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UNDATED LETTERS
written between 1824 and 1833

Letter 257

TO MARTA ANDREOLI
Condolence to a young girl.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sister and Friend,

Love, 9 April.

News reached me of the misfortunes that have befallen your family. I am at a loss for words to express my grief and sorrow at this news. In all simplicity I do assure you that your situation moves me to compassion. I can well understand the grief that fills your heart at such misfortunes. Dearest Marta, the loss you have had, the illness your dear ones at home are still suffering from, are, humanly speaking, too immense and hard to bear, and human nature cannot help feeling the whole burden of it all. And yet, my dear, in the midst of all these afflictions, lift your eyes to the Crucified Lord, look up to Heaven and remember that in making you like him in suffering, Jesus is offering you the greatest grace. Remember that Heaven is yours, and there you will have a reward that

surpasses all suffering. In the midst of your distress remember very often to say to Jesus: «*Fiat voluntas tua*¹». That is the finest protest you could make to him, and the greatest sacrifice you could offer him. Have a boundless trust in Him. He will be a most loving Father to you. He will help you in every need: He will keep you steadfast in all your distress and hold you ever so dear as his own child. My dearest, wipe away every tear from your eyes. Jesus is letting you suffer because he loves you. Jesus is sending you pain because he has a reward in store for you. Place your trust also in Mary most Blessed. She is your beloved Mamma and she loves you in a very special way. Under her protection you will be safe. If I can be of any help to you, I should be extremely happy. In that case, don't hesitate to ask me. Commend me to the Lord, I beg of you. May Jesus be your comfort and Mary your hope. Wishing you all the best. I am

Your loving Friend

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Dear Young woman

MARTA ANDREOLI

PIAZZE D'ARTOGNE.

¹ "Your will be done".

Letter 258

TO VOLUNNIA BANZOLINI

She encloses devotional practices for the Novena of the Purification.

Dearly beloved Sister,

Here is the Novena you wanted. I cannot keep my promise right now, but I will write as soon as I can. For charity's sake, commend me to God. I take leave of you in the Heart of Jesus: there you will fall head over heels with love. I am.

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary
B. C.

To esteemed Lady

VOLUNNIA BANZOLINI

To be delivered in her hands CORTI.

NOVENA OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

1. Say 9 times daily: «Lord, make me know your will and help me carry it out».

2. Carry out duties your self-love shrinks from.
3. Recite 3 times daily the hymn *Ave Maris Stella*.
4. Every time the clock strikes the hour, offer your heart to Mary and at the sound of the *Angelus bell*, place yourself in spirit in Mary's motherly care.
5. Be very modest in dress, speech, manner, walking, etc.
6. Say 3 times during the day: «Mary, my dear Mother, watch over my Virginité».
7. Abstain from fruit every other day.

HAIL TO MARY

Letter 259

TO BARTOLOMEA N.

She makes manifest to her the high standards of holiness God is calling her to.

HAIL TO THE CRUCIFIED LOVE

Beloved Sister and Friend in Jesus Christ,

Though I am rather tired, I cannot go to bed without openly telling you, through this letter, what I have in my heart. For a long time now I have been keeping certain thoughts of you in my heart, nor could I set them aside for a moment, but I never dared mention them to you because I supposed they were prompted by my pride rather than inspired by God. However, I now feel I cannot keep from you any longer what my heart holds about you. Be it as it may, I feel something within me urging me to speak out quite frankly ... Beloved Bartolomea, Jesus wants you to be a Saint, a great Saint ... He has chosen you as his dearly beloved Bride. He has formed over you the loftiest designs; He has called you to a particular holiness. He is not satisfied with a mediocre virtue from you; He expects you to kick out every hint of human respect, and that you embrace a way of life that is woven of the most heroic virtues. He desires that the sweet odour of

your virtues may be felt everywhere and that you may be edifying to all.

Dearly beloved, Jesus wants to have your heart, your love. He is jealous of your purity. He is ardently seeking you and wishes you to be his in a most special way.

Heaven is beautiful, too, and it is worth every effort we can make to obtain it. But our dear Jesus himself is much more beautiful and it is for his sake alone that we should do all things.

We are most blessed if we could love God from our heart: that would be an anticipated Heaven. What else can we desire more than that? ... At the point of death how happy we shall be if we can say: I shall soon possess what I have always yearned for, and loved with all my heart!

Allow me to add one thing: for a long time I have not been able to see you nor speak to you without sensing the divine grace at work within you and wanting to tell you that he expects something great from you: I seem to see this even drawn on your countenance. In my cold and poor prayers I cannot forget you: I keep telling the Lord to let himself be heard clearly and be obeyed by you.

I ardently desire to see you soon as a great Saint; I wish to see you madly in love with Jesus, I wish to see you raised to the sublime heights of holiness.

Forgive me, my dear, if I speak to you with such liberty; the sincere love I have for you, your goodness of heart I am too well aware of, have made me so bold.

Please do not take it ill. I wish you could look into my heart and see with what intention I have spoken to you.

Rest assured that I have a deep esteem for you, as you so well deserve. Every time I had the opportunity to mention you, God knows that I have rightly praised your virtue and your prudence. If I now speak to you in this way, I don't do it because I hold you in less esteem, but because I know that God is calling you to a very special way of life, and I wish what is best for you.

In return for this friendly liberty that I have taken, I want two kind favours from you. One of them is that you earnestly recommend me to God. I wish I could show you what I am in need of to secure your interest in my benefit; just do it for charity's sake. The other is this: after reading this letter you may throw it into the fire and don't speak of it with anyone. I trust you will do both favours.

Dearly beloved, I shall be waiting for you at the feet of the Crucified Love. May this God who dies for our sake fill us with a passionate love for him and make us wholly his for ever. I am

Your grateful, loving Sister and Friend
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary
B.C.

Letter 260

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She humbly asks various permissions.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Superior,

I wanted to hand over two papers to you today, but as Rev. Father Verzi was there, I dared not. I am sending them to you now. I had also supposed I would manage to ask your permission to buy some booklets and holy pictures without telling my Parents, and also to ask if you approved of my going on a visit to Our Lady of Rezzato, because I heard that my Parents wish to take me there. As I did not ask you, I am at least letting you know of it, presuming that you would have been willing to comply.

For charity's sake I beg you to commend me in a particular way to the Lord, that I may not offend Him nor lose inner quiet and silence. I ask to have your holy Blessing and the merit of obedience down to every step that I will take.

I am very eager to visit Our Lady of Graces, my own dear Mamma. I trust She will have compassion on my poverty.

P.S. I had better tell you one more thing. In case Don Fortini insists on taking me one day to his town, renewing the proposal already made to me several times, I am also informing you, as I should like to have your permission. To tell you the truth, I would not be reluctant to go as it would give me an opportunity to move about.

With profound respect and sincere regards, I humbly profess to be.

Yours faithful Servant and Daughter in J. C.
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary
B.C.

To Very Reverend Father
DON ANGELO BOSIO
To be delivered in his hands

Letter 261

TO THE SAME

She begs effective humiliations.

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

For your information I am telling you that if you want to humble me, what does humble me most is mentioning any of the defects of pride noted down in the papers enclosed. May I add that when at times, when you were hearing my Confession, you referred to some particular defect, I felt so ashamed that I never again fell into it.

Commend me to God, I earnestly implore you. With profound reverence I profess to be.

Your humble and devoted Daughter in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA C.

Letter 262

TO THE SAME

She invites him to the Sodality of St Aloysius.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY WILL

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

The heavenly Infant (Mary) sends you to work for her sake. I gave Fr Taeri his assignment yesterday.

If you can spare a few minutes after lunch, St Aloysius would ask you to use them for the benefit of his devotees. We shall be waiting for you in the Sacristy of our Sodality.

For charity's sake I commend myself to your Prayer; at this moment I am extremely weak; unless God helps me I will commit some blunder again.

Humbly imploring your Blessing I am

Yours faithful Servant and Daughter

BORTOLAMEA

Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and Mary

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 263

TO THE SAME

She comforts him when about to leave for Breno.

HAIL TO JESUS CRUCIFIED AND OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Though I am very tired tonight, and sleepy too, I cannot do without writing this letter to you: practically the whole day an inner voice kept saying to me, «Write to your Confessor»; what to write I myself don't know. I have heard how sorry all your family members were at the news that you will perhaps have to leave for Breno.

This made me think of the greater distress you may be in; and yet I tell you: I feel that God will grant the grace to leave you here, and even suppose it is really God's will that you should go to that blessed Breno, I am sure God will work on the hearts of all your dear ones and on yours as well in such a way that what now seems so hard will not be so difficult after all, because the carrying out of God's will, whatever it may cost, is always sweet. When I pray for this thing I always seem to hear the answer: «Leave it to me. I know what I am doing.

In the end you will be happy about it». As far as I am concerned, I know only too well that it serves me right that you leave, since I have responded so poorly to your fervent exhortations and to the concern that you have for my spiritual good. However, I have promised God that if he hears my prayer I will respond much better in future. What if the Lord through this cross is expecting something from you too? ...

I beg you not to mind my boldness which, I admit, is far too much, but if you have indeed to blame me for it, you must also blame your humility that makes me have the courage.

To tell you the truth, I greatly fear that you may be about to fall in some serious illness, and so I earnestly beg you to be calm and not worry so much.

Leave everything to God, and He will make you happy. He is so good that He will never abandon those who serve Him, and with more reason those who seek to do His will. Besides, God will not reject the prayers that so many people are offering to him over this matter.

On my part I have also told the girls of the Sodality of St Aloysius to pray hard for this purpose, without telling them the exact reason, and their fervour is such that it makes me hope that God will hear their supplications.

Finally, in one way or another, God is bound to comfort you and all those who are most hard hit by this blow.

Now I must beg you to forgive the liberty I have taken to write in this manner. I myself realize that I have done a thing that does not concern me at all, but I would like you to know my

aim in doing it, and also to have an idea how I feel about it; that should be enough to justify my boldness.

One word for me, too: I commend my paper to you. I know that I am a regular nuisance and not prudent at all in such situations, but you must forgive me. I beg you to drop a word to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, for me as well. Commend my poor soul to Him, for I am in extreme need of it.

I wish you every blessing and consolation from Above, and once again I apologize. With profound esteem and grateful thanks.

Yours faithful Daughter in Christ

CAP. BORTOLAMEA

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 264

TO THE SAME

A sisterly pact - Wishes for his mission preaching - She entreats him to have no fear of ending up in hell.

HAIL TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am enclosing for you the Novena of the Sacred Heart. I would very much wish you to add something to it yourself, Rev. Father.

Since you have been so kind as to accept me as a sister in well-doing, I make bold to beg you to make the intention of renewing this pact every time you have to give the Absolution to anyone. On my part I have made the intention of renewing my pact with you every time I kiss Jesus or Mary.

If you feel any inspiration for my poor soul, don't drive it away.

I haven't had the time to write out the method of life nor what I mentioned to you the other day. I will give it to you on your return from the preaching of the Missions. The Sacred Heart of Jesus will surely help you in your labour for Him. I wish you every success in all that you undertake for his sake, and also an immense love of God that will consume you through and through.

You must know (nor can I remain silent on it) that you do a great wrong to the good Jesus every time you say that you will end up in hell. It is an offence to Him because you can be sure he wants you in Heaven, and in a very high place, too. Each time such a thought comes to you, drive it away at once because, I repeat, you do a very great wrong to the infinite mercy of the sweet Jesus who with countless graces is preparing you for Heaven.

In haste I pay my respects to you. Look after your health. I am

Yours devoted Daughter in Christ

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 265

TO THE SAME

She proposes devotional practices for a fellow member.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

This is poor Bortolamea who humbly pays her respects to you and commends herself to your charity. The good Giulia Romelli wishes to do something extra during the Novena because the Feast of the Annunciation is the anniversary of her Holy Betrothal to Jesus Christ. She therefore requests you to let her carry out the few practices noted down in the paper enclosed. If you have no objection, you need not return the paper to me, because I have made a copy of it. I will take your silence to mean a kind consent. If not, please let me know.

This evening, if you have a moment free, I beg you to devote it to my soul by hearing my Confession.

May God make of you a great Saint: this is my heartfelt wish.

Yours poor Servant and Daughter in J.

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy Handmaid of Jesus

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 266

TO THE SAME

Trust in Maria Bambina - Complaints concerning St Aloysius.

HAIL TO THE HEAVENLY INFANT MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am sending you some more work to do for Mary's sake. She never leaves us idle, not even for a day; but she is quite right to make us work for her, since she herself is all the time working and striving for us. I will send it to Rev. Fr. Taeri today, on your behalf, because you will certainly have no time to do so, while I will find time somehow.

By now the Lord has restored my usual gladness, and even more, because I am *beside myself* with gladness. The dear, loveable 'Bambina' looks upon the most needy and helps them. Nevertheless, I am expecting some cross soon, very soon. It doesn't matter, anyway, for the Lord will help me; otherwise I will surely betray Him. I hope, or rather I am sure, that the sweet Bambina will also comfort you, Reverend Father. Do place all your afflictions in Mary's Cradle and She will turn every one of them into heavenly joys. For charity's sake, put in a word for me too. I beg you, out of charity, to give

me permission to get up on waking up for the first time during the night to honour the beloved Bambina and keep her company for an hour. If my stomach ache is worse than usual, I beg you to let me say the prayers sitting up in bed. The fervent M. Conti asks you the same permission through me.

Reverend Father, you treated my dear St Aloysius too badly, yesterday, and I am afraid he may have been a bit displeased with you. To make peace with Him, you must think of something that he will appreciate. I cannot help thinking that St Aloysius will be really pleased if you could see what you can do for the young man Gennari so that, if God is truly calling him to the priesthood, he may give serious thought to it. St Aloysius is watching over him from heaven and you, Reverend Father, will support him here on earth, for I do hope God has special designs over him. Thank God the members of the Sodality of St Aloysius are not leaving Lovere till after the middle of next week, and so we are holding a Meeting on Wednesday. If you can spare a moment for us, we shall be waiting for you. St Aloysius will reward you for it.

Forgive my boldness. I commend myself to your kind prayer. Bless me. I am

Yours faithful Servant and Daughter in Jesus
The Handmaid of Jesus. B.C.

To Very Reverend Father
DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 267

TO THE SAME

She sends him scripts after a special prayer to St Aloysius.

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

As agreed upon, I am sending you the method of life and the other paper you told me to draw up. To tell you the truth, I felt at a loss how to do something that was, and is, quite beyond my limited capacity, and I almost had no will even to try. But then I firmly said to St Aloysius: «If you want and are keen on being honoured, teach me how you wish it to be done; you must dictate the words and I will take the slight trouble to write them down».

After that, I recited some short prayer for the work in hand, and then without delay I began to write, jotting down on the paper whatever came to mind. It is up to you, then, to correct what is wrong, add what is lacking and cancel what is not needed or not appropriate.

The Union Meeting, if you have no objection, will be on Monday, about midday, in the Sacristy of our Sodality.

Not to tire you out in reading so much scribbling, I conclude with the request that you have me in mind in your prayer. And with my sincere regards.

Sr. Celeste asked me many times to convey her regards to you, and so I pay respects to you in her name in fulfilment of that duty.

Yours faithful Servant and Daughter in J. C.

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 268

TO THE SAME

She sends papers - invites him to a Sodality Meeting.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

I am enclosing some papers. As to the Novena of the Assumption, I will give it to you soon. Kindly convey my respects to Rev. Fr. Taeri. After lunch, that is, after midday, if you are free, we shall be waiting for you at the Sodality premises. I heartily commend myself to your charity.

I bow to you in reverence. I am

Just now.

Yours poor Servant and Daughter in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA, the Handmaid of Jesus

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 269

TO THE SAME

She asks for the paper on the "Weeks of St Aloysius" - and for permission to sit down for her meditation.

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Kindly send me with Teresa the first paper on the Weeks of the Sodality of St Aloysius, and also the paper with the formula of the Act of Consecration, because I forgot to ask you for them; the Weeks I do have were already done by them twice over.

I have also one permission to ask of you: if I may sometimes sit down for the evening Meditation because at times I have back ache or pain in my legs and if I remain kneeling down in spite of it, it is a sort of distraction. However, to be honest, the pain is not so bad and my self-indulgence is extreme. So if you prefer to withhold your permission, I will be equally glad and I will manage it without much trouble. I have actually done this thing, I mean sitting down, already, three or four times last week. I meant to tell you about it, but I forgot.

For God's sake, I beg of you, commend me to God. With profound respect I implore your blessing and sign off

Your devoted, grateful Daughter in J. C.

CAPITANIO B.

Letter 270

TO THE SAME

Her gladness to be in the company of L. Cismondi - Wishes to M. Superior Gerosa - Postscript by L. Cismondi.

Very Reverend Father esteemed Confessor,

By God's merciful love we have had a very pleasant journey, but we arrived here late - towards 10 o'clock. My good friend (who is now playing the Mother to me and is all the time telling me to do things for obedience' sake) is very busy writing to the Bishop. While she writes to him she gave me the 'obedience' to write to you, Rev. Father, with the understanding, however, that she adds a few lines herself. From her I am learning every kind of virtue, especially humility. Our Lord could not deal a greater blow to my pride as he has done by putting under my eyes such a living example of humility. May it be pleasing to Him that I profit from it. I shall continue to receive Holy Communion regularly: I am sorry to have so many sins. May God give me at least sufficient sorrow to have them wiped away even without going to Confession.

Kindly convey a hundred-thousand wishes to all your family, especially to your Sisters and Nieces. Don't fail, I implore

you, to pay my respects to my dear Mother Superior Catterina Gerosa; tell her I will soon be back to trouble her, and in the meantime to do my share of the work as well.

Excuse my awful handwriting. With sincere reverence I beg you to remember in your kind prayer even the poor Bortolamea.

Very Reverend Father,

As I wish to obey you always I am writing this enclosed letter.

My heart overflows with gladness as I see in my friend the most living image of all virtues. For charity's sake, Reverend Father, say a prayer for me, because if I am not aroused at the sight of all these good examples, I cannot hope I will ever be. With deep esteem, the pitiful Cismondi.

Letter 271

TO THE SAME

She wants him to know the poor state of her soul - She receives the withholding of a permission gladly - Love for her vows - God wants the Institute to be founded.

HAIL TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

At last, after nearly eight months, I have made up my mind to show you my daily register, my continual failures in my method of life and my defects of pride. I earnestly pray the Lord to let you see as in a mirror the poor state of my soul and to make you understand all the needs I myself am unaware of, and which my pride keeps hidden from your kind heart. For charity's sake alone continue to watch over me and lead me along the path God wills for me. I do wish it, I think, though in my sinfulness I keep going against the Lord's merciful designs over me.

The objection you raised to my vow etc. left in me such a trust that my request will soon be complied with, that my heart was filled with joy. I assure you that these chains are not

burdensome at all. In fact, when I want to summon up fresh courage and joy, I think of the bonds I have with Jesus Christ and though I am aware that I am always and all the time unfaithful, yet they still give me strength at the thought that they keep me united to my Divine Spouse.

I recommend to you the dear, longed-for Institute. Be even importunate if you must, in order to put it underway. God wants it and that is good reason enough.

I commend my poor soul to you. Remember it with the Lord now and then. May the loveable St Aloysius obtain for you and for me special graces, particularly that of imitating him.

Mother Mistress Parpani is waiting to see you; kindly attend to her.

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

Yours faithful Daughter in J. C.

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 272

TO THE SAME

*She sends him scripts to see - She invites directions and corrections -
Her suggestion in case of sudden death - She commends the Institute.*

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

My Revered Superior,

Three months have passed since I last showed you my daily notes on my method of life. Now allow me to send them to you together with two papers about general defects of pride. After recommending myself to God I wrote something for the current month, but I dare not send it to my dear Lucia Cismondi if it has not been seen and corrected by you, Reverend Father. I earnestly implore you, for charity's sake, not to spare me if you have any inspiration that concerns me. I will do my best to put into practice what you teach me. I realize that it is in itself a punishment from God when he at times does not let you, Rev. Father, tell me what you perhaps would have said if I had always been faithful in carrying out what you have been continually proposing to me. All the same I beg and entreat you to be kind to my poor soul. My sinfulness is most

distressing: several times today I could not help weeping over it. However, I don't want to get disheartened. I have placed all my hope in Jesus and next to Him in my dear Mamma, the most loveable Maria Bambina. I hope to receive special graces, particularly that of never abandoning my dear Jesus. I pray to Him and I would like to pray to Him a thousand times every moment, to let me die a hundred times and more rather than stray from Him and I sincerely trust that my dear Mamma will obtain that grace for me.

I beg of you one more kindness. In case the Lord has reserved for me a sudden death, I pray you. Rev. Father, to give me Holy Absolution as soon as you hear of it. On my part I shall pray God (if he has that lot in store for me) to give me the grace of making an act of sorrow for my sins and of intending to receive Absolution and I do hope that God in his infinite mercy will graciously receive it just as if it had actually been done.

I cannot end this letter without at least a word on the longed-for Institute. I have not yet lost hope though I clearly realize that I alone, on account of my sins, am the impediment to that holy undertaking. Well, let God do what is best and I am glad. He knows my yearning, my vows, my prayers, my desires for that cause.

I ask you to bless me. I am.

Your poor, unworthy Daughter in J.

BORTOLAMEA, I wish I could say 'of Jesus'

Letter 273

TO THE SAME

She reports on her deep-rooted pride - She submits "Weeks" of St Aloysius, written by her with assistance of the said Saint - She solicits the founding of the Institute - She begs extra penances and suggests a general rule in granting permissions.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am sending you a bundle of papers to see; as you never have anything to do, I am giving you something to do not to leave you idle!

Among them you will find papers with defects of pride I have committed over the last 13 months; for indeed it is so long since I last sent you any papers of this sort! To make what you find in them more complete, I must tell you something which, again due to pride, I have never been capable of telling you by word of mouth, and it is this: I am proud because I want to be so, because I love it. However much I pray God to grant me Holy Humility, I do not really desire it, and I often neglect the opportunities that come my way to humble myself. Nor must you think that I am saying

these things with genuine humility; no, I am saying it out of pride, thinking that it will make you consider me humble for saying it. However, I know that this virtue is most essential, and so I am in constant fear for my eternal salvation; on the other hand, next to God and my Mamma Mary, there is my dear St Aloysius in whom I have placed all my trust; I do hope he will obtain for me the grace of becoming truly humble as he was.

I am also sending you, at last, all the papers I wrote out for the Sodality of my beloved St Aloysius, Please have a look and correct them, as you think best. In fact, I must tell you with all sincerity that except for the writing and the mistakes, nothing is mine, and the credit for all that is right, goes to St Aloysius. Every time I set myself to this work, I always called on him to help me, and I have experienced his help in a tangible manner, because he put in my mind and, as it were, on the tip of my pen, what I had to write.

So much so, I assure you, that when I now and then tried to omit something that he put into my mind because I did not think it suitable, nothing came to mind, however much I tried to think of something else and jot it down, till in the end I did write down what he wanted. In writing the 'Weeks' I did not follow any order; I would very much like you, Rev. Father, to arrange them in a sequence by marking them numerically: 1,2,3, etc. However, if you have no mind for it, I will do it myself when I copy out everything in the notebook prepared purposely for it.

Allow me to beg you as earnestly as I can, to take to heart

the foundation of the Institute that you intend to found in our town. For charity's sake don't let any obstacles in your way daunt you, but rise above them all.

The undertaking is a holy one, it is God's work, and he wishes it. So have no fear, for he will help you all through and in the end he will reward you as you very much deserve for all your trouble.

As I myself cannot take any concrete step, I assure you I will do my best to make many pray the Lord for this intention, and I earnestly hope that the moment for action is close at hand. And so avail yourself of all favourable means that present themselves and do your utmost to start this enterprise that is God's work in all respects. I know you are already even too much taken up with this holy undertaking and need no one to urge you on, nor do I wish to do so myself by telling you about it. But it is to give vent to my ardent wishes, and tell you how I long for the hour and moment when I can retire in some House of the Lord and be able to say to him, «Now I am wholly yours; I no longer have relatives, nor friends, nor comforts, nor possessions, nor anything that separates me from you».

Every day is like a year to me, and I find no comfort except in thinking of my longed-for Retreat.

I am also enclosing a paper with practices for Carnival Time which I wish to do in addition to the few already approved of.

You must know that, due to a slight scruple I had, I have thought I had better abide by the first reply you give me in answer to my request for permission to do some act of

penance; and so I beg you, when I make such requests, don't be so strict, but give me straightaway what you are ready to give me if I ask you repeatedly or if I show myself obstinate to get it.

Kindly commend me to the Lord; unworthy though I am, I do the same for you.

Taboni and Romelli as well as Viganoni, asked me to give you their respects. It is late in the night and my eyes are heavy with sleep, and so I finish this scribbling of mine and humbly express my profound respect for you.

P.S. When you have finished seeing the papers of the Sodality of St Aloysius, kindly return them to me that I may copy them out in the notebook; please excuse me if the papers look soiled from so much use. In addition, I beg you also to write out for me the '*Collect*' of St Aloysius for the Act of Consecration, because I don't like to meddle with Latin. With reverence and grateful thanks.

Sunday, 21 January, during the night.

Your devoted and humble Spiritual Daughter

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 274

TO THE SAME

Her zeal for the Sodality of St Aloysius and the members' positive response to it.

PRAISE BE TO GOD

Reverend Father Confessor,

I am enclosing a paper with information on the current situation of the small Sodality entrusted to the care of the great St Aloysius Gonzaga. May God grant that the protection of this Saint and the care taken by Your Reverence be of some benefit both to myself and to the members. To be frank with you, I never come away from the Meeting of any Sodality (apart from the Union of the Sacred Heart) so happy as from that of St Aloysius. The innocence of my fellow sisters, the ease with which I can lead them, the simplicity of their hearts and their love for devotion bring me much joy. However, there always remains in me a sobering thought: «Will they always be like that?». God knows. May He make of them and of myself so many instruments for his glory: that is what I heartily pray for. I have informed the bigger girls of the third Sodality that Your Reverence kindly intends to give them a Talk at the Union meeting and preside over the Renewal of the Consecration. I cannot describe to you how happy they were, and showed themselves to be, at the news; they started saying to one another, “Let us say some *Hail Marys* that this may come true”. And since I had raised their hope about your coming, last

Sunday, it was amazing to see how readily they came all the way from Santa Maria Church to the Oratorio¹, though it was raining hard, hoping you would come. They were sorry to hear that you were busy, and they asked me to entreat you to come next Thursday afternoon, and I earnestly request you to do so, unless the time is too inconvenient for you or you have some other engagement on that day. In that case, I would ask of you the big favour to let me know, so that I may not hold the meeting lest I should be taxing their patience unduly. If the Lord makes it possible for you to comply with our request, don't disturb yourself: when all the girls have gathered I will send someone to fetch you, so as not to waste your time.

I commend each one in particular to you: the well-behaved ones, because they are very dear to the Lord, so that you may keep them so for Him; the less fervent ones, because they are in greater need, so that they may come out well like the others, and the frivolous ones even more, because their state is more pitiable. More than them, I commend the soul of poor Bortolamea; her needs cannot be counted. Physically I feel better today. Remember me to the Lord. I wish you every blessing from Heaven. With profound respect

From country of Sellere, 12 July.

Your devoted, grateful Daughter in J. C.

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

LOVERE.

¹ See footnote pg 55.

Letter 275

TO THE SAME

She commends herself in occasion of her Spiritual Exercises.

HAIL TO MARY

Here is what Mary is sending you, please. I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. If God gives me the grace to do my Spiritual Exercises, I beg you, this time as a sister, not to forget me in your Holy Mass; pray God to let me know His Will and move my obstinate will to do what is good.

With profound esteem

Just now, from Home, 18 September.

Yours lowly Servant and Daughter in J.C.

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands LOVERE

Letter 276

TO GIOVANNA BOSIO

She proposes mutual sharing of prayers and good deeds - She is eager to be corrected of her defects.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Friend and Sister,

Impelled by the need I have of your prayers I make bold to write this letter to you. Your kind, friendly manner with me makes me hope that you will accept an agreement I wish to make with you: that of being one with me. In practice this means that all the good we do we offer it for each other: you for me and I for you. And so, all the Holy Communions you receive, all the prayers and acts of self-denial and penance, charity, good deeds, etc. will be equally offered for me, and in the same way, all the little good that I do will be offered for you as well. In that way the two of us will be one in the most Sweet Heart of our Divine Spouse, and we shall help each other to serve Him, love Him and honour Him as much as we can. May it be pleasing to Him that by His grace both of us will succeed in becoming Saints! That is my most ardent wish.

I beg you to accept this pact, for I ask it for charity's sake. I also beg you to warn me and correct me in those defects that

you find in me. Do it without any human respect, for charity's sake, and as a result of a true, spiritual friendship. If you do so, I will know that you really care for me, and I will be doubly grateful to you. I shall be waiting for some reply from you, then, by word of mouth or else in writing.

There is a big favour I must ask of you: that is, to tell Don Angelo to hear my Confession on Tuesday instead of Wednesday, if he can, as Wednesday is the eve of the feast of *Corpus Domini*. Remind him also about the letter I mentioned to you the other day. I am sorry to trouble you, but I am availing myself of your goodness of heart.

I leave you in the Heart of Jesus, and under the 'mantle' of Mary. With grateful thanks

Your loving Friend and Sister

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Lady

GIOVANNA BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 277

TO MARIA CHIODI

Consolation in bearing the Cross.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Most beloved Sister
in Jesus Christ,

I cannot think of going to bed this evening without writing a few lines at least to my dearest Maria Chiodi. I was very glad to receive your letter. I was grieved and moved to compassion to hear of the new afflictions that our Lord is presenting you with. All the same, my dear Maria, take it all from God's hands, because that is the path he is leading you by to get to Heaven. Walk along it with courage, because though it is hard, yet it is surer than any other. Evidently, the devil is filled with envy at your virtue and wants at all costs to drag you off with him. Don't be dismayed, dear Maria. The same God who is permitting these sorrows and this Cross, will be the One who will also give you the grace to overcome every temptation and to bear everything for his sake. There is one more thing I must tell you: Mary is telling me in my heart that She wants to be your comforter, your advocate, your Mamma. Have great trust

in Her. Go to Her in all your needs, and rest assured that every big victory will be yours.

To tell you the truth, a few things about you were related to me, too. Though I did not believe a word of it, yet such tales troubled me greatly. Your letter has now made me see how thoroughly false they were, and I heartily thank the Lord who is helping you in such a special way.

I will most gladly do as you wish, and have the two picture-frames done as you ordered, but to know exactly what you want, please send me a piece of thread showing the length and width that you require.

Should you have a chance to come and see me, you would be doing me a big favour.

Our fellow members send their warm wishes. I will soon be sending you some work for Our Lord.

Goodbye, dearest. May Jesus and Mary consume everyone of us with their love. I am

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 278

TO THE SAME

She is sorry for a missed visit - Her humility - She invites her to Mary's cradle.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Here is the paper you wanted. I am unable to tell you how I missed your visit on Wednesday. God has allowed this to happen; he must have foreseen that I would have only shocked you and so he made things come about in that way. May His Holy Will be done in all things.

Dearest, pray for me, in your kindness. A very important matter is weighing on my mind, and so I entreat you to help me for charity's sake.

Meanwhile I shall be waiting for you at the Cradle of our Queen, to honour her together. Let us become Saints by means of suffering. I am

Your unworthy Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Miss

MARIA CHIODI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 279

TO THE SAME

Congratulations - She accepts a new pupil.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 19 February.

I have received your most welcome letter. It made me very glad. For my delay in writing you have my laziness to blame. I rejoice that you are spiritually blessed; I truly hope that God will grant you the grace to draw benefit from it. Don't get disheartened. The reward is given to those who fight to the end.

I am enclosing a new Novena, which is starting on Friday: all the members of our Union will observe it. If Pierina is within reach, don't forget to pass it on to her as well, with my warm wishes.

Please tell the mother of the girl over there - the one you recommended - that after Easter I will accept her in the school provided nothing happens to prevent it.

Recommend me earnestly to God. Kindly offer a holy Communion for a very important matter. Goodbye, dear. May you be wholly consumed by the love of God. I am

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and Mary

To Esteemed Miss

MARIA CHIODI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 280

TO THE SAME

Drawing of lots for St Aloysius - She encourages her to respond to God's love.

HONOUR AND GLORY BE TO JESUS AND MARY

HAIL TO ST ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 14 June.

Here is the new drawing-of-lots list for the Novena of St Aloysius. I warmly recommend to you also the Novena of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which is the same as last year's. Never grow weary of loving Jesus in whom we should find all our delight; take new courage to work hard for the good of your neighbour out of pure love of Jesus. If you receive no reward nor appreciation now, you will certainly have it in Heaven, and you will then see the glory that is prepared for you. Have courage, dearest. In calling us to love Him, the Lord has given us an exceptional grace. Let us, too, respond to it, for He deserves it, and we could never do as much as He has done for us. Let us therefore be very generous with Him.

I don't know if Pierina is there, at Artogne, or not. If she is, give her my warm wishes and ask her to commend me to

God: the same charity I earnestly ask from you. With an ardent wish that you become a true copy of St Aloysius Gonzaga, I am

Your loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and Mary

DRAWING OF LOTS FOR THE NOVENA OF ST ALOYSIUS

Vielmi – Union with God

Chiodi – Conformity to God's will

To Esteemed Miss

MARIA CHIODI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 281

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She encloses the list for the Novena of Our Lady of Mt Carmel - She mentions a grace received on that feast - She says she is unable to love Jesus but shows herself full of his holy Love.

PRAISE BE TO JESUS AND MARY

Sister most dear to my heart,

I gladly avail myself of the opportunity offered by a person from Lovere to scribble a few lines to you and send you the list of the new drawing of lots for the forthcoming Novena of Our Lady of Mt Carmel. The practices for it are the same as those of last year.

I commend myself to you and unite myself to you in a very special way in this Novena. I should like to prove myself grateful to my most gentle Mamma (Mary) for the exceptional favour bestowed on me on the feast of Our Lady of Mt Carmel¹, as you already know. But I am sure I will do no good. Please help me and teach me what I should do. I am really expecting some good suggestion from you; above all, do on my

¹ On 16 July 1824 she had consecrated herself to Jesus by the vow of perpetual chastity.

behalf what I should be doing. Our intimate union, the loving kindness you have towards my soul, will impel you to do what I certainly do not deserve (to be done for me). Oh my Spouse, how I neglect you! ... And yet I know how highly he deserves to be loved; I hear him calling in my heart; I experience the beautiful tokens of his merciful love. I should by now be a Seraphim of love, and instead I am a mean worm crawling in my own defects, without ever doing any deed out of pure love of God. May my dear Jesus help me! ...

I wish you, Lucia, an ardent love of God, an all-consuming love. Make steady progress in this holy love, remember always that God wants you to be a great Saint. With all my heart I wish to see you among the choir of Seraphim.

In the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, I am.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

urgent, please

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

To be delivered in her hands DARFO.

Letter 282

TO THE SAME

God has asked, through her, that Lucia may accept His will even in the hardest things.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sister,

This morning, unworthy though I am, I received Holy Communion for you. I seem to have felt in my heart that God wants you to be fully conformed to His will in all things, however hard they may be. He assures you that He is all the time watching over you to bring about your greater good.

I am now sending you the Novena. Have patience with me if I am late. I am looking forward to a beautiful letter from you. Dearest, I commend myself to you: say a good word for me to Jesus and Mary.

In all haste, let me end.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 283

TO THE SAME

She corrects mistakes in the drawing-of-lots list for the Passion of Our Lord.

PRAISED BE JESUS AND MARY

I am adding these few lines because I made mistakes in the two papers that came to you, on St Matthias and St Luke; St Luke was not an Apostle and St Matthias was not yet an Apostle at the time of the Passion of Our Lord. Enclosed you will find, instead, the parts that have come to you and G. Taboni. One more thing: on Holy Saturday we are aiming at keeping Our Lady company in twos drawn by lots, two hours for each couple, starting from 9 p.m. on Good Friday till 1 p.m. on Easter Sunday, corresponding to the forty hours that Jesus remained dead. I am glad the lots place me with you; I beg you to make up for my lack of fervour with your own ardent love and self-denial; in short, with your virtue make up for what I, in my sinfulness, leave undone.

I am enclosing another paper with some additional practices. Kindly let G. Taboni have the whole lot, too.

I have received your kind wishes through Bortolamea Dò, and have also come to know that you are again at Darfo. This makes me doubt whether you received my last letter or not, the one I wrote to you through Pierina Giacomelli, and attached to which there was also the paper with the Journey to Calvary. In case you have not received it, I would be keen that you get it from somewhere soon, because this spiritual journey starts tomorrow evening.

I am counting on a visit from you. I have the pleasure and honour to be.

Your loving, grateful Sister
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 284

TO THE SAME

Filling a vacancy in the Union membership - She asks her to offer to Baby Jesus her vow of greater perfection - Her admittance into the Sodality of Mary Immaculate.

Dearest Sister,

I asked Lucia and Giulia Romelli to send you the Novena as I had no time to make another copy of it. I hope you will be happy that, in the place of Bertolotti, who joined the Convent, I have admitted my Sister. I trust she will do well. I would like you to offer to Baby Jesus, on my behalf, the vow of greater perfection that I am permitted to do, on Christmas Night. I have a dreadful fear of being even more displeasing to Jesus with this vow by failing to observe it. I therefore earnestly beg you to implore Him to give me all His assistance so that I may carry it out down to the tiniest detail.

I am extremely pleased with the Directress of the Sodality of Mary Immaculate, and that I have been accepted, out of charity, into this Sodality.

Love Jesus for me too. I am

Truly yours BORTOLAMEA

Letter 285

TO THE SAME

She sends her the drawing-of-lots list for the Octave of Christmas.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

I am sending you also the drawing-of-lots list for the Octave of Christmas presuming that you will like to have it. The practices for it will be those of last year, but I am enclosing them all the same. Just a heartfelt greeting to you, because I have no time to write more. I commend myself to your prayer. I am

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady
LUCIA CISONDI

DARFO.

Letter 286

TO THE SAME

She sends her the procedure for the Crowning of Mary.

MAY THE HOLY SPIRIT KINDLE HIS LOVE IN OUR HEARTS

I am sending you the procedure for the Crowning. Please pass on the information to fellow members. And you, Lucia, fortunate one, as you crown Mary, pray also for poor Bortolamea. I have no time to write more.

May your heart be set wholly afire with the love of God.

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONDI

BRENO.

Letter 287

TO THE SAME

She thanks for her letter and also for a Crucifix, which has not reached her yet.

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 8 October.

Here you are, dearest. Enclosed you will find the new drawing-of-lots paper for the forthcoming Novena of the Purity of Mary. The practices are the usual ones.

I greatly appreciated your last letter, and thank you very much for it. Though I am most unworthy, I know that you remember me and that my poor soul is dear to your heart. Regarding the Crucifix you mention in the letter: I will cherish it and keep it to remind me of you. From the letter I cannot understand if you have actually sent it or not: I have not received it. I am letting you know because I am afraid it may have got lost. The letter where it was referred to was handed to me by Maria Dò, but not the Crucifix. I thank you in anticipation for it.

I earnestly commend myself to your prayer. I am very much in need. May the most pure Heart of Mary be the refuge for our poor hearts. With best regards

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and Mary

To Esteemed Lady
LUCIA CISMONDI

DARFO.

Letter 288

TO MARIA DÒ

Postscript to a letter of her sister.

P.S. My Sister's letter gives me the opportunity to drop you a hurried couple of lines as well. I am sorry I have not written to you for a long time now. I failed to do so simply because I could not find a moment free to write: I have not forgotten all about you, I assure you. Please excuse me, and don't give me up. I will be very happy if you write all the same. Kindly send the book attached herewith to Lucia and Giulia Romelli, at your convenience. With best wishes

Your loving Friend and Sister in J. Christ
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To very esteemed Lady

MARIA DÒ

MONTECCHIO.

Letter 289

TO CATERINA FERRI

She gives an account of errands run - She promises practices for May, to be carried out by the girls.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister and Friend,

Lovere, 24 April.

I was prompt in taking your Corporals to the Rev. Nuns, but they are not ready yet. As soon as they are put in order, I will send them to you without delay. I will do my best to do as you wish about novenas, and I will start giving proof of it by sending you as soon as possible the practices for the month of May, and you will let your girls carry them out. Thank you for keeping me in your thoughts. I do the same with you. Commend me earnestly to the Lord, for my needs are countless. Goodbye. I am

Your loving Friend

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To esteemed Lady

CATTERINA FERRI

CEDEGOLO.

Letter 290

TO CATERINA GEROSA

Her full conformity to God's will in founding the Institute.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

I cannot do without writing to you a few lines to make known to you even in writing what I feel about the matter in hand. I revere the designs of the Lord who in his admirable providence, however strange this may seem in our eyes, is little by little preparing the ground so that our desires may one day come true. I assure you, dear Sister, that I will remain ever faithful to you and be with you at every step you take for the greater glory of God and the good of our neighbour. I have no desire to do things or to see things happening in an impressive sort of way. All I want is to do God's will. If it is his wish that we confine ourselves in a small house and work for him there, I shall be quite happy. If He wants to bless us and dispose of us in a different manner, we shall thank him sincerely for it. Whatever God wants from us, I promise I will be always ready

to follow you in the face of any opposition, provided God is there to help me with his Grace. All enterprises have had a beginning: may it be the same with this too. If the beginning is modest and humble, I am glad, as long as God's will is done in all things. Take courage, think, speak and act in such a way that this project may soon be realized. Let us both place ourselves in the hands of God. May He do with us whatever he wills. In all things let us seek nothing else except his glory, his Will and the greater good of our neighbour. Let us put no obstacle to the Lord's enterprise, and hope in a very good outcome of it. If you agree, I should like to do a Novena and start it today, to implore God that He may in His loving kindness help us in this task. I am enclosing it for you. Though unworthy, I too will do it and will ask other devout persons to pray. I wish you all that is good. I ardently long for the moment when I shall be one with you to work for the glory of God and the good of our neighbour. Yours truly

Your grateful, loving Sister
BORTOLAMEA, the Handmaid of Jesus

To esteemed Lady
CATTERINA GEROSA
To be delivered in her hands.

Letter 291

TO Sr. FRANCESCA PARPANI¹

A fragment of a letter in which she refuses to undertake an initiative, so as not to nurture her pride.

I am in all respects unworthy of the task you require, but you must know, my revered Teacher, that in refusing to give in to your request, I am doing something I was commanded to do so as not to nurture pride.

To be frank with you, I really fear that my pride will in the end be my ruin. I am not able to do any action, however good and holy in itself, without spoiling it with some vain intention, or self-gratification or by courtesy, or desire for praise. In short, in all my actions I see only sinfulness. In such a state, I beg you,

¹ Mother Francesca Parpani, a religious in St Clare's Convent, Lovere, was Venerable Bartolomea's Teacher. Endowed with exceptional gifts and virtues, she contributed much to the education of her pupil.

as earnestly as I am capable of, to help me in your kindness. Whatever you can suggest in this regard, do not spare me, and should the Lord inspire you to make me undergo any humiliation, you will be doing a great kindness to me because, I repeat, I fear lest my pride should be my ruin.

And if ever you hear that Bortolamea has forsaken her God, that she had committed hideous sins and, in a word, that she had done what by the grace of God she had never done before, you would be sure that her pride had betrayed her.

Letter 292

TO THE SALARI SISTERS

She sends them a booklet to help them in observing the month of May.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Friends and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Love, 1st May.

I was very glad to receive both of your letters. Thank you for your affection. My delay in writing was due to sheer laziness. Forgive me. Be sure of my own tender love for you. I trust the booklet enclosed will meet your pleasure.

The observance of the month of May has by now spread far and wide; I beg you in the Name of Mary to do your very best so that the young girls of that town may honour Mary during this month: the booklet enclosed will serve you as a guide. I earnestly recommend it to you. Our beloved Mamma (Mary) will help you and reward you well. Take heart and work with a will, for means are not lacking and God has also given you the skill and capacity for it. Don't mind my familiar manner of speaking to you: It is my sincere love for you that makes me

so bold. Kindly commend me to God.

Keep well in body and strive to become Saints.
Remember me too. I am, believe me,

Your grateful, loving Friend
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed sisters

SALARI SISTERS

CAPO DI PONTE.

Letter 293

TO LUCREZIA SINISTRÌ

She encourages her to resist self-love.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 22 November.

A hundred times and more my heart kept urging me sweetly yet irresistibly to write a few lines to you, dearest. My laziness, an evil grown old in me, has prevailed up to now; forgive me ... However, I had not forgotten you, and it was a very happy surprise for me to receive and read your recent letter. Take courage, dearest, in resisting self-love. It is that ugly beast that undermines and spoils every lovely virtue and seeks to enter everywhere. Keep in mind, however, that virtues are acquired little by little, with great difficulty, by constantly doing violence to ourselves. Remind yourself that the Kingdom of Heaven is given only to those who fight to the end. Be comforted at the thought that all the efforts you make to overcome yourself and control your passions are seen and noticed by your most loving Spouse, Jesus, who is always

close to you to help and strengthen you. My dear Lucrezia, be faithful, most faithful rather, to God who as a reward has prepared for you his whole self.

I am enclosing a letter. Kindly answer it immediately because it is some days now that it has remained with me, as I intended to send it with mine.

I will be very happy if you write to me. Commend me to God, I beg of you. A thousand wishes to Cesarina: she is very dear to me. May the Cross of our dear Jesus be our sweet comfort for ever. Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary
the most unworthy

Urgent, please.

To esteemed Lady

LUCREZIA SINISTRI

to be delivered in her hands EDOLO.

Letter 294

TO DON ANGELO TAERI

She sends him a gift.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

I, poor Bortolamea, pay my sincere respects to you, Rev. Father, and all your esteemed family, in particular the good Regina. I commend myself to your Prayer and beg you graciously to accept what I am enclosing.

Ever glad to serve you

Urgent, please.

To esteemed Reverend Father

DON ANGELO TAERI

Bishop's Secretary

BRESCIA.

Letter 295

TO THE SAME

She sends him the drawing-of-lots paper for the Journey to Mt Calvary.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father,

Love, 28 March.

A bad sort of human respect with a good deal of my usual laziness have prevented me from sending you the practices observed by members of the Union. Something inside me kept telling me that it was not right, but my defects overruled me. In the Journey to Calvary already started, Jesus has shown predilection for you by letting the lots fall on you for the part of St John, so dear to the Lord and loved by him. I felt I would be wronging you if I failed to tell you of this favour, and that is why I made up my mind to send you this letter.

The practices for the Journey to Calvary are the same as last year's, and I am certain that you have them, and so I think I need not send them to you again. Here below I am just writing the list of the new drawing of lots.

Commend me to God, I beg of you. I am in extreme need. Since you are now doing the part of the young *John* the one Jesus loved in a special way, say a good word for me too,

to Him, and I am sure it will be of help to me. Most humbly I pay my respects to you and with profound esteem, I profess to be

Yours faithful Servant

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary B.C.

DRAWING OF LOTS

Rev. Taeri – St John the Apostle

You must pray for those who are a cause of scandal to others

Letter 296

TO REGINA TAERI

She rejoices over the holy resolution of her brother - She offers Maria Bambina the merits of her friend.

I feel I would go against the love I have for you if I missed the opportunity offered by the visit of your esteemed Rev. Brother to send you a few lines, at least. I am happy to know that God is keeping you in good health, which I wish to be better and better. I was overjoyed at the holy resolution of your Rev. Brother priest. I congratulate you on such an exceptionally good fortune. May God be pleased to bless it and make it come true as soon as possible. I am sure God will be greatly honoured by it.

Here I am to rob you, as usual, of what is yours. The Novena of the Heavenly Infant is drawing near: I unite myself to you and, to make up for my lack of fervour, I offer Mary all your acts of virtue and all your beautiful activity. In that way I hope that the dear 'Bambina' will give a hearty welcome to the poor Bortolamea, unworthy though she is.

God willing, I may perhaps be able to pay you a visit. The only reason that impels me to make this hurried visit is my

great desire to know you and be with you.

Dearest, love Jesus on my behalf as well, for He well deserves it. I am all the time ungrateful to Him and fear He may be about to punish me. For this and for a hundred other needs I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. I take leave of you for the time being, with the desire to see you in a high place in Heaven. I am,

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA, the Handmaid of Jesus

Letter 297

TO THE SAME

Thanks and errands.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND DEAREST ST ALOYSIUS

Dearly beloved Sister,

I thank you and your esteemed Parents with all my heart for the warm reception given to my Parents. Thank you very much for your courteous invitation extended to me; I would be very glad to accept it if I could. Immense thanks both for the trouble that I am continually giving you and for the letter you sent me. I am unable to explain how much I appreciated it.

Regarding the border-in-gold that I need, the samples you sent me are not in accordance with the wishes of those who want to buy them. This has happened because I was unable to explain everything properly. I will now explain as well as I can, as I don't have any small sample to send you.

What they need is a sort of gold braid, less than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch high, just like those used to decorate Relic cases. I am told that Albergoni merchants have them in store.

Before you make the purchase kindly send me the sample and let me know the estimated cost of about 18 metres of it. ...

There is another embarrassing trouble I must give to your kindness. With the little money I am enclosing I should like you to buy for me wire of the same kind as what you had sent me the other time, in order to prepare a Discipline (a chain to use for penance) for a pious young girl who asked me for one.

Forgive me all this trouble, I beg of you. God will reward you for it. My dear Parents have had a very pleasant journey; they send their warm wishes and regards to you and all your esteemed family. I have a great desire to see you: it would make my heart rejoice to have a visit from you. Commend me to God. Yours truly,

Your grateful, loving Sister in J. Christ
The Handmaid of Jesus and Mary

To esteemed Lady

REGINA TAERI

in front of the Women's Hospital

BRESCIA.

Letter 298

TO THE SAME

Errands.

HAIL TO MARY

Dearly beloved Sister in the Lord,

I am writing a few lines in great haste to tell you one thing: if you have not yet ordered nor bought the designs we asked you to procure for us, please suspend everything for the time being. If you have already bought the gold strip, keep it with you just now; if, instead, you have not bought it, keep the money. The reason for this is that at the moment it seems they have a mind to have it done there in Brescia. In any case, if you have bought the designs and the gold I am quite happy: they will be useful for something else.

My dear, commend me to Mary. Pray that she may grant me the grace to love her very much and serve her faithfully, to be wholly hers. Be a Saint, a great Saint: that is my ardent wish for you. Forgive me all this trouble. God will make up for it. I am

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To esteemed Lady

REGINA TAERI

through Rev. Taeri, respected Bishop's Secretary

BRESCIA.

Letter 299

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She sends her some holy pictures - Thanks - She urges her to love Jesus after the example of St Aloysius.

HAIL TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

My Dearest Sister,

Here you are, Marianna dear: the holy pictures you asked me. I am not sure if you will like them. I did not remember how many you had asked for, and so I bought 15 costing 1.13 lire. As to the ones the Romelli Sisters wanted, I could not find any at all. Tomorrow morning I will ask Mother Parpani a copy of "*Gesù d'amore acceso*"¹ for Don Giovanni. If I have time I will forward it with a couple of lines; if I can't, hand it over to him yourself, with my sincere respects, thanks for the courtesy shown me and a request that he remember me in the '*memento*' of the living at the Mass, assuring him at the same time that *weak*² and *lazy* as I am, I will pray for him at holy Communion time.

Dear Marianna, I am truly obliged to you for your kindness, courtesy and delicate attention to me. I thank you with all my heart for it; it all shows me your immense goodness of

¹ *Jesus burning with love.*

² *The Original word is 'muffa', mildew.*

heart. You must know, however, that you have also done me much good by your good example. The thought of your exemplary behaviour serves to make me ashamed of my own coldness and sinfulness. Well, pray God that once for all I may stop offending Him and start loving Him in earnest.

Take courage, beloved Sister; we serve a good Lord. How well he deserves all our love, our full response to his love! These days are all days of love. Our gentle Jesus is all the time offering us His noble Heart as an example, and He accepts ours in return, if we wish. Oh, the charity of Jesus! How infinite is His love! What shall we do to respond to it? Let us not be reluctant nor slow. Let us give ourselves to Him unreservedly; He will be pleased with our poor offering. In fact, he is so loving that even every breath we take, every step, movement and thought, our tiniest actions are dear to Him and he will accept them gladly. Let us therefore learn from this Sacred Heart to love him as we should, beyond all measure, above all else.

By the example of his own life, our charming Aloysius, whom we are honouring these days, strengthens our desire to have a perfect love for Jesus. Let us therefore have constantly before our eyes a worthy exemplar most pleasing to the Lord; let us examine all our actions in the light of his so that after his example we may become Saints.

It is a great fortune for us and a comforting thought to have Jesus always present to us. He notices everything and marks even our breathing; he is greatly pleased when he sees that we do everything for him. Oh, our gentle Spouse! Grant that your handmaids Marianna and Bortolamea, along with all

their fellow members (of the Union) may always please you and gladden your Heart! This will be our supreme fortune.

A thousand thanks to your esteemed Parents for so much gentleness shown us; please give them our best regards in the name of all of us.

A load of greetings to our dearest Romelli Sisters; assure them that next week when I send them the Novena of St Aloysius, I will also write to them. In fact, I am very eager to do so.

I am enclosing the paper with the drawing-of-lots. Goodbye, dearest. See you again in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I am

Your grateful, loving Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 300

TO PIERINA VIELMI

She urges her to aspire to a high level of holiness on the path of humiliation and suffering.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Most Gentle Sister, most dear to my heart,

Love, 8 October.

Your most welcome letter filled my heart to overflowing, as I saw from it the fine sentiments that dwell in your heart. I heartily thank the Lord who is endowing you with such precious graces and I earnestly pray that He may give you Holy Perseverance. Oh yes! Our heavenly Spouse deserves every sacrifice (we could offer). Let us be truly generous towards Him. All that we do should be done for His sake, and the bright flame of his Holy Love burning in our hearts will teach us ever new ways and means to please the Lord. We should not be satisfied with being good: we should be Saints, great saints, in the manner most pleasing to God, through humiliation and suffering.

Thank you for the courtesy shown me. I too am very eager to see you, but it is extremely difficult for me to come over there.

Let us have patience. Let us meet again in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I am enclosing the new drawing-of-lots list for the forthcoming Novena of the Purity of Mary.

Give my warm wishes to M. Chiodi. Encourage her, on my behalf, in the service of the Lord. A precious crown that will last for ever is reserved for her in Heaven. Dearest, commend me to God, I beg of you. May the Cross of Jesus be our sweet comfort. Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To esteemed Lady
PIERINA VIELMI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 301

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She congratulates her on the progress of the Pious Union - In God's name she recommends imitation of St Aloysius.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY AND THE SPOTLESS ST ALOYSIUS

My most Gentle Sister,

At last, the longed-for moment of being with you is now granted me by the Lord, and I heartily thank him for it; may it be pleasing to Him that I profit from it. I have so many things to tell you that I very much fear I will forget some of them. Let me start by telling you how much I appreciated your letters, in particular, the good news you gave me greatly cheered my heart. I was extremely happy to know of the good qualities of the virtuous Lady Franzoni whose letter I am enclosing with heartfelt thanks for showing it to me. I also informed our Reverend Superior of her beautiful dispositions and of her desire to be helped by him. He was very pleased, and I rather think that he might send her a letter; on your part, encourage her. I presented to Don Bosio your requests for new

enrolments in the Union, and all those put forward by you were gladly accepted by him. In fact he told me to tell you that he would like to have also Candida Rizieri from Bienno and wishes you to inform her yourself, together with another young girl called Rizieri from Ossimo, known to M. Vertova. That S. Ronchi you mentioned is exactly Santina. I am very glad that our Pious Union is developing so well. May God bless it and make us all saints: that is what I heartily wish. Our Reverend Superior told me that he now wishes to admit several other girls from the more hilly region of Valle Camonica.

I suppose you will be happy with the paper that our esteemed Superior himself gave me, because it is more truly yours than mine. It contains the practices for the current month, and the merit of obedience in everything, down to the tiniest details, which he himself gave me verbally. Read it, or make a copy of it as you like; I shall be happy if you do, and then, when you return it to me, I shall cherish it.

I am also enclosing the practices for the Novena of Our Lady of Mt Carmel. This time I leave it to you to send it also to the new members, that is, to Panserini, Franzoni and Rizieri, and in that way you will give them all the information. Another time I will help you myself. In particular I assure you that I wish to strike a spiritual friendship with the good Panserini. For the time being give her my best wishes and tell her that if she allows me, I very much wish to write to her.

I am not at the moment enclosing for you the paper of the 'graces' because from some members residing outside

Lovere I have not received them yet. It is now high time that we come to our own things.

On Tuesday I offered my holy Communion for you; on asking the Lord what desires he has concerning you, I seemed to hear him saying: "Tell Lucia that my St Aloysius was very dear to me, that his life pleased me exceedingly and that if she wants to please me she should strive to imitate him perfectly well, that he should truly be a mirror for her especially in total self-forgetfulness, in order that she may occupy her mind with me, her God, alone". That is what I seem to have understood in your regard.

I ardently desire that all your prayers this month be made so that the Lord may grant us a perfectly-right intention in what we do. Of what use will be all our fine deeds if that is lacking?... I am in extreme need of it, and so in your loving kindness try to obtain for me such a longed-for grace.

I am very eagerly looking forward to what you will have to say about the light you have received in my regard on 1st July.

A thousand wishes and congratulations to all your dear fellow members, on behalf also of those of my town.

Mother Abbess sends you her best regards and asks that you commend her to the Lord.

The laziness of my wretched body is claiming rest, but instead of leaving you I join you in the sweet Heart of Jesus and of Mary. There let us take up our holy dwelling. There let us learn to love them; there let us become Saints.

I should like to have news of how your Sister is keeping.
Please give her my best regards. Goodbye.

Your poor Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

P.S. I realize that in the drawing of lots list I have omitted
someone. Kindly try to work out who is and add her to the rest.
Goodbye.