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YEAR 1831

Letter 210

TO LUCIA SIGISMONDI

Longing for Heaven and conformity to God's Will.

Here is another reminder from me: the drawing-of-lots list for Carnival practices, which remain the same as over the last years. I appreciated your letter very much. Thank you for thinking of me, unworthy though I am. For charity's sake remember my poor soul frequently; at the feet of our Crucified Lord, entreat Him to carry out in me His holy Will. Please say some prayers, and ask others to do the same, for various intentions that are very important. When will it be, dear Lucia, that we be entirely, wholly of God! ... When will it come about that our heart will be afire purely with his holy Love! ... When will it be that, leaving behind this deceptive world, we can enjoy, in the gardens of the Lord, the peace and quiet of the righteous! ...

May the Lord work out his holy Will in us and lead us, too, by the path that is most pleasing to Him. May he make us

worthy of loving him, and that would suffice.

As to your letter addressed to Rev. Fathers Passi, I posted it at once. After that, I haven't heard anything else.

Goodbye, dearest. Next time we meet will be in Heaven, perhaps! ... May God make us worthy of it. May Jesus be loved for ever! Goodbye.

2 January 1831.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Esteemed Lady

LUCIA SIGISMONDI

To be delivered in her hands

DARFO.

Letter 211

TO VOLUNNIA BANZOLINI

She thanks her for gifts sent to her - She comforts her in her spiritual desolation.

PRAISE TO JESUS, JESUS, JESUS FOR EVER.

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 5 January 1831.

I have not yet thanked you as I should have done for the lovely cabbages you sent me, the designs you lent me and the thousand other kind deeds you have lavished on me. I am deeply indebted to you and I am profoundly grateful to you. Forgive my delay in fulfilling this duty of thanking you. I beg you not to overwhelm me any more with so much kindness that I know I don't deserve at all. Only be so kind as to keep up your friendship with me, for that in itself is exceedingly dear and precious to me.

My heart fills with profound compassion as I think of your sorrow and distress, and I wish I could in some way be of comfort to you. When God withdraws from a soul all spiritual consolation and delight, it cannot help feeling deeply troubled and dismayed: all it can still do, however, is to love the Supreme Good all the more. Be comforted, dearest Sister;

God wishes you to give him proof of your fidelity and steadfastness and of your great love for him. That is why he has hidden his face from you; he has let you experience the (limited) worth of creatures and of things of this world so that you may more generously cling to his heart. He is eagerly waiting for you, for he loves you immensely and takes delight in you, and he has chosen you as a most faithful Bride of His. Have courage, dearly beloved, this is the right time to offer pleasing sacrificial offerings, now is the time for you to be most generous. Don't fret: Jesus is in you, Jesus is with you, Jesus is at work for you, even though you are not aware of it. Abandon yourself lovingly in His hands and have no fear. Lovingly kiss the left hand of Jesus who is so wisely hitting hard at you, and tell him that you want to love him immensely, that you want to become a great Saint, that trials endured for his sake are sweet to you, and that you have no other desire than that of doing his Holy Will. Thank him heartily for this chance to humble your self-love but that you want instead so much more love of God. Have no fear, my dear Sister, your heart will soon have calmer times. Remember, though, that God wants you to be a Nun, soon. «Be generous». Oh! What a happiness! ... Pray God to give you the courage to do it.

Goodbye. *Remember me*¹.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

¹ Original in Latin: '*Memento mei*'.

Letter 212

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

Trust in God's merciful love - At a loss in discerning on her vocation.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND THE SPOTLESS ALOYSIUS

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

I am enclosing a paper herewith; kindly correct it as the Lord inspires you and then send it back to me so that I may do something in this time of revelry. I should tell you something about my soul, but to tell you the truth, I don't know what to say to you. I would like to hope to be in the hands of the Lord. He knows that I am in need of everything, that the load I carry is made of frailty and sinfulness and that I am greatly in need of his merciful love. I trust He will have mercy on me, because he is my most beloved Father, and so I trust in Him with a tranquil heart.

During the Christmas Novena I was so strongly urged to run away and retire in some Convent that I don't know how I managed to resist it. But on Christmas Day itself, when I had planned to tell you, Rev. Father, what I had in mind and then decide according to your advice, my heart was filled with perfect calm and an overwhelming desire, instead, to do what I

can for the good of others. I felt that Baby Jesus was pleased with a word from me that I would wait even till Judgment Day for the start of his Work, if he willed it so, and meanwhile to devote my energies for the benefit of my neighbour. I don't know what path God wants me to go by; may He grant me the grace to follow Him anywhere, and that is enough for me.

I earnestly commend myself to your prayer: for charity's sake, remember my poor Father too, sometimes. I need not tell you anything about the Institute because I know you are doing your utmost for it. I will just tell you that a day seems to me a century, so great is my yearning for it to start. It gives me great joy to hope that the good Giovanna, your Sister, may have the good fortune of being among its first members, though I do feel sorry for the pain of separating herself from her dear ones.

I humbly ask your blessing: may it effectively obtain for me some willingness to do good. With best regards.

8 January (1831).

Your devoted, grateful Daughter in J. C.

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

B.C.

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 213

TO THE SAME

Suggestions for the Day of Recollection for girls - She reports on certain fellow members.

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I trust you know that his Reverence the Parish Priest has announced that this evening your Reverence will open the Recollection day. If you think it appropriate, I would ask you to remind the Leaders of their duty to watch over the girls in their group, and the latter of their obligation to obey, etc. There is a real need for this. Recommend also holy Perseverance: it worries me to see how certain girls who were formerly fervent are now becoming so indifferent; they are, in fact, less willing than the others to return to the path of virtue. Insist also on the need to have done with all this talk about love-making etc.

The good Volunnia is in great distress. I beg you to give her some of your time: she is coming to Church about an hour after lunch. If you can make her open out to you, it would be of immense help and solace to her.

Camilla is now calm and quiet: she obeys very humbly and is courageously advancing in virtue.

The good widow Bianca would like to remind you of the kindness you promised her, to buy books for her son.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. If only I could be truly converted on this occasion! ... Excuse me all this trouble I am giving you. With profound respect and grateful thanks

19 January (1831).

Yours devoted Servant and Daughter
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Reverend Father
DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 214

TO A FRIEND

She comforts her in her spiritual tribulations and encourages her to prepare herself for the religious life.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearest Sister,

Love, 10 February (1831).

I greatly appreciated your letter. It brought home to me your inner suffering and oh! how gladly I would comfort you if I could! ... God is putting you to the test; he wants to see your steadfastness in actual fact. Have courage, my dear Sister. Adorn your crown with gems of acceptance of God's will, fervent love and constancy. Be faithful to God even in little things. Remember that your actual life-situation is very pleasing to God, though to you it seems quite different. Beg like the *Canaanite* woman with regard to Holy Communion, but don't lose your peace of mind nor be too downcast if you are not granted permission to receive it. Make up for it with a great number of spiritual Communions, and you will see that God will comfort you and help you equally well, and perhaps even more. Regarding your Bond, remember that God cherishes it and cares for it, and you must be faithful to him as if you were to renew it every hour of the day. Religious life awaits you, but

wants to receive you as a saint, and so do your very best to become wholly, totally possessed by Jesus, and the gates of the Heavenly Garden will soon open to let you in.

Don't distress yourself over your actual condition, due to the lack of a Spiritual Director. With all that you are going through, you should rather rejoice since you bear the distinctive mark of Jesus Christ. Mingle with your tears so many acts of love and thanksgiving to Jesus. One look up towards Heaven and then be at peace. One look at the Crucifix and then say with joy: I will endure gladly and I will always love my Lord Jesus with all my heart.

I will send you as soon as possible the results of the lots already drawn for our devotional practices. Commend me to God, I beg of you. Live calm and quiet in the arms of Jesus, and be sure of attaining Heaven. With all my heart, Goodbye!

Your loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 215

TO THE SAME

About her admittance into the Pious Union - True happiness lies in self-denial for Jesus' sake.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister,

20 February 1831.

Here you are: I am passing on to you the Novena we are starting on Friday, that is, on 25th instant. I spoke to Mother Parpani about your admittance into the Pious Union and she was extremely happy about it. She added that had I not made it a point to recommend you, she herself intended to do her best to have you admitted. Thank the Lord with all your heart for it. I am not going to speak about the Union because I don't have time, nor do I want to write down on paper things I want to remain secret. First time we meet I will tell you everything.

Dearest, take courage, be steadfast. True happiness and gladness is found only in denying ourselves constantly for the sake of Jesus Christ. However heavy the cross may be, Jesus helps us, and he bears most of it himself.

Let us love our beloved Jesus and be always faithful to

him ... Commend me earnestly to the Lord. For charity's sake, I request you to offer a holy Communion for a very important matter.

A thousand wishes to Maddalena. May our dear Mamma (Mother Mary) protect us and defend us always. Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 216

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She encourages him in his commitment for the erection of the new Institute - Her humility makes her hesitate to write out the plan for it - Wise counsel concerning Gerosa and another aspirant - Difficulties met in teaching at school.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

I am breaking the brief silence kept with you. I keep telling myself that I should not be too much of a nuisance to you with my frequent writing, but that is how I am. I am always starting from scratch. However, my experience of your goodness of heart is all the assurance I need. I was overjoyed last Thursday, when I saw how concerned you are about the longed-for Institute. I felt so happy when you said, «I don't want to give up the undertaking. On the contrary, I want to do my utmost till it be successfully brought about». Words that greatly cheered the heart of our good God, words He has already written in Heaven in letters of gold. May He grant you the perseverance needed for such a great undertaking; may He give you an invincible steadfastness, immense patience, uncommon tact and an aptitude for any activity so that with the Lord's special assistance you may soon bring His Work to a good end.

Be assured that the Lord has chosen you, Reverend Father, as one of the main instruments for His work, and almost without your realizing it, he himself made the promise contained in the very words you uttered.

The undertaking is as great and important as it could be. God certainly wants it. So many needs that there are call for it most eagerly.

Be sure that God is in you and with you, and every time you speak, think, do anything or suffer anything for this Undertaking, he will grant you some special grace, and in Heaven He will be your greatest Crown.

After what you told me about the matter on Thursday, I had some uneasiness about what you told me to write etc. Allow me to confess to you all my pride, if I can.

I can clearly see that all I do, think or write, everything is always tainted by my ugly pride and is spoiled by it.

I therefore feel within myself that for the good of the Institute, and not to be an obstacle to what the Lord wants to do about it, I had better not meddle in His affairs, never say anything nor ask anything, nor even think of it, but simply pray the Lord to make me worthy, for charity's sake, not to exclude me from the number of His Handmaids; thus, I will then remain in holy indifference waiting till He opens the door for me.

On the other hand I have an inner urge to obey blindly, and several times I felt driven to write something of what you commanded me, but my pride is too great.

You already know of it, to some extent, since I turn to you (for

help), and so I beg you, if you approve of what I think, to order it as an obedience, because my pride is so subtle that it will find pasture everywhere, even where it meets only with misery and reasons to be humbled.

I beg you to take into account how harmful my pride is, and I am sure you will order me to remain in the lowest place.

In this hurry I beg you not to act according to the intention of asking Catterina to go and see the Parish Priest. She is in deep distress at the moment; what Father Dò said was enough to worry her and upset her even physically though Fr. Dò praised her intentions and assured her of his support - even if indirectly, not to raise the suspicions of Lady Bartolomea¹.

Please wait a bit longer, Father. I feel it is prudent to take that step only when the transactions for the division of the property have been dealt with.

Meanwhile, not to waste time, you could speak to the Parish Priest, tell him what you think and discuss the matter with him, but for the time being please spare Catterina; otherwise I am afraid we might get into a worse fix. However, I trust in your great sagacity. If you act on it you cannot make a mistake.

One more word, if you don't mind, concerning the good Marsiglia. The other day I felt pity for her, poor soul. She could not hold back her tears when you told her that you are not

¹ Caterina Gerosa's aunt, who stood in the way of the division of the property. See Letter 176.

pleased with the idea that she should join some Convent immediately. If, when she comes back to town, she has the same yearning, I beg you for charity's sake to let her go gladly, lest you should leave her with a nagging pain in her heart. It will be a sign that we are not worthy to have such a great joy. If we make her wait against her will, for a long time, maybe, and then put her in a new sort of Retreat where there will certainly be great obstacles to overcome, I would also fear that she may not find the joy, quiet and sense of security that she desires and longs for so ardently.

If the Lord wants her in the new Institute, he will lessen her great eagerness to go at once, and little by little he will draw her to the holy Institute. But I am just talking foolishly. May the Lord let you know what He wills in this matter. I would be only too happy if she were to be one of the first stones of such a holy Edifice.

The Lord has restored my former peace of mind: it is a pure token of his great mercy, and I thank him with all my heart, because a single day of dejection weighs more heavily on me than a hundred pains and aches. May He grant me the grace to love Him immensely and serve Him faithfully, for that is all I seek.

I earnestly recommend my poor School to you. For charity's sake help me with your advice and warning that I may not go against God's designs. Keep shaking me out of my laziness, put me right when I am thoughtless, instruct me in my ignorance, be a support to me, the weakest instrument of God's designs. On the one hand the School is a very heavy

burden, especially when I think of the endless obligations and duties I have towards it, to the extent of almost feeling oppressed by it. On the other hand the Lord is so good and merciful that he helps me almost in a tangible way, and I realize that He is doing everything himself. And yet so often, or rather all the time, my pride sets itself against Him and because of that He is forced to keep from me so many graces, however much he wishes to grant them to me, and so I make endless mistakes. All the same, on Monday, by the grace of God and for His glory, I will resume classes. I ask you, Reverend Father, to grant me the merit of obedience in all that I will do in it, down to the tiniest action, so that the Lord himself may assist me. I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer.

Today I have said enough to tire you out for three months on this letter, but maybe three hours will not pass before I tire you again. Be patient with me, I beg of you.

I pay my humble respects to you and ask your holy Blessing. I end with an earnest request to put my head under the feet of everyone and keep me down, down.

Love, 9 April (1831).

Your devoted humble Daughter in J. C.

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands LOVERE.

Letter 217

TO THE SAME

He encourages him to have trust in Mary for the establishment of the Institute, and to complete the plan for it in Her month.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

1st May (1831).

Here below I am marking your new part in the drawing of lots for this month of May: the practices for it are as in past years. I suppose you have a copy of them, but if you, Rev. Father, do not find them, I shall be glad and honoured to serve you.

Many good little girls have started it with fervour, and I have the trust that their innocence will draw Mary's loving kindness on them. In presenting the month to them I had our longed-for Institute in mind, and I do hope that Mary will take it under her protection: *we are safe, then.*

Obstacles and difficulties should not daunt us, however great they may be. If God wishes to make use of the means we know of, he will know how to bend the heart to his Will. If he wants some other means, I have no doubt that he will let us know what it is, and even if, humanly speaking, every hope of ours may seem to fail, I don't think it would be temerity on our

part to ask God for a miracle in order to start an undertaking that is entirely His and that He surely wants to be carried out for His greater glory. Let us with great trust knock at the door of the Heart of our Jesus and you will see that he will soon hear us. Our dear Mamma Mary will be as gracious as ever. St Aloysius who, fittingly enough, presents himself with his Sundays, will be our Advocate before Jesus and Mary: he will soon cheer us. I trust you have by now started to write out the Plan for the smooth running of the project. I earnestly beg you to get on with it and finish it by the end of this month: its days are all sacred, and Mary will hold your pen and make sure you write what God wishes. For charity's sake commend me to Jesus and Mary. I feel strongly impelled to observe this month really well, stimulated by the thought that it may be the last May that I spend on earth. I wish you the holiness of St Philip and the innocence of St Aloysius while with reverence I thank you. I am

Yours, devoted Daughter in J. C.

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

DRAWING OF LOTS

Rev. Bosio - with the Choir of Archangels -

Humility:

(May) 3, 20

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 218

TO THE SAME

She is glad to send him the plan of the new Institute on the first Sunday of St Aloysius - She has hopes of its foundation - She only fears that her pride and sinfulness may be an obstacle to it.

HAIL TO THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY
AND TO THE SPOTLESS ST ALOYSIUS

Reverend Father Confessor,

Today, as the Lord has given me some free time, I am allowing myself the sweet comfort of saying a few things about the pious Institute that forms the main object of your holy attention and concern, and of my own yearning. I am very glad it is such a lovely day: I mean to say that it is the first Sunday of our dear St Aloysius who, I greatly trust, will also be committed to this cause, so much so that I feel already sure of that grace.

The paper I am enclosing was not written all at one time. I need not tell you that I have written it simply to obey, and that I expect it to be soon thrown into the fire because you too, on reading it, will see how inadequate and useless it is. The Lord withdraws from me lights which he might have been ready to

grant me, on account of my pride, which always turns everything into nourishment for itself: may He do as He wills, for that is all I seek, nor do I need anything so badly as to be humbled.

I cannot keep from you that for some time now I have been experiencing in myself a very intimate trust, and such a sure hope that the Institute will soon be started, that I feel as if I were already on its threshold.

So many good dispositions that are seen in those who must be the main stone are surely the effects of the promises of our good God. I confess to you quite frankly that I cannot even for a moment be unaware of this sweet hope, and it fills my heart with such joy that even the greatest difficulty I can imagine seems to me insignificant.

Day and night, the blessed Institute is always in my mind, and when I dare to hope that I too, purely for charity's sake, may have the lowest place in it, I cannot hold back my tears at the happiness of it. I really think it will be a House especially blessed by the Lord, favoured by many exceptional graces, and in it there will be rendered great glory to the Lord.

And the many needs there are in this town, needs that the Institute will be able to meet, are surely such as will fill with gladness the heart of every Christian! ... One thing alone makes me very anxious ...

I greatly fear that my pride and sinfulness is the one real obstacle to the graces that the Lord wishes to pour on this pious Institute. Whenever I feel impelled to do good, it is like hearing a voice saying: «So that you may be well-disposed for

what the Lord wants from you». And my continual resistance to the calls and graces of the Lord, I seriously fear, may be hindering what He would like to do to establish the Institute. I will do my best to make myself less unworthy of such an exceptional grace, but if my sinfulness is in the way, I beg you, my Jesus, punish me but let the Institute prosper. I beg you, Reverend Father, drive me on with stick in hand, because I am an ass that will not move a step unless pricked with a goad.

Let us firmly hope the Lord will graciously comfort those who pray to Him. The Holy Spirit will bring some gift from Heaven that will cheer our hearts – I ardently desire to kiss those walls that will be the House of the Lord – I desire to find my refuge in it – I desire to please my Jesus – I desire to bury myself to the world and to myself – I desire to do what God expects from me.

I earnestly beg you to commend me to God. May the Holy Spirit sanctify your promise, Reverend Father, that you don't want ever to give up working and striving till the Institute is founded; may He continue to keep you working till it is completed to perfection. With profound respect and grateful thanks I have the honour to be

Just now, 15 May (1831).

Your devoted humble Daughter in J. C.

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

PROMEMORIA

Lovere, 26 April, 1831.

I write under obedience.

After receiving holy Communion I think I had this thought: The Institute which will be founded in Lovere is to be totally founded on Charity and this must be its principal aim. This Institute in particular must be of assistance to young women in moral danger, excluding none of them, regardless of their age, social status or character, as long as they are in spiritual or material need and the Institute is able to do any good to them. The Institute must offer its assistance in every possible way to this kind of young people, because there are few means of bringing them back to the good other than by keeping them away from dangers, etc.

Another time, I think, I had this thought during Prayer. The Institute is not only to be founded on charity, which will constitute its *active life*, but the *contemplative life* must also be added to it so that those who consecrate themselves to this Institute may live both forms of life; which means, that in this Institute a good part of the day must be devoted to Prayer especially to Holy Meditation so that, all their works of charity may produce good fruit because they are an outcome of Prayer and that those persons may be able to teach others what they have learnt from God in Prayer. Not much time is to be devoted to vocal Prayer in common so as not to take away the time dedicated to charity and not to overburden the sisters who, having to spend themselves in instructing and in teaching, could find it perhaps too burdensome and even harmful to their health.

Another time, while I was at work, I had the following thought which was later confirmed during several Communion and Prayers:

The Institute must be founded on the principles and examples left us by Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that its Rule may be a copy of his actions. So all the Rules, Prescriptions and Regulations are to be directed to the imitation of what Jesus Christ did in this World and He must be our Protector, Norm and Guide. Just as many Institutes propose either the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the imitation of a particular saint, so this Institute should propose to itself to honour the Redeemer and imitate his examples, so that a person who consecrates herself to it may become a true daughter of Jesus Christ through her imitation of Him.

In this regard it seemed to me that God desires a new Institute, although I am opposed to it – at least according to my limited understanding – for it seems to me that the difficulties will be more and greater than if we would embrace an Institute already approved. However, if God wants it, He will provide for everything. This idea of the imitation of the Redeemer etc. became clear to me in a way I am unable to explain, and the rules appropriate to reach this goal, appeared beautiful and sweet to me, although I could not see them clearly.

But every time this thought returned to me it left a great sweetness in my heart, and, at times, a sense of gratitude as well, in knowing that Jesus Christ would grant us a wonderful grace if he would call us to such heights.

Once again at holy Communion, I felt that the Institute should have as its main aim the Education of poor young Girls without parents, keeping them even by providing for their full support, until they grow up and learn some work by which to earn an honest living.

Furthermore, it seems to me that it would be very pleasing to our Lord if, besides the day-school conducted free of charge for the poor, the Institute could provide a boarding school as well for all those girls, either coming from the place or from elsewhere, who desire to be educated there, and that especially if they have the intention of becoming school Teachers or if they are good natured, thus giving hopes of lending themselves for the service of the neighbour.

More than once I felt in my heart that the persons who consecrate themselves to this Institute are to be endowed with an extremely solid piety, with outstanding virtue and a natural disposition to love young people. Therefore great caution should be used in accepting a candidate: her virtue and Vocation are to be carefully tested because, this being a free Institute, there would be the grave risk of extremely damaging consequences. It seems to me that our Lord wishes for these persons a very strict and rigorous Novitiate, during which the observance of the Rules must be inculcated in them and the importance of the commitment to be assumed clearly understood by them. Further, they should be made aware that this kind of life is somewhat more difficult than that of Cloistered nuns, because there are greater dangers and more distractions through frequent contacts with secular persons.

So they must feel the need of a great trust in God and of a true spirit of charity, motivated by a genuine purity of intention, through which everything becomes easy and pleasant.

It would be good, at this stage, to make them aware of all this, so as to instil into them the true spirit required by the Institute. It seems to me that our Lord desires that none of them should be engaged in any kind of work or in external services of charity, during the time of the Novitiate (except during the beginning of the Institute when it will be necessary to do only what is possible), because the candidates should first learn the true spirit of the Institute and then put it into practice in every service that will be entrusted to them.

It seems to me that our Lord wishes that the Institute have the three vows of *Chastity*, *Obedience* and *Poverty* common to other religious congregations. The vow of Enclosure should be excluded, so that the members of this Institute may go out, with all necessary precaution, for charitable work. However, in the absence of a precise obligation, they must strictly observe enclosure as it is very necessary for the smooth functioning of the Institute.

Regarding the purpose of the Institute: besides Charity that must reach out to all young Girls, be they poor, needy, rich or in whatever condition, it seems to me that it would be very pleasing to our Lord if the Institute should devote itself to the relief of the poor sick as well, and especially to the care and the direction of Hospitals, where the sisters will serve the sick, comfort them and provide them with spiritual and material help. This must be a branch of the Institute, springing forth

from that sincere Charity which should be an ornament of those who consecrate themselves to this kind of life, very similar to that of our most lovable Redeemer.

Furthermore, I cannot free my Heart from the thought that Jesus requires from this new family a holy concern for the upkeep of his Holy House and therefore, that he recommends that it engages itself in keeping the sacred vestments and the Church linen of the place washed, mended and ironed, with every care and diligence; that a holy decorum and a great cleanliness be observed in it, without exacting any reward for their labours other than the blessing of the Lord.

Although I have already mentioned it, I cannot avoid repeating that I think I felt deeply in my Heart that (at least at the beginning) great care must be taken in accepting candidates for this holy undertaking.

From among the good only the best must be chosen and special care must be taken to select persons inclined towards Charity, meek and quiet by nature, who feel truly inclined to this kind of life and have a great desire for it. In fact, it seems to me that everything depends on it because at the beginning there will be no lack of hardships, difficulties and troubles coming from external circumstances, or to put it better from the Providence of God who disposes everything for the best.

If in the midst of all this there would be some restless or malcontent persons, it would be the cause of dampening the enthusiasm and also of some harm.

The members of this pious Institute are not bound to a formal

Enclosure, so that they may more easily dedicate themselves to Charity. However they must be very careful to keep away from useless contacts of friendships, superfluous conversations or frequent talks with Secular persons.

Charity and duty must be the only reason for their dealings with them. In any other circumstance they must observe Enclosure or withdrawal to an even greater extent than cloistered nuns, because even a single word picked up may be sufficient enough to cause dissipation among all the members of the Institute, and that will be its ruin, being it the plague of the Houses of the Lord.

The members of this pious Institute ought to be endowed with every virtue, but their characteristic virtues should be *Charity*, *Gentleness* and *Humility*, in imitation of our most lovable Redeemer who seemed even to glory in them. And it seems to me that our Lord demands that these virtues be practised so perfectly by them so as to truly shape their character in such a way that everyone, just looking at them, or dealing with them, will recognize them as true followers of the Redeemer.

Although this Institute should be a simple "Retreat", yet it seems to me that our Lord desires in it the greatest Charity among the Individuals, a perfect Community with total equality among all, without any partiality whatsoever, neither for the rich, nor for the frail nor for any other human consideration. From the time of joining the Institute, everyone should be a perfect Sister to the poor Daughters of this Institute.

The true demands of illness will be the only reason to dispense the Sisters from this Universal Community. Furthermore it seems to me that our Lord wishes that in accepting a candidate to the Institute, no regard should be paid to the goods she could bring with her, but rather to the basic, solid virtues she should have. Even when the Institute is in greatest need of material help and there is someone who could provide for it with her large Dowry but perhaps lacking the necessary virtues, let the Institute be left in need that God will provide for it – but let no person be accepted because of these human motives. God would be displeased with it and would withdraw the graces He would wish to give for its benefit.

It seems to me that in this pious Institute God desires (regarding the Dowry) that the Institute may help those poor candidates who would be suited for its purpose and have a strong desire for it; yet for lack of means they cannot have the consolation they desire.

Let the way be left open for them and let the Institute receive them, trusting in that unfailing Providence of God which never fails those who trust in it.

All the more so, since almost no Institute follows this particular policy, with the result that many candidates who would be successful are abandoned for this reason. And it seems to me that God wants it precisely in order to be consistent with the end which the Institute must have, of imitating our most Holy Redeemer. In fact, when someone showed the desire to follow Jesus, He asked him first of all to renounce all his possessions,

and He did not demand anything from those who followed Him. Instead He required such a detachment from them that He said to those who followed Him that He himself had neither a house nor a shelter. This total surrender of goods cannot possibly be followed in the Institute, for we must not expect miracles from God for such things that could be achieved through human means. Therefore it will be necessary to fix a reasonable amount for the Dowry of each Candidate who wishes to consecrate herself to this Institute. At the same time it must be kept in mind that if someone has all the necessary qualities to be successful and is only lacking the Dowry, she should nonetheless be accepted as a member of the Pious Institute.

Last Friday, when receiving Holy Communion, I felt in my Heart more clearly than at other times, and with special tenderness, that the Institute to be founded here shortly should really be called the Institute of the Redeemer and those persons who consecrate themselves to it the Daughters of the Redeemer. It seems to me that God wishes it to be called by this particular name both to indicate the predilection which He will have towards this pious Retreat and to teach those who consecrate themselves to it, the way to holiness; all the more so as no other religious Congregation is known by this unique and particular name and God has reserved such a great and charitable enterprise for these times, when the need is great and extreme.

The Novitiate might well represent the hidden life of Jesus Christ and it seems to me that He wants it to last a long time, at least for two and a half years. The life that follows it should be

wholly engaged for the good of the neighbour, without exceptions, and could be in some way, an imitation of the active life of Jesus Christ during the three years of his preaching. The fourth Vow of Charity which it seems to me that the Lord requires of these persons, would bind them to do everything possible, suffer everything and even shed their Blood for the good of their neighbour. These could be considered as a distant imitation of the consuming love of our Redeemer in dying for us. Frequent Prayer, and specially Holy Meditation for a considerable length of time everyday, could resemble the frequent periods of solitude that our lovable Redeemer spent apart from people to be with his Divine Father and to intercede for us all. The number of twelve Workers, excluding domestic helpers, who may perhaps be sufficient for this pious Work, could indicate the twelve Apostles whom He chose for the salvation of mankind; but since our Lord accepted Disciples as well, this number could be increased if required by the circumstances. May our most lovable Redeemer make us his true followers. Amen.¹

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

¹ That this first design of the Institute was truly what God inspired to his Venerable Handmaid is clear from the fact that it was verified little by little in every substantial part of it, though B. Capitanio died a few months after founding it and in the course of the years the plan met with many obstacles to the perfect realization of it.

Letter 219

TO A FRIEND

She sends her the Novena of St Aloysius etc.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Lovere, 19 June (1831).

Here is the Novena of St. Aloysius. Please forgive me for breaking my word. I do have Don Tomini's letter in mind, but I will do as you desire another time. In your kindness, commend me to God.

Be comforted in the thought that you have a chain that binds you closely to God. Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 220

TO A FRIEND

Golden chains by which she should cling to the Lord.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 24 June (1831).

I am enclosing a Novena, with the understanding, as usual, that you will return it to me, at your convenience. I am waiting to have back the booklet of the Sacred Heart, because they have asked for it, as it is not mine.

I commend my poor soul to you: say a good word for it to the Lord. God wishes to be served by you in holy gladness, with freedom of heart, with the utmost diffidence of yourself and immense trust in him, and with sincere humility. These are the golden chains by which he fastens his bond with you more tightly. Kiss them and hold them precious.

A thousand wishes to Maddalena.

Tell her I will soon pay off the debt I owe her.

May St Aloysius be our exemplar in loving Jesus. Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 221

TO COLOMBA MORA

She inquires after the health of a friend - Her attitude to the world and her love for Jesus.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS WITH THEM

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 30 June 1831.

Permit me to send you a few lines to inquire after my dear Martina. I am anxious about her because I heard she was ill and I don't know whether she is keeping well now or is still sick. Last time I wrote to her I asked her to give me news of herself, but no reply came to reassure me. I therefore turn to you and earnestly beg you to let me know what our dear Sister is suffering from, how long it has taken and how she is keeping at the moment. I will be highly obliged to you if you do me this big favour.

I hope you have done the current Novena of the Visitation though I failed in my duty to send you the drawing-of-lots list for it. I warmly recommend our Pious Union to you. If

only we could respond to the designs that the Lord has over us! ... We would be truly fortunate! Days pass by, they pass swiftly by, and all we are left with are the deeds, good or bad, that we do. The world is deceptive, it betrays us, and how many souls it robs of our loveable Jesus ... But for goodness' sake, let us, at least, be faithful to our dear Jesus, for he deserves it so much. ... How happy we shall be one day! ... My dear, pray much for me; my need is very great. I too want to be faithful to my good God, but every moment all I do is offend Him. Love him on my behalf, for He deserves it.

Greet for me our sick Sister and also our fellow member Afrina: tell the latter that God wants her to be a great Saint. You, too, be a Saint: that is my fervent wish for you, with every blessing. Goodbye. I recommend to you the Novena of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

Your grateful, loving Sister

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

COLOMBA MORA

TAVERNOLA.

Letter 222

TO REGINA TAERI

She thanks her and asks for prayers.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS

Dearest Sister,

Your letter made me extremely happy: it had seemed to me ages since I last had news of you; I had missed them and looked forward to them very eagerly. I thank you for meeting my wish and even more especially for thinking of me with love. I need not assure you of my own affection for you, for you know that among my friends you are one of the dearest to my heart.

Kindly think of the countless needs of my soul and commend me to God. Tell him I need all his Merciful Love.

In your contemplation and in the sweet union that you enjoy with your gentle Spouse, remember also the one who is unable to give up the *onions of Egypt* and so deprives herself of the Heavenly Manna of the Children of Israel. How I wish I could share in the lot of those who, being dead to the world and to themselves, live solely for their God! ...

My dear ones at home appreciated your wishes very highly: they with me beg you to accept ours in return and to extend them a hundredfold to all your esteemed family.

Dearest, see you again in Heaven, but before that I shall wait for you on Mt Calvary to take up the Cross and climb up with it happily to Heaven. Goodbye.

Lovere, 20 July 1831.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 223

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She treats of a dampening fervour within the Pious Union and blames herself for it - She revives her zeal - She refers to a long illness both of herself and of her father - This deprives her of holy Communion.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 25 September 1831.

I was very glad to have news from you; at the same time I was sorry to hear that not all is well with our Pious Union there. The cause of this dampening of fervour is surely myself, because I am negligent, because I am bad, because I am proud. However, we don't have to get disheartened by this; the Enemy is at work to disturb a good work that is perhaps damaging his plans. Let us too work very hard, with God's grace, not to let him prevail over us.

Concerning our fellow members who, you say, are growing rather tepid: I recommend them earnestly to you. Don't wait for them to come and ask for the Novena practices, but reach out to them yourself. Encourage them to keep it up, make them understand the great grace that they have received from God, in letting them partake of so much spiritual

richness. Tell them that hundreds of other girls aspire to have their fortune and the Lord is leaving them without, to reserve it for them instead, but that it would go hard for them if they do not respond as they should. Don't let the loss of our good fellow member discourage you, my dear sister. God wanted to humble our pride. Let us thank him and pray that we may draw benefit from this very situation for his greater glory. I will do my very best to have in hand our Manual of Rules and distribute it. Let us have trust that Jesus and Mary will help us.

As to my health, I now start feeling better. After forty-two days of 'fasting' from it, I have at last today received Holy Communion, with much difficulty. The same sickness came over me three times over. My father was at death's door, but we are now having hopes of his recovery. What a debt of gratitude I owe to Jesus!... You too thank him on my behalf and pray that He may grant me the grace to sanctify all the tiny moments of life, which I now receive as a most precious gift from his hands. I deeply appreciate your concern for me. May God reward you for it, as I most earnestly pray. A thousand wishes to all the fellow members over there. Exhort them in my name also, to be faithful to our most loveable Jesus, and they will be rewarded over and above. Let us love Jesus immensely. Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 224

TO DON BORTOLO CELERI

She asks him to celebrate a Mass for her father - She thanks him for his assistance at his death and funeral.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father,

Just now, 16 November (1831).

Will you kindly say Holy Mass tomorrow for the repose of the soul of my poor father? In occasion of his death and funeral rites, I did not thank you, as I should have done, knowing fully well how much you, Rev. Father, have done for him. Forgive us this failing, and be sure we are truly grateful to you and eager to show it in some concrete manner if opportunities to do so present themselves. We did not come to you in person to do our duty towards you because our bereavement was very distressing and everything that reminded us of our loss became unbearable. We now request you to accept our sincere thanks and apologies to you. To so many acts of kindness shown, we ask you still another: that of remembering our dear Departed one in your Prayer, so that he may be assured of the prayers for the repose of his soul, which he will greatly need.

Recommend him also to the kindness of esteemed Father Rector, and convey my best regards to him.

I commend myself to your Prayer: my need is very great. Tomorrow, about 3 p.m., I should very much like to have a word in Confession with the Rector; kindly let him know; if he can kindly hear me, I would greatly appreciate it. If not, *'Fiat'*.

Excuse me the trouble. I am, in the Lord

Your devoted Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Reverend Father

DON BORTOLO CELERI

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 225

TO A PRIEST

She expresses warm gratitude in the name of her family, and offers a gift.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Reverend distinguished Father,

Our indebtedness to you and to all your family is boundless. Whenever we approached any of you, we have always come to know your goodness of heart and your kind favour towards us. But in occasion of our misfortunes, the charity you showed us, the concrete help you gave us, the favours you lavished on us, were innumerable, and we can truly say that you and Mr. Simone have cared for us with fatherly affection, and so too all the other members of your family. Still now we continue to give you trouble, though we would prefer to spare you; but our insufficiency and your goodness of heart towards us whenever we turn to you for help, encourage us to avail ourselves of it. The only thing we are sorry about is that we never have the slightest opportunity to express to you in a concrete way our deep gratitude for all that we receive from you. In all sincerity we wish to say that it

would give us a great pleasure if we could do anything that would please you. However, God himself will abundantly make up for our inability, and in our trust that he will hear us we earnestly pray to Him to gladden your family and bestow on it his choicest blessings; may He make it prosper at all times and in all respects.

We beg you, Reverend Father, graciously to accept a little outfit for Mass that we make bold to send you, purely as a token of acknowledgement of your kind support, and that we would be eager to reciprocate if we could. It is a tiny satisfaction that we have in expressing our immense gratitude, and we hope that you on your part will gladden us by accepting it, though it is such a small thing.

We pay our humble respects to you, begging you to excuse us if we are too bold in our confidence. We have the honour to be,

27 November (1831).

Devotedly and gratefully yours

CAPITANIO - Mother and Daughters

Letter 226

TO DON RUSTICIANO BARBOGLIO

She informs him of an obstacle to the division of the Gerosa property, and urges him to promote the founding of the Institute.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Parish Priest,

Love, 29 November (1831).

Allow me to tell you something that is very dear to my heart. Today I spoke to Rev. Fr. Dò about the current Gerosa affair. From what he said it seems clear to me that unless she is conceded Gerosa House in addition to a half of the property, Lady Bortolamea is sure to break the word she gave to the dividing of the property. I informed the good Catterina of all this. She felt that such a pact would be grossly unfair but she uttered these words: «I wish to speak out about this, and if I am told to agree to it, I will do so». I feel it is right to inform you beforehand so that you may have time to think over it and advise her for the best. If Catterina had been induced to take these steps for a purely human motive, or for her own interest, one would say that reason, justice and the will itself are all in her favour and that therefore she would do well to stand firm in not agreeing to concede to her aunt the house that she wants over and above

her fair share. But we know that her aim in agreeing to the pact is to be able to start the Institute that God is showing us clearly to be his will; and so if with the undertaking God expects this sacrifice from her as well, I feel that God will be pleased with it and will accept it graciously. Many times what we should not do for creatures, we can and should do, instead, for the Lord to whom all things are due. You must take into account that if Catterina refuses to give in, the whole affair (if I understood right) will be held up and nothing else will be said about it, and things will go on as before without even the hope of coming to any definite agreement.

Forgive me if I am taking so much liberty to speak, but I am doing it so that you may be fully informed of how things stand and may give the advice that your eminent prudence will show you to be most appropriate. I beg of you to keep in mind the Lord's undertaking, the Institute we have in mind, and see to it that the affair does not drag on.

If you don't mind, I beg you not to let Catterina know that I have written all this to you; I ask you this in order to keep peace and harmony between us. I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. I humbly pay my respects to you and ask you to bless me.

Yours devoted Servant and Daughter in Jesus

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA Unworthy Handmaid Of Jesus

To Very Reverend Parish Priest

DON RUSTICIANO BARBOGLIO

LOVERE.

Letter 227

TO DON ANGELO TAERI

She recommends one of her cousin seminarian - and suffrages for her father.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father,

Last week I was in Brescia where I enjoyed the warm hospitality lavished on me by all your family, particularly by my good Regina, who would have honoured me with her company in my own house had not she been prevented from doing so by the actual condition of your esteemed father. However, she promised she would do so as soon as she can, and I shall be eagerly looking forward to her visit. I should like to ask of you a big favour. This year a cousin of mine, a Seminarian (bearer of this letter, Davide Petenzi) is coming to Brescia.

His Parents and I warmly commend him to your charity. The young man is very well-behaved and virtuous. He is diligent in his studies and has in fact obtained very good results, and so all our Reverend Priests, and more especially our Parish Priest, are very fond of him. However, this cousin of mine is rather shy by nature, which makes him fearful and easily discouraged. His dear ones at home commend him to your kindness, that you

may instruct him, recommend him to the right persons, introduce him to good company and help him in what he may need. Add to that, he is rather poor; his family work as hard as they can to help him become a Priest. I therefore earnestly request you to be kind to him, to say a good word for him to the Bishop, by asking him to do all the good he thinks he can do for him. I am sure that you, Reverend Father, will not mind the trouble of doing what I am asking from you and that in your charity, which I know is very great, you will not think it below your dignity to help this poor Seminarian.

Forgive the excessive liberty that I take, but you have your own goodness of heart to blame, which makes me so bold.

All your friends send their best regards; so too my own family. As you undoubtedly know, the Lord has deprived me of what I held dearest in this world: this loss is weighing heavily on my heart and I cannot get over it. Pray God for me and say some *Eternal* rest for the soul of the one God has robbed me of, that He may give him rest and to me peace.

Let me have good news of the Bishop and of yourself. With deep reverence and grateful thanks.

Lovere, 30 November 1831

Yours devotedly

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Reverend esteemed Father
DON ANGELO TAERI
Father of St Filippo Congregation
BRESCIA

Letter 228

TO REGINA TAERI

She looks forward to her comforting visit - She asks prayers for the repose of the soul of her father etc.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Your courtesy and kind attention have remained so deeply impressed on my mind that I am at a loss how to describe it. I wish I had some opportunity to express in a concrete way my sincere gratitude to you. Make me happy some time with a kind visit: it will make me glad and help to cheer my afflicted heart. A thousand thanks for all that you and your family have done for my sake and for my family.

I trust your esteemed father is keeping well. I will be very glad to have news of him. In that case, may I remind you of your promise.

Volunnia and lady Clelia were very glad to have news of you. They send you their warm wishes and commend themselves to your Prayer.

Don't forget to pay my respects to the whole of your Family especially your esteemed father. Tell him that I wish

him good health and a long life filled with all blessings for both soul and body. My mother and Camilla send you and all your family their sincere wishes and thanks.

Thank God we had a very good journey. We kept saying: if our good Regina had come with us, she would not have got scared.

Commend me to God, for charity's sake. My need is extremely great. Remember now and then my dear father, too. Pray once in a while for the repose of his soul: I will be very grateful to you if you do.

May the company of all the Saints urge us to become Saints. Goodbye. A thousand wishes to Teresina and to your Secretary. Commend me to the Prayer of both of them. Hail to Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, for ever and ever.

Love, 30 November 1831.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Lady

REGINA TAERI

BRESCIA.

YEAR 1832

Letter 229

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She forwards Conte Passi's letter in favour of the Institute - She wishes him good health.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Reverend Father Confessor,

I trust this letter will anticipate a holy delight awaiting you. On entering the house I found Rev. Conte Passi's letter covering the one I am enclosing herewith. I read it and re-read it over and over again. As I interpreted it very much in favour of our own plans, it made me so happy that the burden of my misery was gone, it seemed to me, and I was simply overwhelmed. Our Parish Priest wept with comfort when he read the letter, and said: "*We would like to undo, but the Lord wants the Enterprise*".

Catterina is very happy. With all our heart let us bless the Lord. I am sending it to you at once because I should like to recommend to you not to work too hard, so that you may spare yourself the energy you will need to go to Bergamo where you will also be able to settle a few matters relating to our Institute.

Your dear ones at home are all keeping well. They were very happy to have news of you and receive your message; they also gave me a letter that I am enclosing with mine. I was deeply touched by your Angelina. As soon as she saw me coming she began to clap her hands with joy and in four rapid steps she crossed the road, ran up to me and hung to my neck; then she blushed and did not know how to explain her gladness. What a lovely heart she has! If she consecrates herself totally to the Lord, I am sure she will love Him immensely.

We are eagerly looking forward to having you back. May the Lord give you new strength to use for Him. I ask you to bless me while I call on you every grace from Heaven. Humbly paying my respects to you, and thanking you.

Lovere, 1st March 1832.

Your devoted Spiritual Daughter
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary.
B.C.

very urgent - recorded-delivery (letter)

To Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

Zealous Preacher of holy Mission

at St Peter's Seminary

BRESCIA.

Letter 230

TO THE SAME

She tries to dissuade him from abandoning Lovere.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am at a loss how to start this letter. I wish I could silence my self-love and give utterance to Jesus whom I have ardently called upon.

To my dismay I first heard and then read in your esteemed letter of the strange commitment you have undertaken¹ ... What a misfortune for our town! ... But I must also say it: it serves me right.

A few moments ago I met our Reverend Parish priest (dear Father of our souls and the one God meant to be our Superior); he handed me the letter enclosed, and told me to send it to you as soon as possible, and in his goodness of heart he read it out to me as well. He is very prudent in what he writes, but you should have seen and heard him; he made

¹ He was designated Rector of the Seminary of Brescia, but the plan was later given up.

a pitiful sight. With tears in his eyes he said that he had received you, Rev. Father, from the Bishop and no one could take you away. He added that you are his God-given support in his old age and did not know how to manage without you. Then he said: "I will do what I can, but without someone to help me I will leave the Parish to anyone who wants it; God does not expect miracles, etc. etc..."

He said countless other things which I don't want to repeat to you, but which moved even stones to pity. I cannot understand how you, Rev. Father, could accept such an appointment when you know the critical circumstances of our town, for whose good God seems to have purposely made you best fitted. And if our beloved late Bishop, with all the desire he had to have you close to him¹ and had found you promising for various posts yet on coming to know the needs here and what you could do if you stayed here, what you were doing, etc. not only gave you up but also used to say that he was happy to have you here and wanted you to remain here, why now, without a real command from your Superior, do you accept a proposal to the detriment of a whole population? ... Is it perhaps charity to do harm to one in order to do good to another?...

As to our project, the work of the Lord, you can be sure it will go up in smoke, because no one will dare undertake such great works without any support, and if it were taken lightly it would do harm rather than good. In short, I will not say anything else. I suppose this is a punishment, and I really deserve it, and

¹ As his Secretary.

I have already given it up in sacrifice. But God is good; we shall pray so hard that he will give in to our request. You too listen to Him, and consider that it is not by chance that you were born in Lovere. It must be the means you have to use to attain to Heaven; it is the field of your labour.

May God speak to your heart and make you discern His will. I do hope He will be gracious to our prayers. The good Catterina is utterly dismayed and she is already withdrawing if you don't come where you belong. I sincerely pay my respects to you.

I am not telling you anything about those at your home, because they made an extremely pitiful sight, and you must already be finding it hard in that respect. Thank you for the charity you showed me by the exemption you granted me. I am in a nasty mess myself: here with a broken health, not in a state to join a Convent (had I gone at the proper time I would be there by now), deprived of all hope of being able to do what I yearned for so much. My God, help me, I beg of you. ...

May the Blessed Virgin Mary help us. May we find strength in her our Refuge. I ask you to bless me. Volumnia sends you her sincere regards.

Lovere, 7 March 1832.

Your devoted and humble Daughter in J. Christ

BORT. CAPIT. Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

(Very urgent)

To Very Reverend

DON ANGELO BOSIO

at Peter's Seminary

BRESCIA.

Letter 231

TO THE SAME

She takes back what she had written previously with the aim of dissuading him from accepting the appointment as Rector of the Seminary - She accepts God's will.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

To withdraw what I wrote in my last letter and to lay my conscience at rest, allow me to write a few lines more. I beg you to take them from where they come without paying any heed to them, because I am writing for myself, not for You.

I assure you that my heart now reacts in quite a different way from the manner in which I wrote to you; it seems very clear to me that God's will is that you be Rector, at Brescia, of His future Priests, and I feel within myself this strength to such an extent that if I had found myself in your circumstances I would not have done even what you did to discern His will.

However, I am not sorry: I mean to say, I have no remorse for what I did and said to dissuade you, because I don't think I offend God's goodness in using every human means to keep an instrument the Lord made use of to do so much good among a whole population.

You yourself, I think, can carry out God's will with a greater peace of mind when all efforts have been made to know it clearly. I confess to you that even in the midst of my anxiety I have never in this matter made any other prayer to the Lord than this: «Grant, Lord, that the interests of your glory be above all our interests and that your will be done, at any cost». Wipe away all tears from your eyes, then; the Crucified Lord will give you the strength to overcome all obstacles.

In your new commitment you will become a great saint; you will experience the peace of heart that God grants to those who overcome all obstacles for His sake and by God's grace you will make of your Seminarians true Ministers of the Lord. God will provide also for Lovere; we too shall profit from your charity. Let the Institute spring from the denial of our will; it will be more firmly established in that way. I foresee that I will suffer, but I greatly deserve it, and I am glad.

As far as I am concerned, I assure you that from the start I had offered it in sacrifice and I realize that for my soul it is a token of mercy.

I am unable to rid myself of my self-love and pride and for a year or so I have been ardently praying that the Lord may let something happen to set me free from it. Now that He is doing just that, thanks be to Him.

However, I commend myself to your charity more earnestly than ever, and I beg you to keep doing so till death. With God's assistance I have resolved to respond to Him more fully. I feel that I have been negligent in the service of God.

I have resolved to devote myself with all my strength especially in the holy exercise of charity; as long as I have breath in me, I want to use it for the good of others. Shake me and help me in this, for I need it very badly. If you can please return to me the vow of charity, I think it will do me good.

Tomorrow, if I don't have to go to Sellere, I hope to come for Confession; otherwise I will do so on Friday, if I may. I am sending you a letter that was sent to me a few days ago. I cannot keep from you a thought that my natural will prompts to me: Who knows if the Lord accepts your entire sacrifice and some unexpected thing happens which will bring you back to your town? ... Well, may God's will be done. I shall keep all complaints for Him alone, when I have no more fear of deceiving myself. At this moment: *Your will be done* from my heart.

I beg you kindly to forgive my excessive boldness. Recommend me to the Lord and bless me. With grateful thanks, I am

Just now, 14 March (1832).

Yours devoted Daughter and Servant

BORT. Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 232

TO REGINA TAERI

Sound advice and comfort in trials.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Beloved Sister and Friend,

Love, 22 March 1832.

I can understand what you are going through. My sincere affection for you makes me share all the more in its bitterness, and the very thought of the situation you are in is painful to me as well. But ... God visits the righteous and to those he loves best he gives the gift of suffering. Dear Regina, in the midst of your afflictions be comforted because you have a clear sign of being very precious in God's sight. Till now our Lord has treated you almost as a child, feeding you with the milk of his consolations. Now he is treating you as his faithful Bride, letting you share in his Cross. A '*Fiat*' - Your will be done - uttered at this moment is worth much more than all the prayers you could say when everything was going on smoothly. Don't be alarmed, however, if human nature moans under the burden of afflictions, for it needs to take its course. Suppressing our feelings unduly may cause harm to our health, and make the pain still worse. God does not expect us to suppress our

nature but to conform our will firmly to His most holy Will. In all simplicity I assure you that if I could do the least little thing to make you feel better, I would be extremely happy. His Reverence your brother promised to bring you here in Spring. The climate of our hills may suit your health, who knows: it may help lift your spirits as well... I am looking forward to your coming so much that I am counting the days that still remain. ... Last time I came to Brescia I was extremely sorry to do without coming to see you and to greet all your family; but I just could not gather the courage to come forward: your Brother reproached me for it and I cannot even excuse myself for it, because if you had done the same thing with me, I would have felt very sorry about it. Forgive me. Another time I will not do like that. In fact, I will tire you out till you will have to drive me away from your house. Please give me news how you and your brother, Signor Giovanni, are keeping in health, as I heard he has been ill. Every time you let me know how you are keeping, I promise I will repay you by recommending you to the Lord through many good people. My family send their best wishes to you and all your family. Kindly give my sincere regards to your Reverend Brother and your Mother. Goodbye. May the Cross of Jesus be our comfort.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

B.C.

Letter 233

TO ANGELO FERRARI

She returns a favour.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

I am returning the umbrella, with thanks. I trust you will excuse the liberty I take in paying back the money you lent me. We have had a safe crossing, and your Santina arrived here cheerful and happy.

I hope you don't mind if I make bold to send you a small 'soppressa'¹. With best regards in the name of all my family, I am

Lovere, 26 April 1832.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Respectable Dear Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO.

¹ *'Soppressa' is a good quality of salami.*

Letter 234

TO THE SAME

*She gives news of his daughter - She sends him Santina's needlework -
Thanks for gifts received.*

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

Our dear Santina received the pillow-cases and the towel, which she is now sending you back with her embroidery on them. She is ever so attentive to her study, receptive and obedient, becoming dearer to us day by day. She is keeping very well and is happy to stay on. She sends to you, to her mother, grandfather and aunt a thousand kisses and wishes. The sooner you come to see her the happier we and she herself will be.

We are overwhelmed by the endless trouble you are taking for our sake. We thank you for the lovely cauliflower you sent us and for all the other gifts; but please don't be so lavish any more, for we don't think we are deserving of so much bounty. All at home send you and your wife their warm regards. With deep esteem, I am

(1832).

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Respectable Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO.

Letter 235

TO THE SAME

On the good behaviour of his daughter, etc.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

I am sending you the shirt with Santina's embroidery on it, with the sample you had sent us long ago. She is now waiting for further orders. She has always been healthy, cheerful , happy and obedient. She is making steady progress in her studies and applies herself gladly to it. She sends to all of you a thousand wishes and a hundred kisses.

On our part we pay our respects to you all. We should like to know if you have sent our cloak, because it has not reached us yet.

Kindly deliver the letter enclosed to the addressee. We are looking forward to meeting your wife and Santina's aunt.

With profound respect, I am

Love, 22 May (1832)

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO.

(parcel attached)

Letter 236

TO THE SAME

She informs him of his daughter's sickness.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

Love, 25 May (1832).

I feel it is my duty to tell you something that may perhaps sadden you. As there kept appearing one kind of rash on Santina's hands and feet, we took her to a Surgeon, and he fears it may be scabies.

We cannot think where she could have caught it, for we are all immune to it and the girls who do needlework with her are perfectly free of it.

We are at a loss; we are sorry to inform you that your daughter has contracted this disease; on the other hand we cannot afford to keep quiet about it as we cannot make the girl understand that she has to remain apart from her companions. Besides, we cannot take the risk of applying any ointment, fearing lest you be not pleased.

I therefore beg you kindly to come yourself or send your Wife so that we may together see what is the best thing to do.

We are very sorry and embarrassed, but we really don't know how she got it. I hope she will soon get rid of it.

For the rest she is perfectly healthy and is always well-behaved. With sincere regards to you, I sign in haste

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Santina liked the cherries very much, and we thank you for them.

Letter 237

TO THE SAME

Wishing a speedy recovery of his daughter - She places a few orders.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

We were very glad to have news of Santina, all the more so as they were good news: that she is getting better. We should like her to get cured soon and perfectly well, because we very much wish her to be back among us, but we must bear to miss her till she has recovered completely, lest we should again put you to trouble, and ourselves be sorry to see her again going away. Please give her our warm wishes and give her a kiss for us. When she comes back we hope to see, without fail, also Lady Domenica and Aunt Margherita.

If you don't mind the trouble, kindly buy for us four young hens, the best you can find. For this purpose we are sending you 4 Svanziche¹. If they cost more, kindly pay the extra money and tell us so that we may refund it. Sorry for the trouble. Hoping to have good news again soon, I pay my respects to you in the name of all at home.

Love, 3 June 1832.

Yours faithful Servant
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister
ANGELO FERRARI
(with 4 Zwanzigs) ISEO.

¹ See footnote pg 29.

Letter 238

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She proposes a new self-offering to God and consults him on her Annual Confession.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

For some time now I have been having an inner urge to make the self-offering enclosed. On Pentecost day I felt it even more strongly, and so I beg you to go through it and if you approve of it I should like to do it on the Feast of *Corpus Christi*; it is also the feast day of my St Aloysius.

I am enclosing a small offering with the request that you say a Mass in honour of St Aloysius for all his devotees. I would be glad if you can do it on his feast day, but if it is not possible, say it when you like; but please pray hard to this dear Saint for all the girls, so that not a single one may go astray.

With regard to my annual Confession, of which I spoke to you the other day, allow me to point out a few things. It will certainly do no harm to my health, and I would feel rather sorry to put it off: I would feel like doing a wrong to God. On the other hand, due to the little time and less eagerness I have

to examine myself, and even more especially the confused state in which my mind has been for some time, my thoughts are all in a muddle even for the usual weekly Confession. All this makes me think it would do me no good.

In any case I will abide by what you tell me. I don't want to do it nor leave it unless it be in obedience.

I earnestly commend myself to your charity, and to your Prayer.

With profound reverence

Love, 18 June 1832.

Yours devoted Daughter

CAP. BORT. Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

to be delivered in his hands

Letter 239

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She announces the death of a fellow member believed to be already in Heaven - Start of the Institute very near.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY AND THE LOVEABLE GONZAGA WITH THEM

Beloved Sister,

I am breaking our long silence with some comforting news. Our saintly fellow member, the Capuchin Sr. Livia Astori, passed away from this earth to Heaven during the night of *Corpus Domini* and the feast of St Aloysius. I do not mention so many particulars concerning this saintly Soul, because you know them already. I can only assure you of my belief that she went straight to Heaven. Please pass on the news to your fellow members, and recommend the usual suffrages for her, even if she does not need them. Encourage them to keep it up, all the more so since we see that God is building up our Union so well in Heaven. Pray much, really much for me. Here, the Institute will soon be starting. The Lord is blessing it with extraordinary graces. Pray that He may continue to do so. May the Cross of Christ be our sweet comfort. At its feet I leave you, and there I intend to find you again day by day. With a loving embrace

Love, 23 June 1832.

Your loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA Handmaid of JESUS and of MARY

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA SIGISMONDI DARFO.

DARFO.

Letter 240

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She apologizes - She recommends prayers for a Union member recently departed - She hopes the Institute will start soon.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Lovere, 21 June¹ 1832.

I am at last breaking my silence. Forgive me, dearest. In my laziness I never find time to fulfil my duties. I received several letters from you, all of which I have deeply appreciated. I found in them some tasks you set me and I am not sure if I have attended to all of them. If there is something you are expecting from me, kindly write to me again what I have to do because I can't remember anything else. I communicate to you the death, or rather the happy transit into Heaven, of our fellow member, the Capuchin nun, during the night before the Feast of *Corpus Domini* and of St Aloysius. God is establishing our Pious Union very well in Heaven. In that way He encourages us to imitate the examples of those who are reserving a place for us in Heaven. I recommend the usual suffrages to you and to the other Members for our virtuous departed one.

¹ 27 June, according Original.

God is favouring our Institute with exceptional graces, and it is making fast-and-steady progress. I hope to start the New Year in the Lord's fold. Recommend me to God, and believe me to be

Your loving Sister

BORT. the Handmaid of JESUS and of MARY

No. 3 Notebooks Penny 13 each one	lire 1.19
1 notebook (large size)	0.18
1 book on the month of May	0.15

Letter 241

TO ANGELO FERRARI

She asks him to come with his daughter ahead of day fixed.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

I was delighted to hear that on Sunday you intend to bring our dear Santina back to us. I should like to ask you to give us that pleasure a day ahead of that, that is, tomorrow, Saturday, because I wish her to enjoy the feast of St Anthony, which will be celebrated on Sunday. Your wife and aunt Margherita will not fail to come with you, I hope: that is what you promised.

My mother and sister pay their sincere respects to you. Meanwhile, in all haste, I give you my best regards.

Lovere, 13 July 1832.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO.

Letter 242

TO THE SAME

She thanks him for fruit sent to her - She gives good news of his daughter.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

We have received the choice fruit you graciously sent us and we enjoyed it as a token of your love. We warmly thank you for it.

Your Santina is very dear to us. She is always well-behaved, receptive, obedient and attentive, all of which makes us hope in a very good success. There is no trace of the disease and I do hope by God's grace that she will not give us any cause for anxiety. She enjoys perfect health. She is also very cheerful, and fills our day with joy. She sends you wishes and kisses, extending them to her mother, grandfather and aunt. *She tells me to remind you to give something to 'eat' to Our Lady of Sorrows.*

My dear ones pay their respects to you and to your wife. With sincere esteem I have the honour to be

Love, 22 July 1832.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

(with a basket ...) ISEO.

Letter 243

TO THE SAME

She gives news and places orders.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

This is a hurried greeting, on behalf of your daughter as well. She has always been well and behaving still better. I am sending you 6 Svanziche¹, with the request to obtain for me some cockerels, the best ones you can find.

Sorry to trouble you. Best regards from my family.

Love, 30 July 1832.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

(with 6 Zwanzigs)

ISEO.

¹ See footnote pg 29.

Letter 244

TO THE SAME

She inquires after his wife's health.

Dear Mr Ferrari,

We were alarmed to hear some vague news that your esteemed Wife is seriously ill. Lady Laorina is also very anxious because she does not know exactly how she is. I therefore earnestly request you, if it is not too much of a trouble, to write a couple of lines to give us precise information about her illness. On my part I assure you that your Santina does not know anything, nor will she be told. She is quiet, calm and healthy. She is sending a thousand wishes and kisses to you and all her loved ones.

Lady Laorina sends you and her Sister her warm wishes, and wants you to know that she herself is keeping very well. I shall be anxiously waiting for news of your wife. With best regards also on behalf of my family, I have the honour to be

Love, 9 August 1832.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO.

Letter 245

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She recommends initiatives for girls and suffrages for her father.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Will you kindly say your Holy Mass, tomorrow, in honour of St Rosa, Patron Saint of my Sodality Group. You can celebrate it when and where you like because the Members of my group are all peasant girls and so it is not possible to have them come together all at the same hour.

I heartily thank you for so much charity, both spiritual and material, that you lavish on our Oratorio¹. I thank you in particular for all the trouble you took for the preparation of the garment of our statue of Mary. We cannot repay you except with some *Hail Marys*, praying Mary to reward you in her usual gracious way.

I recommend to you our Day of Recollection and our function.

¹ See footnote pg 55.

Among those recommended at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, I beg you for charity's sake to have the soul of my poor father, who must be in great need of it.

I commend myself to your Prayer. May the Lord grant that I remain gladly at the foot of the Cross and teach me to love Him truly through suffering.

With profound reverence and grateful thanks.

Just now, 1st September 1832

Yours devoted humble Daughter in J. C.

BORTOLAMEA, Handmaid of JESUS and MARY

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 246

TO REGINA TAERI

She comforts her in her sorrows - She invites her to Love, etc.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister,

Your esteemed good Brother has been telling me of the various happenings that have saddened your family and you most of all. I was grieved to hear of it and I would have been only too glad to be of some comfort to you. But God who disposes everything in wisdom has strengthened your spirit with heroic constancy sufficient to bear such painful trials. It is evident that God loves you in a very special way and that you are precious in his sight, and most beloved. In the midst of your suffering let your heart be glad and have trust, knowing that a rich reward has been prepared for you.

Your brother Antonio has really improved in health. The mountain climate agrees with him, and I do hope it will do good to you as well. And so, the early days of October without fail I will come over to you with my mother to fetch you, but mind you, don't let me make the journey for nothing, because I am coming just for you.

I have one big favour to ask: please procure for me about 15 yards of wire to be used as a discipline (penance chain), like the one you had made them do for me last time: when I come to you, I will pay off my debt.

Forgive me the liberty I am taking. I commend myself to your Prayer.

Give my best regards to all at home, especially your esteemed Mother.

Looking forward eagerly to seeing you

Love, 18 September 1832.

Your Very loving Sister
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Esteemed Lady

REGINA TAERI

To be delivered in her hands

Letter 247

TO ANGELO FERRARI

She thanks him and makes her apologies to him.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

Love, 4 October 1832.

I am returning your three chairs and the umbrella, with many thanks. I am highly obliged to you for your kindness, and your courtesy puts me to shame. I can only thank you most heartily. Will you please send with a trustworthy person the letter enclosed, recommending that it be delivered immediately, because it is very urgent.

I am sorry I could not bring your dear Santina with me here. Don't mind the way things have turned out. I expect to have her back soon.

My sincere regards to your esteemed wife and warm wishes to Santina. Kindly send me back the two cloaks I forgot there. With deep esteem.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Respectable Dear Mister
ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO

Urgent, please

Letter 248

TO A FRIEND

Concern for her friend - She encourages her to bear suffering.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 22 September 1832.

I sincerely care for you, nor can I ever forget you. Since the last time that God put your patience to the test, I have had no further news of you. Perhaps you have been severely reprimanded. However, remember that we never serve the Lord so well as when we suffer something for his sake. Let your self-love protest if it must, you have only to be generous and tread it underfoot. Be firm, my dear, have courage; the path to Heaven is thorny, narrow and hard to go by, but we must walk along it with firmness, otherwise we may easily lose heart.

Remember that you have made great promises to the Lord, and you have to keep them at the cost of much suffering. Lovingly kiss the left hand of Jesus who is striking you, and keep in mind that you have to remain faithful to him, cost what it may.

Frequently call to mind the saying of the Servant of God, Fr Paolo Cafaro: «We must suffer, sweat, labour and tire ourselves out to become Saints».

I hope to see you soon. Ask permission for it humbly, beg for it, and you will get it. I recommend to you Holy Communion and Prayer. Remember that you have now to be more careful in fulfilling your duties. Recommend me to God in your prayers, I beg of you, this week especially. I leave you at the feet of the Crucified Lord, that you may become a Saint.

Goodbye.

Your loving Sister

BORT. CAPIT.

Letter 249

TO HER SISTER

She announces her departure from home - She entrusts their Mother to her care.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Most Gentle and Dear Sister,

Please hand the enclosed letter to our dear Mamma yourself. From it you will come to know the date fixed for my sacrifice. Dear Sister, offer it with me, you too, and let us beg God to accept it graciously. It costs me very, very much that I have to go away and leave you: you know how dearly I love you ... But ... God is Lord of all ... Try to be comforted yourself and at the same time to comfort our good, afflicted Mother. Your sorrow is the greatest distress that weighs on my own heart ...

I would have a thousand things to tell you, but tears and sorrow choke every word I could say ... Forgive me the many times I hurt you. I assure you that I cherish in my heart all the good you have done me, and I will be grateful to you for it before God.

Remember that I expect you to avail yourself of my help in any service I can render you, for I will always be at your service. If you do, I will know how much you love me. Once

again I entrust Mamma to your care; do on my behalf what I would have done for Her. She deserves all the good done to her. Look after Grandma. Remember also the good Flaminia. Let her stay in my place.

I beg you to remember me in your Prayer. With a thousand kisses, I leave you at the foot of the Cross to become a Saint.

Just now, 16 November (1832).

Your affectionate and grateful Sister

BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Miss

CAMILLA CAPITANIO

To be delivered in her hands

Letter 250

TO HER MOTHER

She takes leave of her Mother with reassuring expressions of love.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearest and most beloved Mother,

Impelled by duty and to my own sorrow, I am about to take a step that is very painful to me and that will also bring sorrow to your heart. My Superiors have decided that next Monday I should open the School in the building that has been chosen, and that on Wednesday I should go to live there with my companions. The aim is to start the Institute for which they are working so hard, in the hope that it will bear beneficial fruit for the good of society. Though I know that this news will inflict a fresh wound in your heart because of the love you have for me, and that by telling you ahead of time I am only anticipating your sorrow, yet out of respect and obedience that I owe you, I am communicating it to you before telling anybody else, with the request that you accompany me with your holy blessing. I need not tell you how hard it is for me to offer in sacrifice a Mother to whom I owe so much or rather, to whom, next to God, I owe my whole self. Your sorrow weighs heavily on my

heart; it is so grievous that without God's help I would be unable to overcome it. I assure you that had I not clearly understood that my vocation is truly willed by God, I would not take this step for all the gold of the world. However, God is the Lord of all; let us offer Him this sacrifice, Mother dear: you of a Daughter you have always loved so much and I of a Mother for whom I profess love, respect and the utmost veneration. Our sacrifice will be pleasing to Him, and one day he will reward us for it.

With my whole heart and with tears in my eyes I humbly beg you to forgive me so much sorrow I inflicted on your heart, so many times I displeased you and disobeyed you. Forgive me everything and think of me kindly, always. With my whole being I thank you for so much care and the incalculable good you have done to me. My heart throbs with warm gratitude which I wish I could express to you even if it meant offering my life-blood as a rendering of thanks to you. However, remember that I will not cease to be yours; I assure you that you will be doing me a very special favour every time you avail yourself of my help, in whatever I can please you.

May you be comforted by the thought that though our separation will be painful, yet our reunion in Heaven will be much more joyous, and we shall bless the sacrifice that won for us such a great reward from God.

Concerning Santina, if she is dear to you, and you don't mind the trouble, you could keep her at home and let her come to School.

But if you find it too difficult to keep her, we shall keep her at the Place¹ all the time. Just do about it as you prefer.

I would need a bed by Wednesday evening. I beg you to give me one, whichever you like. If you are happy about it, I will ask someone to carry the School desks and the two benches to the Place.

May Jesus and Mary be your comfort. My dear sister will be there to cheer you. Once again I implore your Blessing and the help of your Prayer for me; with a thousand loving kisses, I profess the privilege of being

Just now, 16 November (1832).

Your loving, devoted and humble Daughter

BORTOLAMEA

¹ The new Institute building.

Letter 251

TO SR. FRANCESCA PARPANI

Her happiness in her new state-of-life - She exhorts her not to drop Holy Communion out of fear of her faults.

HAIL TO JESUS

AND HIS MOST ADORABLE WILL

Most beloved Mother Mistress,

I am sure you have prayed for me, and since I am very much obliged to you, I cannot let two days pass without writing to you. I am very happy to be in the Lord's Sheepfold. Though he has permitted things to happen in such a way that I am quite alone these first days here, yet the company of my God and of my dear Mamma Mary is all the more keenly felt as a sweet and gentle presence. They are helping me in a way that can be expected of them! I have no fear because I am in the hands of God who loves me as a Father. I am incapable of even the slightest good work, but he can do all things in me, and I surrender myself entirely to him. Continue to pray for me, I beg of you. I am in great need of your prayers, for these are moments of struggle and of pain.

Dear Mother Mistress, Heaven is beautiful beyond compare; we must gain it by sheer suffering; Saints are fashioned through their cross. Take heart. Let us endure

everything for the sake of a most deserving God. Abandon yourself totally to Him, for He is a really good Father. In the Lord's name I tell you that you wrong Him if you again omit Holy Communion when you are aware of defects in yourself. Instead, approach him with greater trust because he is more obliged to be compassionate and kind to you.

Forgive me if I am too bold. For charity's sake, help me. A line from you would make me extremely glad. I deeply revere you. We shall meet at the foot of the Cross. Say an *Agimus*¹ to God on my behalf.

Lovere, 22 November (1832).

Your grateful, loving Pupil

CAP. BORT.

To Very Reverend Mother

MOTHER FRANCESCA PARPANI

at St Clare's Convent.

¹ *We give you thanks...*

Letter 252

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She begs him to celebrate a Mass - She advises him to hold on firmly to the drawing up of a contract.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Our memory failed us on Christmas Day: we did not ask you, as we usually do, to offer a Mass for both of us. We don't want to lose the habit, however, and so we would like you to offer it for our intention on New Year's Day. Tell the Lord whatever you wish on our behalf, for our needs have redoubled. Let me say just a word about our Chapel. I entreat you with all my heart to hold on steadfastly and see to it that the contract be drawn up. Don't expect a further word from Catterina, but you can be sure that she will in fact do much more than what she says. The obstacles we are coming up against in this undertaking make us sure that it will be of great benefit to many. And so, take your courage in both hands and do all that is possible to succeed. You must hold on to the principle that you, Reverend Father, are continually repeating to us: «Trials are necessary for the surer success of the most perfect enterprises».

Be sure, besides, that you are not taking a hasty step, because I myself know that Catterina is free to make use of certain resources. It is only her excessive shy that makes her have doubts. Have patience with me and forgive the excessive liberty that I take. For charity's sake, commend me to the Lord.

May Baby Jesus forgive my sins and burn out what in us is not His; may he truly be our absolute Lord. With humble respect and profound reverence.

Just now, 28 December (1832).

Your grateful Daughter

BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

YEAR 1833

Letter 253

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She sends her a book with the wish that she be wholly owned by the Lord.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY WILL

Dearest Sister,

I could not send you earlier the booklet you wish to have; I am sending it to you now. Please let me have it back as soon as you can, because it is the only copy I have.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. You know already the need I am in.

I wish to see you wholly owned by the Lord; work hard for Him who has reserved for you an everlasting reward. Give my wishes to Canossi, my best regards to those at your own home and to Fr. Guarinoni, who paid me a very welcome visit.

I am ever close to you in the Name of the Lord.

Love, 31 January 1833.

Yours loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Lady

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 254

TO A FRIEND

News of her new state of religious life - In practice she finds it a real death to self.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY WILL

Beloved Friend and Sister,

Lovere, 31 January 1833.

I am breaking our long silence at last. I have been through so many happenings, my dear, and now I finally find myself in the Lord's Sheepfold, as you must have come to know by now. My heart rejoices at it, and every day I feel happier and happier. I cannot say, however, that my desires have been totally fulfilled, because in this place where I am with two companions, one as a housemaid and the other as a Sister, but who one day will be my Superior, there is no precise plan at all, no Rule, no method; at the moment we even have to leave the house to go to Church. However, everything is based on charity and obedience; everything is done in an orderly manner, and little by little we are settling down. We do hope that what we have in mind will soon be firmly established.

To be quite frank with you, I have always thought of religious life as a real death to self. In actual fact I find it even more truly so.

With no right to manage your own life, you must always comply with the ways of others, adapt yourself in everything to others, trample self-love underfoot, forget yourself for love's sake, keep silent, bear patiently and look cheerful, and have no bent even for the holiest things the moment it does not fit in with the duties of your state, in short, to be as good as dead to everything so as to live of Jesus Christ alone and of his most Holy Will. It is a truly crucified life. But oh! How sweet it is made by our loveable Spouse who graciously accepts the sacrifices of his Handmaids! I would not change it for all other joys, by which I mean not merely those of the world but even spiritual consolations, because what makes me perfectly happy is the certainty that I am doing the Will of God. Kindly commend me to the Lord, and beg him to let me die rather than be an obstacle to his work.

Please do drop me a couple of lines. Your friendship is something that I cherish, and if you happen to be passing round here, a visit from you would give me much joy.

Give my wishes to Chiodi. Let us love our beloved Jesus who is wholly ours for love's sake, and let us bear gladly what he sends us. Heaven awaits us; let us have courage in our suffering, for up there we shall be happy for all eternity. With all my heart, Goodbye.

Your ever loving Sister
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 255

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She encloses an offering for a Mass - She dissuades him from conducting the Spiritual Exercises at the Canossians' and tells him to look after his health - She comforts him in the Heart of Jesus.

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

I am enclosing a small offering for the Mass celebrated in our Oratorio¹, with my thanks. Allow me to tell you one thing: though a hundred times I said to myself that I would not speak to you about it, yet I just can't keep quiet and say nothing. It seems to me that, considering your poor health, the Lord does not want you to conduct the Spiritual Exercises at the Canossians' House. I earnestly urge you to withdraw your engagement with the Nuns so that they may have the time to engage another preacher, because they are counting on your promise and they will be greatly upset if, later on, you are unable to keep your word.

I heartily entreat you to have a little more care of your health; remember you do not own yourself, but should keep well for the benefit of your neighbour, for such is the obligation of your state-in-life. Apply to yourself what you so kindly suggest to others: «The Lord's Ass must be well looked-after if

¹ See footnote pg 55.

it has to have the strength to carry its burden». You would be doing a real wrong to Our Lord, who with so much charity commands you to look after your health, if you don't allow yourself that much. Do all that is possible to rid your heart of all dejection; hand over to the Divine Heart everything that weighs heavily on your mind and you will see how in that Source you will find once more the best reason for remaining cheerful.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. I wish you all that is good. Forgive me for taking so much liberty. Ever devotedly and gratefully

From the beloved House of Charity

11 February (1833).

Yours devoted and humble Daughter

The Unworthy Bride of Jesus Christ

B.C.

To Esteemed Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 256

TO THE SAME

She wishes him to clear a misunderstanding with Gerosa over some construction work in the new house - She refers to a picture of St Vincent de Paul given her by L. Cismondi.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY WILL

Very Reverend Father,

Allow me to trouble you with a few lines. I am a bit worried over yesterday's misunderstanding regarding the gate and wall meant to be erected around the playground etc. I was to blame for the misunderstanding because Catterina had warmly recommended me, yesterday morning, to tell you to come and see and she had ordered the masons not to do anything before she had consulted you.

I told you about it in a casual sort of way and so, thinking that the matter was not so urgent, you were late in coming, and Catterina, not to leave the labourers idle, told them to start, believing you would agree to it; she was upset and anxious when she realized that you, Rev Father, thought differently.

I suggest you take the earliest opportunity to speak to her and so hear how she feels about it, and I am sure you will find yourselves in perfect agreement.

In fact, taking it for granted that you, Rev. Father, sought what is best, Catterina had to support your intention and plans and she told the labourers to stop working till she agreed with you on what was to be done. It may be useful for you to know all this; excuse me if I am too bold.

I am very glad our dear Father Saint Vincent de Paul has come to our house, though we neither sought him nor even thought of having him. He made up for our negligence because Lucia Cismondi presented us with his picture. We like it more than we can say. We conclude from this that he cares for us and that from now on he wants to be the Patron Saint of our House, and so he will also be its Protector, Founder and Advocate. Please come soon to see it. I am sure you will be pleased with it.

For charity's sake commend me, in my poverty, to the Lord; entreat Him to have pity on me. I wish and pray that God may accompany with his blessing the plans you have formed for his glory and that he may make of you a great Saint.
With deep reverence

Lovere, 10 March (1833).

Yours faithfully Daughter

B. C. Handmaid of JESUS CHRIST