Lord, because as it is something that concerns the highest glory of God (as I do hope), it entails great difficulties. However, these do not frighten me at all: on the contrary, I get more courage because this very fact shows me that it is something pleasing to God. Giovanna Bosio, who is one of my companions in this thing, feels like me; she was very glad to hear what you wrote in your letter, because she desires and hopes that you too will join us. Last Friday I was present at the function of admittance into the Convent of Elena Bonardi. To be frank with you, it was very painful for me to be there. I could hardly hold back my tears. To make it worse, when after the function I went to the parlour,

several Nuns who were there all kept asking me when I was joining them and urging me to let it be soon, for they counted on me, and a thousand other things that really wounded my heart. I was at a loss how to answer somehow, without telling lies. The whole of that day I felt dejected and wept a little, but I never for a moment felt tempted to abandon my dear Institute. I already foresee I will have much to put up with on account of the Nuns, because they are so sure I have to enter their Convent, and with my ambiguous words I myself give them cause to go on believing it, until the moment comes when I have to tell them quite plainly.

For some time already I have been distancing myself from the Convent, first of all not to run the risk of telling lies, and also because I feel like playing false, letting them think one thing for another.

Besides, I have grown to love all the Nuns, and so it does cost me to have to leave them. However, I am comforted by the thought that I am leaving them for our Lord's sake and therefore I will be even more closely united to them in Heaven. And now that I have opened my heart to you, I must tell you also that the life the nuns lead here seems to me a bit cosy, or rather, spent wholly just for themselves and none of it for the neighbour. But enough of this. I suppose I feel like this because God is not calling me there.

I have been so frank with you so that you may earnestly commend the whole affair to the Lord, and to make others do so, especially the young girls of your Sodality, of which I would like to hear some news.

Another thing: please let me know how Lady Giustina is keeping, if you happen to know, for I am very eager to have news of her. If you write to Don Angelo, don't mention with him what I have told you; I myself will tell you when you can start to speak of it to him. – The Novena of the Visitation of Our Lady has already started and I am enclosing a short list of practices which I should like you to copy out and give also to Giulia and Lucia Romelli.

Commend me to God, I beg of you. I am in extreme need of it. Please say, for three days, three *Glory Be* to St Aloysius. For a long time now I have been praying to him to obtain a favour for me, but he has not done so yet, because I do not deserve it; so please ask him earnestly on my behalf, and I am sure he will do it. Tell Romelli Sisters to do me the same kindness.

Goodbye, dear Marianna. Let suffering and the Cross be always dear to us, and let us do our best to live and die on the cross in imitation of our dear Spouse. All those who know you send you their best wishes.

Now and always, in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Lovere, 14 June 1826.

Your grateful, loving Sister
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 36

TO GIROLAMA TABONI

On the illness of Lady Giustina Alberzoni.

LET US LOVE JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Friend,

I was grieved to hear from you that the incomparable Lady Giustina Alberzoni is seriously ill. Poor as I am, I did pray to God very earnestly and recommended her to the prayers of others as well. If it be pleasing to God to keep her with us a little longer, though she is already ripe for Heaven, I would be extremely thankful to the Lord, and His infinite goodness makes me hope that the prayers of so many made for that same purpose will be heard. I beg you to keep me informed of her health: it would be enough to write a line.

Dear friend, kindly commend me to God. I am in extreme need of it. Give my sincere regards to Miss Lucia, and if you think it appropriate, give my wishes also to Giustina herself, and tell her that I am carrying out the agreement I made with her.

All those who know you send their best wishes,
especially Don Angelo Bosio.

Goodbye, my dear friend. I leave you at the foot of the
Cross, in contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus and with the
desire of suffering for his sake. I am, in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Lovere, 26 June 1826.

Your grateful, loving Friend
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Esteemed Lady
GIROLAMA TABONI

BRENO.

Letter 37

TO MARIA DÒ

She comforts a sick friend.

Dearest Friend,

I have had news about your health which, I am very sorry to hear, has not improved as I had hoped, but rather regressed. I trust it is not an effect of your depressive and gloomy thoughts, which make me even now picture you in my mind, weeping and sighing all the time. Dear Maria, drop this sadness for a while, for it can do you no good, and place yourself with holy gladness in the hands of our good God. Unite your cross to His and have no fear. I do hope that after a time of suffering, our good Lord will be pleased to comfort you. Meanwhile, be patient, have courage and be cheerful, be cheerful.

I am sending a textbook of yours which you have left here by mistake. All the girls of my School send you their affectionate wishes and Adelina sends you also a loving kiss. My Mother and Camilla heartily wish you the best, and with them

also Cottinelli, and all those you are friends with.

Give my best regards to everyone at home, especially Bortolamea, and please ask her to remember me in her prayer.

I must stop here because I am in a great hurry, but once again I recommend that you be cheerful, which will do you better than any medicine. Goodbye, dearest. I place you in the gentle Heart of Jesus and under the Mantle of Mary. Now and always, in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Love, 7 July 1826.

Yours loving Friend

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Lady

MARIA DÒ

MONTECCHIO.

Letter 38

TO THE SAME

She exhorts her to drive away depressing thoughts - She asks for Holy Communions - Jubilee processions.

Dearest Friend,

Lovere, 15 July 1826.

I have just received your letter. I am so glad to hear that you are getting better physically, but it looks as if that obstinate dejection of yours has no intention to leave you. Oh! come on! Can't you give it a good kick and throw it a hundred miles away? I suppose that if you could write to me: «I am cheerful now», I would then say that you are also really cured. But enough of this. I trust that, docile as you are, you will listen to me. First time you write to me, give me precise news about it.

Today I will without fail hand your letter to Rev. Don Angelo.

I will offer a Holy Communion for you, and those you asked for last week; but mind, you will have to repay me. I am extremely poor and if I let go of my 'capital' without claiming it back from those who maybe have no need of it, I will be left completely without. And so from you I want three and from your sister, one.

Give my best wishes to Bartolomea and all your dear ones at home.

A thousand wishes to you from all those who know you here. My mother sends her warm wishes to you.

Tomorrow we are having the first Procession for acquiring (the indulgences of) the Holy Jubilee. It is not meant for all the population but only for us of the our Sodalities, St Philip's Oratorio¹ and the Sodality of the Blessed Sacrament and even these, separately. Pray the Lord that everything may go off well and fruitfully. I leave you in the gentle Heart of Jesus and of Mary. I am

Your grateful, loving Friend
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

P.S. I have a great desire to see you, and so be quick in getting well; then you can come to see me and also to stay here, if you are completely cured, in order to get back your strength, for that is your brother's wish. It is also my wish, and I am very happy about it.

To Esteemed Lady
MARIA DÒ
MONTECCHIO.

¹ See footnote pg 55.

Letter 39

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She asks permission to do penance in occasion of the Jubilee Year.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Yesterday I came purposely to bring you that letter to have your advice on my going barefoot in the procession for the acquiring of the Holy Jubilee. But I first felt too timid to mention it to you and in the end that Priest turned up, and so I could not have a word with you on it. However, I should now like you kindly to tell me if you are pleased or not that I do it. Don't mind the rainy weather, because that does not worry me at all; my shame and self-love are still great in me, but if you approve of it, I trust that the Lord will help me overcome them. Don't take the trouble to write to me; it is enough if you say Yes or No to Giovanna. I will understand.

Allow me to remind you again to give me the method of life you know about. Don't worry over my health, first of all because I am keeping well, and even if I were not keeping well,

I should not neglect what I can do. And so I earnestly beg you this favour, and I ask for it in the name of my dear Mamma Mary of Mt Carmel, on this very day of her feast. I can't think it possible that the Lord does not give you some inspiration to make me do something, for I do pray to Him for that very thing, and at times I ask Him to reprove you a little for failing to do so. Enough of this. I suppose our Lord is not pleased with what I do, and so He never lets anything come off as I wish. However, I am not losing heart; in fact, I have full trust that by the end of this week I shall be comforted.

Lovere, 16 July 1826.

Your devoted and most humble Daughter in Christ

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 40

TO LUCIA CISMONTI

She enquires about a sick person and asks for communion in prayer.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY

Esteemed Madam and Friend,

Lovere, 23 July 1826.

For a long time now I have had the desire to write to you, very esteemed Madam, but respect due to your person kept me back from doing so. However, now that I see how in your goodness you have not forgotten me, but from time to time you send me friendly greetings, I take courage, again relying on your kindness, to write this letter, trusting that it will not displease you in any way.

I have heard from several persons the sad state of the virtuous and respected Lady Giustina, but for some time now I have had no more news of her. I should therefore request you, if it is not too much of a trouble, to tell me how she is keeping. You would be doing me a very big favour because I am very much concerned about her. Next time you see her give her my sincere regards and tell her that though I do not come to see her, I meet her every day in spirit before the Crucified Lord and unworthy as I am I earnestly commend her to Him.

I avail myself of this opportunity to request of you an exquisite kindness. I find myself devoid of merits and of every virtue, and so I should like to ask you, for charity's sake, if in all you do, that is, in your prayers, practices of penance and self-denial, deeds of charity, etc, you could accept me as a companion, by doing them for me as well.

Poor as I am, in the little or nothing that I do, I will on my part do the same for you, and in that way we shall be united in loving Jesus. Your fervour will make up for my lack of it, your virtues will make up for my sins. Then Jesus, in return for the charity that you use with me, will reward you for it. Trusting that in your kindness you will grant my request, I will be looking forward to a favourable reply from you.

I wish and pray that the Holy Love of God may be kindled in your heart and make of you a sacrificial offering most pleasing in His sight. I am in our Lord Jesus Christ

Your most humble Servant
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 41

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She asks for prayers for the preached missions - Her humility - Pact of spiritual union.

PRAISED BE OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Dearest Sister and Friend,

Lovere, 29 July 1826.

I am writing to answer your welcome letter and congratulate you on your happy trip. I cannot write to you at length, because I am in a hurry; these past few days I have always been hard pressed for time.

The preached Missions are going on here, but we are hit hard: of the three Priests conducting them, two fell ill soon after their arrival, and so one priest is giving four sermons a day, over and above the confessions that he sits for, and this makes us anxious that he too may fall ill. This is a well-deserved punishment for our sins, and I greatly fear that I myself may be the cause for which the Lord treats us so severely. For charity's sake, Marianna, with tears in my eyes I implore you, if you have love for me and for so many souls that are here, let your fervent prayers come between us and the Lord, and appease his righteous wrath against us and bring about on us once more his comforting mercy. Tell Giulia and Lucia Romelli to pray for this cause as well, and give them my best wishes.

Let me also hurriedly tell you about the pact that I wish to make with you, if you agree: it is that of being united in all the little good that we do, and so all your Holy Communions, practices of penance, prayers, acts of self-denial, charitable work, deeds of kindness, etc. in a word, everything, do it also for me, and I will do the same for you, and thus we shall be united in the Heart of Jesus and your fervour will make up for my lack of it, your good deeds will make up for my sins, and Jesus, out of regard for you, will look on me with eyes of mercy. Let us then undertake to do it gladly for each other's sake, and it will surely do us some good. I am sending you a few booklets. I will send you the rest later on, because I forgot to buy them. So too the Crucifix and the paper will be sent to you. Along with this, is a letter addressed to Miss Lucia; it is a letter I had got ready some time back. If you know that she is at Breno, send it to her; if not, keep it with you until she comes to Breno.

With heartfelt wishes.

Your loving and grateful Sister and Friend

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Respectable Lady

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

with parcel

Letter 42

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She gives news about her illness - Jubilee Year - Month dedicated to the Guardian Angel.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY WITH THE GUARDIAN ANGEL
IN THEIR COMPANY

My dearly beloved Sisters,

Love, 30 September 1826.

Today I am feeling a bit better; and so I am writing also to you, my dear little Romelli, for I am immensely indebted to you and my heart is full of gratitude for so much care you have had of me and your concern for me. Two days after your kind visit, I again ran a high temperature, almost as vehement as on the first night. However, the fever, though rather bad, was not so high, and it lingered on for some days more. In this relapse, I have had the blessing of receiving the Holy Jubilee indulgence. I mean to say: I had already taken part in the processions; in bed I did my Confession and received Holy Communion. However, I am better now. If nothing happens, I hope I shall be soon restored to health. I have received your letter (and practices) for this month dedicated to the Guardian Angel. Dear Giulia, you are too much concerned for the bodily

comfort of your Bortolamea. Just ask the Guardian Angel if he is pleased with all this delicate care you lavish on me and see what he says. However, I assure you that I follow in every detail what the treatment requires: I eat, drink, sleep, I spend the time pleasantly doing what I feel like in order to get better soon. I liked the plan for the month very much: in this way you have taught me how to sanctify even the special care I should take of my bodily needs. Commend me earnestly to Jesus our dear Spouse, because in spite of so many graces and mercies shown me during this time, I am no better than before. Please don't mind my bad handwriting, because I can't keep my hand steady. Give my regards to your Mother and Lady Angelina. As for you, consider me as I attest to be.

Viganoni sends you her warm wishes.

Your loving, grateful Sister
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Misses Ladies
Sisters LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI
CIVIDATE.

Letter 43

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

About her illness.

My dearest Sister,

Love, 30 September 1826.

Today, at last, I feel strong enough to write; and so, here I am to scribble a couple of illegible lines also to my dear Marianna. I am extremely indebted to you for your warm affection and I heartily thank you for it. As you wish to know what sort of illness I have fallen into, I must tell you that I have been running a fever, of the type that is prevalent in the town. It is of a milder sort, but along with it I repeatedly had certain complications that made me fear the worst. The first night, especially, I thought I would not last till dawn, and I had already made my self-offering to the Lord. This lingering fever went on for some days, then it disappeared, but a few days later it came over me again with almost the same vehemence of the first night and it lasted several days more. However, I feel better now, and if I have no other relapse, please God I will soon get well again. Though it was a mild illness in itself, it left me extremely weak, to the extent that even after ten or

twelve days that I could leave the bed for some time, I could hardly stand on my feet, for my legs trembled so much. These are all warnings from the Lord, but I do not profit by them.

During my illness I also received the Holy Jubilee indulgence, but I am no better than before, and so I commend myself to your prayers. On my part, even though I was in bed, I always kept our pact in mind; do remember it, too, for my own need is very great. I am sending you two books that I had acquired before I fell ill. I will send the others as soon as I can, if the Lord keeps me alive. Goodbye, dear Sister. Strive after holiness: that is my heartfelt wish for you. I am, in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Yours affectionately Sister

CAPITANIO B.

To Esteemed Lady

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 44

TO GIROLAMA TABONI

About her illness - She asks for union of prayer etc.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Friend,

I have received your letter. I read it in bed because I have not quite regained my health yet. Yes, it was bad. It was again one of the fevers prevalent in the town. It has dragged on very long, though it was of a milder sort, except for the fact that along with it there were certain complications that were alarming. The first night, especially, I did not think I would last till dawn and had even made the offering of my life to the Lord. However; I am still alive, and if nothing else crops up, I am better now, except for the fact that I still feel very weak.

Thank you very much for the kindness and concern you have shown for me; I will be ever so grateful. Please keep commending me to the Lord, for I am in extreme need of it; I will do the same for you. In fact, I should like you to enter into an agreement with me to offer what we do for each other, just like sisters. I mean to say, whatever you do: prayers, acts of

self-denial and kindness, good deeds, holy Communions and so on, have the intention of doing everything for me as well, and the same I will do in the little or nothing that I do. I beg you to accept this agreement, with the intention of using this charity with my poor soul. I will not write much longer because my hand is not so steady, as you will see from the bad handwriting of this letter; this is, in fact, the first time I am writing after my illness. Give my best wishes to your Sister, and ask her to pray for me. I leave you in the sweet heart of Jesus and under the mantle of Mary, so that love may possess your heart completely: that is my prayerful wish for you. Do write again, your letters are most welcome, and more than welcome. I am, in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Love, 30 September 1826.

Your loving, grateful Sister and Friend

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Respectable Lady

GIROLIMA TABONI

Breno

PIAN DI BORNO.

Letter 45

TO CATERINA BAZZINI

She thanks the doctor and offers as gift a little cushion.

Respected Madam,

I will never be able to thank God quite enough for having given us as our Doctor a person so wise, so kind and so concerned as your good Husband is. In fact, I myself have felt the excellent effects of it in all my illnesses, but especially in the last one, in which he attended to me with so much charity and care that he could not have done more if he were my own father. And so I am at a loss how to make up for my indebtedness to him or even to thank him.

However, relying on your goodness of heart, I make bold to beg you, revered Madam, to thank him on my behalf.

Since you are the person nearest and dearest to him, your thanks will be even more pleasing and acceptable.

Give him my profound thanks, then, and assure him that I will never forget the great benefits I received at his hands, and that though I cannot offer anything in return for my indebtedness to him, I will at least never forget to pray the Lord for Him and for

all his family. I will ask God to bless him, make him prosper and grant him a long life.

I have further taken advantage of your goodness of heart, gentle Lady, and make bold to offer him a small Cushion, trusting that he will not be displeased with it. Forgive my over-confidence which, I know, goes beyond all the bounds of good manners, but it will not go beyond your goodness, for that, I know, is boundless.

Kindly convey my sincere regards to your esteemed family, particularly to the Doctor your husband.

With profound respect and grateful thanks I have the honour to be

Lovere, 18 October 1826.

Yours devoted and humble Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 46

TO LUCIA CISMONTI

Thanks - Sodality of the Love of Jesus - She invites her to feel more 'at home' with her.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Madam, Beloved Friend!

Love, 21 October 1826.

It is high time that I answer your esteemed and most welcome letter. I am aware that you know the reason for my delay in writing, and I therefore trust you hold me excused for failing to do my duty towards you.

Thank you very, very much for the wishes you sent me through Don Stefano, and for your concern in asking news of me. I owe it all to your goodness of heart, undeserving as I am. I am deeply obliged to you. I am no less grateful to you for being so kind as to accept the agreement I had proposed to you in my first letter. Do go on praying for me, I beg of you, for I am in extreme need. Poor though I am, I will on my part carry out the pact made with you respected Madam.

From our dear Romelli I received the document of the Sodality of the Love of Jesus, and I hope to establish it here as well, very soon. The girls chosen as future members are very virtuous and very eager to be admitted, which I do hope they will, with God's blessing. From you I need to know if those who wish to join it must be enrolled somewhere, if there are Indulgences attached to it, or if there is anything else that must be done.

I earnestly beg you to feel at home with me, in particular not to address me "Miss", which makes me feel uneasy. If you love me, and really care for my friendship, I must ask you to feel free with me: I will wait and see what you will do in the next letter you write.

Convey my warm regards to Lady Giustina; kindly give me some news of her.

May Calvary and the Holy Tabernacle be your sweet dwelling place; take me too in with you, so that I may at last learn to love and serve my dear Jesus.

I am

Yours, loving and devoted Friend and Sister

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 47

TO GIACOMINA BANZOLINI

She despatches a book - She urges spiritual profit.

PRAISE BE TO GOD

Dearest Friend,

Love, 22 November 1826.

I am sending you, at last, the Book *Eroine Cristiane* ('Christian heroines') that you wanted. I am sorry for the delay; the reason for it was forgetfulness on my part. I repeatedly let Wednesday pass by without preparing the letter, and remembered about it only next day, each time feeling sorry about it. Oh well! You must forgive me. I trust you will do so, being the good friend you have always been to me.

I am very eager to have news of you and to know how you are getting on in your spiritual life. I am sure you are already far-advanced in devotion, and ardently in love of the dear Jesus who gave himself to us to the point of laying down his life for love of us. Have courage then, dear Giacomina. The beauty of Heaven awaits you; have courage in life's struggle, for God will reward you and crown you as He alone knows how. Remember me, too, in your prayers.

Goodbye, dear friend. Forget me not.

Yours affectionately Friend
BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Very Respected Lady
GIACOMINA BANZOLINI
SARNICO.

Letter 48

TO GIULIA & LUCIA ROMELLI

She encourages them to honour Baby Jesus - She describes marvellous conversions in Lovere - She sets pious practices up to Epiphany.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sisters,

Lovere, 27 December 1826.

I was very glad to have your letters. I am sorry, though, that I did not get Lucia's first letter to me. To be frank with you, I had started to wonder at your silence, and it must have been more than ten times that I thought of writing to you, but was unable to do so. But after receiving your letters and reading them through, I saw that you are still my good old friends, and that my fears were groundless. May our good God be praised for it.

What a great comfort it was for me, dear Sisters of mine, to see you so full of Divine Love! How blessed you are! May it be pleasing to God to make it ever more intense: I picture you in my mind right now panting for breath as you run to where your love takes you. But where are you going? Ah! Blessed Hut! You that give shelter to the heavenly Infant, kindly receive also these two lovers of His who are eager to take Him in their

arms and are pleading with you to let them in!

Here we are, dear friends, the cave is wide open, here is Mary herself who welcomes you, here is Jesus who looks on you with tenderness and love; here are so many persons who care for Jesus: they too exultantly invite you in, to express your affection for Jesus. You are quite right to run, and don't ever get tired of it, for Jesus will reward you all the more, but along with you drag also your poor sister Bortolamea.

At this point I must start at another tangent, because when I started writing this letter I had still to begin the holy Novena for Christmas, and now that I am finishing it, the Celebrations are over. This is due to the limited time I have and the many things I have to attend to in writing. Please don't take it ill, because the desire to write to you was always there. Excuse me and have patience with me. In fact I should ask you, if it happens again now and then, don't think it is negligence on my part but lack of time, as I said. On your part write all the same, write often and sooner or later I too will be able to answer.

But let us go back to our dear Babe. Though his festivities are over, he is still very dear to me, more than ever, in fact, because I trust that in his mercy he must have been born also in my heart.

Dear Friends, if you were here in Lovere to see among my fellow townsmen the splendid triumphs that God's love has achieved, how happy you would be! You would shed sweet tears of joy and thanksgiving to the loveable Benefactor!

To see so many souls who once were slaves to sin now transformed into lovers of Jesus. To see inns and coffee bars, formerly so frequented, now empty, quite deserted.

Houses and streets, where you would before hear only horrible swearing and cursing, now resound with talk about Jesus and his merciful love, and about holy things. People who for five, ten, fifteen or twenty years had not been to Confession, now are seen making long Confessions, with sincere sorrow for their sins. In short, so many people who before never went to Church are now seen remaining in Church for three, four or even five hours at a stretch!

Ah, dear sisters, to tell you the truth, all these mercies of our good God are so overwhelming that I cannot keep back my tears, and I wish I could thank Him for his goodness. But how to do that? Ah, dear Jesus, you who have triumphed over us, you who in your infinite goodness have made us fall in love with you and drawn us to follow you, grant, I beg you, that our cooperation with so many graces from you may serve to thank you as you deserve.

And you, dear friends, in whose hearts the flame of charity towards our neighbour is so brightly alive, do your very best, through prayer and penance, to obtain for us all the grace of holy perseverance. More especially, pray for the few, if any, who are still hardened in their evil ways and have not yet opened their heart to the voice of the Lord. Tell our most loveable Spouse «that for the sake of even a single sinner who can be converted and be saved, you are willing to give your

blood, life, possessions, health and Heaven itself». If we could be fortunate enough to save a soul and procure for it happiness for all eternity, how happy and joyous we would be! And so, let us do what we possibly can to help our neighbour and leave the care of ourselves to our beloved Spouse, and we shall be sure to attain Heaven.

I trust you will be happy if I suggest a few things we could do together in the remaining days till Epiphany, in honour of the Holy Baby since through my fault we did nothing together during his Novena. Let me tell you what I have in mind: each one of us four will do something different, drawn by lots. To start with: Lucia has drawn the lot of the Shepherd, and so every day she will prepare a lovely basket of virtues and in the evening she will carry it as a gift to the Holy Child, offering it for herself and for us and asking his blessing on all four of us. On behalf of all of us she will also give him a kiss.

To Marianna there has come the role of the Angel: three times a day she will accordingly go in spirit to the Crib and pray Jesus to give all four of us his holy love along with all the other graces needed to make us Saints. She will practise in a special way the virtue of purity, which is the virtue that makes us like Angels. She will keep her heart and her spirit all the time in Heaven and at the Holy Crib, close to Jesus, and pray hard for unfortunate sinners.

Giulia's role is that of St Joseph; she will therefore do her best to stay with mind and heart united to her beloved Mary. During these few days she will play the part of Mary's

Spouse. She will practise acts of charity, both bodily and spiritual, with the intention of feeding Jesus and Mary. Every day she will ask from the Heavenly Child some special grace for persons she knows are in greater need; from Mary, too, she will ask some grace for each of the four of us, every day.

To me there came the role of Mary, his Mother. I am ashamed to say it, but the lot really came to me. Though I am most unworthy of this favour, I will do my best to respond to these attempts of Jesus, my most loveable Spouse, to shake me out of my lethargy. As Jesus will have me looking after him and mothering him, I will throughout these days do my best not to make him cry with my shortcomings and I will also try to make up in some way for what I see others doing to my dear Jesus; and so I will gladly bear the cold to warm him up; by depriving myself of some food and giving it to the poor, I will give him to eat. Three times a day I will adore him profoundly. Very frequently I will take him in my arms, caress him, kiss him, pray to him for all four of us and for all my unfortunate sinners. I will seek to lull him to sleep in my heart and in yours too, and do my best to stay with mind and heart with my dear Child.

Each time we hear the *Angelus* bell, all four of us will gather in spirit at the Crib of Bethlehem, and there we shall lay our offerings, praying Jesus and Mary to accept them graciously.

This is my idea, more or less. Let us do it. I do hope Jesus will be pleased with it.

I must ask both of you to do me a big kindness: to copy out the two booklets I am sending you: Lucia will please finish copying, as she likes, the one already started, by writing, after finishing the Thanksgiving after Holy Communion, with the one she likes best. Giulia, instead, will copy the whole of the other one as it is. They belong to two girls who have 'converted' to God recently, but are now very thoughtful. I am very keen on keeping up friendly relations with them, and in my inability to meet their request, I am counting on you. I beg this from you as a favour. I end here because I ran out of space. I leave you in 'Heaven', close to Jesus. This time I have written so much, making up for other times

Your Sister B.C.

YEAR 1827

Letter 49

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

Friendly exchange.

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 12 January 1827.

Though I'm rather tired, and not extra well tonight, writing to my dear Marianna is no trouble to me. At any rate, I wish to write just a few lines.

Your letter brought me much delight. I was also very happy with the practices for the month that you sent me. I can see that love of God is making you very clever at finding more and more means of loving and honouring him. I will do my best to carry them out well. For the time being I don't think it is appropriate to do special practices for Carnival, because everything is still very quiet; towards the end, if the Lord is pleased to inspire me with some ideas, I will write to you. Please do the same with me.

Rev. Don Angelo sends you his best wishes; he has also given me the discipline to send to you, and I am doing so with this letter. I have wrapped it in a book-cover that I don't use.

Camilla sends you her warm wishes. She will write to you next week. My Parents reciprocate with best wishes which they ask you to extend to your esteemed Parents. Give them also my sincere regards and thank them for their kindness to my Parents and to Camilla. Please don't forget to fulfil this particular duty of gratitude on my behalf. – Tomorrow, Saturday, is my birthday. I shall be twenty. I beg you to thank God with me for so many graces he has granted me over these years, and beg him to let me die this very minute rather than commit a single sin, even if it be a deliberate venial one. With a loving embrace I leave you in the gentle Heart of Jesus, and I myself remain in spirit with you in the Heart of Jesus, and with my body I am going to bed, as I greatly feel like doing, and I am going straightaway. Goodbye.

Your dearly beloved Sister

CAPITANIO B.

To Esteemed Miss

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 50

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She sends the results of the drawing of lots - She thanks for the letter and for a book they had copied out for her.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sisters,

Here I am with the practices for the current period. Kindly send the same, as usual, to our dear M. Vertova, to Rizieri and Mora Sisters, if they are still there, with my best wishes. I am very glad to hear that you are starting the preached Missions, and wish you abundant fruits from them. Just now I have received Giulia's letter and the booklet she copied out, for which I thank her very much indeed. I have also received your other letter with the cloth for the Corporals; I cannot send them on now because they are not ready: I will do so as soon as possible. Goodbye, my dear sisters. I wish I could pour out my heart to you. Indeed I will do it soon. It is not possible just now. I am,

(January 1827)

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

DRAWING OF LOTS ¹		January	February
Rev. ²	Taboni, Vertova, Romelli G. Capitanio C., Taboni G.	8, 23	7, 22
Sr. ³	Brigida, Bosio L., Dò B. Mora C., Rosa F.	12, 17	11, 26
	Bosio M., Rizieri M., Franzoni, Mora M., Rosa D.	14, 29	13, 28
M. Abb. ⁴	M. Parpani, M. Benedetta, Gerosa, Romelli L.	20	21, 5
			March 3

¹ A List in which Bartolomea marks the days she had drawn by lot, and the practices to be performed by the members of the Pious Union of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

² Rev. = Priest.

³ Lay nun.

⁴ Mother Abbess, Mother etc.

Letter 51

TO THE SAME

Love for the Cross.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sisters of Mine. The peace of Christ be with you!

I was very glad to have your letter. Thank God my Sister, too, is cheerful and serene: I wish and pray that she may always be so, because in this world there is no greater happiness than peace of heart and consolations of the spirit. However, I cannot keep from you how I envy your situation, that is, the many crosses that are laid on your shoulders. It is the condition that renders you most closely like our most gentle Spouse, Jesus Crucified, and therefore this is the greatest fortune for a soul that is in love with Jesus. In fact, is there any Saint who has not had crosses, heavy crosses? Oh suffering! How precious you must be and dear to souls afire with holy love! Oh Cross, how desirable you are, since through you the soul is united to its beloved Good!

Dear Sisters, let us value suffering very highly; pray much for me that I may turn to my advantage the slight crosses

that the Lord is pleased to send me.

I am sending you the booklets you ordered through me. I must also tell you that here at home we have found your umbrella.

Camilla, Bosio Sisters, my Pupils and all those who know you, and also my Parents, send their best wishes to you. Please give my regards to Lady Angelina.

With the prayerful wish that the Lord may favour you with his abundant graces and heavenly consolations

Love, 3 March 1827.

Your most poor and unworthy Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 52

TO A FRIEND

Errands – She urges her to dwell on 'Mt. Calvary'.

HAIL TO JESUS CRUCIFIED AND OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Dearest Sister in Jesus Christ,

Lovere, 13 March 1827.

I was very glad to receive your letter, all the more so because I had been eagerly looking forward to it. I am sending you the three booklets you had asked for. They cost 10 pence each, amounting to a total of Lire 1.10. I will be happy to serve you if you need anything else; if so, don't hesitate to command me.

I reciprocate with a thousand wishes to your Sister and to Lady Lucia: please tell her that I owe her a visit, which I will do as soon as I can.

I should like to ask you another favour: that is, to remind Miss Lucia of her promise to send me some memoirs of the late Lady Giustina; but do it on your own account, without letting her guess that I have mentioned it to you.

Dear friend and sister, may Mt. Calvary be our dwelling place: let us abide there for a while to mourn over the bitter

sorrows of Jesus and Mary; let us there learn how to suffer for Jesus' sake; let us there become Saints. Kindly commend me to God, for I am in extreme need of it, and so, presuming that you have a kind heart, I beg you to be good enough to pray for one who needs it more than anyone else.

Rev. Don Angelo, my Sister and other fellow members (of the Union) send you their best regards. Wishing you a heap of crosses, along with an unfailing patience, I am, in the name of our Lord.

The poor, unworthy Handmaid of J. Christ

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 53

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

A summon to Mt. Calvary.

PRAISED BE JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Friend of Mine,

The visit of Lady Giacomelli brought me an immense pleasure. I perceived an ineffable air of virtue and holiness about her that held me spellbound. Though I did not know her, this encounter with her made me realize that she has Heaven within her. I wish I too could let her virtuous behaviour shake all indolence and meanness out of me, and after the example of others give myself decidedly once for all, to God, and stop behaving like a hypocrite as I have always done so far. Enough of this! Pray God for me as well: you will be doing a very kind deed if you do so, and God will reward you for it.

Many friends of mine have agreed with me to accompany Jesus Christ to Mt. Calvary. Various practices for this spiritual journey have been fixed, all suited and in accordance with our plan. For this trip there must be fourteen of us, and so I at once had the idea of asking you and Girolama Taboni to join us, by uniting yourselves in spirit to go on this journey.

To tell you the truth, more than once I rejected the idea of asking you because I felt it was too bold of me to suggest practices to you when you should be more fit to suggest practices to us, but my desire to share in the good that you do is now driving me on a bit too far, trusting that you will kindly take it as a sign of friendliness on my part.

We shall start this journey on Passion Sunday and will go on with it till Good Friday. I hope I will finish copying out the list of practices by the time Lady Giacomelli comes to take the letter, very soon. If it is not ready by that time, I will send it to you through the Romellis and M. Vertova. If you don't mind, inform Girolama Taboni as well, because I think she will be pleased with it.

Let me now tell you the names of the others, most of whom, if not all, are known to you already. They are. Sr. Francesca Parpani, Sr. Paola, Giovanna Bosio, Lucia Bosio, Francesca Bosio, Lucia and Giulia Romelli, Marianna Vertova, Catterina Bortolotti, Maria Conti, Marta Mora, you two and myself.

The reason why there should be 14 members is because we shall be playing the roles of the 12 Apostles, Our Lady and St Mary Magdalene. We have drawn by lots, one¹ for each, with the aim of trying to be like him and have full trust in him.

Yours is St Matthias, and Girolama's is St Luke, as you will see in the cards enclosed.

¹ One of these holy personages.

I am very eager to see you and be alone with you for a while, and so I hope you will give me that pleasure.

Give my wishes to G. Taboni, and tell her to say a prayer for my poor soul.

I wish I had time to stay on with you at least through this letter, seeing that I cannot do it in person, but I had better sign off here in order to have time to copy out the list.

Rev. Don Angelo Bosio gave me the charge to give you his kind regards.

I beg you to remember our pact. I count on seeing you again on Mt. Calvary. Through your prayers obtain for me a bit of love of God. I am, in the name of our Lord,

Lovere, 22 March 1827.

Your grateful, loving Sister
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

P.S. I have finished copying the list and I am enclosing it. I beg you to show it to no one except G. Taboni. I am leaving it to you to tell her everything yourself because I don't have the time to write to her. Do write to me, because your letters bring me much happiness. With best regards.

To Esteemed Lady
LUCIA CISMONTI
BRENO.

Letter 54

TO THE SAME

Sympathy for her brother's illness - She urges her to honour Mary in the month of May.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Most dearly beloved Sister and Friend,

To my great sorrow I came to know why you are unable to come here. I am very sorry about the illness of your brother. At the same time I feel comforted by the thought that God is treating you as a beloved one: I mean to say that he is letting you have a taste of the Chalice of trials which, though very bitter in itself yet to those who are in love with Jesus, is sweeter than any consolation because through it they are made more like their supreme good. Praised be God who lets you partake of such a great treasure.

Rev. Fr. Stefano Dò has asked me to give you his best regards and tell you that he is not sending your letter to Lady Fenaroli; he says that he greatly admires your humility but in this case he prefers that you should show charity; however, he is counting on receiving soon another letter from you corresponding to his idea, which he will then send to this lady.

For the month of May we have fixed a few practices; do take part in them if you feel like it. In fact, my friends and I would

very much like you to join us. Please tell G. Taboni, too, that we wish to have her, in our group as well. I am sending you the paper with the whole plan of what we have in mind to do to honour our most gentle Mamma Mary. If you wish to have the practices that are done in common in the Sodality, just let me know and I will send them to you.

I suppose you will see for yourself that I am speaking to you with utter sincerity and trust and that I love you as a true Sister and Friend. I would be happy if you could do the same with me, and if you know that any of the many spiritual deeds that you do are useful to me and not quite beyond my capacity, kindly propose them to me. Forget about humility where it is a matter of charity; pay no heed to human respect and get rid of it all, just think that you are helping a soul to give glory to God, and that will do. I will therefore wait and see the extent of your charity towards my poor soul. May God continue to grant you the grace of being totally his: that is my earnest wish for you. My warm congratulations to the esteemed Lady Pierina Giacomelli, and no end of greetings to dear Mamolina.

I am in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

P.S. Please tell our dear Lady Giacomelli that I have received her letter, which I have greatly appreciated, and that I will answer it as soon as possible. If you agree, I should very much like her to join us in honouring Mary throughout this month of May. If you think it appropriate and she is happy

about it, explain everything to her, choose for her the virtue and 'choir' you deem best and assure her that I would like to have her as a companion just for the sake of serving Mary. In that way she will make up for my demerits. I will be eagerly waiting to see what comes out of this. Goodbye.

Lovere, 24 April 1827.

Your grateful, loving Sister and Friend

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 55

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She urges them to honour Jesus and Mary.

PRAISED BE JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sisters of mine,

I am enclosing the list of practices for the month of May. Kindly write out a copy of it and attach it to the letter enclosed, to Martina Mora. Make a copy also of the Drawing of Lots and send it to her, seeing to it that she receives the whole lot in time.

My dear sisters, let us love Jesus and Mary. All honour is due to them, and we would be disloyal if we failed to love them. As to Mary herself, how pleased she, our dear Mamma, will be to have daughters who are loving and faithful to her! Take heart, then; the time for showing her our loyalty is drawing near. Pray for me too.

Give my best regards to your Elders and a thousand wishes to our former fellow Boarders.

Love Mary on my behalf as well, and pray that I too may be worthy to love her.

May the holy love of Jesus and Mary consume us totally and make us worthy of Heaven.

Goodbye, beloved of mine, till we meet again on Monday evening, at the feet of Our Lady.

I have had no reply to the letter you had written to Don Angelo, and tomorrow he is going away. Once again, Goodbye.

Lovere, 26 April 1827.

Your most faithful among your friends and sisters
BORTOLAMEA unworthy handmaid of JESUS

P.S. Don Angelo's letter was handed to me today. You will find it enclosed herewith.

To Esteemed Ladies
ROMELLI SISTERS
ISEO.

Letter 56

TO LUCIA AND FRANCESCA BOSIO

She urges them to honour Jesus and Mary in Her month.

PRAISED AND LOVED BE THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Dearly beloved Friends
and Sisters in Christ,

I was very glad to have news from you, which were in themselves very good. Your going away meant much to me: on the one hand I am happy to think that you are having some time when you can rest and relax; on the other hand I can't help begging you to come back soon to this home town of ours, and I am looking forward to seeing you again and enjoying your sweet and gentle company.

I am enclosing the practices for the month of May, and the Paper on the Drawing of Lots, etc. Our fellow members are all very fervently preparing to honour, serve and love our most holy and gentle Mamma Mary. I am sure you too will be among these fervent devotees. As for me, I cannot help envying what came to you by lots while I encourage you to carry it out gladly, for Mary deserves it and She herself will reward you. Pray for me too that I may not lag behind.

Those at your home are all keeping very well, and I think that today your Uncle has left to attend to his preaching Mission.

Mother Parpani has earnestly urged me to write to you; she sends her best regards and commends the month of Mary. Kindly say three *Hail Marys* for her: she has written the note I am enclosing; say another one for me who am forwarding it to you.

All your friends and my own sister send you their warm wishes. Do send me some news of you. I shall be counting on receiving a letter from you.

We shall meet again Monday evening at the feet of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Meanwhile my prayerful wish for you is that you be wholly consumed by the holy love of God. Goodbye. I am, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Lovere, 27 April 1827.

Your grateful, loving Friend
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Ladies
Sisters LUCIA & FRANCESCA BOSIO
VILMINORE.

Letter 57

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She urges her to honour Jesus and Mary.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

My dear Sister,

You are quite right to complain about my silence, but believe me, it has been through no fault of mine. I have been sick, and ever since any mental effort is a strain. Whether I write to you or not, you are always in my mind and in my heart. I had forgotten to ask someone to write out the booklet you had asked for, and so I am sorry it is not ready now, but I will send it to you next time the opportunity offers itself.

We have fixed a few things for the month of May; you are most welcome to join, if you feel like it. I am sending you the papers; please write out, immediately, a copy of them and send them to Lucia Cismondi attached to the letter I am enclosing. As you see, there is a mistake in Item 3 of the Paper on the Drawing of Lots: please copy it out correctly and send it to Lucia. In your sincere desire to honour Mary, please see to it that Lucia gets it in time.

Love Mary on my behalf as well, dearest Marianna; pray to her that I too may be worthy of loving her. Do your very best for Mary during this month: you can be sure that you will be rewarded for it.

I have no time to write more than this much, and so, wishing you virtue and holiness of life, I sign off in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

P.S. Camilla will do you the favour you asked of her.

Love, 28 April 1827.

Your grateful, loving Sister

CAPITANIO unworthy handmaid of JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 58

TO LUCIA & FRANCESCA BOSIO

She urges them to honour Jesus and Mary.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Beloved Friends and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

I seem to hear you complaining about me: that with the month of May so near you have still had no letter from me. You are quite right to complain, but the fault is not mine, but rather of your Aunt Lady Marianna who helped me out with the despatching of your letter. I had written you as far back as the middle of last week, and I had handed it to her to have it sent sooner, but by mistake, instead of sending it to you, she sent it to your Uncle Rev. Don Angelo. I am therefore writing to you a second letter and enclosing once more the papers for the month of May. In case your Uncle sends you that one, be so kind as to return to me the list of practices and the drawing of the lots, because a person over here is left without a copy.

Our fellow members are all full of fervour, and I can't help envying them. I am sure you can say the same thing about your group.

How blessed are those who love Mary: they are assured of Heaven! Our dear Mamma Mary is well deserving of such love, while she on her part distributes graces among everyone, more especially among those who love her sincerely. I beg you to pray for me, too, that I may not lag behind; pray to Mary to make me worthy of loving her immensely. All those at your home are keeping well, and send you their best wishes. All your friends and my Sister greet you too.

Mother Parpani earnestly begged me to write to you and give you her regards.

I would love to meet you or at least have a letter from you with news of how you are getting on. With the prayerful wish that you be wholly consumed by the holy love of Jesus and Mary, I hold you all close to my heart. I have the honour to be

Love, 29 April 1827.

Your most loving among your friends

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed dear Misses

Sisters LUCIA & FRANCESCA BOSIO

VILMINORE.

Letter 59

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

*Concern for his health - Institute to found - Conformity with God's will -
Pact of spiritual union extended to Purgatory.*

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Due to the mistake made by your Sister in despatching the letter addressed to your Niece, I had better write to you this letter to tell you not to send her the letter because I have already sent her a second one. I was anxious to let them have it by the beginning of the month of May for, as you see, there is enclosed in it the paper with the practices for the said month. On your return please return that paper to me as I sent mine to your Nieces and was myself left without any.

Enclosed you will find the letter that Giovanna meant to send you, when she forwarded mine. Your relatives are all keeping well; they send you their best wishes and earnestly recommend that you should not work too hard because they are anxious about your health, and they are still worried about it because you looked sickly when you left.

I am not going to say anything about your health, because I am sure you wouldn't listen to me. But what I don't say to you, Reverend Father, I say for you to the Lord, and on that account I pray with all my heart.

The Hospital is running smoothly: regarding those two who were due to be admitted, one has been taken in already and the other one is about to. Concerning Simone Sacella, nothing has been settled yet. Taking a decision one way or another looked like asking for trouble, and so my Rev. Mother Superior¹ Catterina Gerosa thought it best to wait till you return and meanwhile manage as we can.

May it be pleasing to the Lord to bless, at last, also the Institute that you, our Superiors, intend to found. I ardently desire it, in fact I fear I may be desiring it too much, and so, instead of asking God to bring it about soon, I should pray that his most holy Will be done, and tell him that I am willing to wait for it even a hundred years if that is more pleasing to him. On the other hand I fear that, though this desire leaves me in peace, it may not be prompted by a sincere desire for a greater good but rather by self-love so as to get rid of those little crosses that the Lord graciously sends me in my present situation. However it may be, let us leave everything in God's hands. Indeed, I am sure everything will work out well, sooner or later, in the way most pleasing to Him.

¹ This is the title that she already gives to her future companion in the Institute: Caterina Gerosa. - The latter had, largely at her own expense, erected the Hospital of Lovere which opened on 1 December 1826 with B. Capitanio as Treasurer and Directress.

I take this opportunity to ask you something I have never made bold to beg of you in conversation, though I would have very much liked to. In your extreme goodness of heart you have graciously made a pact with me to share in each other's good deeds. It means much to me, and I consider it as a special grace from God; but I too should like to ask you to render your charity perfect in all aspects by extending the pact not only to the end of our lives but till the moment when the Lord will give us the grace of being both admitted into Heaven. At that point we shall have no more need of pacts, but in Purgatory they will be of great solace, and so I earnestly beg you not to deny me this charity. Of my own, I have nothing, as you are well aware, but united to me are so many virtuous persons, so that if you cannot share in the good that I leave undone, you will at least partake of the great deal done by my dear Companions.

Mother Parpani has given me the charge to convey her best regards to you.

I beg you for charity's sake to say a good word for me to the Blessed Virgin Mary, that she may grant me the grace to serve her in a worthy manner during the month dedicated to Her.

Wishing you health and holiness and with humble reverence kissing your hand, I have the honour to be,

Love, 29 April 1827.

Your grateful and devoted Spiritual Daughter

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Rev. Father

Don ANGELO BOSIO

PAISCO.

Letter 60

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She accuses herself of pride - Sodality of the Love of Jesus.

MAY THE BLESSED VIRGIN BE LOVED

My sweetest and dearest Friend and Sister
in Jesus Christ,

Love, 10 May 1827.

As I have some free time today, I wish to spend it writing to you, dearest friend of mine. Let me tell you first of all that you have done a very good service to my pride by not proposing anything of the type I had begged from you. My pride would have been sharply pricked and hurt if you had paid heed to my earnest requests to you (and that, too, out of pride) since it wants to outshine others, not to be corrected or taught.

Believe me, dear Lucia, I tell you with utter frankness, this passion is so deeply rooted in me that nothing short of the supreme Power of God can wipe it out. I never do any good without letting it enter into it: self-gratification for one thing,

vanity for something else, bringing up excuses for something else, thinking too highly of myself, and so on. In short, in the end I am left with nothing except sinfulness. Even in these unions of ours I find where to feed my pride by imagining that I should get the credit for the good of all my wise fellow members. My Confessor is all the time suggesting ways and means to rid me of this vice, and in this respect he has given me various warnings, among which was the one that scared me most; it is this: he feared, he said, that my pride will in the end be my ruin. For charity's sake, dear friend, now I have manifested my heart to you, and my aim is that I may be helped by your kindness to overcome this stumbling block that would seem almost unavoidable had it not been for the comforting trust that I should have in my God and also the hope that you too will do what you can to help me. Whatever you can suggest in this regard, do not spare me, I beg you, for the sake of Mary, and when you pray for me have nothing else in mind except that of obtaining for me holy humility. If you were in my situation, I would do the same for you: I say this in all sincerity. Of what use will any little good I have done be to me if at the point of death our Lord would tell me in my face: «You have received your reward»¹?

I greatly cherish your friendship, and if I were to lose it I would take it as a punishment from God. Please don't worry over what I said to our dear Faboni. I said it out of pride: outwardly I expressed disappointment at her failure to back me up, but my heart rejoiced over it.

¹ Original in Latin: '*Recepisti mercedem tuam*'.

On my part I want to do my best to keep up our friendship, because I see that I have found in you a friend who by example as well as warnings will do much good to my soul. Because of this I should very much like to talk to you privately: if you are happy about it, I wish to propose another pact between us that will be of spiritual good to both of us. If any day is good for you, I would suggest you come on a Thursday, because I have more free time on that day, but if you cannot, please come when you wish and I myself, if I am not free will make myself free for you.

Please don't mind the poor manners I have used with you. Pardon my pride; I earnestly beg you to go on trusting me and treating me as a friend: let it all be directed towards the end of benefiting each other.

I am returning your books, with heartfelt thanks for your kindness and concern. The Director of our Sodality has noted down for you the names of the members of this town; he intends to enrol others in it. When they have completed their 'Novitiate' I will send you their names.

I was really happy to see so many girls dedicated to the love of Jesus; how I wish I too were worthy to follow them, even if only at a distance! ...

Today I intend to write also to Lady Giacomelli and enclose it in this letter, if I do write.

This time I will not speak to her so openly as I have done with you; but you yourself do tell her about my spiritual need, especially

in matters of humility, and earnestly beg her to commend me to God and to Mary.

May you be wholly consumed by the holy love of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I have the pleasure to be

The most faithful and loving among your Friends

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 61

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She submits the practices for the Sundays of St Aloysius - She asks him to recommend the future Institute to the Bishop.

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am sending you the list of practices for the Sundays of St Aloysius. I have been very slow, but I hope to be still in time. Kindly correct it and return it to Teresa, because this evening I will read it out to the fellow devotees of St Aloysius. Please don't mind if it is rather soiled: last night I dropped my candle on it. I nearly got it burnt, not just soiled. Kindly tell Teresa the exact day you are going to Gianico or to Artogne. Pierina Vielmi asked me to let her know it, so please don't mind my boldness. Recommend our Institute earnestly to the Bishop. For charity's sake remember also poor Bortolamea: say a good word for me to dear Mamma Mary through whom I hope to obtain every grace.

I hurriedly, yet humbly and gratefully, revere you. I am

Lovere, 12 May 1827.

Your devoted and obliged Daughter in Jesus Christ

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 62

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She despatches various objects of devotion - She exalts humility and speaks of her pride - She asks for correction and instruction - Her tender devotion to St Aloysius, to whom she wishes that the future institute be recommended.

GLORY BE TO THE FATHER AND TO THE SON
AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

I received your letter; I read it and re-read it, deeply moved. Praise be to my God who gives me friends who are truly more precious than any treasure. Don't let it make you proud since it is not your own gift. To tell you the truth, I really feel like spending some time with you, and I have the time for it just now, if the Lord gives me the grace not to let it affect my health.

Lest I should forget, I must tell you first of all that I did not order anything of what you mention; I don't even remember what books and holy pictures you wanted. So please forgive me and send me once again the list of what you want. For the time being I am sending you a booklet which costs 5 pence, and two folders you wanted; I will send you the rest next time. I am sending you also the wire, but for yourself use only half of it, which will cost 4 pence;

with the other half please make a small chain and send it to me, because I promised one to a friend of mine and I just don't have the time to make it for her myself. The Lord will reward you for your kindness.

Dear Marianna, what shall we do for Mary? How beautiful it is to do things for this sweet Mamma! I am sure it is through some special grace from Mary that you open your heart to me with such lovely sentiments of humility. Holy humility is, in fact, the virtue that endears us to God and gives value to even the tiniest act. As a matter of fact we know how precious it is from the high regard Jesus and Mary had for it. Jesus was considered by all his people as the worst of criminals and as such he was crucified on the abominable wood of the cross! Mary, the greatest, noblest and Holiest among all creatures, considered herself the lowliest of all, and sought in all ways to remain hidden from men's eyes! ... And shall we seek to be honoured, praised and held in high regard? ...

I confess to you in all simplicity that I have received excellent graces from the Lord, but I greatly fear that on account of my pride Our Lord will have to stop granting me his mercies and rightly let his justice take its course. Believe me, when I speak of myself in this way: this passion of pride is so deeply rooted in me that to be freed of it nothing short of Divine Omnipotence will suffice.

If ever I do a good deed, all merit for it is lost due to vanity, self-complacency or merely human ends.

Even in these holy unions of ours I offer good pasture to

my pride, by imagining that it is thanks to me that so much good is done by my devout fellow members. In short, I confess to you that I feel at times caught up in a confusing maze that sets me trembling all over and fills me with dread of an impending disaster. However, there is still left in me a great trust and hope in Mary. She is the Mother of the humble, and I do want this grace of humility too. Let us seek it together, and let us go on asking for it till we acquire it. From now on let our friendship entirely serve the purpose of benefiting each other.

Everything you know and think: «this might do good to Bortolamea as well», whether it be good advice, correction, some good inspiration, or devotional practice, or even your tenor or method of life, do not hesitate to share it with me: nor will I be niggardly in sharing such things with you, you'll see. I want both of us to go, with a will or without it, to Heaven: let us then help each other to climb that rugged path, and to do that, let us have great trust in Mary. I should like to know what you are doing with the girls of your town this month, in honour of Mary.

I will greatly appreciate it if you can tell me about this.

Today we are starting the Sundays in honour of the spotless young Saint Aloysius.

Today, my heart overflowed with joy.

I am sure my dearly beloved Luigino has a hand in it. May it be pleasing to God that once for all, after the example of this Saint, I may consecrate myself entirely to the Lord!.. I desire it with all my heart.

In these six Sundays, offer a particular intention in your prayer for the good outcome of our Institute.

Pray for it with all your heart, and make others pray for it, because there is urgent need for it.

I had better finish this letter, because I begin to feel the strain of it.

I will look forward to a long letter from you, written in all confidence. I trust that you yourself will be satisfied with mine this time; if you wish to know anything from me, don't hesitate to tell me, and I will promptly do as you wish. Forgive me if I don't write as often as I should, but I just can't do more.

I leave you under the protective 'Mantle' of Mary: there you will be head over heels with holy love. All your friends send you their best wishes. A thousand times 'Goodbye'. I am, in the name of the Lord,

Lovere, 13 May 1827.

Your most true friend and sister

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy handmaid of Mary.

To Esteemed Lady

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 63

TO VOLUNNIA BANZOLINI

She begs alms for the Hospital.

PRAISED BE JESUS CHRIST AND MARY

Esteemed Lady and Friend,

An exceptional reason is urging me to write this letter to you. All this time that I have grown to know you closely, I saw in you remarkable gifts and personal endowments which made me realize that you are very dear to God and a delight to his heart. For this, all praise is due to the Supreme God who so magnanimously adorns his beloved creatures.

But what I particularly liked in you was your tender love and charity towards the poor. Relying on that, I too make bold to seek charity, not for myself but for the poor of the Hospital.

Among the many things that they need, one is a curtain or blanket that can be used as a screen for the commode of the patients. It would cost 6 or 7 lire to prepare it. For this need I turn to you, esteemed Lady, and appeal to your kind heart to help us provide it. The amount I mentioned is a rough estimate,

but you can contribute less or more than that amount according to what your kind heart towards the poor patients will suggest. God will reward you, and since I know you so well, I myself have firm trust that you will fully meet my request.

I will write your booklet as soon as possible, and soon you will also have the book for which you have placed the order. With deep affection and profound esteem

Lovere, 27 May 1827.

Your devoted and grateful Servant and Friend

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 64

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

Regarding her affliction in spirit - She cheers him up over a cross he has to bear.

MAY THE LOVE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT BE KINDLED
IN OUR HEARTS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am sending you the paper on how we intend to carry out the Crowning of Mary:¹ I trust I have written what Mary herself prompted to me; if you find anything that is merely my own, cross it out, and I will be only too glad. I want to open my heart to you in this regard. Last night there came upon me a certain heaviness of heart which then passed away. It started during my Confession itself; I could only sigh, shed tears and pray. Deep within me there was an overpowering sense of restlessness which I myself could not explain. I slept very little in the night, and even that was bitter. On waking, tears came to my eyes, my heart was mournful and restless and even in prayer and in Holy Communion itself I could not keep back my tears.

¹ A devout practice carried out by Venerable Bartolomea with her friends at the end of the month dedicated to Mary.

Not knowing why this was happening to me, I said to the Lord more than once: «But my God, what is this all about?» In the evening, to ease the pain in my heart, I wrote a long letter to Mother Mistress (the pacifying reply to which reached me today, and I have also talked with her: she is so calm and quiet, my same old Mother Mistress), because I could not bear the idea that she might be displeased with me. Several times the idea of turning to Mary for help occurred to me, but I was ashamed because I had treated her very badly; I hardly dared look at her, and it seemed to me as if she were about to give me proof of her displeasure by letting things happen in such a way that I would never again offer my services in her honour.

But Mary is always Mary: she overlooks the failings of her daughters; she loves them and cares for them as a tender Mother, even when they are not at all faithful to her. This morning, the moment I entered the room I looked at her Picture and it seemed to me that she looked on me with kindness, but I still felt depressed. Then when you, Reverend Father, sent me the command to do something for Mary, I felt greatly comforted. Mary seemed to tell me: “I like to be served by you”. All my anguish vanished that instant, and in its place there took over an immense gladness that remained with me the whole day. Mary thus gave me the courage to approach her and commend myself to her, and thanks to her I also hope to receive the Holy Spirit.

I am now cheerful and happy. However, I trust that Mary and even more especially the Holy Divine Spirit, will also strengthen you, Reverend Father. I was very sorry to hear about

what you have to endure. The first thing I thought I could do was to pray to the Lord to let me have a share in your suffering, but then I realized I was too unworthy and weak to even dare make that petition. Allow me to tell you exactly what I feel about it, though I myself am not in the same situation.

To tell you the truth, I have till now been wondering why the Lord, who usually repays with crosses souls that work tirelessly for his glory, in your case, Reverend Father, allows only honour and praise; in fact, I myself prayed him to single you out by letting you be most greatly humiliated, contradicted, forsaken and wronged, etc., but the Lord has instead removed such thoughts from my mind by allowing me to have a glimpse of your suffering. Thanks be to Him for it. On the one hand I feel terribly sorry to see you so deeply afflicted; on the other hand, I am equally glad: last night I recited the *Te Deum* twice, thanking God on your behalf for graciously adorning your soul with such singular graces.

This suffering is for you, Reverend Father, that very Cross that God makes me, too, long for, but is not pleased to give me, because I am too unworthy.

I seem to see your Guardian Angel marking in letters of gold, in the Book of life, all your steps, all your words, all your sighs and all your actions, because they were done in spite of the reluctance that you feel; but even more especially I seem to see Jesus who from behind the Cross is looking at you, Reverend Father, with eyes of predilection and, appreciating your endurance, pouring fresh graces into your heart without your noticing it.

Do cherish the Cross: it will make of you a great saint, Reverend Father. As for me, though I have never had the fortune to bear it, yet I do envy those souls that are favoured by the Lord with such a valuable treasure. Have patience. Calm times will come and I trust that the Holy Spirit will also give you strength and bring in you a sense of contentment. There are many good people who are praying for you, without their knowing it; I have asked them to offer for three days all the good they do for this intention. The Lord will hear their innocent prayers, I am sure. As for me, I will choose the most appropriate time, when in our gathering we shall celebrate the Crowning of Mary, since I will have the part of holding Mary's Mantle, and so I will place you under it and there you will be safe. Remember me, too, in your prayer, that I may not be ungrateful to the love of my God nor to that of my dear Mamma Mary.

I take this opportunity to send you back your book, and beg you kindly to send me another one, as usual. I am also enclosing some papers with defects of pride. Please bless the two Rosary Beads you will also find enclosed. In your goodness excuse me if I have been too bold in everything; I am aware that I take advantage of your goodness, but I can't help it. Have patience with me; the Lord himself will reward you.

With humble reverence and grateful thanks. I beg you to bless me. I have the honour to be

Friday night, 1st June 1827.

Your devoted and humble Daughter in J. Christ

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

P.S. Today, Saturday, we are having the practices in honour of Mary. To make us still happier, the good Mamma Mary allowed Mother Mistress and myself to draw the lot of offering her today's Crown. Both of us are very glad, because it makes us understand that Mary does not mind even our *quarrelling*. Now we are fully in peace.

Letter 65

TO THE SAME

Her openness of conscience and docility - modest idea of herself.

MAY JESUS CHRIST BE PRAISED AND LOVED

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am at last sending you the method of life, which you will find written out in the booklet: I am sending you in one lump all the papers I have been writing for myself from time to time, because I really want to place myself entirely in your hands so that you too, Reverend Father, may better know the state of my soul and so, continuing to treat me with your usual charity, can lead me to Heaven. I hesitated to send you the whole lot of them, because many are of little or no importance, but have patience with me; I have resolved not to keep from you anything, however slight, and so I am sending you everything, begging you to let me have back those you think can be of use to me. As to the others, just throw them in the fire.

I am also sending you the books for the Institute of the Ursulines. For a long time I have had in mind to return them to you, but I kept forgetting to do so.

Please excuse me for it. For charity's sake commend me to God. I seriously fear (I say it most earnestly and sincerely) that I am heading for perdition. My pride is extremely great: it sets me trembling and thinking that it may have the upper hand in the end and at any moment I may fall headlong down the precipice. The graces the Lord grants to me are countless, and I do acknowledge them, but I don't respond to them well at all. Any other person granted the same graces would have become a great Saint by now, whereas I am not even a beginner in the Christian way of life. On account of my failure to respond, I fear the Lord may stop giving me graces and leave me at the mercy of my passions. Till now my Lord has been too good with me: as soon as either with a defect or something else, particularly with thoughtlessness I tried to stray from Him, He at once made his presence felt and either with inner reproaching or remorse or restlessness, he never stopped trying till I had recovered my former fervour.

But I dread to think what might happen if God in His exceptional mercy should ever withdraw from me and after so much trying again and again He should in the end turn his back on me.

I suppose that he may not be pleased with even the few good things that I do since there is mixed up with them so much pride and imperfection. My fear that he may not be pleased with them is confirmed by the fact that I am always without any cross. All my close friends, all so good, have some, or many, crosses to bear, and as if on purpose they come and tell me all about them, and so I come to know how dear they are to God,

I envy them and say to myself: «And I, no cross at all: I am loved, served, left quiet, made much of, etc.». At one time I had at least some physical pain which, though always slight, was persistent and could cause me discomfort, but now that I am in good health, I have nothing to bear. And so I don't know what to say except that I have reason to think modestly about myself. At the same time I don't want to lose my trust in my God nor in Mary, either. I belong to them, and this should suffice.

I earnestly beg of you: if in any of the devout practices that I now wish to undertake, you detect some strain of pride or self-love or anything that is merely human, cross it out, and I will be happy about it, and if you would rather withdraw your permission from the whole lot of them, do so, for if that would be useful for me, I shall be equally glad. For charity's sake, do not spare me in any way: I place myself entirely in your hands; I will do my best to obey you in every detail, and so I will be led to Heaven. Have patience with me, too. Our Lord will give you an extra share of bliss in Heaven in return for the charity and patience used with Bortolamea. I on my part will pray the Lord for you.

For your greater peace of mind I should like to say one more thing, concerning the Curate. When I sent you the letter, the last one I mean, I was not quite sure if it was the right thing to send it to you, and even praying the Lord to inspire me what I had to do, I did not feel any definite assurance about sending or keeping it back: In the end I sent it to you with a prayer to the Lord that if there was anything amiss, to let you know. I

thank God who has deigned to make his Will known to you: he has truly been very gracious. All the same, do what you can so that your preaching will not be impaired nor cut short. It entails much hardship, no doubt, but it is something that the Lord wants from you, and so even if it means dying out of hard work, it would be a special grace. But I have tired you enough.

For some time - as I hope, at least - I will send you no more of my scribbling. Meanwhile I will be waiting for what you will please have to send me in time for the feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. Humbly asking you to bless me, I have the honour to be

Lovere, 12 July 1827.

Your unworthy yet most grateful Daughter in J. C.

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 66

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

Condolence over the death of an aunt - Enthusiastic outbursts in occasion of the Crowning of Mary - Declarations of friendship, etc.

PRAISE BE TO OUR MOST GENTLE SPOUSE J. CHRIST

My gentle Friend and Sister,

Thanks be to my God who is at last granting me this time to spend, at least through this letter, with the sweetest and dearest of my friends that you are for me.

I was grieved to hear of the demise of your worthy and incomparable Aunt. The loss of such an outstanding woman is truly great, and for all those who knew her and more especially for you who is blessed to be her Niece, it must have caused a deep sense of bereavement. At the same time not less should be your comfort at the thought that she will certainly be in Heaven, and though you have been deprived of a real support here on earth, you have acquired a powerful Advocate in Heaven. And so, instead of mourning over her as someone dead and gone, let us rejoice with her and be happy that she has gone before us to that life of bliss and everlasting happiness.

May there ever remain indelible in us the memory of her virtues,

serving as a powerful incentive to take heart and do our best to attain to that level of holiness that she has reached.

Your last letter brought tears of joy and tenderness to my eyes, at the 'sight' of the graces that Mary showers your soul with. I am quite sure that the day of the Crowning was for you a heavenly day; I can imagine the joy with which you must have offered the crown to Mary and the delight with which she must have accepted it.

Blessed are you, who belong totally to Mary, and this offering of yours (which I really liked) binds you to remain always hers. I tell you quite openly, for me too it was really a heavenly day. Mary never minded my unworthiness; in fact, I felt sure that with an immense kindness she accepted me, with all my most gentle Sisters, under Her holy 'Mantle' and assured me of her special care and assistance.

Dear Lucia, how deeply indebted we are to our most loving Mamma! ... What a strict obligation we have to love her, serve her and honour her! ...

Oh yes! Let us do it with all our heart, for she highly deserves it. I am enclosing the paper with the graces that we have prayed for. Next time I write to you, I will also send you my self-offering; I feel it is my duty to do so, and with it I'm thinking of sending two more papers which I trust you will like.

I beg you to excuse my delay in writing; I too was very sorry, but I just could not. Believe me, you are deeply engraved in my heart and in my mind: there is no day and

hardly an hour when my Lucia does not come fresh to mind, still reminding me of the courtesy shown me during the happy days I had the good fortune to spend with you; in particular, the intimate, edifying talk you had with me the day and night you kept me at your house, still cheer my heart and make me wish for another opportunity when I can again have a talk with you and dwell upon spiritual and holy things.

I am returning the book on the life of St Camillus. Thank you very much for it. I assure you that I found it delightful. I was looking for Virginia's volumes, but as I find that type here in Lovere as well, I thank you all the same and spare you the trouble of lending them to me. I ask you, rather, to give my sincere regards to the good Teacher Angelina; tell her that I was very glad to receive her letters, and have greatly appreciated them, that she must excuse me for having written no letter so far, that if she is displeased with me she has every right to be so but that I ask her to keep peace with me and forgive me for the sake of St Aloysius, and to give me a token of her good will by sending me a book to read on the life of St Stanislaus along with a letter; lastly, assure her that I too will soon write to her and my letter will be so long that it will make up for all my failings.

Give my warm wishes to G. Taboni and my regards to Lady Cristina Ronchi and Ballardini Sisters, and all those who enquire about me.

I am sure you will remember me too in your Prayers; I am in extreme need of it. I will do the same for you, unworthy

though I am. Pray especially that I may be ever faithful to my Divine Spouse. On the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel I renewed my cherished vow, trusting that Mary will give me the grace to faithfully live up to such exceptional graces.

All our fellow members of this town, especially Mother Parpani, send you their best regards.

Looking forward to your letter and wishing you a heap of crosses with the unflinching patience to bear them, I am, in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lovere, 19 July 1827

Your loving, devoted Sister in J. C.

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

P.S. Give my sincere wishes to our dearest Pierina Giacomelli. I started writing a letter to her, but I have had no time to finish it. I will send it to her next week along with my reply to Taboni. Let me leave you, then, dear Lucia, within the sweet Heart of Jesus.

As soon as you can, offer a Holy Communion for an important intention. I will do one for you as well, for the good success of your Parish Priest.

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 67

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

Humble acknowledgements - Confident advice - Requests submitted.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I'm sending you some paper fit for the fire. Now I know that you, Reverend Father, have realized what lengths my pride can drive me to. In fact, it has made me do a thing that no humble person would ever do, nor would you have commanded it. Oh well! I am glad that my pride can serve as an exercise in humility to someone else: may God grant that I profit from the examples of others.

Relying on your goodness of heart, I make bold to mention one thing I hadn't the courage to say by word of mouth. For some time now I have been hearing several people complain because you first promise to hear their confession on this or that day, but then almost always break your promise; I have also heard other persons speak of this in an unpleasant way. I am sure there must be some reason for it, Reverend Father, but they don't understand. And so, you must either meet their demands if you can, or else just leave them free on

those days that you are too busy, especially people who have urgent duties at home or need more care. I don't expect you to have that kind of concern with me: I would be sorry if you did; on the contrary I assure you that by breaking your word with me, you do me good. Please don't mind the liberty I take.

I am enclosing the practices for the Novena which I did at the request of my fellow members in preparation for the forthcoming Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary. If you are not pleased that I do it, just burn it up, and I will be quite happy. In fact I must tell you that while I was drawing it up, a thought of pleasure in my own ability crossed my mind and I was on the point of tearing up the paper, but I said to myself that there is always time for that. So you can approve or disapprove of it as the Lord will inspire you.

Lucia and Giulia Romelli have asked me to remind you, Rev. Father, to answer their letter, and to grant their request, and I, in my reply to their letter, assured them that you will soon make them happy by sending them what they want, and so I beg you to keep my promise to them.

If you happen to have two or three minutes free this evening, I should like to make my confession, but do not let it trouble you; I will not mind if you don't have time, because I am at peace. It is just because I want to avoid the trouble of coming tomorrow when very many people will turn up for Confession.

Commend me to God. – I fear I may be disturbing you unduly these days that you must be very busy with the Bishop, but I am doing it for the Novena: if you approve of it I can send

it in time to those who live far away. If you just say 'Yes' or 'No' through Monica, it will be more than enough for me to understand.

In haste, yet most gratefully I revere you and profess to be

Lovere, 3 August 1827.

Your devoted Servant and Daughter in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA C.

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 68

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She despatches the Novena for the Feast of the Assumption.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sisters,

I am enclosing the Novena, trusting that you like it. Please make a copy of it and give it also to Marianna Vertova because I have no time to make more copies myself. You will find another one enclosed: please send it to Lucia Cismondi, and if you come to know that she is not in town, add a few lines of your own and send it to her through some other associated Sister. Make it a point to have it reach her in time.

I am not sending you the booklets, because the only ones I found are bound, cover and all, and cost 22 or 23 pence each. If you want them all the same, tell me and I will send them to you.

All the fellow members send you their wishes. Please give my wishes to Marianna and to those who know me.

I beg you to say three *Hail Marys* for my intention.

Wishing you much fervour to do the Holy Novena with
great fervour, and make up also for my lack of it.

I am totally yours.

Lovere, 4 August 1827.

Your grateful, greatly loved Friend

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Excellent Misses

Sisters LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

CIVIDATE.

Letter 69

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She congratulates her on graces received through Mary - She accepts new members.

MAY OUR HEARTS BE ARDENT WITH LOVE OF JESUS
AND OF MARY

Most Gentle Sister
and ever-faithful Friend,

I have received your letter with the favours Mary has done to you. It was very kind of you to let me share in them; to tell you the truth, I could not help shedding copious tears of gladness at seeing you so highly favoured by Mary. Helpless as I am, I could not but kneel there and then before the image of my most loveable Mamma and thank her for you. I also offered myself to Her, but I fear that my own meanness may again tear me away from Mary's hands. And so I beg you: on the Feast of her Nativity present my offering to Her on my behalf, make her any promises you like in my name and then send them to me. Be kind to me, I entreat you. Remember that we are united for a set purpose, and it is my hope that out of regard for you God will grant his graces to me as well.

I am sending you the Novena. I fear I may be continually overburdening persons with too many practices; if you happen to hear complaints about it, I would be very much obliged if you tell me in all confidence.

We gladly accept the very good girls recommended to us, and if you would like to let still others join, we are happy about it. See to it yourself as you think best. Ballardini 1. stands for Fr. Bortolo, who in his humility asked to be admitted; the other name with Number 2. marked against it is Angelina. I have no time to write more. Give my wishes to all the members, to whom I hope to write as soon as possible.

Strive to become a saint, and pray also for your

Lovere, 28 August 1827.

Grateful, loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 70

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She sends them a Novena - Sentiments of humility.

Dearest Sisters,

A thousand and more thanks to Giulia for the big favour done me so soon: the spiritual payment she deserves for it is already made.

I am sending you the forthcoming Novena practices. Kindly make a copy of it without delay and send it immediately to Marianna Vertova as well. I wish you to tell me with all sincerity if I am inconsiderately setting too many practices. In that case, I will be more moderate. Be frank with me. I don't have time to write more. Keep ever in mind the poorest one, the one most badly in need among your dear friends, that is myself. May the love of God make of you whole-burnt offerings most pleasing to his gracious heart. A thousand wishes from all your Sisters here, and Rev. Don Angelo reciprocates your wishes a hundredfold. I am, in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Love, 28 August 1827.

Your dearest, most loving friend

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Esteemed Ladies

Sisters LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

urgent

CIVIDATE.

Letter 71

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

Practice in virtue - Virtue of a friend of hers.

PRAISE BE TO THE BLESSED TRINITY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Just now, Lovere, 28 August 1827.

I am sending you back the booklet from which I copied out the Novena for the Feast of the Nativity of Mary. I heartily thank you for it. In my last monthly Confession I forgot to ask which virtue you wish me to practise in a particular way for the coming month, and so I think I had better let you see the resolutions I have made and ask you to add to them what you think best. If you have no objection, I should like to add to my method of life the resolutions made for acquiring holy Humility and mark any failure in observing them as well.

My fellow members wish to do the Novena together; that is why I wrote it out, and if you, Reverend Father, approve of it, we shall do it. In that case, I would request you to send it back to me soon, because since this time too, I have been rather slow and late in drawing it up, I am anxious lest I should again be reproached by the fellow members who live far away.

Romelli sisters and Marianna Vertova have asked me to give you their regards and thank you very much. A moment ago I was reading a letter from Lucia Cismondi. Of all my friends she is the dearest. She is truly a saintly person. It made me weep with gladness at so many virtues I saw in her and with confusion at seeing myself so far behind.

Mary has obtained for her extraordinary graces on the Feast of her Assumption, and for my sake she made her tell me of them that I may thereby realize my nothingness and at the same time encourage me to imitate her. Believe me, Lucia is for me a continual incentive to piety, nor is it by chance that Our Lord has allowed me to establish a close friendship with her. I do hope that the example of her virtues and still more her powerful prayers and my sharing in the good she does will make Our Lord work in me the miracle of my conversion.

Laura Vezzoli, with whom I have chatted in a familiar way, told me she is waiting for the 'Food' which you, Reverend Father, had promised her some time ago. I commend myself to your Prayer. With deep respect and grateful thanks I am,

Your devoted Daughter in J. Christ
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 72

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She requests help for her Spiritual Exercises - Her obedience in frequency of receiving Holy Communion.

HAIL JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I should like to ask you to do me some favours, which I hope your goodness will not deny me. In these days of Spiritual Exercises I would very much like to have the paper with instructions on the proper way of doing them and request you kindly to adjust it to my case, for it had been drawn up not for me but for Lucia Cismondi. I would also be obliged if you could lend me for these days a book for spiritual reading and for Meditations suitable for these Spiritual Exercises, because I have none of my own.

But the greatest charity of all that I beg of you is that of commending me earnestly to God. I fear I may let slip this opportunity without benefiting from it, without turning to God with a sincere heart. Without writing at length on this point, you, Reverend Father, know my needs, and that is sufficient to ensure your charity in my regard, all the more so considering that I myself, unworthy as I am, have not yet stopped praying

that the Sodality members you care for so much may have a very fruitful Retreat.

Today, at the meeting of the Association, the Parish Priest has given the order not to go for Holy Communion the whole of this week; and so, Reverend Father, if you have no objection, one must have patience and obey, though a whole week of 'fasting' will be extremely painful.

With humble reverence and grateful thanks I ask you to bless me. I am,

Love, 8 September 1827.

Your devoted and faithful Servant and Daughter in J. C.

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 73

TO THE SAME

She gives an account of inner inspirations - She senses death drawing near.

PRAISED BE JESUS CHRIST

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am returning the book you lent me; I thank you heartily for it. I really liked it, though it was a bit scary. But nothing less than that would have moved the hardness of my heart. I am also enclosing the papers with my resolutions and some notes I jotted down these retreat days. Since you had proposed to me Fr. Mozzi's beautiful method for the Spiritual Exercises, I had already started, the previous two days, to write down something, in rough, though, because I cannot do more than that; I had not dared to tell you about it, why I don't know exactly. At any rate, I am now sending you all my scribbling, so that you may see the outcome of my Spiritual Exercises.

I trust you will not find it annoying if I open my heart to you about the inspirations and temptations I have had especially during these Holy days. For some time now I have insistently felt an inner urge to stop thinking about myself and,

instead, to consecrate myself totally to God. I mean to say: to let him be the Lord of my whole being, not to keep as much as a sigh for myself but that all be given to God, to let him act in me as he wishes and to remain in close intimacy with Him; in short: to live with my body on earth, but with my heart and my spirit in God. At times such inspirations are so lofty that I feel utterly unable to carry them out.

On the contrary, I am often assailed by the thought that I may be deceiving myself, that I myself am imagining these things in order to nourish my own pride, that I am all the time misleading others through some outward show, that I do not have the right intention in what I do, that I will end up losing my soul, that all I am doing is deceiving myself and others, and thoughts of this kind.

Such thoughts make me restless and fearful, at a loss what to do. I would like to be entirely Jesus' own possession but I am aware that my pride is a serious obstacle: all these thoughts lead me to think that I am detestable in God's sight and so my hope is continually overshadowed by fear and day after day my joy is broken by fear, and so it goes on till the last day of my life will come, and I cannot help supposing it to be quite near, and God alone knows how it will be for me, then.

I greatly fear that I am not letting you know of all my defects and so it is entirely my fault if you, Reverend Father, cannot prescribe me the remedies needed.

And so I beg you, out of the love you bear for Jesus Christ and for my soul redeemed by Him, to implore the Lord to let you know the state of my soul, just as it is in his all-seeing eyes,

and with that knowledge to make me do what you think best;
on my part I will also beg from God the grace to obey you.
Now I think I have told you everything.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer; unworthy
though I am, I will do the same for you. Humbly kneeling for
your blessing, I declare myself to be

Lovere, 19 September 1827.

Your grateful humble Servant and Daughter in Christ

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 74

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

Craving to grow in the love of God - She suggests a new spiritual pact.

PRAISE BE TO THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY

Gentle Sister of mine in the charity
of our Lord,

I avail myself of this opportunity to write to my dearest Lucia, something I really wish to do, and may it be pleasing to God that our conversation in writing be profitable to both of us.

The Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary is over, and I am sure that by now our gracious Mother has done you some special favour. I am very happy about it, and it is my ardent wish that Mary may greatly enrich you with her virtues, graces and gifts and make you all Her own. However, I beg you not to forget Bartolamea, for I am in extreme need of your prayer.

To be frank with you, I have great inspirations, our Lord wants me to be His, entirely His, keeping for myself not even a sigh, and yet with all these inspirations I never do anything for Jesus' sake but am always cold, careless, mean, and I greatly fear that in the end Jesus will be so displeased with my

worthlessness that he will leave me to myself. For this reason, I beg you, if you love me in Christ, pray earnestly for me, pray that our Lord may cast at my heart a dart of his holy love, so that, pierced by it, my heart may at last give in to His wishes and do what He expects from me. My spiritual need impels me to beg you to make with me a new pact, and the love you bear me together with the trust you instil in me, enable me to hope that you will accept my proposal.

It is my desire that we make an agreement not to seek any grace from God nor make any prayer without seeking it and making it for each other: you for me and I for you, as though the two of us were one. And so, if we come to know that any practice, admonishment, inspiration, etc. could be useful to one or to the other, we shall make it a point to inform each other, in other words: to be kind to each other with the same concern we would have for our own soul. Knowing how kind and good you are, I don't think you will deny me so great a grace, and so I beg it of you with all my heart. By all means ask your Confessor's permission to make this pact, and if he hesitates to let you make it, beg it from him: I will ask my Confessor's permission as well, and I am sure he will be very happy because he will understand the very great benefit that will be drawn by my soul from this spiritual union. I shall be eagerly anticipating a favourable reply.

I am enclosing the papers I had promised you long ago. I trust you will like them because they are about what is extremely dear to you, that is, the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

With regard to the latter, you can join the members of the Union branch in your town by performing the same practices; offer the good you do with that of the members in Lovere, as they on their part do for you. However, I leave it to you to do as you think best, the most suited to circumstances in your own place.

Dear sister, love God on my behalf as well, for He absolutely deserves it, and we would be really ungrateful if we refused to love Him. Let us, then love Him with a most ardent, disinterested and pure love. Let us love Him because He deserves it, because He is our supreme good. For charity's sake pray that I may not be niggardly with a God who is so lavish with me; pray that my heart may have no other love than Jesus and his glory. I wish you, too, the loftiest grade of holiness, and that the Lord may bestow on you a good share in his most exquisite graces, especially that of suffering, for it is my prayerful wish that you become a Saint soon, a great Saint.

Next time you meet your fellow members, convey to them the warm wishes that I send them on behalf of all the members of my town. I am looking forward to your most welcome visit. It is up to you to fulfil my desire, if you can. Goodbye, sister dear, I'll come to 'meet' you in the Heart of Jesus. I am,

Lovere, 8 October 1827.

Your grateful, loving Sister in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

P.S. If you accept the pact I mentioned, fix the day on which you mean it to start for both of us, and let me know if it has to be done for good or only for a fixed period of time.
Once again, I say goodbye, and hold you close to my heart.

To Very Esteemed Miss

LUCIA CISMONTI

DARFO.

Letter 75

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

Advice on religious vocation - On charity towards neighbour - On humility.

PRAISE BE TO THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY

Dearest Sister of mine,

Love, 8 October 1827.

I was extremely glad to receive your letter, and I am very sorry I could not answer it sooner. I am always very happy with your letters, but I lay no claim on having them. In fact, every time you write to me, I take it as a gift from you, and so you don't have to feel guilty if you don't write, all the more so since I myself am always very slow in answering yours.

I am sending you the book on the love of Jesus; you had placed an order with me for it. I don't remember how much money I owe you. If you agree let us consider my debt to you cleared with this book. I am also sending you three booklets called «L'occupato che medita»¹. I will despatch the others as well when the booksellers have them in stock. They cost 5 pence.

With regard to the advice you seek from me about your religious vocation, I don't know what to say. I am passionately in love with a cloistered religious life, but on the other hand I

¹ 'A busy person meditates'.

love to engage myself in works of charity, both spiritual and corporal, which in the Cloister cannot be done except that of praying to the Lord for sinners. If I found myself in your situation I would be at a loss what to decide.

The need in your town is very great; young girls, especially, are greatly in need of your help; even if you don't do anything, yet without you they would remain deprived of a support that is too necessary, and perhaps even the limited efforts you have made so far for their spiritual good would also come to nothing.

On the other hand, I would greatly miss that blessed Retreat, that fond solitude my heart desires so much in order to be united to God; it would be extremely hard and painful for me to abandon it, and so I don't know exactly what to tell you. Commend yourself earnestly to God: He will surely make his will known to you.

However, don't seek your own advantage but rather that of your neighbour; be sure that in making you lead the life of a Nun in the world, our Lord would be granting you a grace no less great than that of making you retire in the quiet tranquillity of the Cloister and spend the rest of your life in it.

Do pray tirelessly and fervently to God for this, but with much peace of mind, because the Devil at times puts a thousand thoughts, desires and worries in our head, making us think another state-in-life is better and meanwhile he weakens the will to live and act in the actual one and thus our desires are never fulfilled and we get bored with our state-in-life and so neglect our duties.

Dear Marianna, take new courage to live in your present circumstances; keep at what you are doing as if you had always to remain as you are. That will be the best way of entreating God to make his will clearly known to you, if he is truly calling you to another state-in-life. That blessed charity towards our neighbour that Jesus Christ practised so much throughout his life appeals to me exceedingly, and the practice of it is a delight that I don't think any (cloistered) religious can ever experience. To be quite frank with you, supposing God is not pleased that there be here in Lovere the Institute that is being planned and longed for, an Institute which is meant to unite contemplative life with all the works of charity that can be done for our neighbour, I would certainly find it extremely hard to enter the Cloister, because I would be too sorry to let slip so many opportunities to lend a hand for the good of my neighbour, though even now I am not availing myself of any opportunity to do so. This is all that I can say to you. I would be glad if you keep me informed of any inspirations you may have about this later on.

Commend me to God, I beg of you, for I am in extreme need of it. I am sure the Lord wants something from me, but I am offering resistance and as a matter of fact I am continually rejecting it. I need to have a particular light and strength that will bend my heart to His will and admit, to my utter confusion, that His will prevails. Come, Marianna, have compassion on my poor soul, offer a special prayer and some act of mortification and penance for me. If I have some love of God, I shall be of some benefit to someone else.

I really count on your prayers. See to it, I beg of you, that my reliance on you is based on actual fact.

Your and my friends send you countless wishes and with them my Parents convey wishes to you and all at home. Give my wishes to Giulia and Lucia Romelli. Tell them I am looking forward to a letter from them very eagerly.

My prayerful wish for you, dear Sister, is that your heart be entirely owned by Jesus: a heart that loves, seeks, desires and longs for Jesus and rest in Him alone, and that you may become not just a Saint but a great Saint and soon a Saint. For this I wish you a solid foundation of humility. I would not be sorry at all if you were to be ill-treated, wronged, forgotten, slandered and even persecuted: these would be the surest signs of being very dear to God, but if you don't have them yet at present, the Lord will give them to you later on. Meanwhile, go deep into the knowledge of your utter helplessness, think most modestly of yourself and in your self-estimation count yourself as the least of all and deserving every dishonour. This is the first step to sanctity, without which everything else is worthless. I am speaking to you with all frankness on this subject because that is how I reproach myself over my pride, which is becoming worse and worse, and because of which I fear to be a real hypocrite, and God alone knows what is in store for me in the world to come. I already seem to see hell yawning wide for me and I seem to hear God's dreadful words addressed to me: «I do not know you; you have received your reward from men. Away with you, for I do not know you».

I beg of you, Marianna, pray for me. Otherwise now we are united but for all eternity we shall be separated, you with God and I with Demons, you in Heaven and I in hell. I end here because I have no more time and because my heart is troubled over such reflections.

This is all, dearest; remember your poor Friend and Sister

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Lady

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 76

TO MARIA N.

She encourages her to persevere in practices of devotion and charity, in spite of difficulties she has to face and in anticipation of Heaven's reward.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Friend of mine,

Here I am at last answering the most welcome letter you wrote to me long ago. Excuse my delay, which is due to the scarcity of time left free; however, you can be sure that you have always been in my thoughts, and that I value your friendship very highly. I thank you heartily for the holy pictures you so kindly gave me, and I wish I had something to give you in return. Though I have nothing at the moment, I do know my obligation to you and at the first opportunity I will see how I can make up for it.

It was for me a great comfort to hear the good sentiments you have and how well you are behaving in the face of the derision you have to bear up with. It is a real blessing that you are drawing so much benefit from the graces received from God; at the point of death you will be extremely glad and you will bless the happy moment in which you consecrated yourself totally to the Lord's service. Keep in mind, however, that what

counts now is that you persevere, for what you have done so far will be of no avail if you are not able to keep it up till the end. And so, take heart, dear Maria, let them laugh and scoff, and hold you in low regard; you keep to your own way of living, or rather, seek to grow in love of God, practise the virtues proper to your state-in-life, cherish the precious crosses that God will send you, receive Holy Communion as often as you can, and offer your service as far as your life-situation allows to teach the girls, to help the poor, to visit the sick and, in short, to do good to your neighbour, and then you can rest assured that Heaven is yours. – Take courage, then. You have nothing to worry about. And if you feel weighed down by distress, cast a look at Heaven, that dear Homeland where all unpleasant things will be done with and where we shall experience only joy, contentment, happiness and peace.

Kindly commend me to the Lord, for I am in extreme need of it. Remember me always.

Write to me as often as you like, and I will do the same to you. – Goodbye, dearest. I would be happy to know the state-in-life you feel that the Lord is calling you to.

I am, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Lovere, 16 October 1827.

Your grateful, loving Friend
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 77

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She encourages him in his preaching work - Desire to imitate St Aloysius.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

This is to request you to examine and correct the Novena practices that I am enclosing. I have done it for our spiritual Union. For that of Our Lady of Sorrows I will do an easier one, if you agree.

I cannot hide from you the consolation I feel at seeing you about to go and preach your dear, holy Missions; I wish you every success, and I earnestly pray God to bless the whole course of them. You can be sure that the one you are undertaking just now will come out well because I have already placed it under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of St Aloysius Gonzaga and of St Paul the Apostle. These three powerful advocates will obtain from God whatever is needed for the happy outcome of your Holy Mission. By all means do whatever you can, because you cannot rest easy before you get to Heaven, but in the midst of all your labour, look after your health, and without neglecting your duties, do your best to keep well.

Excuse the liberty I take to speak to you so boldly: you know I cannot hide anything from you, Reverend Father, and must always be frank beyond any conventional rule.

Pray also for my spiritual good. I beg it of you most earnestly, in particular that I may be granted the grace of imitating my dearly beloved St Aloysius, who in the drawing of the lots for the forthcoming Novena has come, of all people, to me! This thing has made me very happy and I rejoice over it, because it assures me that on His part, He does not spurn my company. However, I do want to be like him and so with all my heart I commend myself to your Prayer.

I wish you a safe and happy journey, along with abundant exceptional graces for your spiritual benefit. With grateful thanks and profound respect I crave your Blessing while I profess myself to be

Lovere, 17 October 1827.

Your faithful devoted Servant and Daughter in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 78

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She accuses herself of pride.

HAIL TO JESUS

Dearest Sisters,

I am enclosing the practices for the Novena of All Saints, as I suppose you are waiting for them. I am not writing much as I think it is your turn to write. I am looking forward to your letter.

For charity's sake, my dear sisters, commend me to God. Whatever I do goes to the devil and will serve only to feed all the more the fires of hell that I see yawning at my feet, all set to receive me¹.

Believe me, if I do anything (good in itself) I do it out of pride, and I imagine myself to be so great that I go to the extent of thinking that they will write my life. For such pride and for other

¹ After the manner of the Saints, she blames herself for what was simply a temptation to pride. In fact, in constantly overcoming it, she was becoming ever more meritorious in God's sight through the practise of a most sincere humility.

enormous sins that I do not mention lest I should scandalize you, I am heading for my ruin, and any moment, I feel, God may leave me to myself, and as a result plunged into the most heinous sins. For charity's sake, I repeat, pray hard for me; beg the Lord to be merciful to me; that he may do whatever he knows best, provided he saves me: in short, pray for the needs of my soul. Don't imagine that I am saying all this out of humility, oh no. I say it in all truth, in order to be sure of your kindness in my regard. Believe me, I am sorely afflicted over this, and so I am in extreme need of your prayer, otherwise I may end up being separated from you for all eternity.

I am counting on your spiritual help.

Give my sincere regards to your Mother and to Lady Angelina. Do become Saints, great Saints, and Saints soon; I wish it for you with all my heart. I am

Lovere, 19 October 1827.

Your loving and grateful Sister

BORTOLAMEA C.

Letter 79

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

A covering letter for scripts - She accuses herself of pride and asks for a remedy.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am enclosing the Paper I spoke to you about, of my good fellow member Lucia Cismondi. Should there be anything amiss, kindly correct it. Lucia herself would be glad if you do that. She asked me to tell her simply what I think; I find the whole thing beautiful and appropriate, but I am submitting it to your better judgment, Reverend Father. In order that you may understand better my friend's intention, I am also attaching her letter, which you may read if you think fit; in that way you will come to know how she feels about it.

Enclosed is also a list of small practices that I wish to perform for the souls in Purgatory. I beg you to give me your permission together with the merit of obedience. For your information regarding my health: I am now keeping quite well. For a few days now I have not had any stomach ache, even,

so much so that my heart reproached me for having asked no permission to fast. I take this opportunity to send you also my failings in observing my method of life: I submit it to you so that you may know where I have failed.

Yesterday my pride had the better of me again; what is more, I did it during my Confession itself! When you, Reverend Father, asked me if I had let Lucia read the Paper on the Association of St Aloysius and I said that I hadn't, it passed through my mind that you would think how humble it is of me not to have mentioned the little good I have done but just confess my defects. Later on, the thought came back, and I at once felt I should tell you of it, but I put the thought aside and so I told you nothing about it, out of sheer pride.

The fact remains, however, that I have had no peace, nor could I set myself to do meditation before I had promised the Lord that I would make up for my fault by telling you about the thought at the first opportunity.

For charity's sake do not spare me your correction in this matter; it is true that it hurts my pride, but the Lord will give me the grace to know what can best set me free from this defect and, to be frank with you, I never pray so earnestly for you, Reverend Father, as when you reprove me for my pride because it makes me realize that God, through you, is doing an exquisite charity to my soul.

I have told you this so that you may not mind the reactions of my pride. It has made me anxious lest you should, as a result, be lenient with me now.

Do whatever you think best to rid me of this defect, and I will always take it as an exquisite kindness on your part.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer, while with grateful thanks and deep reverence I kiss your hands and declare myself to be

Lovere, 31 October 1827.

Your faithful Servant and Daughter in J. C.

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 80

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

Spiritual consolation resulting from a visit of hers - Oneness in spirit.

MAY OUR HEARTS BE EVER AFLAME WITH THE HOLY LOVE
OF JESUS AND MARY

My most gentle and beloved Sister
in the charity of Our Lord,

Your coming here has not been less joyous and beneficial to me than it has been to you. To be quite open with you, the previous two days I had been feeling so dejected that I could hardly restrain my tears. This was caused by my pride (I'm telling you this confidentially, as a Sister) on account of which I greatly feared that God had abandoned me and it seemed to me that I could at any moment fall into grave sins, which would have been a just punishment for my pride.

Your coming, the sweet conversation I had with you and above all the pact that out of charity you agreed to make with me, dispelled from my heart all gloomy imagining, and brought in their place a sweet hope of being assisted by God, loved and looked upon as his Daughter and Bride, and all was quiet and peaceful again.

Oh, how immensely I am indebted to my God!...At the very instant

when I felt as if He had abandoned me, I received his most exquisite mercies, and just when I thought I was detestable in his eyes, He made me understand that he has a most tender, loving compassion for me. ... My God! Grant that I may not be ungrateful for so many graces! ... Kindle in my heart an all consuming love for you and gratitude for your benefits!

To be more closely united, I suggest that once the devotional practice that we resolve to do in our monthly day of recollection is approved by our Confessor, to share it among ourselves one month each in turn, with the merit of obedience in carrying it out. This time I am enclosing it myself: my Confessor has seen it and attaches the merit of obedience for you as well. Next month you will do the same and ask the merit of obedience for me too. Please tell your Confessor that if the Lord gives him any particular inspiration for me, or if at times in assigning any practice to you he thinks that it could also be useful for me, ask him to command it to me and I will appreciate it and will always take it as an exquisite charity from him. In short, tell him to take me under his obedience since he has to consider me as another 'you'. Let him say to you whatever he has to say; in that way he has nothing to hesitate about. If you think I had better make the same request to my Confessor for you, I will do so.

My Confessor was only too glad to give me his permission to make this useful pact. He told me to do it as a perpetual pact but to renew it on the first day of every month in order to keep it ever fresh in mind.

He quite readily granted both of us the merit of obedience. I started it on All Saints day; you will do it as soon as you have read this letter.

I am sending you the method of life. Tell me quite frankly if there is anything that does not suit you, and we will put it right. I received your Paper. I thank you heartily for it, and I shall cherish it as a treasure. Everything in it seems to me most appealing and appropriate: it is the best I could have ever wished. For the time being it is in my Confessor's keeping; I have begged him on your behalf to tell me what he thinks of it. I will tell you that another time. I should also like you (in all confidence) to write down for me the method you follow regarding practices of penance and bodily mortification, and tell me which are your Patron Saints because I want to ask them to take special care of me as well. Goodbye, dearest. My earnest wish for you is that you be counted among the number of the greatest Saints and attain the heights of perfection.

Remember who has the pleasure to declare herself as.

P.S. Don Angelo sends you his wishes. I shall expect back the formula for the vow of poverty adjusted for your use. Next week I will send you the Novena for the Presentation of Mary at the Temple.

Lovere, 2 November 1827.

Your very faithful, loving Sister
BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 81

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

Fresh advice on her religious vocation.

HAIL JESUS AND MARY

My beloved Sister in Christ Jesus,

Most eagerly and gladly I read your letter, but as I went on reading, there came on me an uneasy feeling, the concern that I may have caused you some distress. I am sorry about that, yet I don't know what to say. To make clear affirmations on the choice of your state-in-life I would need a special light from Above, which would make me sure that it is God's will that you become a Nun. But I do not have that light, nor do I deserve to have it. And so it would not be prudent of me to prompt to you the decision that you should take. However I do think, and hope, that God may call you to the Religious life; your excellent dispositions deserve such a great grace and the graces that the Lord is showering on you so abundantly show that God wants to do great things in your life. But for the rest let God guide you as He pleases and to where he wills: you will see that you will everywhere find the means to become a Saint. I beg of you: be calm and rest assured on this matter.

Better still, place yourself, like a little child, in the loving arms of your dear Father and gentle Spouse, let Him alone look after you, and He will comfort you, as you will see. Be steadfastly faithful, love Him tenderly and be sure that you will soon know (clearly, I hope) the will of God concerning your vocation.

I heartily thank you for your comforting words. I acknowledge my indebtedness to you and to all my dear friends for their prayers, which have obtained for me tranquillity and peace, though I am still as bad as ever. I beg you to keep praying for me, for I am in ever-greater need of it. As to the Novena for the Presentation of Mary at the Temple, we shall follow the one you have already, dictated by Reverend Don Angelo. Please tell our dear Romelli sisters the same thing, and give them my warm wishes and thanks for the kind letter they sent to me; assure them that I shall soon write to them, too. Please send the letter enclosed to the Teacher Pierina, because it is urgent. My Parents, Camilla, our fellow members and Friends reciprocate your wishes. Mother Mistress Parpani is waiting for a letter from you; do write to her first opportunity you get.

Goodbye, dearly beloved. May the peace and comfort of the Lord be with you. I am

Love, 6 November 1827.

Your faithful and loving Sister in J. C.

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy Bride of Jesus

P.S. I wanted to write out a copy of the Novena to send it to the Sisters of Breno, but it is already late, and my head is dull and heavy with drowsiness, and so I have to have recourse to your kindness and ask you to make a copy and send it with Pierina's letter. You will thus make up for my shortcoming. Pardon me. Once again, goodbye.

Letter 82

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

Desire for holy friendship in Jesus and Mary.

MAY THE PEACE AND JOY OF THE LORD
BE EVER WITH YOU

My gentle and faithful Sister,

Love, 9 November 1827.

I am enclosing the Novena practices for the forthcoming Feast of Mary's Presentation at the Temple. You don't have to be concerned with our fellow members of Breno because I had asked Marianna Vertova to send it to them and by this time they will have received them. If there is anyone else there who, you feel, would be well-disposed to join in the Novena, I would also be happy if you let her do so. The more greatly Mary is honoured, the more copiously will she pour graces into your heart in return for honouring and revering Her. I am waiting for your letter. Meanwhile, I assure you that I constantly keep you in mind. With much confidence I tell Jesus of my wish that all the graces which in his infinite mercy he grants to me, he may equally grant to you as well: that he may make you a saint, in a word: that he may make you pleasing to his Heart. I am sure you do the same thing for me, and the need for it is great, you must know. Pray Jesus with all your heart to grant me a profound humility and along with it the opportunities

to practise it. Dear Sister, let us live at the feet of our Crucified Love: there we shall learn everything; there we shall be head over heels in love, there we shall become Saints. How happy we would be if, after being so closely united here on earth, we could die at the same moment and together go and see for the first time Jesus and Mary in Heaven! Jesus might do us even that grace, who knows!

My Father Confessor liked your Paper very much; everything in it was for him appropriate and of heavenly beauty, and so he keeps urging us to carry out Mary's commands and thus become worthy of her graces. Do pray to Mary that she may bestow all these favours on your poor Bortolamea as well, though she is most unworthy.

May your heart be wholly consumed by the holy love of Jesus. I am

Your grateful, most faithful Sister in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy Bride of Jesus

Letter 83

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

Gratitude and humility.

MAY THE PEACE AND JOY OF THE LORD
BE EVER WITH YOU

Most Gentle Sisters of mine,

Your letter brought me much comfort, and at the same time a sense of dismay, because it made me realize how far I am from the perfection that you think I have attained, and which I should truly have. Oh well! If I am poor, I shall have a better right to the merciful love of my Jesus. He is rich enough, and if he wants to, he can enrich me too, the least and most unworthy of his handmaids, but he must do everything through me Himself because even when he gives me some gift, all I do is spoiling it with my ugly defects, especially of pride. I do trust you have offered some prayer for me to the Lord; in fact, I have already felt the effect of it, because though I am still sinful, yet I am calm and cheerful. It is another token of the merciful love of the Lord to have friends and sisters of such worth and virtue, because of which the Lord turns a blind eye to my weaknesses and looks graciously on me for their sake and out of regard for them.

I am enclosing the practices for the forthcoming Novena. As usual, please pass it on to our dear Marianna, and give her my warm wishes. – To all three of you, Mary is granting an exceptional grace, which you will find here attached.

Give my sincere regards to Lady Angelina. Our fellow members of this town send you their best wishes, and with them also my Parents and Camilla. Pray for her who prides herself on being

Lovere, 23 November 1827.

Your ever-faithful Sister

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy handmaid of Jesus

To Excellent Ladies

Sisters LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

CIVIDATE.

Letter 84

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She mentions their spiritual pact - She asks her to pray for Don Bosio's preaching of the Missions and for special needs of her own.

THE PEACE OF THE LORD BE ALWAYS WITH YOU

My most gentle and beloved Sister,

I am sending you the practices for the Novena of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. I must tell you that this time I did not send it to Breno, because I have no time to write it nor the opportunity to send it. Please have the patience to make a copy of it and send it to our fellow members of Breno, because I trust you will find it easier to contact them.

I don't have to remind you of our pact, because I am sure you have it in mind, but during your Spiritual Exercises our Lord must have given you some special inspiration for me as well, and so I am simply asking you to tell me something about it.

I have presented your requests to my Spiritual Director; he gladly accepted them with the assurance that if the Lord

graciously gives him any inspiration in your regard, he will tell you about it and even command it to you. He told me to recommend holy humility very earnestly to you, because it will make you ever more pleasing and acceptable to your Spouse. One command he expressly gave you is to have the preaching of his Missions very much at heart; he wants you to pray very hard so that this holy work may give glory to God and do much spiritual good to people, in a word, that you consider it as your own task in order to render it quite perfect and pleasing to God. My duty will be that of keeping you informed of the exact date and time of the Mission days. It is a command that should mean much to you, because it amounts to no less than co-operating towards the eternal salvation of souls, of souls for whom our adorable Spouse shed his most precious Blood to the last drop, and laboured so hard.

I beg you to pray that the Lord may graciously let me know his holy will in a matter of great importance, and to give me also the strength and virtue to carry it out. I will tell you about it another time, because at the moment, since my Confessor is away, I do not have his permission. Meanwhile I beg you to do your part with God and Mary to obtain for me light and effective strength to do all that He wants from me.

I am waiting to have the practice for the coming month. Besides that, I should like you to send me also, if you don't mind, whatever you have in mind to do in Holy Advent in preparation for the coming of the Heavenly Infant.

All the fellow members of this town send you their warm wishes.

I heartily wish you holy perseverance, and every spiritual gift, so that you may attain to the Bliss of Heaven. May I remind you of the matter I wish you to present to your Confessor on my behalf, at the earliest opportunity.

I am, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Lovere, 25 November 1827.

Your grateful, loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy handmaid of Jesus

Letter 85

TO THE SAME

She thanks God and her friend for comforting help received - She asks her to convey her thanks also to her Confessor - Reflection on knowledge of self.

**MAY OUR HEARTS BE AFLAME
WITH THE HOLY LOVE OF BABY JESUS**

Most Gentle Sister,

I was overjoyed to have your letter, as also the beautiful practices for the current month: for this, I rely on your kind support to have from God the grace to carry them out in every detail. Oh, how good the Lord is! At this moment I am hard pressed by a cross that is weighing a bit heavily on me, and so, in order to cheer me up, Jesus sees to it that I have your letter, which is dearer and more refreshing than anything else in this world. May infinite thanks be rendered to Him for it. I am sorry I don't have more than two minutes free to spend with you just now; patience, I will do it another time, when I will also open my heart to you.

Thank you for the Holy Communion you offered for me. Please give a thousand thanks on my behalf to your Father Confessor for his kindness in receiving me under his obedience.

Give my humble respects to him and tell him I am waiting to see the effects of his charity towards my needy soul.

Thank God for the knowledge he gave you of yourself. This is an exceptional grace. St Augustine ceaselessly implored God to give him this grace, that is, to have a true notion of himself in order to humble himself, and to have a true notion of God in order to love him. And so, far from getting discouraged, thank God with all your heart, and be glad, because if you are poor, God is richness itself and He will enrich you as befits his nature and as a most faithful Spouse. For the rest, I beg you with all my heart to pray to Jesus that he may grant me to know my own poverty and keep it always in mind so as to learn once for all to look upon myself as I am and never have thoughts of pride, which make me so contemptible in God's eyes.

I admire your tact and prudence in omitting certain items in the method of life. To tell you the truth, when I understood this, I felt ashamed of myself, because I am not even concerned about it and on the other hand I am careless in everything. As a result I have reason to fear that all I am doing is loading myself with dry wood for the next world. But enough of this. ... Pray that God may grant me the grace to do all that he wants and expects from me, and that will make me happy too.

I render special thanks to Jesus and Mary, and also to you, for being admitted into the Sodality of the *Immaculate Conception*. I am eagerly looking forward to the day of starting, and if you don't mind, I should also like to know the names of members enrolled.

I am very sorry to hear that Lady Taboni is ill.

Unworthy though I am, I will pray the Lord for her recovery. Please convey to the Taboni sisters my warm regards, as also to all the other fellow members.

Please say a prayer for a person who needs a special recommendation to God.

Let us rejoice at the thought that Jesus is about to come into our heart. Let us hope that he will plant his Kingdom in it, and remain in it for ever. – I am, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

Love, 4 December 1827.

Your faithful, loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy Handmaid of Jesus

To Very Esteemed Miss

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 86

TO THE SAME

Hesitation on vow of perfection dispelled by obedience - She desires to have love for the Cross.

HAIL TO BABY JESUS AND HIS MOST BLESSED MOTHER

Dearly beloved Sister,

Thanks be to God for the letter you sent me. It has brought me immense joy and comfort. To tell you the truth, before I made the vow I had a thousand misgivings, fearing it could be prompted by pride, or by the devil and that as a result of it I would be simply burdening myself with new sins. On the other hand, I could not put aside all thought of it because it really seemed to me that God wanted me to make it; and so, to put an end to all my anxiety, I told my Confessor exactly how I felt; I also wrote out the formula of the vow and then left it to him to judge saying that I would be happy to do as he said. He readily gave his consent to everything but only for a fortnight for the time being; please God, I hope I shall be able to make it perpetually. – Your letter, the kind warnings you give me, reassure me. Yes, however great my weakness may

be, my Jesus will help me. He will keep me up, he will be my strength, and in Him I will find tranquillity and rest. I join you in your generous offering to Baby Jesus and on Christmas night let us meet close to Jesus, and our dear Mamma Mary will let us enter and show us where to stay.

In all confidence I'm telling you: the Lord is offering me some small cross; I am glad of it, but I fear I may not be able to bear it as I should.

On your part, please pray that he may grant me the grace to rejoice at such crosses, not only just now when they are very light and not amounting to much, but also in future, when they seem to loom much larger. On the 25th I will ask the practices for the month with obedience for them, and I will send them to you immediately. I am now enclosing some small practices to be done in common during the Octave of Christmas. Mother Parpani wanted to introduce another member, a very good girl named Francesca Rosa: I say this for your information. My Sister, together with all the other fellow members, sends you her warm wishes. Please give my wishes to all the members in your town.

May the holy love of Jesus burn brightly in our heart and consume it all. I am, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Love, 21 December 1827.

Your faithful, loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy handmaid of Jesus

Letter 87

TO THE SAME

She urges her to ask for a grace and to love Jesus.

MAY BABY JESUS SET THE HEART OF MY DEAR SISTER
AFIRE WITH HIS HOLY LOVE

Lovere, 24 December 1827.

I am enclosing the practices for next month. Both of us, as you will know, are granted the merit of obedience in everything. I have also been given the command to tell you on behalf of Rev. Don Bosio, my Superior and yours, that you should really pester Baby Jesus for your Parish Priest. You must never get tired of begging him till he has granted you the grace; in fact, I urge you to redouble your prayers and supplications, and make your friends redouble them as well till you have obtained the grace, telling Jesus quite plainly, that you expect this grace from him. – And so, go quite confidently to Baby Jesus: this time he will comfort you, I am sure. Tell him that the command you have received is not to go away from Him unless he grants your request. I join my poor prayers to yours. When, in a few minutes' time, we shall have the coming of our Redeemer, and I too will go and adore him in

the sacred Hut and join you in this Holy Place, I will earnestly implore him to grant that grace.

May the Child Jesus speak to you on my behalf. I will not tell you more than this: «Jesus loves us to the point of becoming a Baby for our sake, and is all the time crying out to us: Love me, love me». Let us then love him with all our heart, let us love him always; may love be the last breath we take. – I am putting down my pen to leave you only to find you in spirit at the Crib. With grateful thanks I am.

Your grateful, loving Sister in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy Handmaid of Jesus

P.S. If you think it would be a good idea to pass on the practices for the month to Pierina Giacomelli, do so. But if you prefer not, do as you think best. I will be equally happy.

Let us carry on with the practices for the Octave of Christmas till Epiphany. That is what my enthusiastic fellow members wish.

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONDI

BRENO.

YEAR 1828

Letter 88

TO THE SAME

Delay in responding to God's voice - Zeal for the salvation of a soul - to make reparation for offences that Jesus receives.

HAIL JESUS. DOWN WITH SIN, FOREVER

Most Gentle Sister in Jesus Christ,

Here you are, my dearest; I am sending you the practices you wish to have. I must confess to you that several times I heard the sweet voice of my gracious Jesus insisting for this thing, but for some time I paid no heed to it, perhaps for sheer laziness. All praise to him for overcoming it. You yourself have reawakened me. Regarding the project and rules for our Pious Union, I will be sending them to you soon; they have not yet been examined and corrected. Your devout intentions in this matter have all been approved of, even more largely, in fact, than what you spoke of, as you will see.

It made my heart ache to hear from you of the dampened ardour of a very dear sister of ours.

For love's sake, don't let her slip through your fingers. If she evades you, and you go and bring her back, beg her to

think it over, rouse her from her indolence, and if she is too far to be spoken to, write to her, but I say to you again: keep her safe for Jesus. I do trust that God will grant you this favour. Pray hard also for our Sodality. These days our Reverend Superior is conducting the Spiritual Exercises to it with great zeal and charity. Please pray that its fruits may be abundant and lasting. The forthcoming Novena for the Feast of the 'Purification' of Mary will be the same one we did last year. I don't know if it has the drawing of lots (on the various roles); I shall see. If it does, I will do my best to send it to you soon.

I should like to tell you so many things, but I have too little time, and I am too sleepy. I will do it next time, please God.

I warmly commend to you our poor Jesus. For goodness' sake let us keep Him company. Many persecute him, hate him, wrong him, and he is forced to flee; let us give him shelter in our heart, let us be faithful to him so that in our company he may not be unhappy.

Once again I commend to you the booklet on St Aloysius. Please do your best to let me have it soon.

May our hearts be all afire with the holy charity of our Lord. I am

Love, 9 January 1828.

Your poor Sister in J. C.
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 89

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She accuses herself of laziness and resistance to God's grace.

MAY THE CROSS OF OUR CRUCIFIED LOVE BE
THE INSEPARABLE COMPANION OF MY DEAR MARIANNA

Lovere, 18 January 1828.

I am enclosing the practices for the forthcoming Novena of Mary, with two conditions attached to it that will make you pay dearly for it. One of them is that you send a copy of it to Lucia and Giulia Romelli, and the other one is that you send it also to Breno and, if I can have it ready, a letter for the Teacher Angelina. If you don't find the letter, send her the Novena all the same: I earnestly request all this from you, because my laziness is too bad to find time to make another copy.

Dear Sister, what are you doing in view of Heaven? Ah! I am well aware that, worse for me, you are a continual reproof to my worthlessness, and that God may be using your example to condemn my meanness. I am at a loss what to say, I feel very sorry for it, I should like to mend my ways, but my evil passions keep me bound to this earth. My gentle Spouse Jesus makes use of every means to prevail over me, but I obstinately resist, and so in my utter confusion I commend myself to your kindness.

Pray that Jesus may grant me the strength to break all other chains, however subtle, that keep me far from Him so that I may freely fly to Him, and repose on His Sacred chest by conforming myself perfectly to his most Holy Will, in short, to make me wholly His. I desire this with all my heart, and it is what I hope to obtain through your Prayers.

I pray that you may have much fervour during the preached Missions you are about to have. Give my sincere regards to your respected Parents and to Romelli Sisters. On my part I convey to you the warm wishes of my Parents, of Camilla and of Bosio Sisters. Goodbye. I am

Your grateful, loving Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Miss MARIANNA VERTOVA
MALEGNO.

Letter 90

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She encourages her to advance in virtue.

MAY OUR CRUCIFIED LOVE BE EVER LOVED

Most Gentle Sister,

Love, 5 February 1828.

I was very glad to receive your letter, and very, very pleased with the practices for the current month. I could more rightly and with better reason say about myself what you say about yourself, for I am not at all satisfied with what I do.

However, I liked your suggestion very much, and that is exactly what I want to hold on to. And so, let us take heart and to make up for what we neglected last month let us do our best to do as much as we can this month. The practices are as beautiful and stimulating as they could ever be, the need is extremely great and Jesus expects much from us. Let our courage come from the Heart of Jesus and his wounds, and we can be sure of a full success.

As to your wish, I cannot meet it: our Superior said that he wants to think over it and that, please God, he will let me send you later on what you want.

I did not write to you earlier because God's will was against it; have patience.

Give a thousand wishes to our dear fellow members there. They are all very dear to me, and in their merits I place all my hope.

I cannot write more than this much, because I have no time. Let us become Saints; let us tread the path of suffering, the path of self-denial, and we can be sure of Heaven. I am

Your faithful Sister

BORTOLAMEA of JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 91

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She thanks God for their friendship - She urges them to love Jesus and make up for other people's sins.

SANCTIFYING GRACE BE WITH YOU ALWAYS,
MOST GENTLE SISTERS IN JESUS CHRIST

I am unable to express to you the intense delight your letter brought me, and at the same time the strong encouragement to all that is good. The kindness you have shown me on the 13th of last month is beyond any merit of mine, and I warmly thank you for it. You will be happy to know that on that day I really felt the effect of your fervent prayers. Oh! How much I owe my very good friends! May our loveable Spouse be thanked, for being pleased to associate his Bortolamea in close friendship with souls so dear to Him and so richly endowed with merit, so that she too may draw great profit from it. The promises you have made to Jesus on my behalf were the best and dearest you could have ever made. It is now up to me to carry them out most faithfully.

My weakness, my helplessness and wretchedness are very great, but Jesus, in whom I have placed all my hope, is

rich, strong and powerful. He will help me and keep me up; he will be my strength, and I fully, sweetly trust Him! – What sad times are these! ... Alas, (to think of) poor Jesus, forsaken by most of his creatures! ... What shall we do to comfort him? ... We can just love, love.

If we let this flame of love burn in our heart, we can be sure that our heart itself will suggest the means to comfort Jesus in his afflictions, to soothe his wounds with perfumed balm, to do good to so many who desperately indulge in the pleasures and revelry of Carnival time.

Above all, let us beg our loveable Spouse to unburden his righteous anger upon us, to make us suffer what he wishes, even the pains of Hell, to make reparation for so many faults, that He may look on them, His creatures, with a face, not of wrath, but of peace.

Jesus assures us during this time that everything we do to comfort and help our neighbour, He himself will accept as a balm for his wounds.

That is, in short, the best thing to practise during this time, that is the way in which to please our most gentle Spouse.

I wish to thank my dear Giulia for being always so courteous and so ready to bear with me; this time, however, I intend to take full advantage of her goodness, and as soon as possible I will send her the booklet mentioned.

You do me wrong in saying that I would be going against my will in coming to your house for a few days. I assure you that of all pleasant things the world could ever offer me, that would be the only one I would wish to have; but at the moment, it is

not God's will. I must have patience. Please God I will do as your heart, and mine, desire some other time. Our dear Sr. M. Teresa Marenzi wrote to me: she told me to make it a point to give you her warm wishes. I ask you, instead, to give my best wishes to Marianna and tell her that I have acquired her books; let her please send someone for them because I don't know of anyone to send them with.

I am sending your Corporals; I apologize for the delay.

I am keeping very well. These last few days I was a bit out of sorts, but now I feel quite fit. How I wish I could see you in Heaven, crowned with stars at the feet of our most gentle Mamma Mary! I am

Lovere, 8 February 1828.

Your faithful Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 92

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She thanks her for concern shown towards her in her illness - A new religious Institute and hopes for her own.

MAY OUR HEART BE CONSUMED BY THE SWEET LOVE OF JESUS

My most Gentle Sister,

I am delighted with this moment when I can enjoy conversing with my dearest Marianna. Of all the human pleasures, that of spending time with my dear friends and sisters is the only one that refreshes me. I have received your welcome letter. In accordance with your request, I am sending you the two books. They cost L. 3. Thank you very much for the love you bear me and have also shown me by inquiring about my health. These are all signs of true friendship, and since this binds us together with the bond of holy charity, I trust that it will never fail. I can now assure you that I am now very well, and that even the sickness I have had was not serious; it kept me in bed only on a few half-days, except for two whole days, when I could not get up at all.

I trust that our dear Romelli sisters have told you about some spiritual works of charity towards poor sinners that can

be done during these disastrous times, and so I need not say more about it. In her letter to me, our dear sister Marenzi gave me the charge of conveying you her best wishes. She has no words to express her relief at having her desire fulfilled. But believe me, the happiness she feels now is the fruit of a hard struggle she had to put up, with unabated courage, against all sorts of opposition, forced delay, disagreement, and in the end it almost seemed as if everything would come to nothing. But Jesus, who had the whole undertaking in his own hands, was pleased to bring about unexpected means through which the Institute could at last be started, and with five Companions she was vested in the religious habit under the name of Sr. Maria Teresa. How happy she must be! How supremely fortunate! What more can I say? Her exceptional goodness won for her that blessing from the Lord. And we, dear Marianna, what shall we do? Must we simply envy others their happy lot with no way of having our desires fulfilled? If that is what is pleasing to God, patience. But suppose our dear divine Spouse, never minding our demerits, really wants to make our dreams come true, how happy and fortunate we would be! Let us knock at the door of our Jesus and entreat him with our prayers, let us have full trust in his goodness, and then we can rest assured that sooner or later he will hear us.

Any booklet enclosed is meant for Giulia to transcribe: she is willing and glad to make acts of charity; so please pass it on to her with your warm recommendation.

Give my best wishes to Giulia and Lucia Romelli. I am very sorry that the Missions already announced are not going

to be held there, but God's hidden plans are unfathomable. He alone knows why, and by His will we must abide.

Dear Sisters, have patience. Kiss the left hand of God who strikes you, for very soon there will come the refreshing caresses of his right hand: the more bitter the actual afflictions are, the more delightful will be those that follow them.

I trust you will remember to commend your poor Bortolamea to God. Do it earnestly, for I have an extreme need of it.

May the most loving Jesus purify you of all imperfection however slight, so that you may be a whole-burnt offering most pleasing in His sight.

Lovere, 8 February 1828.

Your grateful, loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 93

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

Her inner struggle with divine grace, etc.

MAY THE MOST SACRED WOUNDS OF OUR BELOVED JESUS
BE OUR SWEET REFUGE AND SHELTER

Most Gentle Sister,

With all my heart I thank God who in His goodness grants me the sweet pleasure of spending some time, at least in writing, in holy conversation with you. This is the only pleasure that I really like, and may our gentle Jesus be blessed for giving it to me.

I am enclosing the practices for the coming month of March. Jesus furnishes us with the most valid means to make us not just Saints, but great Saints. May He grant that we draw benefit from them! ... How happy we shall be at the point of death!

All things pass away, and swiftly too. What remains is what we have done, good or bad. And yet (believe it or not), with so many graces the Lord grants me, so many inspirations He lets me have, so many good examples I see around me, I remain cold and bad. Today I have been worse than ever;

I have treated my dear Jesus very badly. Good for me that I have to do with a kind-hearted Father, who will not mind my demerits but is ever so merciful to me.

This very day, in fact, he has called me in most gentle ways. I say it to my own confusion: a competition seems to be going on between the two of us: I in offending him and he in loving me; I in straying from him and he in seeking me out again.

Oh the goodness of my God! ... and how long shall I turn a deaf ear to your voices? ... How long shall I resist your love? ... Break down, I beg you, this very minute, the chains that hold me bound to the world and to myself: draw me entirely to you; grant that I may be wholly yours.

To be frank with you, Sister dear: the Lord makes me understand what he wants from me, but in my obstinacy I cannot make up my mind to do his holy will.

Above all he reproves me for my lack of union with him; he wants me to cultivate a deep interior life and I myself realize how perfect and enlivened all my actions would be if they were prompted and sustained by this interior life. I earnestly beg you, good sister that you are, to ask for this grace on my behalf: ask it of him at once that he may hear you.

We are fellow travellers on our way to Jerusalem. Jesus goes ahead of us, bearing his Cross: may he graciously let his Handmaids share in such a precious treasure.

In this painful journey comfort Jesus on my behalf, because I am sure that all I do will only add to his pain: pray that a drop of the most precious Blood of Jesus may also be applied to my poor soul.

Give my regards to all the fellow members of your town: in particular my dear Giacomelli when, as usual, you will let her have the practices for the month; please tell her that I am mindful of the debt I owe her and hope to pay it soon. I would be glad to have some news of our dearly beloved Spadacini; I fear she may be ill.

Our Reverend Superior Don Angelo sends you his best regards and commends himself to your Prayer. Please do the same thing for me to our Superior there.

Goodbye, dearest. We shall meet again on Mt Calvary. God is making us wholly his own. I am

Lovere, 29 February 1828.

Your grateful, loving Sister
BORTOLAMEA of JESUS

Letter 94

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

Ardent wish for holiness and longing to be called Sister Maria Luigia of Jesus.

HAIL JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

I have received your last letter. It brought much joy to me. I am very sorry, though, that another letter of yours has got lost. In despatching letters make sure the bearer is reliable.

I am sending you the practices for the Novena: it is arranged in the form of a spiritual journey, as that of last year. As usual, please pass it on to our dear Romelli Sisters, and give them my warm wishes. It is my ardent desire to see in you a Saint, a great Saint. The immense love of Jesus calls for every effort we can make to please him. Oh how blessed we should be if the transparency of all that we do could be worthy of the loving kindness and good pleasure of our good God! Let us do our best in this and Heaven is ours.

I cannot write more than this, nor do I know what else to say. May the Crucified Lord speak to you instead;

I place you within His holy wounds, and beg you to remember me as well. You can be sure that I look forward to the day and hour when I can be named

Lovere, 13 March 1828.

SISTER MARIA LUIGIA OF JESUS

Your grateful, loving Sister

Kindly send the letter enclosed to its addressee as soon as possible.

To Esteemed Lady

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 95

TO MARIA CHIODI

She apologizes for the delay - She sends Novena practices in preparation for the Feast of the Annunciation - On Jesus Crucified.

PRAISE TO THE BELOVED JESUS CRUCIFIED

Dearest Sister,

Lovere, 14 March 1828.

This time I have really given you cause to know how negligent I can be with this delay in answering your letter, which I warmly appreciated. I beg your pardon and at the same time I am glad that you have thus an opportunity to know me just as I am.

I am sending you the forthcoming Novena for the Feast of the Annunciation. As you see, it is arranged in the form of a journey in accordance with the desire of several fellow members. If our dearly beloved Pierina is there, please let her have it too. Give her my warm wishes and tell her to excuse me for my delay in answering her kind letter, too. I am not writing to her just now because I don't know her whereabouts: whether she is there at Breno or somewhere else. Besides, I am anxious lest my letters be read by others, and so I hope she will understand.

However, assure her that I shall write to her personally as soon as possible and fulfil my obligation towards her.

May Jesus Crucified speak in your heart, and speak to you also for me. May His most Sacred Wounds set you afire with love and admit you into themselves. Oh! How blessed we shall be if we can comfort Jesus in his sorrow and in his terrible sufferings! Happy shall we be if Jesus will find delight in dwelling within our heart. Let us adorn our heart with virtue more and more, and Jesus will take full possession of it. Above all, let us cherish his Cross: It will take us right into the most gentle Heart of Jesus; it will save us. May the pierced Chest of Jesus be the retreat in which we seek shelter on this day, and live in it for ever. Remember me, too. I am

Your loving Sister in J. C.

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 96

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

Ardent love for Jesus - Advice on spiritual direction - Intimacy of their holy friendship.

MAY WE TAKE COMFORT IN THE PASSION OF JESUS CHRIST

Dearly beloved Sister,

I find myself at a loss how to start this letter. The love of Jesus Christ, his infinite suffering, our ingratitude to his boundless love: these are the main sentiments I should like to speak about with my most gentle Sister, in order to revive his love in my own heart and thus try to break the icy hardness in which it is immersed.

Let us be clear about this, my dear Sister and Friend: what else could our good God do to induce us to love Him? Is there perhaps anything we may desire that He left undone? And yet how poorly the love of our good God is returned! ... It is almost incredible! If the least of all men had done the tiniest of the good things that our God has done, how much love he would have drawn to himself! ... How is it that Jesus alone should be denied love in return for his love? Ah! Jesus dear. I

beg you, grant that we, Lucia and Bortolamea may love you very much, that they may love you as much as we can, to make up for how much our love was lacking in the past, for the love that poor sinners fail to return to you, and if it were possible, as much as you deserve. Ah! How blessed we would be if we could love a God who is so loveable! ... May this be pleasing to God, May God bring it about. ...

I have received your letter, which really meant much to me. To tell you the truth, your silence had made me anxious, giving rise to doubts, almost, that our friendship might be growing cold.

But I at once said to myself that on my part it will never wear away nor grow cool, and on the part of my dear Lucia, I would do her a real wrong if I had doubts about it, and so I reassured myself. Your presentiment regarding my health was not groundless.

I had a slight fever which forced me to stay in bed just a few half-days and two or three full days, but very soon I recovered my health without further damage which shows that the sickness was not of a serious sort.

I see that you are anxious about the advice given you regarding spiritual direction. I myself do not know what to say to you about it. You know quite well that I am keen on keeping to just one. It seems to me that having more than one spiritual director cannot be of much use because though all are saintly, yet they differ in their outlook and this diversity of approach cannot be very conducive to spiritual growth, I feel. However, it was done even by Men and Women Saints, and one must

therefore admit that if they did so, they must have found some good in it. In your case, if the approach and advice of the Priest you mentioned in your letter are in some measure contrary to the direction you are receiving from your Confessor, I think you had better forget about him, because if you have two priests guiding you in opposite directions you will not have much peace of mind. If, instead, you don't see any difference between the two and, as a matter of fact, it helps you to advance in the way of perfection, I would not advise you to abandon him. However, commend yourself to Mary, and She will help and reassure you.

I am enclosing the Novena practices planned as a journey, as you will see. Dear Sister, let us be glad, for Mary is pleased with our union and friendship. She herself has put us together on this spiritual journey. As a result she knits us together more closely in our pious union with new ties that are so much stronger inasmuch as all of them are spiritual and holy. I am very glad of it; it makes me extremely happy. On your part, have patience and bear with me. Despite my unworthiness the lot of crowning Mary fell on me. I expect you to take my place. Let us crown her together because the lot fell on me and you are united to me. Put into it as many virtues as you can find and practise in order to make up for my lack of them. As to the journey to Mt Calvary, I will tell you about it in another letter: that gives me the happy opportunity to write to you again. I am, in the name of the Lord

Love, 14 March 1828

Your ever-faithful Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

P.S. You don't have to send the paper with Novena practices to Breno because I have seen to it myself, and I hope they have received by this time. Once again, goodbye. Give a kiss for me to the Most Holy Wounds of Jesus. Don't send letters any more to the 'Ginnasio'¹; I fear there is some difficulty. Hand them instead to Dò Sisters: they will deliver them safely to me. Give them my warm wishes.

¹ **'Ginnasio'**: a 'boarding school' for boys, where Father Verzi was living.

Letter 97

TO MARIA CHIODI

About the Journey to Mt Calvary.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sister in Jesus Christ,

This time I had intended to write personally to our dear Pierina, but since I have received no letter from you to tell me her whereabouts, I am writing again to you and sending for both of you the “*Journey to Mt Calvary*”, which all of us are following, starting on Saturday evening, as you will come to know from it. – I wish you a true spirit of fervour for this journey so that you may give comfort to our loveable Jesus who is on his way to Calvary to lay his life for us.

I have no time to write any further, with better reason since you owe a letter to me this time. A thousand wishes to Pierina. See you again at the Upper Room from where we are setting out on our journey. I am

Forlì¹, 21 March 1828.

Your most loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Miss

MARIA CHIODI

ARTOGNE.

¹ Forlì (Italian city close to Loreto) is quoted as a halt of the Spiritual journey to Loreto (cf. *Scr II*, 216-218). Bartolomea was doing it in that time in preparation to the feast of Annunciation (cf. *Scr II*, 499-501).

Letter 98

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

The blessings of a holy friendship - Zeal for the salvation of souls.

HAIL TO CRUCIFIED LOVE AND OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Most Gentle Sister,

I was very glad to have your delightful letters. It rarely happens that they don't move me to tears of tenderness and intimate consolation. How precious a true friend is! ... Blessed be God who has knit my heart to yours so closely; the benefit I draw from it is truly great now and I do hope it will be ever more so as time goes by. Oh yes! Let us remain always united in the sweet Heart of Jesus; let us love him, make reparation and render thanks to him. I do trust in the supreme Goodness of God that we will be united for all eternity. Oh! What a supreme fortune!

Jesus is waiting for us, Sister dear. Jesus is calling us to comfort his afflicted Heart, to soothe his wounds smarting from so many offences. What shall we do to comfort Him? ... Ah! He himself teaches us how. Seek me souls, he says to us; make others love me, bring to me my dear creatures. And so, let us not spare ourselves any trouble; on the contrary,

let us pray to God for the grace to work and suffer much for the conversion of sinners, even if we had to endure the pains of hell for all eternity. If by that means we can send some soul to Heaven, I am sure that the flames of hell would change into shafts of charity and our pain would turn into joy. But I am unworthy, and so the Lord will give me no favours of that kind! Blessed are those who endure suffering for the Lord's sake! ... With regard to Holy Saturday, we over here are observing the devotions prescribed for the first Saturday of every month. But if you think you had better change anything, I would be equally happy. I am looking forward to meeting you and enjoying your company. I do trust that by God's grace I will be able to draw benefit from it. God be with you, dear! Remember me, too.

Lovere, 27 March 1828.

Your most loving Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 99

TO THE SAME

She is sorry about her hurried departure - A note covering Don Bosio's letter - She proposes practices of spiritual friendship - She mentions the Hospital.

GLORY AND HONOUR BE TO THE BLESSED TRINITY
AND LOVE TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF THE VIRGIN MARY

Most Gentle Sister,

I was overjoyed to have your letter, which I read over and over, but still greater was my happiness in talking with you, even if it was for very few minutes, and about this let me tell you frankly how I feel. I was a bit distressed when I saw that you were eager to take leave of me. You can be sure I do not think it is because of any ill feeling on your part: you must have had a good reason for it. I do in fact admire you for it and accept it: but at least the few minutes when you are free, I should like you to spend them with me and not stay so little with me as you did last time, because in that way you do me a great wrong. You will excuse me for speaking to you with such liberty, but you must know by now what makes me speak like this.

Shortly after reading your last letter, I had an opportunity to speak with our Reverend Superior and I gave him your message. On hearing of it he said he wanted to write to you personally and explain exactly what he thought of it.

And so I earnestly encouraged him to do so, assuring him that he would be doing a great kindness to you as well as an extremely great pleasure to me, and I thanked him heartily.

I am therefore enclosing his letter to you, and I want you really to receive it as coming straight from Heaven: whatever he says to you in it, receive it as an oracle from the Lord, for I trust that the Lord must have given him a special light in your regard.

I am enclosing the practices for the month of May. They were drawn up by Reverend Mother Parpani. Please pass them on to the Sisters of Breno because the circumstances I find myself in, leave me no time to do it myself.

With regard to the others, you mention, I don't know what to say to you; as you did in past years, you can do again this year. Everything will come off well, and Mary will be very pleased with it.

I am very glad you are starting the Spiritual Exercises tomorrow. I do hope the Lord will grant you the virtue to do them as perfectly as is required of you. I assure you I will be there with you in spirit. Though I cannot actually do them myself, I will join you by remaining recollected, attentive to what the Lord will say to me in my heart. Remember that we are one, and so during this time seek some special light for my poor soul as well. To establish our spiritual union still more firmly, I would suggest we do one thing from now on: when we speak to God, whether it be asking for some grace, offering him gifts, making acts of love, self-offering, supplication, etc., to speak always in the plural, thus keeping our union in mind and

at the same time praying to God to bless us all the time.

With that end in view, I would suggest one more thing: on the first day of the month let us offer our Holy Communion for each other, and pray to Jesus at that time to let you understand what I need, what he expects from me and what I should do to please Him, and to let me know what he wants from you, and later on, with all sincerity, freedom and charity we shall inform each other of the inspiration that we receive. If you like the idea and have the obedience to do it, we shall start on 1st May, and I am happy that the month consecrated to Mary should mark the start of our 'reunion'. I suppose you will say that I am all the time behaving like a poor *beggar*¹, each time having something to ask for my own advantage, but well, be patient with me and our gracious Jesus will reward you in a handsome manner.

If you too feel like it, I should like you to tell our Rev. Superior of Breno that I think the Lord must have inspired him to suggest something for my spiritual benefit. Please tell him that if he has any inspiration concerning me, to tell you of it most freely, because I desire it and as a matter of fact, I am waiting for it. Thank him heartily for all the kindness he shows towards me, and remind him to renew the kind pact made with me.

I nearly forgot to tell you what I was most anxious to say. I am very glad that you have the paper with my vow etc. because from it you can come to know of the enormous debt I owe the Lord.

¹ Original in Italian: '*pitocca*'

And so I beg of you: in all your letters remind me of my obligation, recommend it earnestly to me, admonish me, correct me, warn me, in a word: do whatever you think will make me more deeply committed in carrying out what I promised to the Lord. I urge you to do it, for charity's sake.

Let our hidden dwelling place be the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. There we shall learn to love him, there we shall learn to be Saints, there we shall stay till He be pleased to call us to Heaven.

Pay my humble respects to Fr. Dò and also to his sisters and Lady Marianna. Commend me warmly to their prayers.

Goodbye, my dear Sister. May God make me worthy to be always truly so, and not be totally undeserving of so high a favour. May the Blessed Virgin Mary receive us both under her sacred 'mantle' (protection). I am

P.S. I came to know through Fr. Bazzini that you wish to know a few things about the Hospital. Kindly tell me more exactly what you mean and then, under the instructions of Rev. Bosio I will write to you what you wish to know, at least if we here will have anything enlightening to pass on to you. In fact, our Hospital has still no Rule of its own. However, whatever I come to know I will tell you most gladly. Once again, goodbye.

Love, 23 April 1828.

Your ever-faithful Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 100

TO THE SAME

She praises her fellow members and considers herself least of all.

HAIL TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Beloved and Gentle Sister,

Love, 5 May 1828.

I am enclosing the assigning of practices as drawn by lots¹. I am not mentioning by name the persons known to you. I could not show them to our Rev. Superior as he is away.

Oh, Sister dear, it made me so happy to see my dear Sisters so fervent and virtuous! May a thousand thanks be given to my good Jesus who is so much at work in these souls in whom he finds his delight.

I was confused as, compared with them, I felt so cold and negligent; I was almost disheartened by it, but as I reflect on the goodness of our beloved Jesus I trust He will have compassion on me and help me.

¹ Paper on which she enumerated the devotional practices to be done in certain Novenas or Feasts, drawn by lots to her and to individual friends of hers.

I have again been disloyal to my gentle Jesus: at the crucial point I misused the blessed firewood of total self-abandonment in the arms of God instead of using it to keep alight the flame of love and keep it burning before Jesus in the Sacrament. For charity's sake, beg forgiveness from the Lord on my behalf for my mistake and pray that I may be always faithful to Him even in the midst of difficulties and obstacles, anxiety, coldness, boredom, etc. etc.

A thousand thanks to you and all your fellow members over there for the kindness and delicate attention you have shown towards me. All this shows how immensely kind-hearted you are.

Give to all of them my warm wishes.

May the gracious heart of our Jesus be the cosy nest where we dwell; there let us learn to love him, serve him and praise him as he deserves. Goodbye. I am, in the Lord,

Your grateful, loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Very Esteemed Miss

LUCIA CISMONTI

DARFO.

Letter 101

TO MARIA CHIODI

She urges her to advance in love for Jesus.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sister,

Lovere, 6 May 1828.

I am sorry I could not write to you earlier. Please don't mind, my dear! Your letter brought me much joy, all the more so because I can see from it that your heart is all afire with love for Jesus. You are truly fortunate, for you have chosen the best part that will never be taken away from you. Keep going, dear Maria, or rather, advance more speedily, these days that are so charged with love. In his love, not knowing what else to give us, Jesus gives us himself. What about us? What shall we give him? Ah! I have only misery and sinfulness. However, I hope to have great graces from Him. Yesterday I had the happiness of sending a few 'kisses' to our beloved Pierina, but I could not speak to her because I had no chance to do so. I hope I will write to her soon and assure her of the sincerity of my affection for her. Dear Maria, for charity's sake remember me in your Prayers. Goodbye. May the Sacred Heart be our 'nest'. I am, in the Name of Jesus Christ,

Your grateful, loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 102

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She sends her the practices for the Novena of St Aloysius etc.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY AND THE SPOTLESS ST ALOYSIUS

My most Gentle Sister,

The Lord has given me this unexpected - and all the more welcome - opportunity to send you the practices for the Novena of St Aloysius. I have no time to suggest anything else, because I am busy at school. May I remind you of the list of graces, and I too will send you ours. I am also waiting for the other paper you promised me on reflections before Holy Communion, but take your time over it. Give my wishes to your fellow members, particularly to Spadacini: thank her for the affectionate letter she sent me and tell her that I intended to write to her today but as I am short of time I will do so another time, in order to write at greater length.

Goodbye, dear Lucia. May the furnace of love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus be our real dwelling place. I am

Love, 9 May 1828.

Your grateful, loving Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady
LUCIA CISMONDI

BRENO.

Letter 103

TO THE SAME

About a vow of hers - She advises her to devote herself to the spiritual good of her neighbour - Sundays of St Aloysius - Her novitiate in the world.

HAIL TO JESUS AND OUR MOST GENTLE MAMMA MARY

My dearly beloved Sister,

I read and re-read your letter with extraordinary pleasure, and by the grace of God I do hope I shall draw benefit from it. The beautiful vow that you recommend to me so earnestly means much to me, I assure you, and I rely on my good Jesus for the grace to carry it out most faithfully. You are quite right in saying that it is not an oppressive chain but a ring, a bond that unites me closely to Him, and I am supremely happy about it. May it be pleasing to Him that I put no obstacle to the mercies that he wants to have on my poor soul.

On 1st May I offered my Holy Communion for you; I prayed the Lord to let me know what he expects from you, and he made me understand clearly through an inner sense of sweetness that his Cia¹ is very dear to him and that in her he finds full delight. if there is anything he particularly wishes from you, it is total self-abandonment to Him. He wants to work in

¹ *Cia is the nickname of Lucia.*

you as he pleases. He wants to make of you an instrument of his glory, and so, let Him guide you as he wishes.

With regard to the resolutions you are about to make, I must tell you quite frankly, about the first one, that is, about taking up many things: God wants you to prefer the common good to your own quiet, and so, instead of withdrawing, you should undertake even more. He is highly pleased that you work hard for your neighbour, and He himself will make up in some other way for the recollection that at times you have to interrupt in order to attend to your neighbour. And to blend this charity with humility, I think you would do well if every month you ask your Superior's kind permission to devote yourself in every way to the benefit of your neighbour. Once you have that permission, consider it as an exceptional favour that God grants us by giving us an opportunity to gain some merits for Heaven, and at the same time remain willing to drop everything if our Superior thinks we should do that.

With regard to your second resolution, I can see nothing wrong about it. However, if our Lord asks for anything, do according to the light that He gives you.

Tomorrow we are starting the Sundays of our dear Protector. I am quite confident that he is ready to grant us special graces. I was told to beg through him the grace to know and to carry out in all our actions, even the tiniest ones, only what is pleasing to God and that he be our Teacher by letting us know: this is pleasing to God; this other thing is not.

I was also given the command to start tomorrow my Novitiate in the world, and in that way to undertake religious life in order to be deserving of such a great grace.

I should like you to send me, at your convenience, the prayer of acceptance of death that is said after Holy Communion. I have no more time and so I leave you in the sweet Heart of Jesus, where you will pray also for your poor

Lovere, 10 May 1828.

Loving and grateful Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Miss
LUCIA CISMONTI
DARFO.

Letter 104

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

Her devotion towards St Aloysius.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY AND TO ST ALOYSIUS

My dearest Sister,

I know that you were very happy with my last letter, and that it gave you much joy. Thanks be to God for it; I want to see you happy, always.

Dear Marianna, God is visiting you with the cross in so many little ways. Your actual life-situation is not so pleasant, perhaps, but in his goodness Jesus will make it sweet for you, and He is helping you to become totally His.

I cannot conceal from you the joy that I feel today, the first Sunday dedicated to our dear Patron Saint Aloysius Gonzaga. I seem to see you all intent on honouring in a worthy manner this great saint, and on the other hand I seem to see the lovable Luigino all taken up with his devotees. I am sure that for each and everyone he will procure some special grace. I too am praying my dear Aloysius to have a thought for the least of his devotees and favour me with some particular grace, for I am in extreme need of it.

Dear Sister, I wish you could see the serious commitment of so many girls, devotees of St Aloysius: their great fervour, love and devotion. They really make me blush with shame. At the same time I am very happy that this incomparable Saint has true devotees.

Camilla sends you her warm wishes and wants to know when your "illustrious self" intends to come to Lovere, because she has an ardent desire to see you.

Please pay my respects to dear Bonardi and Mora. As to you, I leave you within the sweet Heart of Jesus, to fall head over heels in love with Him. Goodbye, dearest. The Novena for Pentecost is the same we had last year. Please let Mora Sisters know of it, too. I am

Lovere, 11 May 1828.

Your very loving Sister

SR. MARIA LUIGIA OF JESUS (to be in future)

Letter 105

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She gratefully accepts her friend's suggestions - She does Don Bosio a good turn - Persons assigned the role of crowing Mary - She promises a visit - She craves for crosses and desires to know how to make up for offences done to the Sacred Heart in her presence.

PRAISE TO THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY

My most gentle Sister and Friend,

How good our Jesus is! At this moment he has gladdened me with a letter from you. I had not expected it - which makes it even more welcome.

I can tell you quite sincerely that I am not overburdened at all; in fact, I am hardly doing anything. However, the advice you gave me to be guided in everything by the goodness of our Spouse is most welcome, and by the grace of God I want to do my best to put it into practice.

As to what you tell me about the Dò persons, I rejoice over the new enrolments. I am not quite sure if the others will be happy about increasing the number of members. However, I will do what I can to persuade the Superiors at least, and I trust they will be happy.

Our Superior grants you the merit of obedience in the act of total abandonment of yourself to God. In fact, he told me that he wanted to send you a note, but he has not yet given it to me. He wanted very much to write to you but he has too many engagements. Now he has left for the preached mission; he earnestly commends himself to your kind prayer for the good outcome of it.

The fortunate ones who will crown Mary¹ are: Don Bosio, Sr. Paola, Lucia Romelli and Monica Bosio. On the manner of doing it, Mother Parpani thinks it is better not to fix anything so as to leave each one free to do as their own fervour prompts them at the moment.

If you are at Darfo on Tuesday, I will come to you, please God. Otherwise, if you are at Breno, I will come Tuesday or Wednesday when I accompany my Mother in fetching home my sister Camilla, who is at Malegno at Marianna's house. I would very much prefer Darfo, but in any case I simply must pay you a visit.

As to the Novena for the Sacred Heart, we shall do the same as last year. Please inform the 'sisters' of Breno.

I wish you to do me a good turn. Ask our Lord to let you know what he wants us to do when we see or hear others commit sins, especially grave ones, in order to make reparation for the outrage against His Heart, and then tell me or write to me about it. I feel that God expects some reparation

¹ cf. footnote Letter n.64.

for so many offences, but I cannot think of anything. Pray him again and again, for I am sure he will grant you this grace. Obtain for me from God the grace to be constant. In case He wants to favour me with some cross, pray that He may not spare me...

I beg you to look after your health; your illness distressed me. I am eagerly waiting for the practices of the coming month and the new commands of our Mamma Mary. I will tell you many other things when I come and see you. Till then, goodbye.

I am, in the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Lovere, 29 May 1828.

Ever yours, BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS

Letter 106

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She approves of her decision to do the Spiritual Exercises on her own and sends her useful books for that purpose.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND THE SPOTLESS ALOYSIUS

Dearest Sister,

Love, 16 June 1828.

As always, your letter made me glad. I am very happy to see your warm fervour. The good decision you made to do the Spiritual Exercises on your own will greatly turn to your advantage. In such a special encounter with Him, Jesus will not deprive you of his grace nor of his light, and my prayerful wish is that you have both in abundance. I am enclosing two papers and a booklet, which will be of help to you, I hope. But you must send me back everything afterwards, so that in case of any need I may use them again. God be with you and bless you. Camilla is away in the countryside and so I could not pass on your message to her. On her behalf I thank you for the funeral Oration you sent. I am enclosing two disciplines handed me by Don Bosio, who is now at home. He said one is for you and the other to give it to Romelli Sisters for them to share. He left word that you have to make them give you back

the one Lucia had borrowed and send it to me, because he absolutely wants it back.

A thousand regards to your Parents in the name of all of us at home. – Goodbye, dear. My fervent wish for you is that the Lord may fill your heart to overflowing with his infinite blessings. I am, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Lady MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 107

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She sends them practices for a Novena, etc.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY AND THE LOVEABLE ALOYSIUS

Love, 21 June 1828.

I am enclosing the practices for the Novena. As usual, please let M. Vertova have them too. A short while ago I read Lucia's beautiful letter. I will do as she says. I can't write more just now. Wishing both of you the holiness and perfection of St. Aloysius.

I am

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Ladies

Sisters LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

CIVIDATE.

Letter 108

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She recommends a promising Seminarian - She sends a book for a young girl.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS

Lovere, 22 June 1828.

As I have had no news of you lately, I am sending just a couple of lines, availing myself of an opportunity to do so. If it is no trouble to you, give me the joy of receiving a few lines from you too. The bearer of this letter is a good, intelligent Seminarian who has a firm and earnest desire to dedicate his whole life and his studies to the good of his neighbour. With that end in view he is anxious to make the acquaintance of all persons who in some way could help him in such a beneficial task.

Kindly hand the book attached herewith to the girl living close to you, who had come to see me; tell her that she will find in the book all that she wanted me to tell her, and to make sure she carries out what it says. Give her my best wishes and ask her to commend me to the Lord.

I have no time to write more, and so I lovingly say goodbye, leaving you at the foot of the Cross where you can

become a Saint. Please let me know if you have received my last letter attached to which I had sent you various papers.

I am

Your poor Sister in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 109

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

Rules for the Sodality of St Aloysius - Her devotion to this Saint.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND THE SPOTLESS ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

There are two matters, both of which are pressing, which had slipped my mind today; I am writing this letter requesting you kindly to hear of them. I must keep my word with St Aloysius if I want him to be well-disposed and loyal to me. I must therefore let you know that Rev. Curate Fr. Fabiano is very eager to have the Rules for the Sodality of St Aloysius; he said he will make a copy of them for himself. He would like to have them by next Sunday because on that day he wishes to hold the first meeting and accept several promising girls. It is quite a long time that he has been anxious to have them, and now he seems to be displeased at all this time I am taking to give them to him. I suppose that you, Reverend Father, have no difficulty in letting him have them, and I am sure Mother Mistress Parpani must have corrected them perfectly well. It is my exceedingly-ardent desire to have St Aloysius honoured and his example imitated; and so I wish to inform you that Reverend Ballardini, the Romelli sisters and M. Vertova are also eager to have these Rules and introduce them in their

own town. I therefore beg you, Reverend Father, not to leave them without. Whatever Mother Mistress might say, I too want a copy of her book and I do hope you will have no objection, after satisfying all the persons I have mentioned to you.

You have presented me with a most valuable gift today: I am unable to tell you how happy I am to have it. I thank you with all my heart. I am most deeply grateful to you and to the person who sent it to you. I will keep this precious holy picture as a pledge and assurance of the designs that St Aloysius has over me and as a token of the agreements and promises that I myself have made to him: it has therefore a twofold significance for me. It makes me desire more firmly than ever to stop being the worthless Bortolamea and become Holy Aloysius. The examples of his life and his eminent virtues have an irresistible appeal to me. If I by myself am unable to imitate him, He will make me do it himself; in whatever I do, I will no longer think it is Bortolamea who is carrying it out, but Aloysius himself. Thus through his example, or rather, by letting Him do everything himself on my behalf, I trust I will become less unworthy of the mercies of my gracious Jesus who, though I do not deserve it at all, never stops lavishing his graces on me. Once again I beg you to keep up your kind concern for me. I know I am unworthy especially because I do not respond well to it, but Jesus will reward you all the same. I commend myself in a special way to your prayers. I count on the kind pact you made in my regard. I beg you, however, not to lump me together with all¹ those who commend themselves to your prayers: my countless needs call for your particular kindness.

¹ Original in Latin: *'In Commune Plurimorum'*.

The other thing I had forgotten was to ask you about the practices for next month; Lucia also wrote to me saying that she is waiting for them. I beg you to suggest more than one because last month, too, there were four. Both of us beg you to point out a special practice appropriate for this month every time we see or hear someone offending our dear Jesus. All this we request you most earnestly.

In conveying my sincere regards and profound esteem to the Reverend Secretary to the Bishop, tell him what you think appropriate to express my deep gratitude and happiness for what he did for St Aloysius. Both my gratitude and my happiness are beyond even what you might express in words. From now on it will not be possible for me to forget him in my prayer. May the Lord make of him, too, a perfect St Aloysius, as I heartily wish.

If by any chance you write to Rev. Fr. Angelini, please give him my best regards. Three or four times I received greetings from him, and answered none of them.

Let me end this letter, asking you to forgive me all the trouble I gave you and to grant me your holy blessing. I am, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Lovere, 27 June 1828.

Your grateful, faithful Servant and Daughter in J. C.

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 110

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She promotes proper behaviour in church - Vow of conformity to God's Will - New enrolments in their Pious Union.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND THE SPOTLESS ALOYSIUS

Most Gentle Sister,

Lovere, 1st August 1828.

I have received all your letters, and I appreciated every one of them; they served to chide me for my strange lack of fervour and commitment in the Lord's service. Please God, I hope I shall get over it, and you must be the means of my sanctification.

Today I offered my Holy Communion for you. I prayed our Divine Spouse to let me know what he wants from you. It seems to me he said that he is greatly offended and wronged by so much recklessness shown nowadays in irreverent behaviour, thoughtlessness and lack of reverence, and so this month he assigns to you the task of watching over his house, the Church; it will be your duty to prevent disorderly behaviour by fostering a sense of devotion, composure and reverence in the House of God. To make reparation for offences that you

cannot prevent, the Lord expects that your demeanour in Church as well as your inner attitude be one of angelic devotion. In that way you will be making up for offences committed by others and also showing the proper way of staying in the presence of God.

I am enclosing the results of the drawing of lots for the forthcoming Novena. I am very happy to be your partner in serving our dear Mamma Mary; in that way I trust that your virtue will make up for my lack of it. Every time we enter Mary's room we shall ask for both of us some special grace, especially that she may leave to us as her heritage: holy humility, charity, purity and long-suffering. I trust that our most gentle Mamma will do all that we expect from her. Besides our devotional practices I was recommended (and I tell you of it because I consider you my other self) great love, full trust, deep humility and to make under *pain of venial sin*¹ a vow of complete abandonment in God's hands, whatever predicament he may permit that I be in.

I wanted to write to Panzerini, but I have no time today. I shall do it another time. The persons you propose are all gladly accepted. However, he told me he wanted to reserve place for a few persons he wishes to enrol. Please give my regards to (Angela) Spadacini and tell her to assure Rev. Ventura da Vezza, when she writes to him, that our Rev. Superior was very happy to hear of his intention to join our Pious Union, and that he would very much like to have some

¹ *Original in Latin: 'sub levi'.*

news of his town and about the outcome of his preached Missions: this is something he is very eager to hear from him about. Fr. Dò wants to have a young girl of his town admitted. He did not mention her name, but she has been accepted. And so when I inform him of the girl's admission I will also send a copy of the practices of the Novena to him, once I have it ready. That means there will remain one copy less for you.

It is my fervent wish that throughout this month we keep imploring the Lord to grant us holy humility, because one single grain of pride will spoil the noblest actions, and I have so much of it. What shall I do? I do have trust in God ...

A thousand wishes to all the fellow members, especially the good Panserini. Goodbye, dear. See you again at 4 a.m. on Wednesday, at the 'bedside' of Our Lady. I am

Your poor, unworthy Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 111

TO THE SAME

She apologizes for her delay in writing.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY.

Dearly Beloved Sister,

22 August 1828.

I am enclosing the new assignments as drawn by lots for the forthcoming Novena of Mary. If it suits you it will be the same as last year's. I beg you to excuse my delay. I have received all your letters and I greatly appreciated every one of them. It would also be my ardent desire to 'stay' long with you, but just now I cannot. I hope I will be able to do so soon, when I shall also send you the letter of the good Lady Franzoni.

A thousand wishes to all our dear fellow members and a hundred thousand to the Pierinas; kindly tell the latter to excuse me for sending no reply to their letters. What about the five Sundays in preparation for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception? I should very much like to know.

I leave you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In His name I am,

Your poor Sister in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Miss

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 112

TO MARIA DÒ

She recommends the forwarding of a letter.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY

Dearest Sister,

23 August 1828.

Kindly send the letter enclosed to the addressee whose whereabouts I am not quite sure of, and the letter is very urgent.

I earnestly commend myself to your prayer. With warm wishes to you and sincere regards to your esteemed family, I hastily conclude. I am

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 113

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

One thing alone matters: to become saints.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY

My Dearest Sister,

Lovere, 24 August 1828.

I have received your letters, and I have also 'heard' your gentle reproaching. Bear with me if I am lazy; at times I am unable to write, for serious reasons, for I am always eager to spend time with you, and when I receive any letter from you, I feel particularly happy. I am very glad you did your Spiritual Exercises. God must have made His will known to you in all things and given you special light. I can picture you as you are now, more than ever His, and all-holy. It makes me so happy! Dear Sister, do cherish the gifts of the Lord, and continue to respond to Him, for this will help you attain perfect happiness. Every time I set myself to meditate on the short span of my life, the bliss of Heaven, the wretchedness of this world and the pains of Hell, there is aroused in my heart an intense desire to do my utmost to become a Saint, a great Saint.

In fact, what is mortification, self-denial, humiliation and hardship or anything else compared to Heaven that we gain by such means?... We would be really *Mad* not to become Saints, great Saints; but even madder it is of me who, with all the means that enable me to do much for Heaven, actually do very little, hardly anything, and in reality do the contrary. As for you, please don't do like me; keep up your high standard of virtuous living and if you can, do still better and better, and God will reward you as only he can do.

Kindly keep me in your Prayers.

You will be receiving from Lucia and Giulia Romelli the new allotment of assignments for the forthcoming Novena. I should like you to return to me as soon as possible the papers and the book I lent you for your Retreat.

I wish you the loftiest holiness together with a holy gladness of spirit.

Let me end by gladly professing to be, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ

Your poor Sister

Aspiring to be Sr. M. Luigia of Jesus - B.C.

Letter 114

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She urges her to spread devotion to Mary - She gives and invites advice on how to cultivate a spirit of devotion and the presence of God - She recommends to her care a member who is lacking in fervour - Rendezvous at the Cradle of Maria Bambina.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ALOYSIUS

Most Gentle Sister,

Love, 5 September 1828.

Infinite thanks be rendered to my Jesus who so graciously grants me this time to spend with you, dearly beloved Sister. You have every reason to complain of my delay in writing, but I trust you will be so good as to pardon me, because I know that my life-situation is known to you.

On Monday I offered my Holy Communion for you, and when I asked the Lord what He wanted from you, I seemed to have heard him say that He would be pleased if you did your utmost to spread devotion to Mary, his dear Mother, and as much as you can use all means to make others love her, serve her and honour her. That is the beautiful task you are assigned this month. Mary will reward you in a most handsome way, too! ... You are immensely fortunate. I beg you to say an *Agimus tibi gratias*, on my behalf, to thank God for all the

favours he is graciously bestowing on me these days. To tell you the truth, I am anxious; work has somewhat increased; this, added to my pampering ways and laziness, robs me of a great deal of time that I should be spending in holy Prayer: it makes my mind wander, dampens my fervour and drives Devotion out of me. In this dangerous state I am greatly in need of your kind help.

Please say a prayer for me and then feel free to tell me what God will suggest to you about it.

I am enclosing the devotional practices for this month: they are all meant as helps to acquire a true spirit of prayer and an abiding awareness of the presence of God.

With regard to this, too, I beg you to tell me the method you follow to remain in the presence of God even in the midst of distracting occupations, and the way you do your Holy Meditation.

I ask you this confidentially and I trust that you too, as a true sister, will not deny me such an exquisite charity. Do not disappoint me in my hope.

I am now enclosing a letter from the good Lady Franzoni. I really admire her noble heart and her personal endowments hold me spellbound. I wish and pray that God may keep her steadfastly so.

You want me to write to her. I should not like to say 'No' to you in anything, but I must say that I cannot be of any use to her. Besides, my duties leave me little or no time free, and since I don't know her personally I feel I may be lacking in respect to send her my scribbling.

However, if you send me an order to write to her, it will serve to overcome all my difficulties.

There is one thing I must tell you: I heard from some persons that the member (you) mentioned may be getting rather lukewarm. I could not believe it, and I said the same thing to the person who told me about her: that it could not be true. But with you I cannot keep quiet. Try to find out the truth in a discreet way, and do your best to provide a remedy for it if need be.

Dear Sister, for charity's sake, remember me. I am anxiously waiting for a letter from you. A thousand wishes to your fellow members; I commend myself to them all.

I shall wait for you at the Cradle of our dear Bambina. I had the obedience to ask from her two graces the day of her Feast: the first one is that of dying, at least, in a religious Institute, and the second one is that of a Holy spiritual Childhood. I trust with all my heart to be granted both graces. Pray Maria Bambina to be as liberal in granting graces to me as she is to you.

Goodbye, dear. May you be wholly consumed by the love of Jesus. I am

Your poor, unworthy Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 115

TO PIERINA VIELMI

She urges her to strive towards perfect love of Jesus.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY & ALOYSIUS

Dearest Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 19 September 1828.

I have had no news of you for a long time now, and it is longer still since I last wrote to you, beloved Pierina. I hope, or rather I am sure, that you are wholly God's own possession, and that your noble heart, so well founded on solid piety, must have made considerable progress by now. Oh! What a blessedness it is to serve the Lord! ... What a supreme happiness! ... How sweet is the yoke of the Lord, how light is the burden of his laws, and how loveable He himself is!

Blessed are those that love the Lord with a great love, and more blessed still are those that love Him with their whole being! In that manner our vale of tears is transformed into a delightful Paradise, and to a loving soul, afflictions, however great, are sweet and pleasant. Let us do our best, my dear, to love Jesus, to love Him greatly, to love him with our whole being. May his Holy Will be ours, may the virtues he taught us

by his own example be dear to us, and let us be eager to become Saints.

I am sending you the practices for the Novena of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. As usual, you will also inform Maria Chiodi. Not knowing whether you are at Breno or at Artogne, I am addressing the envelope to Maria Chiodi.

There is a big favour I must ask of you, that is: to offer a Holy Communion according to my intention and ask Maria Chiodi to do the same; let it be as soon as possible. – Wishing you from Heaven all the means by which you can become a Saint, a great Saint, I commend myself to your Prayer and sign off

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS (as I hope)

To Esteemed Lady

PIERINA VIELMI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 116

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She praises her humility - Value of this virtue - She is happy about her mother's recovery - She entrusts her with various tasks.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY & ALOYSIUS

Dearest Sister,

Love, 19 September 1828.

You really amazed me by your humility. As I read your letter I was greatly edified by this virtue that shone out of it. O holy humility, how precious and great you are in the eyes of God! ... How essential you are for acquiring true virtue! ... Yet how I flee from you! ... Do cherish this virtue, and you can be sure of attaining to Heaven ...

May infinite thanks be given to our good God who restored to health your esteemed Mother! Please give her, and all those at home, my sincere regards, along with those of my Parents and Camilla.

I am sending you the practices for the Novena. Please pass them on to Rizieri and to the dear Romelli Sisters. To the latter kindly deliver also the packet of holy pictures enclosed, which they had asked me to buy for them. If they are too many, let them send the rest to me, and I will keep them.

I must ask of you a great kindness, that is: to offer a Holy Communion for my intention, and tell Romelli sisters to do me the same kindness. I am asking it for charity's sake and so you cannot refuse.

I need to obtain a grace from the Lord, but as I am aware of my own unworthiness, I cannot hope to get it except through the prayers of souls pleasing to God. Give a thousand wishes to the Romellis, and tell them that I am very eager to have a letter from them.

I haven't received anything from Rev. Don Bosio yet. He has endless engagements, which leave him no time free to spend for your benefit and consolation.

Have patience.

I earnestly commend myself to your prayer. My needs are so great that I almost feel oppressed by them. Let us love Jesus and Mary; in their name I sign off

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS (as I hope)

To Esteemed Miss

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 117

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

Gifts received from God during her Spiritual Exercises and her poor response.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY & ST ALOYSIUS

My deeply-revered Superior,

Counting on your goodness of heart, I make bold to send you the papers I wrote during this Retreat so that you may know the results of my Spiritual Exercises. I don't add anything here since I did my best to write everything, with all sincerity, in these papers. I must just tell you that I feel deeply thankful to God, who has helped me in a special manner and has granted me many graces. He has also given me favourable circumstances by which I could remain quiet and not restless at all. I acknowledge it all from the goodness of God, from the assistance of Mary and of my Holy Advocates, and from the prayers of so many persons to whom I had commended myself. I am aware that if I had responded to all these graces, I would have had fruits a hundred times more plentiful. However, I am very happy, not about my misery but about the supreme goodness of God, and I do trust in Him that I am not the same as the one I was in the past.

I earnestly beg you to write down what you think about the points where I expressly ask it of you - but do it at your convenience.

I commend myself to your Prayer. I realize that I am in greater need of it than ever; the Lord expects great things from me, and if I do not respond well, God alone knows what will become of me.

I sincerely revere you, and as I kiss your hands I have the honour to be now and always

Lovere, 26 September 1828.

Your poor Servant and Daughter in J. C.

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS (as I hope)

Letter 118

TO REGINA TAERI

She is sorry to have missed a visit from her - She offers a gift - She asks for communion of spiritual goods.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND THE SPOTLESS ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Dear Madam

and Most Loveable Friend,

I had cherished the hope and great desire to meet you, express my affection for you and know you personally; but just when I thought my wish was about to come true, I was disappointed. I am very sorry.

It was not the Lord's will for me to have that joy, which would have been extremely great for me. I did not deserve it and so I had better have patience. However, I cannot help begging you most earnestly to avail yourself of some other opportunity that may offer itself to you, for I assure you it would be the greatest favour you could ever do me.

I know that your goodness of heart is boundless and so, relying on it I make bold to send you a little gift that you find attached. I beg you to accept it graciously as a token of the friendship that you offer me, and not to mind the excessive liberty that I take.

I should very much like to know if you have received another letter of mine, because I fear it might have been lost. I beg you for charity's sake to commend me to the Lord, and as my spiritual need is extremely great, I dare once more request you to accept me as a Sister in the immense good that you do. On my part I assure you that I intend to do my best not to let it be too much to your spiritual detriment. Please do it for charity's sake, however, and God will reward you.

I beg you kindly to pay my respects to Reverend Fr. Taeri, your brother. Please tell him to remember me some time at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

With profound respect, grateful love and esteem I have the honour to be

Lovere, 29 September 1828.

Your loving, ever-faithful Servant and Friend

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Esteemed Madam

REGINA TAERI

BRESCIA.

Letter 119

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She urges her to make amends for the lack of fervour Bartolomea herself and others have in receiving Holy Communion - Good fruit of her Spiritual Exercises.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY & ST ALOYSIUS

Dearest Sister,

Lovere, 6 October 1828.

Here are the Novena practices in preparation for the forthcoming Feast of the Purity of Mary. I wish you deep fervour so that you may do honour to Mary on my behalf as well, for she, the Mother of us all, deserves it most highly.

At the beginning of the month I offered my Holy Communion for you, and begged the Lord to let me know what he wishes to do in you. He seems to have told me that He wishes you to receive every Holy Communion with a new, intense fervour, with the special intention of making up for the coldness with which so many persons have recourse to Holy Communion, especially my own coldness, which is very great.

On my part, I am waiting for the result of your Holy Communion for me, and if you don't mind, I should like to know the result of last month's Communion as well, because it is more than a month since I last received any letter from you. What distresses me a little is the fear that as a punishment for

the way I have misused your friendship, the Lord may now have a mind to deprive me of it. I admit that I do deserve that punishment but I commend myself to your goodness of heart.

I should very much like to know what you think regarding the things I spoke to you about in the letter before the last. Dearest Lucia, I prayerfully wish for you from Heaven all the help you need to become a Saint. Thank you for the prayers you have offered for the good outcome of my Spiritual Exercises. The Lord has heard your prayers, because he has helped me in an extraordinary way. It is up to me now to improve, that is: the fruit that I should draw from the Retreat, and God alone knows how I shall do that. Goodbye, dear. God be with us always. I am

Your poor Sister in J. Christ
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 120

TO MARIA CHIODI

On service of God - Charity towards a sick fellow member.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Lovere, 18 October 1828.

I was very glad to have your letter. I do appreciate the affection you show me, but above all I like your warm fervour in God's service. I see that you realize how great is the Lord you serve and how deserving of love he is. Do serve him most steadfastly, bear patiently all the opposition you have to face, and you can be sure that Heaven is yours. Let the worldly say what they like, for our happiness in serving God is very great, and let us who are so fortunate benefit from so many graces and become Saints. Pray earnestly for me as well.

I am very sorry that our dear (Pierina) Vielmi is sick. Please go and see her on my behalf, comfort her in my name, give her my best regards, and make it a point to keep me informed of her health.

I trust you have the Novena of the Feast of All Saints, the one we had last year. I am sending you the list of the fresh

drawing of lots. In case you don't have the Novena practices, let me know, and I will send it to you without fail.

Wishing you an immense love for God along with a profound humility, that will make you pleasing to God, I am

Your poor Sister

BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

MARIA CHIODI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 121

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

About their Superior - Sentiments of a holy, tender friendship - What she has learnt concerning her friend in her Holy Communion - Suffrages for the faithful departed - Craving to share in the Cross of Jesus.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Lovere, 3 November 1828.

I have so many things to tell you that I am anxious lest I leave something out. Let me start by thanking you most heartily for so many warm wishes you have sent me. May the Lord reward you for your charity towards me. I assure you that I have received both of your letters. I answered the one before the last and enclosed in it the drawing of lots for the practices of the All Saints Novena, as I had made a point of sending it to you a few days ahead. I fear it may have been lost, because in your last letter you say that you were still without the list.

I already know that you had spoken to our Reverend Superior, and so you must have explained your doubts to him. However, I had informed him how you felt, in answer to which he said he had not in the least been annoyed or displeased

with you, and that in being silent he thought he was doing the best thing. In any case, he added that if he can help you in any way, he will certainly do it without any hesitation. Please say the same thing to Maria Dò and tell her, besides, that he told me he expects her soon, that is, within this week, because after that he will be away.

I was told that today or tomorrow you are expecting me at Darfo. I greatly appreciate your invitation: I thank you for it with all my heart and remain very much obliged to you. But it is not God's will that I accept the invitation, because other engagements I must attend to without fail and certain circumstances prevent me from going to Darfo. I am very sorry because I have an ardent desire to see you, all the more so on hearing that there is also the good Franzoni, whom I long to come to know personally and establish with her a close friendship; but perhaps just because he sees that I want it too much, God is not pleased to satisfy me. May equal thanks be given him. I had hoped to find time by today to write to Franzoni herself, but even in this I cannot please myself. Please give her my best regards; ask her to think of me as a loving Sister of hers and to be so kind as to commend me to God.

The forthcoming Novena of the Presentation will be the same as last year's. I trust you have a copy of it. It does not require lots to be drawn for carrying it out.

The day before I offered my Holy Communion for you. I cannot keep from you what the Lord seems to have made known to me: that is, that he is very pleased with you, that he

finds great delight in you. When I begged him to let me know if there is anything he wanted from you, I seem to have understood that the Lord has destined you to be among the greatest Saints, and that from you he expects a special response to his graces, so that you may in fact become a great Saint. – That is a supreme blessing, dear Lucia. The gracious Jesus wants you entirely for Himself. May he grant you all the graces (you need) and work the whole thing out in you. Do your best to become a great Saint: that is my ardent wish for you.

I am waiting for the practices for the current month, and the inspiration that the Lord must have given you for me. In this Octave of All Souls' Day, I have the obedience of uniting all my actions to the infinite merits of Jesus Christ and then apply them for the liberation of the Souls in Purgatory. And so, when the bell strikes the hour, I have to implore Jesus Christ, in his loving kindness and by the merits of his Blood, the liberation of a Soul of Purgatory; I have also in obedience the commitment to put aside, every day, a portion of my food and share it with the poor, offering this act in suffrage to those Souls, and to recite every day Nocturn and Lauds from the Office for the Dead. Please join me, because by myself I am no good, and besides, I have compassion on these poor Souls. I beg you to implore our Crucified Love, every day, to give me the graces I will need, and then to let me share a little in his Cross. The tranquillity and ease in which he is leaving me makes me fear that he may not be pleased with me; for the rest, I am sure he does not let me suffer because he sees that I would not be able to bear it. Ah! my dear Lucia, let us love Jesus, let us love

him with all our heart, let us love him always, and let us do our best to make others love him. One act of love of God is worth more than anything else.

I leave you at the feet of the Crucified Lord; there I will meet you again soon never to leave you any more. I am

Your poor Sister in Jesus Christ

BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS

Letter 122

TO REGINA TAERI

Protestations of friendship, humility, etc.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY & THE SPOTLESS GONZAGA

Respectable Madam

and Beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Your bounty, esteemed Madam, is exceedingly great. Your generosity and courtesy are beyond all telling and leave me quite confused. The excellent gift you favoured me with could not have been more precious, but I am at a loss as I have no means to repay you even in the smallest of ways. And so all I can do is to thank you from my heart and assure you that if you can graciously honour me by commanding me to do something for you, I would be extremely pleased, and remain deeply obliged.

Once again in this letter I feel the need to express my wish to meet you and embrace you. I am unworthy of your friendship, but as you, in your goodness of heart, are offering it to me, I appreciate it more than I could ever explain to you, and in Jesus Christ I do love you tenderly. I entreat you to favour me by sending me letters, which I will greatly appreciate, and to be at home with me as with a sister. When you call me 'Madam' I

feel it does not fit me at all. Drop it altogether: I ask it as a big gift, and I dare tell you that I expect from you that very gift.

There is one thing I would very much like to tell you. If I were sure that I would meet you soon, I would prefer to wait till then to express what I mean, but if that moment is far or uncertain, I will write to you about it in another letter, provided you too want me to.

Kindly commend me to the Lord. I greatly fear that my ingratitude may cut short the flow of graces that God is bestowing on me with such merciful love. I assure you that there is no other thought that affects me so much as the thought that I am in danger of forsaking God, and that unless he helps me in a very special way, my sinfulness will really lead me astray. For charity's sake pray, therefore, that God may grant me the grace to remain faithful to Him. That is my most ardent desire.

Dearly beloved in the Lord, I convey to you Don Bosio's best regards; on your part, pay my sincere respects to your Brother-Priest.

With deep respect and esteem, I am

Love, 4 November 1828.

Your grateful, loving Sister in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Esteemed Madama

REGINA TAERI

BRESCIA.

Letter 123

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

Remorse of conscience - She asks her friend to pray for Don Bosio's preaching during the 'mission' days.

HAIL TO THE HEAVENLY SPOUSE
AND HIS IMMACULATE MOTHER

My Dearest Sister,

Love, 9 November 1828.

I read your most welcome letter, and was overjoyed by it. The very thought of you, dearest Marianna, makes me glad; at the same time, your virtue is always a severe reproach to my lack of it. For goodness sake pray that God may free me from my sorry plight. I do want to love God, to serve him faithfully, to be entirely his, to remain loyal to him at all times, but of what avail is all this to me when I am bashful, stifling the graces of my God? I don't want to give in to sadness, but I can't help it. My failure to do what God expects from me is pricking my conscience all the time. Alas, dear Marianna, can it be that I don't love God who is worthy of infinite love? But that is certainly the case. Please entreat him for me yourself, that he may soften the hardness of my heart and grant me the grace to love him truly.

Reverend Don Bosio sends his best wishes to you and begs you to unite all the good you do to his own apostolic labour, and earnestly pray God for the conversion of those souls to whom he will proclaim the Word of God. On his part he assures you that he will let you share, as a Sister, in the fruit derived from it. He told me to make it a point to tell you, so please do it with all your fervour. The forthcoming Novena of the Presentation of Mary will be the same as last year's: it does not entail drawing of lots. For other coming Novenas, we shall similarly repeat those of the past. If I don't write to you, it means that the Novena will not change, and you can inform the fellow members who live close by.

A thousand wishes to our dear Romelli Sisters; they hinted at paying me a visit and I was looking forward to it, but that is as far as they got, for they never carried out their intention.

Give my regards and respects to your esteemed Parents. Sincerely now and always

Your poor Sister and Friend
BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS

Letter 124

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

About the Novena of the Immaculate Conception - On the love of Jesus.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY, AND ST ALOYSIUS WITH THEM

Most Gentle and Beloved Sister,

Love, 21 November 1828.

Rev. Fr. Dò told me, today, that you are expecting from me the Novena of the Immaculate Conception. In my last letter, which I sent you through Lady Zattini, I had mentioned that in agreement with Giacomelli's proposal, we members of the Rule of Mary Immaculate should follow the novena prescribed by it, and for the others, I said, to give them that one or the one we did last year.

I have received no reply to that letter so far, because Fr. Dò forgot to bring it to me, and so I have no way of knowing which one you prefer, supposing that you too have a copy of both novenas. I hope your letter will be delivered to me tomorrow; I will then know what you are asking for, and will do the needful.

I will also ask our Rev. Superior to hand me your letter and will enclose it with my own reply.

Regarding the practices for Advent, he promised to give it to me soon, and I will do my best to send it to you immediately.

You are quite right in commending me the sweet love of Jesus. Very late have I come to know him, and still more late have I begun to love him; even now I fail to love him. For charity's sake, dear Lucia, if you love me, implore God to grant me a share in his love. Our good God is most deserving of our love; men everywhere love him too little. Let us, at least, love him since we have the supreme fortune of knowing him.

Today I joined you in consecrating myself entirely to Mary, so that She may take us to Jesus.

Your beautiful qualities will have made up for my defects. I am

Your poor Sister

BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS

P.S. Here is what you requested. Excuse the wretched way it has been done. I will write the letter you spoke of as soon as I can. In great haste, goodbye.

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 125

TO PIERINA VIELMI

She congratulates her friend on graces received, and asks for the help of her prayer.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

AND THE GREAT SAINT ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Dearest Sister,

Lovere, 21 November 1828.

I have received your lovely letter. To be quite frank with you, your warm fervour made me feel envious. The Lord is granting you exceptional graces: go on responding well to them. Your Spouse expects great things from you; he wants you to be great in virtue, he wants you to be a Saint. Be faithful to him, for God deserves it, and you yourself will be supremely happy.

I beg you to be mindful of me in your Prayer. I realize that God wants something from me; he gently calls me to accept his sweet yoke, but up to now I have always offered resistance to him. However, I have resolved not to displease him any more; on the contrary, I resolve to follow His merciful designs over me and to attain to that end I earnestly beg you to assist me with your Prayer.

As to the forthcoming Novena of the Immaculate Conception: If you are enrolled and have the Rules of Mary Immaculate, do

the Novena prescribed there, while those not enrolled in that Sodality will do the Novena we did last year.

Give my warm wishes to our dear M. Chiodi; tell her that I am waiting for her letter. I wish you an excellent outcome and abundant fruits of your Spiritual Exercises.

Goodbye, dearest. Let us love God; let us love him with all our heart. Let us love him always: that will also make us happy.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

PIERINA VIELMI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 126

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She gives her the charge to lead the Pious Union meeting on her behalf.

Dearest Friend,

Love, 29 November 1828.

I had planned to come to your place on Thursday, but various circumstances prevented me from doing as I wished. However, as the Novena of the Immaculate Conception of Mary starts today, I feel it is my duty to send a copy of it to you, and ask you to read it out and recommend it to all our dear fellow members. Next Thursday I hope I will be able to come and conduct the meeting myself. Meanwhile, I beg you to substitute for me, putting new life and fervour into the hearts of our Friends. Greet them warmly in my name as well.

I wish you all the best, especially God's grace, which is the greatest treasure there can ever be in Heaven and on earth. Commend me to God. Yours truly

Your poor friend and sister in J. Christ

BORTOLOMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 127

TO THE SAME

Condolence in occasion of the death of a member - Their Pious Union foreseen 40 years earlier - What she thought about her friend during Holy Communion - Don Bosio commends his Holy preached Mission.

HAIL TO JESUS & MARY

Most Gentle Sister,

I have received your letter which, as always, is most welcome. I was grieved to hear of the death of such an exemplar of every virtue, of such a worthy fellow member. On the other hand it is equally consoling to think that we have acquired in her an Advocate in Heaven, for I am sure she will go on praying for our Pious Union. I quite agree with your suggestion regarding the replacement for the Departed 'Sister'. I will propose the name of the one you mentioned to our Superior, and if he agrees, as I am sure he will, I shall write to you. I cannot keep from you; in fact I must tell you for the consolation of both of us, that the Lord has great designs over our holy Sodality.

On hearing about the aims and purposes of our Union, Rev. Count Tomini was amazed;

he said to Mother Parpani: «I assure you that this good initiative is in accordance with God's will. It was foretold forty years ago in these terms: a time will come, it was said, when in the Church of the Lord there will be a Pious Union composed of 12 Religious (priests) representing the Apostles and 72 Disciples, a Union that will give glory to God and do much good to the Church». Don Tomini said that the initiative had been attempted, opposed and examined but had never come off successfully, and so everybody said it was a sign that God's time for it had not yet come. He added that the splendid fruit coming out of it will be seen later on because at the moment he cannot say anything about it. However, he encouraged those concerned to have at heart an undertaking so pleasing to God. He himself, he said, accounted himself fortunate to have joined it. I suppose it will make you happy to know it because I do not doubt that the person who spoke so highly of it is most reliable. My fellow members here are very fervent. Please tell other friends there about it, too; it will give them new courage and fervour.

On the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of Mary let us make it a point to write down something to give form to our Union. Pray and make others pray to Jesus and Mary to enlighten us in this regard.

Yesterday I offered my holy Communion for you. I begged Our Lord to graciously let me know what he expects from you. I felt that the more lowly you consider yourself, the more delighted he will be with you, and that he really wants to dwell in your heart as in a crib, and so he wishes you to

prepare it pure, lovely and warm with love of God, for him to dwell always with you. I will also be eagerly waiting for what your holy Communion has to say to me.

Our Reverend Superior, who is at the moment preaching a Mission, sends his best regards to you and earnestly reminds you to pray, and make others pray, that his Missionary work may bear much fruit; at the same time he assures you that you and all those who are praying will be made to partake of the fruit of his labour, by God's own grace.

I am enclosing the program for Advent, which is meant only for you and for me. Later on, I will send you another one, which you will kindly pass on to fellow members, along with the assignment, to each one as drawn by lot, for the forthcoming Christmas Novena; as to the practices themselves, we shall do the same as those of last year.

I do wish to see you crucified with Jesus Christ, provided you pray that on the Cross I too may always live and die. See you at the Stable of Bethlehem. Goodbye, dearest. I am

Lovere, 2 December 1828.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS

Letter 128

TO ORTENSIA PETENZI

She sends the Rules for the Sodality of Our Lady of Sorrows - In observing them, she recommends dependence on her Confessor.

Dearest Friend,

Here you are, dear Friend of mine: most gladly I meet your wish and send you the rules of the Sodality of Our Lady of Sorrows. It will be your duty to put it into effect without delay, but first of all show it to your Confessor.

I am very sorry I cannot 'stay' with you any longer because I am hard pressed for time. But I cannot fail to recommend it greatly to you. Do your utmost for the sake of Jesus and Mary, and one day you will be rewarded for it.

Give my regards to Miss Catterina Fiorini, and my warm wishes to all those at the house of my Wet nurse.

God be with you, dearest. Commend me to God. Do give me some news of the Sodality of Our Lady of Sorrows in due time. I am

Lovere, 9 December 1828.

Your loving and grateful Friend

BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS CAPITANIO

To Esteemed Lady

ORTENSIA PETENZI

GIANICO.

Letter 129

TO BARTOLOMEA TOMASI

Thanks for a gift.

Dear Madam,

Your courtesy, Madam, has quite overwhelmed me and left me confused. The fine, valuable gift you have graciously honoured me with is most welcome and I do appreciate it very highly. The only thing I am sorry about is that I have nothing to offer you in return, all the more so because I am aware that I do not deserve the gift at all. Your goodness of heart, which has been so lavish with me, will be its own reward. I assure you I will always feel deeply obliged to your kindness. If there is any opportunity of expressing my gratitude to you, I would be very glad to avail myself of it. Meanwhile, as my duty itself dictates, I will redouble my attention and care for your beloved daughters, and to the best of my limited ability I will try to be up to your expectations concerning their education.

My Parents pay their respects to you, dear Madam, and join me in thanking you for the gift above mentioned.

With prayerful wishes of Heaven's gift of happiness, and assuring you of my sincere esteem and grateful thanks, I have the honour to be

Lovere, 16 December 1828.

Your faithful Servant
BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Esteemed Madam

BORTOLAMEA TOMASI Née BAZZINI

LOVERE.

Letter 130

TO VOLUNNIA BANZOLINI

She rejoices over her friend's spiritual progress, and comforts her in her present state of desolation - Rendering of thanks.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

I was extremely glad to have your letter. I cherish your friendship more than any other thing, and I thank you for granting it so kindly though I do not deserve it.

I am overjoyed, and I congratulate you on the beautiful graces the Lord is granting you. Your humility (permit me to say it) has filled me with confusion, as it made me see how far behind you I am. At the same time it gladdened my heart as I saw how solidly you are erecting the edifice of your piety over that fundamental virtue.

The Holy Christmas celebrations are over. Baby Jesus must have showered on your soul his precious graces; I am sure he has also chosen your heart for his dwelling place. If you did not have consolation, it does not matter. The Child Jesus who as soon as he is born begins to suffer, has let you,

too, taste the hard bread that he had to eat throughout his life. Don't worry over that. On the contrary rejoice that Jesus is making you worthy to suffer for his sake. You must know that among the graces I asked from Baby Jesus one is exactly that he may day by day give us a share of his Cross. To me he gives nothing to suffer because I am unworthy, and I would make poor use of it. To you, instead, he offers that gift because you are dear and faithful to him. Accept it gladly, and be happy. Oh! How sweet it is to serve the Lord even when he hits us hard!

I am sorry I have to cut short my conversation with you. My eyes are heavy with drowsiness and night has set in. So I must end with the words: «Let us love God, let us love him with all our heart, let us love him immensely, let us love him always, and make everybody love him». I am

Lovere, 26 December 1828.

Your loving and faithful Friend and Sister

BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS, CAPIT.

P.S. I am at last sending you back your silk cloth for the embroidery work. I thank you with all my heart. I wish I could return such a big favour in some way. I am truly grateful and highly obliged.

I hope I shall soon be able to give you the Holy Communion booklet you had asked me for. Forgive me for being so slow. Once again I give you my sincere regards, leaving you within the sweet Hearts of Jesus, Joseph and Mary.

B. C.

To Esteemed Lady

VOLUNNIA BANZOLINI

LOVERE.

Letter 131

TO REGINA TAERI

Greetings and wishes - News on the Pious Union consecrated to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary with invitation to join it.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Most Gentle Friend and Beloved Sister
in Jesus Christ,

You will not mind the familiarity I use with you, who accept me as a friend. I blush at having to admit that I exceed all the limits set by duty and good manners. But in your goodness of heart you will bear with my boldness which, I can assure you, comes from my sincere affection for you.

I am unable to tell you how grateful I am for your kind letter. I read it over and over again, and every time with a new pleasure. I heartily thank God for uniting me to you even before coming to know you personally, and since what unites us is the bond of charity, I trust that it will never be loosened, however unworthy of it I may be.

I was very sorry to know that you were ill; I do hope that you are now feeling better: I wish it most heartily and pray that Heaven may restore your health and keep you well permanently.

I was delighted to hear that you wish me to explain what I merely hinted at in my last letter, and I am only too glad to do so. You may have heard about a Holy Association of very good girls who encourage one another to do good.

Fortunately, though unworthily, I am one of them. From what we can tell, the Lord has great designs over this Pious Union.

The persons who form part of it are meant to make up an Apostolic Body. Hence it cannot have more than eighty-four members: twelve Priests who represent the twelve Apostles (we need only one to make up that number), and 72 Virgins who represent the 72 Disciples of Jesus Christ.

All these persons love one another and consider themselves Brothers and Sisters in the Lord. The good that each one does is meant to be shared by all the members of this devout Union. So too in Novenas and in certain times of particular devotion, all together observe some practices of piety, trusting in God's good pleasure.

There are also a few little rules to be kept by those admitted into this Sodality. Its full name is: «Devout Union consecrated to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary».

I assure you that all men and women members, with the exception of the one writing to you, are persons of a profound piety and very dear to God.

They come from different country-towns, as you will see from the list of their names that I shall be sending you.

There are other interesting things I could tell you about which you would be very glad to hear, but rather than be too lengthy I

shall keep them for the happy moment when, God willing, we shall welcome you in our midst.

May I add that as we are still three or four Members short, I should like you too to be enrolled in this Pious Union; I desire it most sincerely, and with all my fellow members will feel deeply enriched if you accept the invitation. Reverend Fr. Angelo Bosio, who is also a member of this Sodality, greatly desires that you be admitted into this Devout Association. I shall therefore be eagerly looking forward to your reply, and it will be my privilege to supply you with all the material relating to this Pious Union. I need only mention in passing that all that I have told you is confidential, and that you are kindly requested not to let anyone else know of it. Excuse the length of this letter, which may have tired you.

I wish and pray that the Child Jesus may consume us all with his Holy love, and make us totally His own for ever.

So long, then. See you at the feet of the Holy Child Jesus. There I will surely find my dear Sister and Friend and in this encounter and at all times I beg you to remember me as I profess the privilege of being

Lovere, 26 December 1828.

Your loving and faithful Friend and Sister

BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS