

SPIRITUAL WRITINGS

of Venerable

MARIA BARTOLOMEA CAPITANIO

PRIME FOUNDRESS

OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY

IN LOVERE

drawn from manuscripts

with notes

by

LUIGI IGNAZIO MAZZA S.J.

Volume Three

Notes and Practices of life-of-Perfection

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In obedience to the decrees emanated by His Holiness Urbano VIII and issued by the *S.R.U. Inquisizione*, the author affirms that he attributes no authority to what is said nor to the appreciation contained in this book other than what is given or what will be given by the Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, to whom it is his honour to totally submit.

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FOREWORD TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The “**SPIRITUAL WRITINGS OF VEN. MARIA BARTOLOMEA CAPITANIO**” collected by **Luigi Ignazio Mazza** sj, published in Italian in 1904 and in an anastatic copy in 1968, were translated in English various times along the years.

Very often, however, they were simply translations of extracts of the text to be used for the formation of the Sister of Charity according to Institute’s own charism - as Vatican II has constantly emphasized the necessity to return to the original sources, - and for the immediate needs bound to the ever more international spreading of the Institute.

For a long time, we longed to have at our disposal an integral translation, not only faithful to the contents but that it might, as much as possible, abide by the setting of the Mazza collection of the “Spiritual Writings”, following also the same layout in order to facilitate consultation and comparison between the Italian and the English text.

The fulfillment of this desire was officially taken up by the superior general, mother Piercarla Mauri, and is put into effect in the first mandate of the superior general, mother Annamaria Viganò, with the publication, for the time being, of the **III volume of the Spiritual Writings**. With determination mother Annamaria insisted upon having the printing of a trustful, entire and unique translation of the “Spiritual Writings” as a gift for the whole Institute. As a lovable coincidence, the conclusion of this work takes place in the year of the Jubilee of Mercy, the contemplation of which urged Bartolomea to found an Institute “the purpose of which is the Works of Mercy”.

The **translation is the work of Sr. Maximilla Saydon**, fruit of several years of commitment, of tenacious care for a correct understanding of the texts. To her the Institute expresses deep gratitude.

Subsequently, the work was revised by other persons, both in Italy (offices of the Generalate) and in India.

The present text, therefore, is the result of an assiduous and passionate collaboration which also implies patient accuracy required for the printing of the volume which “re-produces” the Italian collection by Mazza maintaining the same format.

April 2016

Edited by: **Sisters of Charity of Saints
Bartolomea Capitanio and Vincenza Gerosa
Via Santa Sofia 13, Milan - Italy**

N.B. The anastatic reprinting of 1968 comprises a Note upon the “HISTORICAL AND SPIRITUAL SOURCES OF THE INSTITUTE OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINTS BARTOLOMEA CAPITANIO AND VINCENZA GEROSA” useful for the knowledge of the original sources, collected by Mazza and for their authenticity, which for right reasons will be printed apart.

NOTES AND PRACTICES

OF LIFE-OF-PERFECTION

TO DIRECT HER SPIRITUAL LIFE

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

With this third volume of the writings of Venerable M. Bartolomea Capitanio, all the material for publication is fully compiled. It contains all that could be found from the good deal that she habitually wrote for her own spiritual progress.

This volume is divided into two parts. Part One, bearing the heading *Spiritual Notes*, comprises sentiments and resolutions which she noted day by day throughout her Annual Retreat or on her monthly Day of Recollection, together with the findings of her examinations of conscience, which she marked every day, in particular, any thoughts of pride or even the tiniest failure in observing the Method of Life she had prescribed for herself.

Part Two covers Practices for a Life-of-Perfection which she had set herself for every day or for certain periods of time, together with the vows and self-offerings through which she consecrated herself ever more closely to the Lord.

Some readers may not be quite happy about publishing certain defects the Servant of God noted down about herself, defects that sound exaggerated, as will be noted where they appear. However, apart from the fact that, to be true to history, biographers should faithfully record everything that she left in writing, we rather believe that this very thing can be edifying to all. In fact, when we realize that even Saints have been subject to the common lot of human frailty, we will not consider it so arduous to follow in their footsteps along the steep and narrow path of perfection. As the shaded parts in a picture, their defects make their virtues stand out in a more luminous manner because these are seen as the fruit of the assaults of a rebellious nature constantly overcome.

This, it seems to us, has been, in fact, the most striking feature of the holiness of M. Bartolomea: the prodigious energy and constancy with which she kept up the struggle day by day against her natural defects so as to let divine grace prevail in every area of her short lifespan. Her minute daily examinations of conscience are an evident proof of that. But, God willing, we shall give ample evidence of this in the biography that we have already got ready for the Press.

And so, we do hope that the printing of this third volume of her writings will, indeed, make the figure of the Venerable Servant of God shine out more brightly as well as encourage readers to follow the path traced out by her.

PART I.
SPIRITUAL NOTES

I.

EXPERIENCES MADE DURING MY ANNUAL RETREAT 1826¹

TIMETABLE FOR THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

At 4.30 a.m. I shall get up from bed, say my prayers and recite Matins and Lauds before leaving the room.

5 a.m. I shall go to Church, meditate for an hour, recite early morning prayer, mid-morning prayer, midday prayer, mid-afternoon, and all my other vocal prayers.

¹ In Bartolomea's script, the year is not given, but it must have been 1826. This can be inferred from the following facts:

1. It cannot be 1828, '29, '30, '32, because a separate report is given on the Spiritual Exercises of those years.
2. It cannot be 1831, because in these Notes she mentions her father still living, whereas he died before that.
3. Nor could it be 1827 because from Ven. Bartolomea's letters we come to know that she did that year's annual retreat in September.
4. Nor the years before 1826 because in these Notes she refers to the Method of Life drawn up this same year.

After that, I shall pay a visit to the patients at the Hospital and then return home for breakfast and housework, after which, before I take up my needlework, I shall do some spiritual reading and pay a visit, in my room, to Jesus and Mary.

In the time usually devoted to work, that is, at 9 a.m., I shall do some more spiritual reading, and shortly before lunch I shall make an exam on my weaknesses and imperfections.

After lunch, before and after the Instruction, I shall pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, during which I shall listen to what the Lord graciously suggests to me and teaches me; I shall then pay another visit to the patients of the Hospital.

I shall do some sewing till 3.30 p.m. during which time I shall meditate for half-an-hour and then have 'merenda' (snack).

Then, if I am free, I shall go for a walk by myself. On the way I shall read this method of life, think about my resolutions

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5. Lastly, we conclude it must be 1826, because that year she had her Retreat in December, not as usual in September, because, as a matter of fact, she fell ill in September 1826. As a further indication of this, we can also note that we have no letters written by her those days up to 27 December, though she usually wrote several letters for Christmas, and this corresponds to her resolutions to avoid writing during retreat days. She probably chose these days because the people of Lovere had Missions preached to them then.

and reflect on what has struck me most in my meditations or in the sermons.

Then I shall go for Meditation and Visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

Before going to bed, I shall meditate for half-an-hour or longer, make my examination of conscience and read the meditation which I shall make towards midnight, and as soon as I wake up.

I shall keep silence throughout, with thought and mind continually absorbed in God, self-denial of senses, in particular, abstaining from food I like.

I shall note down what strikes me most in my meditations, good resolutions I take and weaknesses that the Lord will graciously make me see in myself.

(INTRODUCTION - 18 December)¹

On the eve of these Spiritual Exercises I was anxious, not quite sure that I would do them well; I felt as if I had undertaken a commitment that I was unable to fulfil. I started the first introductory Meditation without much enthusiasm, and I had various distractions in it. Towards the end of it, my eyes fell on a picture of a damned person, and the sight of it remained so imprinted in my mind that for a full half-hour my thoughts did not wander from it. I was deeply moved, especially in reflecting how God's merciful love has saved me from it etc. My eyes filled with tears and, turning to God I promised to do these Exercises well, above all to overcome my laziness.

¹ Day and month are not expressly noted in Bartolomea's script, but they are easily deduced from what appear as Days 6 and 7 of these Spiritual Exercises, said to be the eve and feast of Christmas respectively.

Day 1

First Meditation. Why man was created. I had no time to do it in my room, but only after Communion and the Mass. (In this I had to fight back my drowsiness). I thought especially of the many times and in so many circumstances I had made very poor use of God's grace by acting for human aims, and straying from God.

Second Meditation. Our ultimate aim. Ah! I must admit that, by no longer following on the footsteps of Jesus Christ, I strayed from the goal towards which I was moving. I realized I had neglected piety after I had opted for it, and had instead started to look fondly on vanities, and had even begun to have a desire to be pleasing to the world and, with that, to feel especially drawn to a certain fellow.¹

How I wronged you, my God, in thinking of abandoning you for a youthful emotion; to please a creature! What I am especially sorry about are the bad examples I gave during that unfortunate time; and how many there must be that I do not even know of. I felt as if you were chiding me and saying in my heart: You see, you have abandoned me after having so many times experienced my consolation in prayer and in the other practices, after you had received me so frequently in yourself

¹ From testimonies of her Confessors it is clear that these were simple temptations. Her profound humility made her accuse herself of things which were not sinful.

etc. ... And I said ... I myself, as though tired of devotion, I would have gone after a 'freer' life, and, had you not kept me back, where would I have ended up ? ... (thinking back of age 17 to 18).

Third Meditation. On the means and special graces used by God in order to save me. This was a vast subject; I do not know where it starts nor where it ends. I was deeply struck by it, as I had never responded at all to the loving care and attention that the Lord has had for me, etc. Today such a feeling of boredom came on me that I was almost on the point of giving up these spiritual exercises. This was when I was trying to reflect deeply. I felt it so strongly that I could not help wondering how I could keep it up all these days, and telling myself that it was useless for me to waste all this time because it would do me no good.

In my *visit* this afternoon my felt desire was mainly that of becoming a saint; in reaffirming this resolution I prayed for the necessary assistance.

On *examining* my conscience regarding pride, I became aware of the craving I have for appreciation from the world and how much trouble I take at times to meet its standards; the ease with which I take up commitments that often present themselves disguised as virtues or real needs: these I should avoid. Though at times I do humble chores, I have a few times put into them also the poison of a secret pride. This morning I had some distractions in Church; harmful thoughts were less than usual. I reviewed a bit my way of examining myself: I find

that when I examine myself in preparation for Confession, I always omit the first act, that is, of thanksgiving, and that I spend too much time on examining myself, leaving too little time for sorrow, and that the more I think the more confused I become; I am always at a loss how to distinguish a simple thought from consent to sin. Most of my sins are of omission.

Day 2

The first Meditation which I made when I got up during the night. I did not have any feeling of devotion except that I cheered myself up with the thought that I was at least enduring the cold for a while. I did not get up promptly and in Church I felt drowsy. I had a long distraction after Communion.

I had a great longing for religious life in my morning Meditation, but even more so after Holy Communion.

However, my present state of mind, I must admit, is that I don't mind which institute is meant for me; I would be ready to join this one or that one. I only wish that the Lord may make his will known to me as soon as possible. I am not expecting miracles, nor do I fix the time limit for granting me this grace.

I dare only show him my desire that he may as soon as possible make his holy will known, not to me, but to the person who is entrusted with the care of my soul, while I keep ready to do his will.

Third Meditation. As I reflected on the punishment meted out Adam and on the Angels, and on what Jesus has suffered because of the gravity of sin, I was especially struck by this

last thought: when the Son of God himself was not spared, how can I think of being spared myself? ... Hence the point of sorrow and rejection of sins, and gratitude to Jesus Christ.

The examination of conscience was on Sorrow and the 'Resolution' of amendment. I have the bad habit of spending more time on examining my conscience than on making acts of contrition; sometimes, even after the act of sorrow, I again start examining myself. I realized that what I am usually sorry for is that I have disappointed myself spiritually, not so much that I have offended God, etc. Sometimes I limit myself to the moment of Confession and Absolution to ensure the sorrow itself with a new act.

A fourth Meditation was on *one's own sins*. In this one I was wholly absorbed in prayer and more than in any of the other Meditations I was moved to detest the failures of my past life. Alas, my God! I began to offend you before I came to know you ... I had these and other similar thoughts: Though it is true that we could do penance anywhere, yet the fittest place is one of retirement from the world; otherwise there remains the danger of adding to our faults from having to relate to the world ... whose poison seems to creep into the hearts of those who just look at it. Though we can become saints in any state-of-life, the most saintly and the most perfect are found in religious institutes, and those who are bent on becoming great saints, join religious life (provided the Lord calls them to it); they part with the world and will have nothing to do with it because they know that it is filled with dangers, the mere inhaling of which is contaminating ...

I felt within my heart a call to Religious life and saying to myself: Magdalene¹, beware of lingering in enemy's land, because you will be deceived. You must leave it soon if you want to become a saint. If I resist and linger still, God may abandon me and leave me to my own devices: and so everything points to my decision: I am coming ... where you will. When will it be? As soon as you like: that would make me glad... Do of me as you will, and I will be happy, for I feel that you want some sacrifice from me. Such reflections made me feel rather distressed because they irritated the wounds that cause sorrow and shame at the slightest touch, though they have been healed, as I trust, through Jesus Christ. Today my thoughts were a bit scattered due to certain conversation I heard; I gave in to a needless satisfaction of my curiosity and an empty occupation, whereas I could have spent that time in prayer.

Day 3

The first Meditation on Death, did not scare me at all; I had some difficulty in overcoming drowsiness and many scattered thoughts. I could not receive Holy Communion. I don't know if it is an inspiration or a temptation that came to me these days to make a general Confession; in the situation I was unable to do it and so I made an ordinary Confession by just hinting in a general way at past years and nothing else, with the intention of doing it as soon as possible.

¹ Magdalene. She probably calls herself by that name, considering herself a repentant sinner.

The second Meditation. On the particular Judgement.
What left an impression on me was Jesus Christ's sentence: *I will search Jerusalem with lamps*¹. I carefully considered unfulfilled obligations of Baptism and of my profession, the offence given to the Judge in his presence, in the Sacred place. Under his very eyes ... I have committed so many sins that I cannot understand how he bore with me without punishing me ...

The third Meditation. On Hell considered in the senses. I did not have any special feeling in this Meditation except tediousness in doing it.

The exam was on my Confessions: certain failings came to mind at once. When I accuse myself of having paid no heed to God-given inspirations or desire for good, I hardly ever give the reason for it, nor do I mention the inspiration or desire itself, as I should do, perhaps: similarly with regard to downright self-indulgence, I seldom mention particular instances of immortification. As to downright sins, there is nothing I have failed to mention except that, in temptations against purity, I do not usually explain fully: I am always at a loss because I don't know if they are just thoughts, or if I committed some fault. When I go for Confession to another priest, I usually do not have so soon all the confidence needed even to tell him about the particular needs or defects of my soul. There is another thing which I don't know if it is right or wrong; it is this: I readily accept the opinion of my superiors even when in my mind

¹ Original in Latin "*Scrutabor Jerusalem in lucernis*" (Zephaniah 1:12).

there is something quite different. I used to think that this is docility, but it may also be pusillanimity or inconstancy, as for instance, when I ask permission to do something good and they don't grant it. I don't have the courage to insist but give up at once, but maybe such occasions put my constancy to the test and find me too weak to insist, however strong the inner urge to do so may be, and the wish I have to carry it out for my own spiritual benefit.

Day 4

First Meditation. How hell affects the powers of the soul.
As I am so material-minded, I cannot apply my mind to it as I should, and so I think I have not done it well.

The second Meditation. On Eternity. I did this hurriedly. My mind was taken up with something else; my thoughts were scattered, and so you can imagine what impression it left on me.

After Holy Communion my thoughts wandered for a good while, and then I had this thought: at all costs I must heed the voice that seems to be coming truly from God. Life at home with its continual temptations to indulge in comforts of life, giving in to what one feels like, however restricted opportunities for it may be, is a hindrance to perfect poverty. The opportunity to command rather than carry out orders is not easily handled by beginners. The care for the family and similar circumstances which will be my lot if I stay at home, would all

impede quiet reflection and the detachment that the Religious should have; in a word, the world is not the place for me to become a saint. Do I have to stay with such uncertainty in the midst of all this encumbrance? Heaven forbid! My God, take me away at once. I am determined ... Oh yes! And nobody can prevent me from carrying it out. And who could go against your holy Will, my God? You who are the Lord and owner of men's hearts, see to it that no one keeps me far from you.

Exam on internal acts, as in the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. I have always been subject to passing feelings and imaginative thoughts etc. that may jeopardize chastity. In the past I was less wary than now, because I often aroused them by not keeping strict control over my senses; I did not give them much thought, nor so much scruple either. Now, instead, one thing like that is enough to keep me away from Holy Communion, fearing I might have given them cause maybe by a careless glance, though without any evil intention. However, such temptations are not always equally strong¹.

Pride, vain glory, self-love and so on, are my main defects and - what makes them worse - they are mainly about qualities of the spirit etc. I could mention many of them, but I don't have much time etc.

¹ She developed this extremely-delicate conscience and attained to this purity, as her Confessor attested, to the extent that "she never felt any stimulus against chastity", and that "she was favoured by those gifts that endowed St Aloysius Gonzaga, whom she had resolved to imitate".

The third Meditation was on the number of the elect.

Am I among the elect? ... I had this temptation: since I am so unsure of eternal goods, why don't I start enjoying goods I have at present, things that must have been given me for some reason, and make the most of the little that I do have now, before I run the risk of losing both what I have now and what I may have in future? By rejecting what I have here I may also lose what is beyond this life, etc. etc. But the temptation was soon recognized as such and driven away. This Meditation conveyed to me various salutary thoughts; in fact, unless I be made of stone, I should understand how important it is to ceaselessly act in a way that will ensure my admittance, as one of the 'elect', into Heaven.

A difficulty I met today almost made me wish I had not taken up these Spiritual Exercises. A sense of trepidation came over me as I thought of the new commitment I am about to assume by the vow, though my heart rejoices at the very thought of being able to do it (I hope this is not another vain thought of mine!) ... after having longed for it so much.

As to the *examination of conscience*, I should also mention, as a main defect, that I am attached to my own will, finding it hard to overcome myself in this respect and also disapproving, in my heart, what others do or want me to do.

Day 5

The first Meditation. On the return of the Prodigal Son.

As I myself have so many times strayed, and even run away from God, this Meditation encourages me, and I seem to hear the Heavenly Father calling me home, assuring me that I will

be welcome. He calls me to seek refuge in His Heart, where I will no longer need to seek pasture in the unclean things of this earth, for I will find, instead, all that is most delightful in his purest love, and every kind of nourishment in his Sacred Heart.

The second Meditation. On the Standard of Christ and the standard of Lucifer. Both of these meditations have stilled the fears I had yesterday, and rather than hesitate and fear about the future, I have felt reassured and trustful, opting (without fail) for the standard of my 'Captain', Jesus Christ. I was fairly intent on my prayer, not drowsy at all. After Communion my thoughts were a bit scattered.

The third Meditation was on the three Classes of Men. From the very start I put myself among the second class, that is, of those who want to follow Jesus Christ, but only where they want, when and how they want, not in all that they know the Lord expects from them. That is my miserable condition, and I don't know why I must be so stupid: why with all my desire, and some effort at times, I never make a step forward in self-abnegation. The main purpose of these meditations is to choose the state-in-life and to be firmly established in it. After a good hour in which I anxiously considered the various types of religious Institutes, I sincerely declare, before God, that the Lord is calling me to an Institute the purpose of which is the *Works of Mercy*, and that this is what at the point of death I would be happy to have embraced. I totally submit my view to that of my Director, whom I am well-disposed to obey

unreservedly; I limit myself to saying that it is to this that I feel inclined, feeling in the depths of my being that it is where God's designs over me are. But the task of choosing from among the many religious Institutes that are similar in that respect, I leave to my Director; and since he told me not to rush into a hasty decision but to leave it in God's hands, that is what I intend to do, and I pray that He may let my Director know His most Holy Will, rather than let me know, for I am unable to discern it.

However, I am disposed to embrace whichever God wants (which I hope my Spiritual Director will indicate to me). I who thought I had no greater desire than this, was actually told by my Spiritual Father that my desire is not great enough ... that I lack *all* the requisites to become a nun ... Alas!

I know he has good reason to doubt my constancy, but, good God, who inspire me with the desire for it, will you then deny me the help to fulfil it? Surely not! Ah! The Heart of Jesus, my Love, will not bear to see this soul moan, far from his house. Yes, my Child¹ Jesus, if you don't let this slip from your tiny tender hands, you will see me forcing it out of you. What I fear is this: that gradually I may become more and more insensible to God's call, and that He might little by little deprive me of this vocation and leave me ... that would be a just punishment of an unfaithful soul!

¹ It was the day before Christmas Eve.

Since the world is not the place for Saints, anyone who desires to be perfect abandons it. Anyone who seeks God shuns it ... Anyone who loves Jesus hates it, and anyone who wants to live in Jesus dies to the world. And should I wish to stay in it? God forbid!

My examination of conscience was on what my spiritual director admonished me last time, that is: on attachment to material things, etc. I must admit that on all those points I find particular defects. First thing is, among my relatives I have a special liking for my Father, above that for my Mother, and it is a question of my own liking, not for God's sake ... I am attached to the world and its vanities, and I understand it, because at times when I am with others I feel ashamed if I lack certain adornments and things which, as it were, mark out persons deserving of respect and honour from other people, etc. And when people see that I lack certain things, I cheer myself with the vain thought that they will at least think highly of me as a pious person and that I do it out of a virtuous contempt for worldly vanities. I feel satisfaction at times when I make others think that I despise the world though in fact I want my views to be well-accepted by everyone as coming from someone important etc. etc. I am attached to material comforts, and to myself. How many times I am undecided whether to satisfy or deny a pleasure, and end up giving in to 'nature'¹

¹ On the contrary: it is difficult to come across saints who practised a greater and more constant self-denial than what Ven. Bartolomea Capitanio practised throughout her life.

How many times, just to gratify my own pleasure, I refuse to deny myself, disregarding the continuous inspirations from the Lord ... If it is a question of self-abnegation, Dear me! What an effort I have to make! And if it is a question of sacrificing esteem, alas! My heart feels faint at the very thought of it !

Today I talked uselessly for a little while, disturbing my inner silence. I did not control my taste in eating; I committed an act of impatience, and I was curious in one thing.

Day 6 - Christmas Eve

To start with, I was lazy in getting up, and in *Meditation 1* of the day I had to repent of it. This was on *Jesus' Agony in the garden*. I had to admit that drowsiness is a marked weakness in me, and that when I am overcome by it my prayer is no good.

The second Meditation. On the Scourging at the Pillar and Crowning with Thorns. I did it badly, and also with my mind totally taken up with the housework. What strikes me most is Jesus' silence in the midst of such cruelty etc. But I, I myself was the dreadful cause, I was the one for whose salvation Jesus Christ suffered so much! I have committed so many sins¹, since my childhood.

¹ This and other expressions of this type must be considered exaggerated out of humility. The 'sins' she refers to must have been, at the worst, childish immodesty. Don Angelo Bosio, her Confessor, who was well-informed of her whole life, and who had also read these scripts, attested under oath during the Processes, that the Servant of God had kept her Baptismal innocence intact and that she had never committed any sin of impurity.

Alas! I remember the nasty things I dirtied myself with from such an early age! (how damaging it was for me to see indecency and lack of care on the part of certain persons ...)! I shudder at the very thought of it! A hundred times cursed is scandalous behaviour!

The third Meditation. On Jesus condemned to death. If human respect is so detestable in Pontius Pilate who, after all, depended on Caesar and could understandably enough dread disgrace in his eyes, what could be said to excuse all my regard for the world which is, after all, an enemy to me and an enemy to Jesus Christ!? If I displease the world, it has no owner's rights over me, and my eternal salvation does not depend on it. Ah! How foolish of me! And yet in certain situations, I cannot overcome myself.

When I omit virtuous acts before certain persons, or when I am afraid to appear special - it is often human respect and nothing else. So too my exaggerated shyness of dealing with persons in high positions etc. or my excessive anxiety about making mistakes before persons who thought highly of me or had seen me doing praiseworthy things etc. etc.: it is all human respect. How many times I start imagining people saying to me: "You want to play *pious*, to play the *saint*, while you are not even a good Christian!"

There is one resolution I must make: when I have to carry out a commitment, I will pay no heed to voices of false humility which, with the pretext of not craving for praise, will have me omit works of mercy or neglect my duty. I don't have to make

people hold their tongue; as much as I can, I will do everything with a right intention, and then let others talk if they will ... I am bound to overcome all human respect, not feel ashamed of staying at the foot of the ignominious Cross of Jesus Christ; I should rather cherish the bitter taste of humiliations in order to imitate Jesus Christ. What a lesson, what a rebuke to a tepid soul!.. Seeing him condemned! ... Crucified!.. Dead! ... What an impression it makes, and what tender calls Jesus makes from the Cross to a soul that longs to love him! I had various positive sentiments, among which was the desire to partake of the sufferings of Christ, and as a resolution I decided not to put it off any further out of human respect.

Examination on faults of omission. At the start there came to mind my poor response to divine inspirations, carelessness in my duties, etc. , a lot of it !... This exam covers scruples as well. These do not bother me at all, but I do have the defect of doubting if I have confessed my sins as I should, and I would repeat them if I were allowed to do so, in my fear of having explained myself inadequately. On the giving of scandal, I feel I am not giving any in the life I am leading at present, but in the past I am sure there were some.

Today I was slow in getting up, I gave in to curiosity twice, once I did not obey at once, not much abstinence at lunch, I had scattered thoughts and said useless words, especially in the morning; I was a bit careless in following my timetable. In the evening, as it was Christmas Eve, my happiness was beyond my own comprehension. I stayed more

than an hour before the Blessed Sacrament, with much delight, partly meditating on the mystery of Christmas, and partly desiring the spiritual coming of the Child Jesus in my soul, and I spent nearly the whole of the evening like that.

Day 7 - *Nativity of Jesus Christ*

With the intention of staying up for the night, I prepared myself for the Midnight prayer, but I was too sleepy and twice I dozed over it. This laziness and drowsiness had come over me that same morning, too, and this makes me think that it may have been an impediment to the gifts of Baby Jesus, preventing me, that is, from receiving the fervour I had so much longed for. I told Baby Jesus how sorry I was for this weakness of mine, but even more severely I had to accuse myself of neglect and lack of fervour.

The Meditations for this day served as a reviewing of the previous ones and on the Mystery of the Birth of Jesus. As I considered the obstacles I am all the time putting to God's love, there were aroused in me sentiments of sorrow and shame. At the moment of Holy Communion I felt so weighed down by my own misery and sinfulness that all I could do was ask God's forgiveness and mercy, renewing the act of Contrition all the while; I hesitated to approach Jesus Christ, lest he should reject me. I was not sure if I had to receive Communion that morning considering that I did not feel moved by love of God nor even able to have such sentiments; but then I threw myself with trust in God's mercy. 'I will go', I said

to myself; 'I am like rough straw, but the Child will enter into it like fire. Who knows what flames of fire he will perhaps kindle into it ... If my heart is confined in prison, He has the keys and will let it out. I hoped to feel a bit of fervour in that Communion, but in vain, and I have grounds to fear that it is because of a certain negligence and poor commitment on my part, that in these days of Spiritual Exercises I have not felt that warm devotion that Baby Jesus usually gives to souls enamoured of him, except for Christmas Eve when he graciously treated me sweetly. It is all charity shown to me by Jesus Christ.

That evening I felt a kind of trepidation thinking of the commitment that I was about to assume again, but it wore off without disturbing me. After Holy Communion I made the vow of Obedience with the conditions granted me, and renewed the vow of Chastity. Once again I renewed my resolutions, promises, etc. Regarding the Method of Life that I set myself, I did not feel there was anything else to add: it seems to me that what I already have will do, for perfection does not consist in doing many things but in doing them well; and so for the future I will insert in the list another act of penance for every failure to observe the Method itself: this will consist in making two crosses with my tongue on the floor for every ✠¹ sign, and one for every (I) sign, and to kiss the ground three times for every X sign.

¹ These signs are conventional symbols that stand for failure to observe the Method of Life in any of its points.

In the *Examination* made about conversation and leisure, I found no problem, because now, by God's grace, I don't think I am spending any time uselessly on it. As to the duties of my state-in-life, there are many things I repent of. I am easily inclined to laziness; in between things I have to do, instead of spending it well, I sometimes waste time doing useless things.

Today I spent more than a half of the time in church, but without having feelings of devotion, except sentiments of trust in the Blessed Virgin Mary. Throughout the day I kept imagining myself to be the hay on which Baby Jesus was laid, which kept pricking him: to this I compared the undue softness with which I treat my body and the rough way I treat others when I give in to anger.

Today I prayed harder than ever that the Lord be pleased to turn the preferential love my father has for me towards my sister instead. I don't know how it happens that, while I try to keep within the bounds of filial love, my father prefers me to her, though I don't have a bit of her good qualities, even¹.

Today's defect was some useless words.

¹ Her sister was rather short-tempered, while Ven. B. was very meek. But as saints do, she was so intent on finding out her own failings that she did not even see those of her sister, in themselves more noticeable.

Next day I received Holy Communion with the intention of having the blessing of Jesus Christ, and I spent the day in greater tranquillity than before. I feel happy about the vow that I have made lately (*of obedience, the day before*); I pray God to give me the grace to carry it out as perfectly as I possibly can.