

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

The writings of Venerable Bartolomea Capitanio, duly approved by the Sacred Congregation for Rites in view of her Beatification, are now published in three parts. Part One contains her letters. Part Two will contain the rest of her writings meant for the good of her neighbour. In Part Three there will appear what the Servant of God wrote for her own spiritual progress.

Several times, now and again, there have appeared in print passages from her writings either in appendix to her biography by the eminent Fr. G. Scandella, or separately. But none of these partial publications reproduced exactly the full original text: for some reason or other, some writings were cut short or interpolations were inserted into it.

It has therefore been thought advisable to compile a complete edition as much as possible leaving the writings as

they are, for two reasons: because the writings that saints have left after them are always valuable and deserve to be gathered and cherished for the veneration of the faithful, and also in order to continue the beneficial apostolic activity that the Servant of God carried out through her writings in her short lifespan¹.

In fact, one can hardly even imagine how much fervour of spirit and of a sound Christian life she succeeded in radiating through her writings in her native town of Lovere itself, all over the Valle Camonica and in many other places within the Dioceses of Brescia and Bergamo, not only for the benefit of girls and older women but also for the spiritual good of eminent and devout Priests, among whom it is sufficient to mention Fr Angelo Taeri of the Oratorio of Brescia, Count Marco Passi and Count Tomini, Archpriest of the Bergamo Clergy Chapter. These priests turned to her for advice, and were inspired to move ever ahead along the path of perfection by her suggestions on devout practices and methods of life suited to priestly life.

Of one of her letters it is narrated how it was passed around in a country-town, and its salutary effect on the people was, according to what the parish Priest of the place said, as great as that of a preached Mission. – One can therefore hope that an apostolic activity of that kind, spread by means of the

¹ Ven. Bartolomea Capitanio was born at Lovere on 13 January 1807 and died at Lovere itself at the age of 26, on 26 July 1833.

Press over a vaster field, should reproduce a hundredfold the same abundant fruits.

No wonder, then, that the letters of Venerable Bartolomea were, even in her lifetime, highly valued by eminent Priests of Brescia and Bergamo Dioceses, and that Bishop Nava of Brescia himself was in possession of several letters of hers and cherished them with jealous care.

In this regard it is fitting to quote what her Confessor and Rev. Parish Priest of Lovere, Don Angelo Bosio, testified during the canonical Processes: «To write anything at all, she did not need to put in much effort; her pen ran smoothly and speedily like water from a fountain. At times she would write whole booklets without having to cancel any mistake; as a rule she never had to make a rough copy, and there was about all her writings such an unction and spiritual wisdom that they were held, and are still held, in great esteem, as an effective means to instil a deep faith and a sound piety. As I read them, I am impelled to repeat what I said in another place (about the Rules of a Pious Union for Priests and Virgins), referring to what was affirmed by Count canoeist Tomini. “These are the writings of a Saint” and “Saints’ things are not to be touched”».

With that sense of respect, in fact, her writings are kept as close as possible to her autograph original script, slightly correcting here and there only where it is a question of grammatical construction or spelling so as to render the reading smoother and more pleasant. – The few defects that remain can be partly due to her deliberate intention to humble her self-love (she herself furnished evidence of this), and

partly to the large amount she had to write which, come to think of it, was most astonishing for a young girl who was often sick, very busy teaching at her own school, keeping the house clean or running the Hospital, conducting 'Oratorio' meetings and directing so many Sodalities, not to mention the considerable time dedicated to devotional practices or to works of charity for the benefit of her neighbour.

What has been compiled in this edition cannot be considered complete at all. Witnesses during the Processes agree in attesting on the vast amount of her writings. Several of them say that for a long period of time she used to receive a letter from her every day. Others say that she «used to spend night hours writing out novenas, triduums, methods of life, etc» – because a «constant flow of requests for novenas, devotional practices and methods of life came from very many people, including parish priests, eminent spiritual directors, persons of high merit, and her writings were distributed in very many country-towns»; – «It is almost incredible how a young girl could do so much in her short lifespan». Lastly, it was said, «Her Guardian Angel must have come to her assistance to enable her to write so many letters and so many other writings, without ever neglecting her other duties: more especially, that all are not only well written but also permeated with heavenly wisdom and with evidence of a life of holiness, illumined by God himself». From these and similar testimonials we can easily infer that there must have been very many more letters, a large part of which has unfortunately got lost.

This appears more likely to be the case from the fact that in the last days of her life Ven. Bartolomea threw a fat bundle of her writings into the fire, keeping for herself only a prayer-book which she constantly used till the very end. Moreover, we can suppose that other papers written by her and sent to friends who in turn passed them on to a third or fourth person, less careful than they to keep them safely, must have either been destroyed, or gone out of sight and out of mind in such a manner that not even the best attempts of the Bishop of Brescia and his Curia could find them.

However, what does remain and is here compiled and offered to the public, seems more than just sufficient to nourish a firm hope that it will attain the purpose here intended: to the greater glory of God and the growth in holiness of other persons. In that case the compiler will consider himself amply rewarded for his humble toil.