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III.

VOWS AND ACTS OF SELF-OFFERING

FORMULA FOR THE TEMPORARY VOW OF VIRGINAL PURITY

PERIOD OF TIME ...

I, N. vow under pain of venial sin, to consecrate my virginal purity to my Lord Jesus Christ, choosing Him as the most chaste Spouse of my soul, by consecrating to Him my heart, my soul, my body, my whole being, all my thoughts, all my affections and all my desires; I will seek, in all that I do, to please this most beloved Spouse who in the superabundance of his infinite goodness accepts me today as his dearly-beloved Bride and clothes me with this dignity, which is the greatest that one could ever desire.

On my part, in order to return your love I will keep away from my heart affection of any sort for the things of this world, giving up for your sake even the pleasure of talking of them or listening to talk about them, especially talk of vanity, love-making, weddings, etc. ...

My dearest Spouse, grant that my heart be wholly yours, that it may love none but you, that it may think of nothing else but you, that it may do everything for you alone.

Jesus, Jesus, I love you, but as I love you too little, I wish to love you very, very much. Amen.

HAIL JESUS, AND MARY

OFFERING

FOR THE VOW OF PERPETUAL VIRGINAL CHASTITY

Jesus most beloved, here I am, your poor handmaid N. at the height of her happiness. I now have no other desire since you, King of Heaven and earth, become so lowly as to choose me for your dearly-beloved Bride, for ever.

And so, from the depths of my heart so filled with sincere gratitude, with a firm, determined will and with a fully-convinced mind, I vow *sub gravi* (under pain of mortal sin) to consecrate for my whole life, to my most gentle Lord Jesus Christ, my virginal purity, choosing Him alone, and absolutely none else but Him, as the most chaste Spouse of my Soul, thus depriving myself most gladly and for ever of the freedom to marry any man. And so you, my most beloved Jesus, will henceforth be the owner of my soul, of my heart, of my body, of my affections, of my whole being. From now on I no longer consider myself as my own, but wholly and entirely yours. I am resolved to give up my life most gladly rather than be unfaithful to you. But what can I now say to you, Jesus, my Spouse? ... How many times I promised to be constantly true to you, and then! ... It will be your concern to assist me: with your help I will then succeed in carrying out my promises. Let the ring that binds me to you be your holy love, a most ardent love, which I beg of you.

Let me be like you in suffering, and so I ask from you the grace to suffer gladly for your sake, and to overcome all excessive seeking of my own comfort. May the adornments of this unworthy bride of yours be Humility, Chastity, Charity, Poverty, Obedience. My dear Spouse, do with me what pleases you most. Let this singular grace be the first link in the chain that will bind me to you through repeated acts of virtue, of self-denial and pious deeds. I have no fear, since I am Jesus' bride. Yes, I am wholly yours. What have I done for you, Lord, that you should choose me from among so many, more worthy than myself, and raise me to the sublime rank of a bride of yours? What shall I give you in return? I beg of you, keep me steadfast in your noble Heart; grant that I may live only through you and for you. My God, my joy is so great that I am here at a loss for words. My silence will make manifest to you the desire of my heart. *O Dominus meus et Deus meus!* (My Lord and my God) Grant me holy perseverance, and that will make me fully happy. Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! I love you, but as I love you too little, I want to love you so much! I beg of you, my supreme Good, grant that I may die to the world and to myself that I may live for you alone.

O Mary, delight of Virgins, to you I commend my Purity. Guard it and keep it pure of any stain. Dear St Aloysius, be a faithful advocate to me; present my offering to Jesus and Mary with your own prayer that they may be pleased with it,

In te Domine speravi, non confundar in aeternum.
(In you, Lord, I have hoped. Let me never be confounded.)

Hail, Jesus and Mary.

OFFERING FOR MY VOW

OF PERPETUAL CHASTITY

I, Bartolomea, kneeling before the Most Holy Trinity, before the Blessed Virgin and the whole Court of Heaven, make a true and real vow of perpetual Chastity; that is, from this point I choose Jesus Christ as my most gentle and beloved Spouse, renouncing the freedom of marrying any man on earth, and instead I address all my affection, all my thoughts and desires, to my most chaste Spouse, to whom alone from now on I want to do my best to please. Amen.

16 July 1826

FIRST PROCESSION DAY

OF THE HOLY JUBILEE

My dear Jesus, you are infinitely merciful and boundless in your love; this very day you have granted me an experience of it by letting me start to take part in the Holy Jubilee. My Lord, utterly poor as I am, yet all the same still your own Bride, I want to do my very best to love you with all my strength, however limited it may be. I will love you by avoiding all sin, defects and imperfections. I will love you by practising virtue, especially humility, purity, obedience and by keeping in your presence. I will love you by doing all I can for the salvation of my neighbour. In a word, I will love you by shunning all that displeases you, and by doing what I know will be pleasing to you.

Most loveable Spouse, through your most sacred merits and those of my most gentle Mummy Mary, grant to me and to everyone the grace of fully participating in the fruit of the Holy Jubilee. I place my trust in you, and find my repose in your most gentle Heart, as I commend to you everybody, especially my Confessor, my relatives, sinners, and those particularly dear to me.

(RENEWAL OF THE VOW OF CHASTITY)

HAIL JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS

16 July 1830.

My most loveable Spouse Jesus, my whole being is alive with sentiments of gratitude towards you, for honouring me so highly to the point of choosing me as your Bride, most unworthy though I am. I offer you my heart overflowing with sweet sentiments of thankfulness and love. I wish I knew how to love you and thank you as much as you deserve for a grace so special and so exceptional. I count myself supremely blessed and happy at having such a great privilege and I would not change it for the greatest wealth of this world.

The only sorrow I have is that up to now I have not responded well to my Vocation as a Bride of yours; but though I have not done it in the past, by your grace I will do it, yes, I will do it in future. You, my Spouse, are the Man of Sorrows, your life is a constant lesson in suffering; the Cross which even before your birth lay great and heavy on you, must also be embraced by me.

PRAISE AND GLORY BE TO THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY
HOMAGE AND HONOUR TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY. AMEN

FORMULA FOR THE VOW OF CHARITY

My good Jesus, I know that love of you should never be separated from true love of our neighbour. Therefore I, Bortolamea of Jesus, in my desire to please you in all things and to heed the inner urgings that come from you, here in the presence of the Most Holy Trinity, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of my Guardian Angel, of St. Aloysius, of my Patron Saints and of the whole Celestial Court, vow *under pain* of venial sin to treat my neighbour with the greatest charity, both spiritual and corporal, in whatever I shall engage myself.

And so, from now on, all that God has given me I will no longer consider as my own, but all of it granted me to be used for the benefit of my neighbour. Life, health and talent, thoughts, words and actions, things I possess and whatever I may have in future, I will use for the benefit and relief of my dear brethren.

For the sake of sinners I will devote all kinds of practices of piety, prayers, acts of self-denial and penance, and every time I come and kneel at your feet, my Crucified Lord, I will never forget them: I will pester you, my dear Jesus,

and I will pray for their conversion so hard that you will not be able to deny me that grace. To prevent sin, besides, I promise you to do my utmost, but do strengthen me in my weakness. I will hold the youth, all my dear Oratorio¹, most dear to my heart. I will especially care for those girls who are most dissipated and most far from you. Such girls I will tirelessly pursue and try by all means to gain their confidence and then win them over to you. If my loving attentions are of no avail, I will not give up but rather redouble my efforts and with a holy concern I will follow close at their heels, and not desist till I see every one of them safely yours. Regarding the illiterate, I will spare no pains. With charity and patience, I will teach them all the little I have learnt. Nor will I hesitate to go myself to seek all those persons who are in need of instruction: I will use the kindest attentions towards such as these.

For the poor souls in Purgatory, I will have a most compassionate charity: every day I will try to do suffrages for them by some devotional practice, and on Mondays I will offer the whole day for their relief.

The poor sick and the bed-ridden will truly be the delight of my heart. I will visit every one of them as often as I can. I will do all I can by word and deed, doing them the meanest and most repulsive services, helping them as much as I can and tirelessly assisting them, and also, as far as circumstances and obedience will allow, when they are on the point of death.

¹ “*Oratorio*”: in the pastoral tradition of the churches in North Italy, it is a place adjacent to the parish church in which the youth are gathered for catechism and other similar activities.

I will give the poor as much material help as I can. I will do my best to find out those who are really needy, and on them I will be most lavish in my charity. I will deprive myself of all that is superfluous in food as well as in clothing, and limit myself to what is strictly necessary so as to help the poor with it; and if at any time I should go hungry for their sake I will be glad of it, and I promise I will do it. If I come to know of a real need, but I myself cannot meet it, I will not be ashamed to beg for them and by all means try to help them.

My dear Jesus, I promise you all this; indeed, assisted by your grace, I vow to do it. On your part, I beg of you, strengthen me in my weakness. I am the poorest instrument, unworthy and incapable of anything: if you want anything from me, you must do it all yourself, otherwise I will spoil all your most marvellous works. But I beg of you, let your power rule me; show how in your all-powerful hands the poorest instrument can do the most marvellous things. I do not rely on myself at all, but I have full trust in you. This sweet confidence enlivens me and gives me courage, instilling in me the hope of obtaining everything from you.

Yes, my God, I will never rely on myself but always count on you. In dealing with the most difficult, tiresome or even hopeless works, I trust that through your loving kindness I will happily succeed. Sustained by this sweet confidence I will dare, in case of real need, to face danger, knowing for certain that you take care of your handmaid and will not let her come to any harm. Help me, good Jesus, for I do want to dedicate

myself earnestly to your dear creatures, doing it all for love of you. And while I shall be concerned with the good of others, you must know, my dear Spouse, that I entrust the care of myself entirely to you. See to my needs yourself, attend to my necessities and assist me; be always at my side, uproot all vices from my heart, planting virtues instead; make me a saint, for I surrender myself totally to you; nor do I think I belong to myself any longer, but wholly to you.

Most Holy Mary, with all my heart I commend myself to you; teach me yourself how to love my neighbour, provide me with the means with which I can help others; give me this grace, for I truly want to do it.

Dear St. Aloysius, you who did so much for your neighbour, give me your noble, charitable heart that I too may be a true imitator of yours.

All you Saints of Heaven, pray to Jesus for me. Amen.

Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat. (I can do all things in Him who comforts me).

May Jesus' Almighty power prevail for ever!

PRAISED BE THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY. AMEN

FORMULA

FOR THE VOW OF GREATER PERFECTION

Here I am in your presence, trembling all over, my good God, in order to give you the truest proof of the sincere desire I have to love you and serve you in the best way I can; and so I Bortolamea, your unworthy handmaid and Bride, kneeling before the most adorable Divine Trinity, before you, my dear Child Jesus, and you, Most Holy Mary, before my Guardian Angel, my dear St Aloysius and all my Holy Advocates and all the Heavenly Court, vow *under pain of venial sin* to seek in all that *I do, think* and *speak* what I clearly know to be more perfect.

And so, through this vow, I bind myself from now on to a life of total self-abnegation in both external and internal actions. More precisely, externally: never to seek after bodily comfort, to opt always for harder things, to embrace suffering gladly, in a word: to cling to the Cross by loving all that it presents to me.

As to inner actions: I hereby bind myself to curb all my passions and to practise all the virtues on a high level, that is: humility, obedience, chastity, patience, remaining always in the presence of God, inner silence, self-abnegation, charity, poverty, gentleness, reservedness, etc. and of all these virtues I mean to make special vows.

Lastly, I bind myself to the closest imitation of you, my Beloved Crucified Lord, especially by seeking after the most profound humility in all things, not only by having and keeping a most modest idea of myself but also by desiring and looking out for opportunities for being held in contempt, forgotten and wronged. I promise you, my good Jesus, that I will never, never do anything except loving you: that I will never, never stop going against myself and persecuting myself in order to walk in your footsteps, that I will always, at all times, embrace suffering in order to become like you, Crucified for my sake.

This is, dear Jesus, the offering I make to you, this is the sacrifice of my whole being, the holocaust that I present to you. Graciously be pleased with it, accept it, and as a pledge that you are pleased with it, grant me the grace to carry it out to the tiniest detail and with scrupulous care, till my last breath. I beg you, Jesus, don't ever let me break this chain that binds me so fast to you; I prefer to die a thousand times rather than let that terrible thing happen to me.

Be you my strength and my support; be you my help, my everything; I place all my hope in you, and you can do all

that you will; work in me as you wish, for I give you full freedom to go ahead. I am yours, my Lord, and yours I want to be for all eternity.

Most Holy Mary, my sweet hope and comfort, I commend myself to you. This is the best moment for you to let me know that you are a most tenderly-loving Mother to me, by helping me to be faithful to Jesus in all my promises. And you all Saints of Heaven, especially you, my dear St Aloysius Gonzaga, whom I choose as Protector of this vow, obtain for me from God so much grace that I will not fail to keep my promises to the letter.

In te Domine speravi, non confundar in Aeternum (In you, God, I hoped. I will never be confounded). *Amen.*

(RENEWAL OF MY VOWS)

HAIL, JESUS, JESUS, JESUS, FOR ALL ETERNITY

First Day of Year 1831.

From the depths of my heart I thank you, my Jesus, for keeping me in existence to start this new year. I beg you, grant that I may make of the whole of it a sacred offering. My heart is filled to overflowing with a holy joy at the thought that I am starting it with your most holy and sweetest Name.

From Jesus alone, through whom I am starting the new year, will I therefore draw my comfort, my help, my strength and my delight. For the sake of Jesus, I now firmly resolve, for this whole year, to let every breath come from my heart, every thought from my mind, every word from my tongue, every action from my heart and from my body. In Jesus and with Jesus alone I want to act, think and speak so that everything may be sealed with the most Holy Name of Jesus.

My God, since you grant me this new year, I really want to become a saint, I want to be wholly yours, I want to love you truly from the heart. I want to spare myself no pains in anything, any more. Dear Jesus, relying on your grace and on the power that your most holy Name will give me, I most gladly

renew the sweet, holy bonds that unite me so closely to you. Far from scaring me, their chains cheer me and strengthen me. By all means let me be wholly bound to you, held close from every side, no longer owner even of a thought, nor even of a glance. I am quite content provided you give me the grace to please you. I renew most gladly the sweet bond of virginal Chastity: grant me a thousand deaths, a thousand martyrdoms rather than permit that I be unfaithful to you. My heart must be entirely yours, and equally so my body and my freedom, too. I reserve myself no other option than that of loving you with all the powers of my being, if you help me.

I renew my binding-vow of charity towards my neighbour. Lord, give me a generous heart, help me in all that I undertake, purify my intentions, help me in my weakness; on my part I resolve to shake off my laziness once for all, to find all ways and means to be of spiritual and material benefit to my neighbour, as much as my limited strength permits.

With trepidation, yes, but with a generous and resolute heart I renew the strictest of my bonds, that of seeking in all that I do, think and speak what I clearly know to be more perfect. By this I put myself under the obligation to seek myself no longer, but instead, to go against myself and deny myself what I feel like, to let suffering be my life's nourishment, to seek after a hidden life of humiliations, in a word: I am strictly bound to check every thought, look or word except when I have to use them for your glory and for the good of souls: of others and my own.

This is the hammer that must always strike at all my actions and give them shape. It is the bell that must always ring in my ears, it is the thought that must remain fixed in my mind: Bortolamea, you no longer belong to yourself, but wholly to God; you must not seek yourself but only His glory; for His sake remember that you are strictly bound to live a perfect life, to curb your likings, even if there is no wrong in themselves; to attend to yourself only in the strictest needs. Bortolamea, remember that you are now bound (by your vow) and that you have to render a strict account for it at God's tribunal if you are unfaithful. However, divine love sweetens all things; what I will do out of love will never be burdensome to me. My God, cast a dart of holy love at my heart, and I will be exceedingly rich.

O Mary, next to Jesus, you are all my hope; I commend myself to you. Obtain for me the grace of being crucified with J.C.

Dear St Aloysius, pray for me. Obtain for me holy perseverance.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, may you be always loved, praised, served and blessed, adored and given thanks for all eternity.

Amen.

A HUMBLE OFFERING OF MYSELF

TO MY SPOUSE JESUS CHRIST

Most loveable Jesus, in keeping with the advice of the person who holds your place for me and with what you make me feel deep within myself, it seems to me that, out of a special favour, you have destined me as a poor, worthless instrument in the work you have planned for your glory and for the benefit of your creatures in this town.

While thanking you with all my heart for such a special grace, I make a vow *under pain of venial sin* to overcome all obstacles, reluctance or temptation that I may find in my way, prompted by relatives, by outsiders, by the devil or by myself, and at this moment I consecrate myself to your Holy Institute as if I were already realizing it, by vowing never to change my mind, unless I am told to by my Confessor, and accordingly from now on I consider myself as belonging no longer to myself nor to my relatives nor to the world, but entirely to you and to what you have planned concerning myself; for that purpose I intend to dedicate also the modest possessions you have given me and what I may come in possession of.

Dear Jesus, help me in my weakness; let me even suffer, as much as you wish, but remember that I am extremely helpless. I will cherish any infirmities, opposition, detachment, ingratitude, provided you help me. Every day in my Holy Communion I will renew my offering; graciously accept it and grant me the grace to be always faithful to it. Give me your Holy Blessing.

Most Holy Mary, I commend myself to your charity.

Dear St Aloysius, please present to Jesus my poor offering, and enhance its value by your own merits. Pray for me.

HUMBLE OFFERING

THAT I PRESENT TO JESUS THROUGH THE HANDS OF MARY

Here I am, Jesus most beloved: I have reached at last the longed-for moment of my sacrifice. Today, through the hands of Mary, I have the blessedness of consecrating myself wholly and irrevocably to your glory, and to the service of my neighbour. In this situation, you are my only support. I consider myself unfit, unworthy, incapable of anything; but if it be your will, you can make me accomplish even marvellous things. I do not know what I shall be doing there; I simply promise you that I will do gladly, without any objection or arguing, all that I am commanded by those who hold your place for me. I will do all that my self-love shrinks from; I will do what others find hard; I will do what will be mostly held in contempt or put to ridicule, and I will do it cheerfully, willingly and with real pleasure.

Lord, most willingly, for your sake, I give up peace and quiet in order to devote myself wholly for the benefit of my neighbour. I offer to you in sacrifice my devotional practices, my prayers, and even my Holy Communion to do, instead, what you will want from me. I have no longer anything of my own; I am wholly yours, and yours in the manner that is most pleasing to you.

I accept from your hands all that you will be pleased to let me suffer in this new state of life for which you have destined me, and right from now I resolve to want nothing except you, your Cross, your Will, and the good of my neighbour.

I present my Mother as a gift to you; you know how much I love her, and how much it costs me to leave her. However, graciously accept the offering and be of help and comfort to her.

I place my sister in your keeping; take special care of her, make her a great saint, and grant her the precious gift of Virginity, assured in some religious institute.

I recommend to you all my Relatives. I entrust to you all my friends. I pray for all my benefactors: help them and save them all.

I put back in your hands all the possessions, however meagre, that you have given me, that they may be used for the benefit of the needy. I have always been poor, and from now on I shall gladly be extremely poor.

I pray and beseech you, however: assist me by your grace, grant me all necessary virtues, preserve in me always joyousness of heart, reliance on you alone and none on myself, union with you, and a holy courage in every deed that concerns your glory.

Dear Jesus, I recommend you our House. I hope for great graces and much help from you, and if need be, I will not fear to ask you even for miracles, knowing for certain that you will perform them. I beg you not to leave me too long without your company: grant that a Chapel be built, and if a miracle is

needed for it, I ask it of you¹. I also ask you for another Companion, but she must be after your own Heart. Let us have her soon, for we are in need of her.

Lastly, I have this to say to you: I offer you everything in sacrifice. I want nothing else. I will do and suffer all that is pleasing to you. Above all, I unite myself to you in everything. I will act, think, speak and suffer, and even breathe, with you.

Never forsake me, I beg of you, lest I spoil all your work.

Most Blessed Virgin Mary, take my humble offering, unite it to your own most precious offering² and render it pleasing to your Jesus, enriching it to its fullest with your protection and help.

Dear St Aloysius, follow me step by step; warn me when I go wrong; protect our Institute, pray continually for me and my companions.

My Guardian Angel, and all you Saints of Heaven, pray for me.

¹ In the original Script of Bartolomea there is an expression which is missing in Mazza "*If you love me, you will do it for me*".

² It was the Feast of the Presentation of Mary at the Temple, 21 November 1832, when she started the new Institute.

LOVING PACT WITH GOD

WHICH I MAKE EVERY SUNDAY AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

My God, my Creator, my all, you know the yearnings of my heart; its groaning and sighing are not hidden to you. I wish I could praise you every instant, I wish I could advance ever more in your holy love, I wish I could weep unceasingly for my sins and make uninterrupted penance for them, but my daily work and the duties of my state, though holy in your eyes because they are ordained in accordance with your holy law and regulated by obedience, prevent my weak mind from thinking steadfastly of you or from praising you as constantly as my heart desires.

And so, in order that this desire, which is surely a gift from you, may not remain fruitless, and that no instant of the time I have may be wasted, through this *loving Pact* I consecrate to you, O Lord, for the whole of this week, all the movements of my heart and of my body.

I implore your infinite goodness to be pleased with this consecration and accept it through the merits of my Lord

Jesus Christ, to the greater glory of God and the better good and spiritual advancement of my soul.

With every breath I take in the course of this week, I intend to offer you, Lord, the life, passion, blood and painful death of my Lord Jesus Christ, the merits and sorrows of Mary most Holy and of all the Saints, to your greater glory and praise, in reparation for my own sins and those of all your creatures, and for the salvation of the whole world, for the exaltation of the holy Catholic Church, for the spreading of our holy faith, for the preservation in health of mind and body of the Pope, of bishops, parish priests and all who tirelessly and zealously work to promote the spiritual good of souls, for peace throughout Christendom and for the conversion of all sinners, heretics and unbelievers throughout the world.

With every beating of my heart, I intend to make an act of living faith, of firm hope, of perfectly-pure love towards you and towards my neighbour for your sake alone; also many acts of heartfelt sorrow for my sins. I will unite these acts with those of all the apostles, martyrs, popes, confessors, virgins and all the Saints and especially with the most ardent love you receive from the most holy Humanity of Jesus Christ, from the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the heavenly host.

Every time I lift my eyes to Heaven, I intend to rejoice and be glad with you, Lord, for all your infinite perfections, and

to thank you for all the privileges granted to Mary, and for giving Her to me as a mother; I also intend to implore you with all my heart to give me a real devotion towards her and the grace to imitate Her virtues.

Every time I open and close my eyes, I intend to praise and acknowledge with a most profound gratitude and sincere thankfulness all that has been done, or will be accomplished till the end of the world, by Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary, by all the Saints and righteous persons to the greater glory of God. I desire and intend to join them by having all their holy intentions and approving all their objectives, as if I myself through them and for them had carried them out and would carry them out in future till the end of time.

I intend and desire every sincere desire conceived by my heart to be a desire to be pleasing to Jesus alone, to attend to my holiness-of-life, to seek Heaven, and also to make just as many spiritual communions and acts of perfect conformity with God's will.

Every time I attend to the spiritual or material benefit of my neighbour, I intend and desire to make up for all my faults against charity, and for those of all your creatures, and to prevent other such faults in future.

Lastly, every time I move my hands or my feet, I intend to embrace, out of pure love for you, all the fatherly designs of

your providence, and to gladly accept your most holy will in every detail, with the sincere desire that you dispose of me as you please.

In order that this *Pact*, as far as I am concerned, may never change, I seal it with the most precious blood of your Wounds, Jesus my love, and I hold it, and will always hold it, now and for ever, as valid, firm and approved, even if I should be unmindful of it; and each time I say: *my God, keep me*, I intend to renew it and confirm it in your presence, my God, whom I adore, love and revere, while I implore you to give me all the help I need to love you, praise you and adore you for all eternity, as relying on your infinite goodness, I trust that I will do, in Heaven. Amen.

Hail Jesus, hail Mary with my dear St Aloysius.

DIRECTING OF MY MIND

WHICH I DO EVERY SUNDAY

TO PURIFY MY INTENTION THROUGHOUT THE FOLLOWING WEEK

I adore you, Jesus my Spouse; stricken with love for you, I place in you my whole self. To you I consecrate the powers of my soul, the senses of my body and the affections of my heart, for I have no wish to live, act or breathe except to give pleasure to you; I would rather die than offend you. You yourself keep me, Lord, as your own possession, that I may be unharmed and safeguarded from all the wiles of the Enemy, whose promptings I detest and abhor. In fact, my will is utterly opposed to them. I therefore declare myself against any temptation or adverse suggestion that may be lurking around, and affirm that I am willing to lay down my life rather than give in to it.

O Lord, in all that I shall do, in thought, word or deed, I intend to have the same mind that was in you in all that you did here on earth for the glory of the eternal, divine Father. I offer all of it in renewed thanksgiving for all the benefits you have showered upon me, for having created and redeemed me, for my upbringing, for having safeguarded me and called

me to the state of virginity, and in preparation and thanksgiving for Holy Communion; and all this because you deserve to be infinitely loved and served.

All the torment of my soul, such as temptations, aridity and sorrows, or of my body, be it affliction, pain, hardship, privation or toil, I offer to you, my gentle Spouse, in return for what you have done and endured for my sake; I offer it also as a penance for my sins, to purify my soul by means of inner and external suffering and so prepare it better for union with you in prayer and in holy Communion, and to acquire strength against my passions and my inclination to evil.

All the solace given to my human needs: eating, drinking, sleeping, working, resting and so on, is from now on meant to give honour and glory to God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to enhance the glory of the Saints, to increase the merits of the righteous, to refresh the souls of the faithful departed and to obtain mercy for sinners, and also that I may acquire the strength and health to bear the burden of my duties and what I may go through in my life-situation.

With every sigh I utter I intend to detest and abhor my sinfulness and each sin in particular, and also the sins committed by all mankind against your honour and glory, O my God, from the beginning of the world till now. How I wish I could make up for it in some way, even by shedding all my blood!

I give up the freedom and pleasure I would have in

spending the day as I feel like; and I gladly submit myself, for your sake, O Lord, to the duties connected with living at home, for the good and tranquillity of it, in a way that is pleasing to you.

I give up the pleasure of chatting and talking as I feel inclined to, with persons who share my tastes; I adjust myself to what obedience requires of me, since even you never refuse to come to my soul though you find in it things that displease you so much.

I wish and intend to obtain all the holy indulgences attached to what I do every day for myself and for the souls of the faithful departed; I also intend to partake of all the good that is done in the Holy Catholic Church, in which I desire to live and die as a true Christian.

Lastly, every breath I take, all the throbbing of my heart, the movements of my body and the batting of my eyelids, I intend and wish to be acts of love towards Jesus my Spouse, of sorrow for having offended Him, of yearning to love Him ever more and to unite myself to Him with the purest and most perfect love in time and for all eternity.

Every time I say: «Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul», I intend to renew the intentions above. Amen.

May it all bring about greater glory to God and spiritual good to my soul.

31 March 1828

IN THE FUNCTIONS OF THE 40 HOURS OF ADORATION

OFFERING OF MYSELF TO JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

How great you are, my Lord, in your mercies! ... How gentle you are towards your creatures! ... What more could you do to draw our hearts and our love irresistibly to you than to give us yourself in this Blessed Sacrament? ... Your pressing invitation makes me so glad! ...

You assure us that you find delight in dwelling among men and that makes you dwell on the sacred altars, waiting, calling, embracing all those who come to you. The Angels themselves do not seem to be so greatly-favoured as we, your poor creatures, are. Considering that you, dear Jesus, find delight in conversing with us, what about me? ... You know how I enjoy staying at your feet, how I revere the banqueting-table to which you graciously admit me, day by day, how sweet and delightful are those moments when I cling to you in love. But that is not enough. I too want to have something to offer you in return for your boundless love. What shall I give you, then? ... What I have is your gift. Of my own, I have only poverty and sinfulness. But I know that you are pleased all the same if I

offer you what is yours; having nothing else to give you, I offer you my very self, without reserve.

Yes, my Jesus, I give myself wholly to you, I place myself trustfully in your most holy hands; do with me as it pleases you best, and I am glad of it. In every situation, however small, however difficult or hard or contrary to what I like, I will seek your most Holy Will, and I will do it gladly to the best of my ability. My concern will no longer be myself but you alone, knowing that you will take special care of me as well.

I will ask no other grace from you than that of loving you and pleasing you. You yourself, O Lord, look after this poor handmaid of yours, while I on my part have no desire to seek anything except to be totally yours. I will always cherish your Holy Will, I will seek and adore your plans for my life, nor will I have any other concern than that of abandoning myself wholly in your hands, unreservedly and gladly, so that I may be entirely yours just as you are entirely mine! Good Jesus, graciously accept the offering of my whole self to you, and grant me the grace of self-forgetfulness so that I may live for you and in you alone.

Let the Holy Communion I receive be a pledge of this grace, and I beg you to let me always receive you worthily, so that by this means there may be formed in me that lovely union with you, from which I will never live apart.

Inveni quem diligit anima mea, tenui eum nec dimittam.

(I found him whom my soul loves. I held him and would not let him go)

13 April 1827. Good Friday

DECLARATION TO JESUS CRUCIFIED

I, ungrateful that I am, have inflicted death on you, my Jesus, by my sins. ... But I will not do like this any more in future; I declare, by your grace, that I prefer to die a thousand times rather than displease you in the slightest way. This very day I want to start a new life. I cling to you, holy Cross, with you I want to spend my days.

My dear Jesus, self-abnegation, humility, acceptance of your will, endurance, patience, detachment from all creation, union with you, and ceaseless self-denial will be my daily practice. That's enough; I am yours, do with me what you wish; I will no longer worry about myself: grant me your love and I am rich enough.

17 April 1829

DECLARATION TO JESUS CRUCIFIED

As you breathe your last in atrocious pain, my good Jesus, I approach you with the desire to be of some solace to you. With my tears I wash those Wounds inflicted on you by my sins. Regarding these, I humbly beg you to forgive me; I promise that from now on I will never offend you again; I am willing to accept death a hundred times rather than displease you in the slightest way. Receive me, good Jesus, in your grieved Heart, and grant that I may there for ever dwell, and learn from you how necessary suffering is for our salvation.

Lord, along with your sacred Body I bury all my faults, especially pride, self-love, touchiness, frivolity, negligence in my duties. Grant that I may rise again with you to a life completely new and holy. I earnestly recommend to you sinners and those who commit sacrilegious acts; I entrust to you my dear Parents and Relatives, my Superior, the (Pious) Union, the devout Associations, the Congregation, and the Holy Souls of Purgatory. Receive us all in your open Heart, and grant that we may always love you and serve you.

DECLARATION TO JESUS CRUCIFIED

(Good Friday 1830)

Dear Jesus, here at your feet is the most unworthy among your handmaids. It was I, yes myself, who most ungratefully ill-treated you so. It was I who scourged you, it was I who crowned you with thorns, it was I who inflicted the wounds in your hands and in your feet, it was I, lastly, who pierced your side. Oh Jesus dear, forgive me, in your loving kindness. I will no more do so; on the contrary, I promise that from now on I will love you immensely, and do my best to make up for what I failed to do in the past. I will totally forget myself so as to think of you alone, and at this moment when you expire in atrocious pain I beg of you one grace, that is, that you let me share a little in your Holy Cross; but first strengthen me with your grace that I may not be unworthy of your Cross. I am too unlike you, my Jesus Crucified, and I really fear I am not pleasing to you, and so, if you love me, make me worthy of suffering.

Dear Jesus, with a drop of that Blood that you so abundantly shed on the Cross, wash my poor soul clean. Purify also the soul of my Parents, and that of my Superior and

of my Benefactors, that of all my fellow-sisters (of the Pious Union) and of all the poor cholera-stricken. Grant that these souls, redeemed by you, may not offend you any more.

I place in your Holy Tomb all my faults, especially pride. I beg you grant that I may rise again with you to a completely-new life, stripped of my own self and wholly clothed in You, in order to live only for You and in You, my beloved All. Amen.

Maundy Thursday - 1 April 1831

SELF-OFFERING TO JESUS CRUCIFIED

Most loveable Jesus, my most chaste Spouse, I acknowledge the infinite graces I have received from you, which are quite overwhelming. I also acknowledge that your sweet invitations, or rather, your vigorous 'pushing' urging me to offer myself to you totally, unreservedly, with no half-measures, but with great courage and better than I can ever explain, are pressing, irresistible. How many times I have heard your voice saying to me: «As long as you are not wholly, totally mine, I will not stop knocking, calling you, and carrying on a holy persecution on you ...». And yet, I have always had the heart to resist, and to live my own way. ... My Jesus, I am very sorry, and I wish to wash away my great ingratitude even if I should have to shed so much blood. Forgive me, and as a sign of your forgiveness grant me the grace to carry out what I am resolving to do.

1. From now on I want to live a crucified life, in rigorous self-denial, that is: I resolve no longer to seek nor give myself the slightest satisfaction in what pertains to my body nor to my spirit. I therefore resolve never to lift my eyes except for

reasons of duty, charity or obedience. I will not speak except in reply to others or for the sake of duty, charity, obedience, or to please any of my neighbours, not to annoy anyone. But simply because I like it or out of indifference, never. I resolve to abandon my body totally in the arms of divine Providence, never to insist on having anything nor to refuse anything. I will eat, drink, sleep, refresh myself only when I am told to; in everything I will carry out the command or wish of others, and rejoice when no-one seems to notice me; I will not express my needs unless I am asked to do so.

I will treasure my slight physical ailments; I will not let others notice them, much less talk of them unless I am asked or when it is necessary; out of respect, however, I will simply mention them if my Superiors enquire about them; I will strictly keep to the treatment prescribed by them, even when my self-love makes me think that I have no need of it; in this regard, I will never object to their orders, but thank them. And so, I will eat, sleep, walk about, when I don't feel like it. In every case, I will always do as others require of me: take with pleasure what others enjoy, speak when they wish me to, keep silent when they expect me to, in all things to have no other will than that of carrying out what others wish.

As much as I can, I will keep my mind taken up with God in a sweet and loving way; I will avoid, like the plague, not only thoughts against any virtue but also useless or distracting thoughts. In things where it is up to me to choose, I will always

choose what I don't like, what is most humiliating or most irksome. And so I will wage a holy war against myself, no more seeking for myself anything except suffering, and for Jesus, only his glory. I will always be willing and ready to make any sacrifice; I will frequently offer God what is dearest to me: my Superiors, my Relatives, the Associations, the Unions, my Holy Communions, my prayers, my spiritual consolation, the peace and quiet of my heart, the days of recollection, my girls, the school, the Oratorio¹, the Hospital, my works of charity, and anything else that I cherish. At the same time I will keep myself ready to leave everything, abandon everything and give up all things if it is pleasing to you, my God, provided it is your will. I don't want to be a saint if you don't wish it of me. I will not long for Heaven, if you are not pleased. I have no other desire than that of loving you, loving you greatly, loving you always, with all my heart, professing my love through suffering, living crucified with you. Lord, I will no longer seek myself in my thoughts, words and actions, but only you and your glory. Send me whatever you wish: suffering, scorn, humiliation, abandonment. I will endure it all for your sake. If you allow me also a good reputation, praise and appreciation, the honour will be yours. As to Bortolamea, I will bury her in your tomb, so that she may no longer make any appearance in the world. May you alone and your glory work in me.

Jesus my love, I cannot conclude my self-offering without promising you what you yourself keep knocking at the door of my heart for. Regarding love of neighbour, I will do my

¹ See foot *Note* pg 697.

best to practise it really well. I will use every means, every skill, to avoid sin, and help others avoid it; with that end in view I will be bold, and I will even take risks, relying on your assistance; however, I will do my utmost to stop people offending you. I don't mind if I forfeit fame, possessions and life itself: such a noble cause is worth much more. But above all, the poor, the sick and the youth will be the object I aim at. For their sake I will gladly give up my liking for quiet retirement, my usual devout practices and anything else. Lord, shake me out of my laziness, grant that I may put to good use the talents I have received from you. Grant that I may please you.

Lord, write in indelible letters on my heart what I am now writing in this notebook, so that I may faithfully carry it out. But for this I need special help from you, for without it I will only offend you.

Dear Jesus, come in aid of the weakness of your handmaid and the poverty of your bride. My craving is to love you, to please you; I beg you to remove from my heart every other craving. Lord, walk with me in every step I take, otherwise I will betray you. But I do want to love you; crucify me with you, make me die to myself; let the world be for me like a desert without any traces of my actions, because these must be seen by you alone.

Put much vigour and courage in me, so that I may do much for you, because however much I do, it will always be nothing. Mary, my dear Mummy, I commend myself to you; I want to love your Jesus, my Jesus, I want to love him immensely.

Lend me your noble Heart, dear Mother Mary, so that I may love him truly through it. Beloved St Aloysius, obtain some grace for your poor devotee; my sole desire is to please my Jesus. See to it that I be granted this holy love. All you Saints of Heaven, pray for me. Amen.

Praise and thanks be rendered to my dear Jesus.

HAIL JESUS AND MARY

OFFERING

OF MY WHOLE SELF TO JESUS CRUCIFIED

Here I am, my dear Jesus, at the foot of your adorable Cross. I acknowledge the countless graces I have received from you, particularly frequent moments of spiritual joy and a great pleasure in serving you and loving you: for it all I render heartfelt thanks; I wish I could thank you as you deserve, for I know that you care for me and have for me infinite love, but I am too unworthy. All the same, I beg you to accept my desire, and let your goodness make good for my nothingness. At this moment, however, I give up, for your sake, all spiritual consolation, all spiritual pleasure and delight; I want to love and serve you for your sake alone. I want to live a life of suffering; I want to live nailed to the cross. All the consolation and pleasure that in your infinite mercy you have reserved for me in this world, I now give up, begging you to reserve it for me in Heaven. Now, all I want to seek is the cross; for love of you I will cherish all that is painful, and if in your goodness you wish to favour me with some cross, and make me like you, Crucified for me, I will consider myself most highly-favoured. Yes, my dear Jesus, I declare with all my heart: at this point I

accept every sort of tribulation, cross, suffering, desolation, aridity, dread, anxiety, poverty, bad name, contempt, sickness, derision, calumny, harassment, persecution, trouble, etc. in a word, all that you are pleased to send me. But I beg you most earnestly to help me. Don't leave me alone, for that would be the end of me. I know my weakness only too well: if you took your sacred Hand off my head for an instant, I would fall headlong down the abyss of my nothingness and then, what will poor Bortolamea do? ... And so, dear Jesus, I beg you only this; for the rest, if you want to hide your face from me, if you prefer to be silent with me, if you want to treat me harshly, if you want to be very strict with me, do as you like; I promise I will love you always, I will serve you faithfully, in all that I do, I will always seek to please you.

And so, dear Jesus, my most gentle Spouse, accept this offering that I make to you with all my heart, purely for love's sake. Bless me, and with this blessing give me the strength to be constant in what I am now promising you.

Mary most Blessed, my dear Mummy, help me and teach me how to bear the cross in the most perfect way possible. My Guardian Angel, St Aloysius Gonzaga, St Theresa, I commend myself to you; continue to pray Jesus for me so that after such a serious offering I may not again be unfaithful to my dear Jesus.

Praised be Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

OFFERING OF MYSELF TO MARY

Dear Mummy Mary, here is Bortolamea who offers herself entirely to you. Ah! What a happiness it would be for me if I can be wholly 'of Mary' !

Graciously accept me, dear Mother, for I am wholly yours; my heart, especially, will never be satisfied as long as it is not wholly aflame with your holy love.

This is my protestation of love to you, Mary: I want to love you, serve you, revere you and honour you always and as much as I am capable of; my whole life, in future will be spent in your honour, and it will be my bounden duty to make others, too, love you. Help me with your grace and let me die rather than go back on my word to you. Amen.

Hail Mary.

OFFERING TO MARY

Kneeling at your feet, dear Mummy, I, Bortolamea of Jesus, beg your forgiveness for my lack of loyalty in serving you in the course of last month; relying solely on your goodness I trust in your compassion and most affectionately I dedicate myself entirely, especially my heart, to you, while I assure you that from now on I will have no other pleasure nor glory than that of loving, serving and pleasing you, my dearest Mummy.

Graciously accept my poor offering, for the sake of your Jesus, my Jesus; from now on give me yourself the grace (since I no longer belong to myself but to you, completely) to imitate your beautiful virtues and to do only what is pleasing to you. Grant me the grace to love you greatly, to make others love you, for I will never be happy till I see the love of you spread all over the world. While I beg you to bless me and with me all my companions, I pray that you obtain for all of us the grace to die a saintly death, and that we may in that hour have you by our side.

I love you, Mary, but as I love you too little, I wish to love you much more. Amen.

OFFERING TO MARY

IN THE FEAST OF HER 'PURIFICATION'

Most sweet Mamma, I, Bortolamea of Jesus, your unworthy handmaid and daughter, come to you with true filial trust, with the intention of ardently recommending myself to your kindness. Among your daughters you have perhaps no-one who is in greater spiritual need than I am, none so poor, so spiritually feeble. The great poverty of my heart will therefore move your gracious heart to deep compassion.

I am unworthy of your favour; I admit it and blame myself for it, but you are all the same a Mother of love and tenderness to me, and so I have full hope in you. I entrust my heart to you; I have soiled it with countless sins. I beg you, make it spotless and beautiful, that it may be pleasing to Jesus my Beloved. Let me partake of your profound humility, of which you give me, on this day, such striking examples. Obtain for me the grace to realize, once for all, who I am, to cultivate a desire to be held in low regard, in short: to seek holy humility in all things. Hand to me your Divine Son as you once did to the Holy Aged Simeon. Today it is from your hands that I intend to receive Him; impress on me the preciousness of the gift that you offer me. And if you foresee that I could commit even one single

venial sin in the remaining part of my life, I beg you, grant that I may die at once because I hope to be in the grace of God just now; but never let me forsake Jesus who loves me so much.

Dear Mummy, tell your Jesus, my Jesus, to make me wholly his. I know that nothing less than an act of his omnipotence is needed for this, but tell him to do it for the sake of his handmaid and bride so that she may be able to love him and serve him in the manner that he expects from me. Tell him to do with me as he wishes in this world, for I am glad of it, but that as soon as I am freed from this body, I want to come to love Him and you in Heaven. And so, tell him to let me share in his cross, so that I may be cleansed of the terrible sins I have committed. In your hands, my dear Advocate, I place my vows, especially the most demanding one; with your protection I hope to have the grace of carrying it out. Or rather, I beg you to carry it out for me and in me.

On my part I wish to offer you a little gift: that of putting in your hands the three faculties of my soul; be graciously pleased with them, for I no longer consider myself the owner of them. Grant that I may never make use of them in any way that does not give glory to God and to you, to the benefit of my neighbour and for the good of my soul.

Dear Mummy, give me your holy blessing, and with it the gift of Holy Perseverance, and grant that I may soon be able to come to Heaven to praise you for all eternity.

Amen

HAIL MARY, QUEEN OF HEAVEN

31 May 1829

OFFERING TO MARY

O Mary, Mary, my most gentle Mummy, to you I come though I am most unworthy. I am at a loss what sentiments to express to you on this occasion. Help me yourself to tell you what you expect from me, or rather, be yourself the one to speak in me and on behalf of me.

I am extremely sorry for coming to the end of this month without doing what I should have done to honour and serve you! ... How negligent I have been, how many good opportunities for pleasing you I have let slip by. I would have been much happier now if I had done my duty towards you perfectly well, just as so many others, faithful daughters of yours, have done. Forgive me, beloved Mummy, I earnestly pray, and I promise that in future I will be more faithful and loyal to you. However, while I ask you to have compassion on me, I must also thank you as far as I am able to, for so many graces, favours and special help you have given me during this

month, out of your clemency, though I did not deserve it. Who could ever enumerate the graces you have obtained for me? Not I, certainly! And what should I give you in return for your immense love? My whole self and, above all, my poor heart. The offering is too poor, but I beg you to accept it all the same and make it your own. With my heart I place in your hands also all my weaknesses, especially my wretched, inveterate pride, which is the cause of much displeasure to God and also to you. I beg you, grant that from now on I may no longer again act or think proudly, for it displeases my Jesus. Grant me the freedom of spirit which will enable me to do what is right with the one sole aim of pleasing God.

O Mary, I give you my whole self: heart, soul, body and will, feelings and sentiments, whatever belongs to me. Make me yours, wholly yours, yours for ever and ever.

I promise I will use all ways and means to instil devotion towards you in the hearts of all those I come in contact with. Oh! How I wish I could see the heart of everyone aflame with love for you! ... Mary, you can do it, you desire it, do it then, I ask it of you for charity's sake.

I recommend to you our Pious Union; grant that it may continue to grow in fervour. For charity's sake alone I beg you to send the Holy Spirit into our hearts, with that fullness of gifts in which you received Him when you were on earth. Prepare our hearts to receive Him; see to it that He does come.

For myself, then, there is one thing I ask of you, a thing I really want, and it is this: that from now on you may enable me to lead a life that is a perfect copy of St Aloysius Gonzaga's life, and that I may be as dear to Jesus and to you as that great Saint was.

I commend to you all your devotees, my Parents and Relatives, my Confessor, sinners, the youth, the sick and the afflicted, Christian princes, all the Clergy, the devotees of St Aloysius and the Souls of Purgatory. Give comfort and strength to all, O Mary, and impart on me and on all of us your Holy Blessing.

HAIL JESUS AND MARY

14 August 1828.

Humbly kneeling by your bed, my beloved Mummy, as you are about to pass away from this earth, I, Bortolamea of Jesus, draw close to you so that I may share in the benefit of your last will and Testament.

I beg you to be pleased with the poor offering I make to you of all that I am and of all I have; take everything with you to Heaven and keep it close to you, for I want to be wholly yours.

Dear Mother, do not depart from here without me, your poor handmaid, and if now you are leaving for Heaven, and do not wish to take me with you, I too will come there at least with my heart and desire. Grant that from now on, all that I hold dear, desire and long for; my thoughts, words, actions, etc. may be solely for the sake of Jesus and yours, and with the yearning for Heaven.

I earnestly commend myself to your charity; you are a Mother to me; look after this daughter of yours, unworthy though she be. I place all my hope in you. I want solely what you want: I wish to love you, serve you, praise you and make everyone love you. I beg it of you for charity's sake, and for the same

reason I ask that you leave me, in remembrance of you, your own most Sacred Heart, and in return for it I give you my own poor heart, badly marred by sins. Your loving kindness assures me of this grace, and from now on I will think that I have no other heart in me except yours, so perfect and most rich in heroic virtues, and with It I will love my God as much as I am capable of.

Mary, I am yours; make of me Jesus' own possession. Mary, make me a saint, a great saint, soon a saint. O Mummy, let me die a thousand times rather than displease you even in the slightest way. For love's sake, bless me and bless also my Superiors of soul and body, bless our Congregation and all others, all my sisters and friends, sinners, and the whole Church. Bless also all the Holy Souls of Purgatory: *Nos cum Prole pia, benedicat Virgo Maria.* Amen.

HAIL THE INFANT CHILD

7 September 1828.

Unworthy as I am, I cannot but approach and kneel before your Cradle to assist at the most blessed act of your birth and pay homage to you. Do not turn me away, dear Child, my most gentle Mummy: I am unworthy of it, but in your graciousness you will allow it and my own need drives me to come to you. I rejoice with you because I see you so beautiful that as soon as you were born you won the Heart of God himself.

With all my heart I thank the Blessed Trinity who with such high privileges lifted you above all creatures. Yet in such greatness do not forget your poor handmaid, this devotee and daughter of yours. Look on me with eyes of kindness and compassion, and graciously hear my supplications.

Dear Child, for the sake of your Infancy give also to me a holy spiritual infancy, whereby just like a child I may have no will, intellect, desire or bent except for what God wills. Give me also the grace to be born again with you to a spiritual and devout life. Grant me fresh fervour, grant me love, grant me inner silence and a true spirit of prayer, grant me a self-

denying, patient spirit, grant me also some cross that I can cherish, grant that I be forgotten, offended, wronged etc., for I really desire it; but for charity's sake help me. Lastly, grant me your lovely purity, your profound humility.

I recommend to you our dear Institute, for charity's sake do not mind my unworthiness, but do it in your graciousness. With all my heart I also beg you to see to it that I may at least die in some Religious Institute if I am too unworthy for you to make me spend in it all the days of my life. I hope to receive everything from you, dear Child and Mummy.

Before your Cradle I now kneel nor do I wish to come away from it. Here I will learn how to love God, how to avoid offending Him, how to serve Him, and you, most faithfully, in a word, how to become a saint; I beg you in your compassion not to drive me away. I commend all to you: my Confessor, my Parents and Relatives, sinners, the youth, all the Pious Unions and Associations, and the whole of Christendom, and the Souls of Purgatory.

O Mary, lift your tender little hand from your Cradle and on all of us impart your Holy Blessing.

Nos cum Prole pia, benedicat Virgo Maria. Amen.

