

YEAR 1829

Letter 132

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She reassures her friend of her special love - Tells her about Holy Communion offered for her - Progress of the Pious Union - She recommends the Spiritual Exercises to be conducted for the Sodality.

HAIL TO THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS

My most gentle Sister
in the charity of Our Lord,

Praise and thanks to the gracious Jesus who grants me this moment to spend in sweet conversation with the dearest of all my Sisters. It's a long time since I last wrote to you. To me it seems very long indeed, because you are so dear to me. I need not tell you that the reason for my delay was not disregard for your person, because if you thought so you would be doing me a real wrong. Rather, other engagements robbed me of the time I would have devoted to writing to you.

I have greatly appreciated your last letter. It shook me quite a bit out of my coldness in the service of God. For charity's sake, when you have time do write to me and reproach me for my negligence in loving God. I need it very badly.

Today I offered my holy Communion for you. When I asked my Lord in the Sacrament what he expected from his Lucia, it seems to me that he warmly recommended his own cause: that is, that in this distressing Carnival time you must do your utmost to prevent offences to Him and to gain for him the conversion of some soul. Set your heart on doing this, for Jesus truly deserves it, and you are very fortunate in doing something that is so dear to him.

I cannot keep from you the happiness I feel at the sight of so much progress in our Pious Union. I assure you that all my fellow members in my home town are all afire with holy love, eager to do a good deal and very happy to be members of this devout Union. The girl you proposed to replace the one who died, has not obtained the approval of Rev. Superior. I myself proposed five names to him: two of them were accepted and three were not. The Lord knows what he disposes, and so let us be happy to do His will. I told Don Bosio that we wanted to make up the required number, and he answered that with regard to the five or six still lacking, he knew where best to find them, and that he has them already in mind if, he added, all of you agree to it.

I hope I will soon be able to send you some practices for Carnival Time: it is indeed appropriate that our Pious Union be committed to draw souls to Jesus.

I should like you to do me an act of kindness: that is, to pray Rev. Fr. Ballardini to send you without delay the booklet on the Company of St Aloysius. The Religious to whom I had

lent it was unable to copy out the whole of it and now with his group he has already come to the end of seven weeks, and several times he begged me to lend it to him again. It is true that I have a copy of it myself, but it is not exactly the same, and so he must have the same booklet again. Please give Fr Ballardini my sincere regards and tell him to excuse me for hurrying him, and to commend me to God.

A thousand wishes to all our dear fellow members. Commend me to the prayer of each one of them. I expect to have a letter from you soon. With the prayerful wish that we be wholly consumed by the Holy Love of Jesus Christ.

Love, 1st January 1829.

P.S. I almost forgot to tell you that on the 4th instant Rev. Superior is starting the Spiritual Exercises to the Sodality. I earnestly commend him to your kind prayer, that they may bear good fruit. Please pray and make others pray hard. For all that you tell me in your letter I will give you a reply as soon as I can. So long, then.

Your poor and unworthy Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 133

TO A PRIEST

Condolence on the death of his father.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father,

I am at a loss how to start this letter. On the one hand I am sorry to bring back to mind a thing that weighs so heavily on your heart; on the other hand my duty to share in your distress impels me to mention it, though I am sorry I have to do so. My dear ones at home and I were grieved to hear of the unexpected demise of your good Father, and this makes it even more difficult for me to find fitting words of comfort to you, Reverend Father.

The only comforting thought I can offer you in your bereavement is that God's Will, however hard and painful, is yet always loveable, for God does everything for the best. Besides, you have good reason to be comforted at the thought of the virtuous life of your good Father, for which there is no doubt that God has willed to reward him.

Do all you can to raise your spirits, for God is watching over

you and your family. He will be a Father to you, and will help you at all times.

All at home pay their respects to you and share in your grief. Camilla takes the liberty of sending you the holy picture of St Aloysius Gonzaga, which she had promised you long ago. She is also returning your books with heartfelt thanks and the assurance that you have done her a good turn.

Give my sincere regards to your Sister. Please tell her to commend me to the Lord though I do not have the pleasure of knowing her personally.

Wishing you all blessedness from Heaven and begging you to commend me to God, I have the honour to be

Love, 2 January 1829.

Your devoted Servant
BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 134

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She sends the Novena of the Betrothal of Mary.

Dearest Sisters in Jesus Christ,

I had forgotten to send you the practices for the Novena of the Betrothal of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so I am hastily sending them to you now, with the request that you inform also, as usual, the four Sisters close by: that is, Mora Sisters, M. Vertova and Rizieri.

I have reminded the Nuns about your Corporals, but due to the unfavourable time, they are not ready yet.

I leave you to hear the preaching of the Holy Missions, with my wishes to you of abundant fruit everywhere. In great haste I sign off, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Love, 13 January 1826

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Ladies

LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

(urgent, please)

CIVIDATE.

Letter 135

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

About a letter lost - Don Bosio to be consulted on a matter.

Dearest Sister in the charity
of Our Lord and of Mary,

I have received your most welcome letter. It brought me much joy, with its fresh assurance of your kindness to me. I assure you that from me you have back what is yours, with interest. If I am unable to write to you frequently, it is not that I forget you, believe me, but rather due to additional small engagements that rob me of all my free time. Relying on your goodness, I hope you will remain close to me all the time.

I was surprised to hear that you have not received the paper with the practices for Carnival time. Maybe it was my mistake: I may have intended to send it but never did so. In any case, please let me know if you have received a letter from me in which I mentioned the result of a holy Communion I offered for you, and in the same letter I had made a brief hint on the fellow member Ferrari. As far as I can remember, I had enclosed the paper in that letter.

If you did receive the letter, it means that I forgot to send you the paper. What I fear is that the letter might have got lost, and I would be especially sorry about that.

I shall without delay ask Rev. Superior to come here, if he agrees to have you with others gather here as well; I will try to let you know soon what he says.

Fellow members here send you their warm wishes; please give our best wishes to fellow members there.

Wishing you all that is good, I am

Love, 21 January 1829.

Your poor Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

urgent, please
To Esteemed Lady
LUCIA CISONDI

BRENO.

Letter 136

TO THE FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE PIOUS UNION OF THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY

Fragment of a letter in which she presents what Canon Conte Tomini thinks of the Pious Union.

25 January 1829.

Rev. Count Tomini, our fellow member, was consulting Mother Parpani on the way of holding meetings of this Union, the number of members, that is, that there should be 12 Priests representing the 12 Apostles, and 72 Disciples, all virgins etc. Utterly amazed, he said, «You can rest assured that God approves of this thing and that it is bound to bring about much good. You will see in due time what will come out of it». He said he considered himself highly fortunate to be enrolled in it himself. He warmly urged her to remain loyal to it, never to grow tired of it nor leave it, for (members) could be sure that God was pleased with it. Mother Parpani asked him to explain to her more clearly what he knew about it; he said he himself could not speak of it, but had come to understand that this Pious Union had been foretold forty years ago either in Rome or in Naples in these terms: – that at a certain point

there would be in the Church of the Lord a Pious Union composed of 12 Priests representing the 12 Apostles and 72 Virgins amounting to the number of the 72 disciples, and that this Union was to bring about much good to the Church. – He added that several times this Union had been pre-announced, opposed and examined but never quite realized, which meant that it was not yet the time established by God for it. We are fortunate to be among those more highly favoured by God and held dear to his heart.

Letter 137

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

*Thoughts on Heaven - She urges her to found the Sodality of St Aloysius
- to comfort the Heart of Jesus - Her fear of abandoning Him - She
promises new rules for the Pious Union.*

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS
HAIL TO MARY AND HER UNFAILING PATIENCE

My most gentle and beloved Sister,

It is with great joy that I sit down to write this letter. When I speak and talk with you, my gentle Sister, a sense of gladness settles in my heart and a sweet delight comes over my whole being. How will it be then if I have the blessedness of enjoying your company in Heaven? ... O dear Homeland! ... Your very name is sweet! ... At the thought of it our heart overflows with joy. Is it drawing near, perhaps?... If you go first, remember me, I beg of you; I will do the same for you if I am fortunate enough to be the first to step into Heaven.

I have received all your letters and also the booklet about St Aloysius. I am glad that my letter with the practices for Carnival Time attached to it has reached you at last. I trust you have received another letter of mine with a copy of

the same practices because I was eager to meet your request.

With regard to what you tell me about the Sodality of St Aloysius: to tell you the truth, for two years now I have desired, and I feel that the Lord too wishes, that you do what you can for such a beautiful cause but - I don't know why - I never told you about this wish of mine.

However, to make sure both of us are doing the right thing, I have sought the advice of our Reverend Superior, taking care to let him know your difficulties as well.

He too told me that you should undertake with confidence an initiative which will certainly be pleasing to God and beneficial to young girls. And so, take this enterprise in hand with much fervour and have trust in St Aloysius, who will do himself what you cannot cope with. He will take such care of the girls you entrust to him, that I really trust not a single one of them will go astray.

You tell me that the Lord wants from us something more during this Carnival Time. The note I am enclosing is meant for the two of us, and we have for it the approval and obedience of Rev. Superior.

If God gives you any other inspiration, you will be doing me an exquisite kindness in suggesting it to me.

Yesterday I offered my holy Communion for you. I prayed our gentle Jesus to graciously let me know his designs over you; I seem to have understood that he wants you to make every effort to adorn your heart ever more beautifully with virtue, because he has chosen it for his dwelling place, particularly during this time when he is forsaken by so many.

Dear Lucia, how fortunate you are! ... For charity's sake, be you at least there to comfort the beloved Jesus who is continually receiving countless offences. Comfort him with your love, your fidelity, your loyal service: do what you can, also, to obtain mercy for the unfortunate who offend Him. But be especially kind to Bortolamea, your friend and sister. One thing I tell you: I find myself in dire need of your charity: I greatly fear that I may be contemptible in God's sight; At every moment I seem to see myself forsaken by God and so falling headlong down a precipice. This time you must simply be a sister to me and pray with all your heart to God that if he foresees that I am about to stray from him, he may give me at once a sincere sorrow for my sin and then make me die immediately. This thought weighs really heavily on my heart, and I have a dreadful fear that it may come about. What gives me a sweet hope, though, is the union and charity that you have towards me, and so I hope that your merits will keep me up.

There is another kindness I want from you. Since we have agreed to ask from Jesus Christ the conversion of some soul every time the clock strikes the hour, I beg of you that at the sound of midday you ask from Jesus Christ the perfect conversion of all the girls of my Oratorio¹ and at 2 p.m. to ask from him my sincere and total conversion. The same thing I, though unworthy, will do at the same time for your Oratorio; for you, I will ask from Jesus the sublime heights of holiness.

This time I am bent on tiring you out with my lengthy letter.

¹ See footnote pg 55.

However, you must know that I never get tired of reading yours, and this time I will wait for one soon, a long one that will cheer me, though I do not deserve it.

Dearest, let us love Jesus, let us love Mary. Let us do our best to make others love them, for they absolutely deserve it. I hope I will soon be able to send you the new Rules for our Pious Union. Meanwhile, have patience because the things that we long for most are the very things that come off most successfully.

So long, dear Lucia; I leave you with the aged Simeon to enjoy the company of the Child Jesus. I am

Love, 2 February 1829.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 138

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She is happy about her friend's recovery from illness - She gives an account of errands run for her.

HONOUR AND GLORY TO JESUS AND MARY

My dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 6 February 1829.

I am very much obliged to you and deeply grateful for the immense joy you gave me in sending your most welcome letter. To tell you the truth, I was rather anxious and worried, knowing of your illness and having no further news of you. Thank God for restoring you back to health. I am so glad of it! Yet do remember, also, that God is giving you the gift of health with the understanding that you use it all for his glory and for the benefit of our neighbour. I was overjoyed at the news of the extraordinary fruit brought about by the preached missions. Let us render heartfelt thanks to God: I pray that these fruits may last and remain, by His grace.

For charity's sake I beg of you one thing: at the morning bell of the *Hail Mary*, to ask from Jesus Christ the perfect conversion of all the young girls of my Oratorio¹, especially of

¹ See footnote pg 55.

those who most deeply afflict the Heart of Jesus. Unworthy though I am, I will do the same for your Sodality.

Tomorrow morning I will go and get the book and the medals you asked me for, and will send them to you in the same cover. As to the trimming you wanted, I could not find any like the sample, though I searched for it in all the shops of that type. They all sold out a short time ago. In one shop, however, there is found just about two yards of it.

Please write to me and tell me what I should do, and I will be glad to serve you. Meanwhile, I am keeping the money; when I know what you want, if I cannot do anything else for you, I will send it back to you without delay. I must tell you, however, that you should not have sent the money beforehand. You must treat me with greater simplicity and familiarity. I expect it from you; that is the manner I use with you, too. Let this serve you as a rule for another time, then. I will soon send you the book of St Aloysius.

Our Rev. Superior, Bosio Sisters, my Parents and Camilla send you their best wishes. They were all happy to hear that you have regained your health almost fully.

May God make you a Saint. I am

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Distinguished Lady

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 139

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She hands in rules drawn up for the Pious Union, with other scripts - She asks permission to make the vow of charity - Sentiments of true humility - and devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Before you leave permit me to send you a heap of my usual papers. I don't expect you, nor even wish you, to see them at once; I am sending them to you now because it is a thousand times better that they be in your hands than in mine. Look through them as is most convenient for you and then send them back to me when God inspires you to do so.

Among these papers you will find the manual of the new rules meant for our Pious Union. Mother Mistress (Parpani) and Lucia Cismondi have kindly taught me the heart and substance of whatever I wrote, and I feel that they have had a special inspiration in thinking it out. In their humility they declined to write down anything, though I had earnestly begged them to do so. Mother Mistress, especially, refused to put in even a word in it. As an instrument of their humility and to the incitement of my own pride, I wrote out what they have

taught me; I have done it badly, I know, and what is mine is my character and mistakes. Now I am handing it over to you, Reverend Father; I beg you to examine it, and if you do not find it well-suited to our purpose, throw it in the fire, and God will provide something better.

I am also sending you the paper with what I have promised the Lord as the fruit of my Spiritual Exercises. I must tell you in all simplicity that my heart is truly bent on seeking every means of using charity with my neighbour. In my Spiritual Exercises, especially, I felt strongly urged to make out of it a special vow.

I dared not do it without first obtaining your permission, and so I now earnestly beg your consent, and at the same time I request you to teach me how to do it: to shake me out of my laziness and timidity, to reprove me, to drive me on with sheer force, in a word: to make me practise this splendid charity in all ways possible.

The desire of being able to do something for my neighbour is what represses in me the deep yearning and longing for the delights of solitude, though I cannot help feeling it strongly from time to time.

However, in this, as in everything that concerns me, may the Lord do as it is most pleasing to Him, and I will be glad of it. What I do desire, and what I earnestly pray for, is that he may never leave me to myself.

This thought, together with the fear of being myself contemptible and displeasing in the eyes of my God has long been troubling me very deeply. I feel I can at any moment fall

away, nor do I dare ask for death, which I would gladly seek, for fear of facing something worse. I deserve the worst, I admit, but the grace not to offend my God but to love him greatly is something my good Jesus must not deny me. In the midst of my fears, I must tell you, my most gentle Mamma Mary is a great source of comfort for me. For some days now deep down in my heart, I have felt her gentle reproof for my lack of trust and love for her. At this moment an unusual sense of tenderness and confidence has come over me, encouraging me to hope anything and everything from such a good Mother, and her very name on my lips gladdens my heart. Oh Mary, Mary, in your loving kindness save me ... Another thing I cannot keep from you is this: my heart seems to be telling me that Mary wishes to be your trusted Companion in the forthcoming Mission you are about to preach. She has purposely brought it about that for some days you will be left without a Companion-preacher, to make you experience how effective is Her assistance. Have great trust in Her, and your Mission will be most fruitful. I give you my humble regards and beg you to commend me to God. However, before I end this letter, I ask you to accept the sincere thanks I render to you once more for your immense charity towards our Oratorio¹. I assure you that Mary has been very pleased with what you have done; indeed, I am sure that the extraordinary fruits of the holy preached Missions at Civitate were obtained through Mary's intercession as a reward for your kindness to Her Daughters. However, I cannot for my part fail to thank you most sincerely and assure you that I will always be

¹ See footnote pg 55.

deeply grateful though I will be unable to express it in deeds.

Have a good trip. I wish and pray that every word you utter may be like an arrow of God's love that will strike the hearts of all those who hear you. I am

9 February 1829.

Your poor unworthy Daughter and Servant in J. C.

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 140

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She is happy with the fervour of her fellow members - She asks for missing copies of devotional practices for each month.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Love, 17 February (1829).

Dearly beloved Sister,

I am sending you the practices for a Novena, due to start on Friday. It is meant for current needs. Please pass it on to all our fellow members etc. I received your welcome letter from which, no less than through Fr. Angelini, I came to know of the immense good done in your town. I am very happy about it and I prayerfully wish holy Perseverance to all concerned. Fr. Angelini wanted me to assure you of his satisfaction at everyone's readiness to carry out his suggestions. He wishes you to be friendly to everyone and encourage all of them so as to strengthen them in their good resolutions.

I must ask you to do me a favour: a fellow member of ours wishes to have all the practices of the months that we used to observe a few years ago. I have only those for January, February, March, June, July, August and December -. I don't have those for the other five, and so I must ask you to lend

them to me: I will not keep them long. Please note that what I am looking for are the months that the two of us used to ask from our Superiors, a month each in turn. Please excuse the trouble I am giving you, and do me this favour.

I earnestly commend myself to your prayer. Please make the girls say three *Hail Marys* at the Union Meeting, for an intention I have very much at heart.

May we be wholly consumed by the love of God.
Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

B.C.

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA SIGISMONDI

BRENO.

Letter 141

TO THE SAME

She praises and encourages her fervour.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

My Dearest Sister in Jesus Christ,

At last I succeeded in finding the salad you wanted and now I am sending it to you. Next week I shall send you the other lot, if you like. I can't tell you how much joy your visit brought me. Your fervour and all your virtues have overwhelmed me. I would love to be like you, but I realize I am too far behind you. For charity's sake continue to accept me as your Sister, and let me partake of the vast good that you do.

I informed Don Bosio of the happy outcome of the instructions you carried out, and he was very glad. He then asked me if you had shown Fr. Taglierini the letter that Fr. Ballardini had written to you. I said you had not done so. I'm not sure if that is true or not.

Pluck up new courage in this holy undertaking. You will undoubtedly have God's blessing for it.

A thousand wishes to our dear fellow members. Those of my town send their best regards to you, Dearest, may God make of you a great saint, a Seraphim of charity. I am

Lovere, 23 February 1829.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 142

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She sends him devotional practices in occasion of the election of a new Pope - She offers extra copies for priest members - Modest idea of herself.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Superior,

In my negligence I have delayed to this day to send you the enclosed papers, and as a result I have committed another mistake; I mean to say: I have already sent to members residing outside Lovere copies of the first paper with practices for the Election of the Pope, and today I have given copies also to those in town, without first submitting them to you for approval. Next time I will try to be more diligent. I have also prepared the spiritual journey to Loreto for the Novena of the Annunciation, but I cannot send it to you just now, because I have only one copy of it. I will give it to you very soon, though, so that I may then send it to members residing out of town, not to give them cause for reproaching me again. In fact, they continually complain that they often lose the first days of the novena because I am too slow in sending it.

Please let me know if you want a few copies for any of the priest-members of the Union, and I will gladly get them

ready. You can then assume that I will continue to provide accordingly for future needs.

For charity's sake commend me to Jesus and Mary: my needs are becoming ever more critical, and without a special help from God I fear I may come to a bad end.

I pray God, if it be his will, to keep you in perfect health so that you may use it for His glory and for the benefit of our neighbour. I ask your Blessing. I am,

Love, 1st March 1829.

Your devoted, grateful Daughter in J. Christ

BORTOLOMEA, Unworthy Servant of JESUS

To Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 143

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She urges her to have greater courage and trust in God - She promises the Articles and Rules for the Hospital.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sister,

Yesterday I offered my holy Communion for you; it seems to me the Lord spoke to my heart and said that he wants you to have a greater trust in Him and more courage even in the most arduous and audacious works. He will always be with you and by his grace you will carry out everything well. He promises you all this but on your part, too, you must have the utmost trust in him. He expects that from you, for his greater glory.

I am enclosing for you the novena to our beloved Patron Saint Joseph. I hope it will reach you in time.

I have told our Reverend Superior what you wanted me to say; he said that as soon as he arrives at Breno he would let you know. That will not be so soon, however, because he is not keeping so well. In particular, he is so hoarse that his voice can scarcely be heard when he speaks.

As to the Regulations and Articles for the Hospital, Don Bosio promised he would give them to me, and I will send them to you at once after that.

And you, dearest, commend me to God. I am, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Love, 2 March 1829.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLOMEA OF JESUS

urgent

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONDI

BRENO.

Letter 144

TO THE SAME

*She seeks help in copying out the Rules for the Sodality of St Aloysius -
She hopes to meet her request regarding the Hospital.*

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

My dearest Sister,

(March 1829).

I am sending you what was left of the salad that I owe you. I avail myself of this opportunity to set you a task for the sake of Jesus and Mary.

I should like to ask of you a big favour. If there is over there someone who is good at writing I would ask her to copy out for me the Rules of the Sodality of St Aloysius. I will gladly pay the whole expense incurred. If you find some way of doing me this favour, let me know and I will send you the book. Forgive me the liberty I take. I am sorry I cannot write more just now. Give my wishes to all our fellow members. Please tell Pierina Giacomelli that I will soon do my duty towards her. Remember me with God and Mary. I take leave of you with the wish to see you a Saint. I am

P.S. I have just received the basket and your welcome letter, but the first letter you say you have written to me has

not reached me yet. As soon as I can I will attend to what you asked me about the Hospital and to the task you set me. –
Goodbye.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

urgent

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

with a small basket

Letter 145

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She forwards devotional practices - Humble fears about herself.

HAIL TO JESUS

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

I am enclosing some papers for correction, as usual. I suppose you have a copy of the Way to Calvary; if you agree, we are planning to do the one of last year. Herewith enclosed you will find the new drawing of lots for it. In case you don't have it, I will very gladly prepare a copy of it for you.

I am sorry to trouble you, but I must remind you about the paper of Breno, because a gentleman told me that I should have it ready by Saturday, when he intends to come and fetch it.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer: God alone knows my extreme needs. I am dreadfully afraid of being on the point of straying from him unless he performs on me an act of his omnipotence and helps me.

I humbly pay my respects to you and implore your Blessing. I am,

Love, 29 March 1829.

Your devoted, grateful Daughter in Jesus

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy Handmaid of JESUS

To Reverend Father
ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 146

TO CATERINA FERRI

Errands run - Love for the Cross.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearest Sister and Friend,

Love, 11 April 1829.

I trust you have received by now the books and pens you had told me to buy. Actually, I sent you an extra book and pen not to send you back the change (3 *pence*). I am sorry I could not write to you a covering note.

I am now sending you almost the whole length of lace you wanted, hoping you will like it. Thirteen 'braccia' (*about 780 cm*) of it is still lacking, but I have already ordered it. I still have some money left. I want you to tell me if I should buy you still more of it, or serve you in some other way, or send you back the change. When I have finished I will send you the bill for the lace I bought, for your own satisfaction and mine.

If I can be of any service to you, I do it very gladly. Don't hesitate to ask.

Let us love the Cross, dearest. Let us gladly carry the one the Lord sends us; by that means we shall give comfort to

Jesus who, laden by it, is on his way to Calvary to die for our sake.

A thousand greetings to our beloved Donda; tell her I am waiting for her letter, in answer to which I will myself write a long one.

Give my respects to Fr. Panzerini and to Lady Erminia. I take my leave of you at the foot of the Cross. Please pray earnestly for your poor

Yours Sister in J. Christ

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

CATTERINA FERRI

CEDEGOLO.

Letter 147

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

Triduum for Our Lady of Good Counsel - New enrolments - She asks for prayer, etc.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Beloved Sister Cleophe¹,

I am enclosing for you a devotional triduum in preparation for the Feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel.

Before I forget let me inform you that our Reverend Superior told me you can aggregate the Sodality of Edolo to your own of Breno, if the latter is already aggregated to that of Rome, and that they should send you the names of all the members of Edolo.

I hope you have received by now my last letter, together with a booklet, sent to Breno. I myself have received yours, which I appreciated very much. I beg you to say three *Hail Marys* and also three *Glory Be* in honour of St Aloysius, for a poor person who is in extreme need.

¹ She calls her friend by the name of the personage that she has to represent according to the lots drawn for the practices of the *Way to Calvary*. She herself will represent John, and so signs by that name.

I wish you great fervour and the most abundant light for a good Spiritual Exercises. Goodbye, dearest. We shall meet again at Jesus' sepulchre. May he be pleased to let us suffer with him and also to rise with him to an utterly-holy life.

Lovere, 16 April 1829.

Your poor brother

JOHN OF JESUS AND MARY

Letter 148

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

*She promises greater fervour in honouring Mary in the month of May -
Her longing for the conversion of all sinners.*

HAIL TO FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST, THE RISEN LORD

My Revered Superior
and Father in Jesus Christ,

Kindly examine and correct the enclosed paper. My dearest Mother Mistress Parpani has gently reproached me for honouring my Mamma Mary so poorly, and she suggested that we do a Novena. I am the only one to blame, because I am so lazy, and she is quite right to complain. To make amends and honour Mary I will do my best to be much more diligent this coming month of May, so dear to Her. – I have come to know that Fr. Angelini has been complaining that we never send him anything about what we do. He said he doesn't know what to think, and in the meantime he has kept up, and is still carrying on with the practices for Carnival Time.

How happy I am to see these sacred days so many souls that break down the bonds of sin and reconcile themselves to God, and come up to receive Him! ...

On the other hand, it makes me sad to think that even if there is just one that obstinately resists the voice of the Lord, it is enough to afflict the merciful heart of my Jesus. May Jesus grant that the torment he endured for our sake may be so powerfully at work that no one will be able to resist it.

I humbly pay my respects to you and invoke from Heaven on you the most sublime holiness. I am

Love, 19 April 1829.

The poor JOHN¹ OF JESUS and MARY

To Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

¹ See footnote on Letter 147.

Letter 149

TO PIERINA VIELMI

She urges her to be earnest in living the month of May.

HAIL TO OUR DEAR MAMMA MARY

My beloved Sister,

Love, 24 April 1829.

Just a couple of lines in great haste, as it is very late in the night, to remind you that the practices for the month of May will be the same as last year's. Here below I am writing out for you the results of the new drawing of lots for it.

Last Saturday I received your lovely letter. I trust you have also received mine, together with the card. I am greatly indebted to you for the affection you profess towards me; I assure you of the same sentiments on my part. May it be pleasing to God that this close friendship will help us to love Him more warmly. Dear Sister, I am eagerly looking forward to the holy month of May. Oh, how beautiful it is to serve such a loveable lady, beloved and worthy beyond all telling to be honoured and loved. Let us do our very best to meet the pleasure of the sweet Heart of Mary, and we ourselves will be the most favoured by Her. Give my best wishes to our dear M. Chiodi.

To you and to her I commend my poor soul. Pray that it may attain salvation. I take leave of you with the wish to do much for the sake of our dear Mamma Mary. I am

| NAMES DRAWN BY LOT | DAYS ON DUTY |
|---|--------------|
| Ventura, Vielmi, Grassi A., Cismondi C., Pasquini - with the Hermits - Humility | 2, 25. |
| B. Zandrini, Gerosa R., Rosa L., - with the Thrones - Trust in God | 12, 29. |

Your poor Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Respectable Lady

PIERINA VIELMI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 150

TO LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

She urges them to be earnest in living the month of May.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY FOR EVER AND EVER

Dearly beloved Sisters in J. Christ,

I am sending you the results of the new drawing of lots for the practices of the month of May, which are the same as last year's. This gives me the opportunity, and the pleasure, to send you my wishes and earnestly commend myself to your kind prayers. When you send the list of assignments to our dear Mora, enclose a copy also for Ghesa, and give my warm wishes to them and to our dearest M. Vertova.

This is all for the moment, because I just have no time. All the fellow members here send you a thousand wishes.

My wish for you is that you may have the fervour of Saints most deeply devoted to Mary, in order to observe perfectly well the month that is sacred to Her. I too should like to do something, and instead I will never stop offending Her. Pray earnestly for me. With the lovely name of Mary I finish this letter and sign off as

Lovere, 24 April 1829.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS AND MARY

Urgent, please

To Esteemed Ladies

Sisters LUCIA & GIULIA ROMELLI

CIVIDATE.

Letter 151

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She urges her to be earnest in living the month of May.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS CROSS

Beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 28 April 1829.

I received your welcome letter, with the booklet, only yesterday. Thank you for being so prompt in sending it. The practices for the coming month of May are the same as last year's. I am now sending you the new drawing of lots. I hope you have received by now another letter of mine with a devotional Triduum. I am too short of time to write more. I am enclosing a letter of the good Banzolini. Dearest, have charitable concern for my poor soul, which is in great need.

I take leave of you with the desire to do much for our beloved Mamma (Mother Mary). I am

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady
LUCIA CISMONDI

DARFO.

Letter 152

TO THE SAME

She urges her to do great things for the glory of God - She longs to be united to her for ever in Heaven, and hopes to be so, before that, in a religious Institute - Indulgences of the Oratorio¹ - Tender affection.

HAIL TO JESUS

Dearest Friend and Sister,

30 April 1829.

I am never so happy as when, seated at my small table, I keep sweet company to my dear Lucia. However, the main purpose of writing to you is not simply for the joy of it but also to tell you what in the Holy Communion offered for you Jesus seems to be asking from you. That is: just as He is risen to new life, He wants you too to rise to an ever holier and more perfect life, a life full of noble works, which will greatly contribute to His glory; He assures you that He will always be your help, support and joy. Dear Lucia, when will that blessed day come when, united for ever we shall fear no more to be separated? When shall we see the beauty of our Divine Spouse? O Heaven, our dear homeland, receive us, for our yearning is for you alone!... However, before that blessed day

¹ See footnote pg 55.

comes, I think Jesus wants to place us, here below, within a Heaven-on-earth, that of Religious life, where love of our Heavenly Spouse will render suffering itself most delightful and sweet. But am I worthy of such a grace?

I tell you quite frankly, dear Lucia, that when I dwell on that thought I remain sad and confused, and find comfort only in considering that though I am most unworthy, it really seems to me that Jesus is calling me to that happy state, and if he calls me it means that he wants me to embrace it.

While I wait for that longed-for moment, I am trying to live as a Religious in the world, and with that aim in mind I made various alterations in my method of life. In particular I have established a greater detachment from all things and a life of greater reserve, and having done so I have found myself quieter and happier, because I can say that Jesus is everything for me.

I wish I could say with the same assurance that I am wholly His, but my misery, imperfection and innumerable defects speak up in the depths of my being and say that I would be telling lies.

However, I want you to be so kind as to pray to our Heavenly Spouse that a time may come when I can say it with all truth. Forgive me if I am indiscreet in writing at such lengths when you are always so busy, but it is for me a great joy to talk with you, my dear, because I do it with great confidence as in conversation between not just two loyal Friends but also in affectionate talk between two Sisters.

Kindly let me know how much longer you will be in Darfo. I hope it will be for just a few days because this greater distance delays the pleasure of reading your letters.

I pray our dear Mother Mary to look on us always as her beloved Daughters and to receive both of us under her 'mantle', for ever.

P.S. I am waiting for some information regarding Indulgences of the Oratorio¹, and if they can be gained by uniting our Oratorio to yours. Meanwhile allow me to repeat for the thousandth time that I have a warm affection for you, and that I think with deep gratitude of the great deeds of goodness I have received from you: I will always be

Yours grateful, loving Friend and Sister

THE HANDMAID OF JESUS

¹ See footnote pg 55.

Letter 153

TO REGINA TAERI

Though sorry that her friend has been denied permission to join the Pious Union, she wants her to abide by obedience, etc.

HAIL TO MARY AND ALL HER DEVOTEES

Dearest Sister and Esteemed Friend,

Love, 5 May 1829.

For some time I had been anxiously waiting for a letter from you and, to tell you the truth, I felt sadly disappointed when no letters came. Then I came to know, to my sorrow, that the letter I had written in answer to your last letter had been lost and so I realized that your silence with me was quite reasonable.

However, now that I trust this letter is sure to reach you, I think I should repeat what I had written in that letter. What you told me in your last letter about our Pious Union was very painful, and I am sure that the real cause for it was my demerits. However, though obedience forbids you to join it personally, my fellow members and I appreciate your ardent desire and consider you as our Sister all the same.

I should very much like to know if you have lost all hope of getting the permission to join later on because, to be frank

with you, I wish to have you in it so much that I prayed to give up my place for you, and only yours is vacant now. But obedience is above all, and when we follow it unquestioningly, we cannot make a mistake.

I can imagine with how much fervour you must be serving our loveable Mother Mary throughout this month. You are most blessed in doing so, for Mary thoroughly deserves to be honoured and loved, and she will not fail to reward those who do it with a sincere heart. Kindly convey my best regards to Reverend Father your brother, and I implore both him and you to commend me most earnestly to Jesus and to Mary.

Our Rev. Rector and Rev. Bosio send you their sincere regards. In eager expectation of letters from you, I am

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS AND OF MARY

To Esteemed Lady

REGINA TAERI

BRESCIA.

Letter 154

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She urges her to honour Mary and spread devotion to Her - She commends suffrages for a member departed.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

The Peace of Christ be with you.

Love, 8 May 1829.

I would have loved to spend a good long time with you. That would give me extreme joy. But God chooses not to give me that pleasure since I have only a few minutes free just now. So be it! Be you rather the one to cheer me with an ever-welcome letter, a thing I eagerly look forward to and am in great need of. In my holy Communion offered for you on 1st May I seem to have understood that this month the Lord wants you to do your very best to honour and serve the Blessed Virgin Mary and try all possible means that others may do the same. He assures you that he will consider as done to himself what you will do for his Mother, your own beloved Mother. Love her on my behalf as well, for she is a Mother most worthy of boundless love; implore her that she may deign to bring about in me a true change of heart.

Wishing you a good heap of crosses with as much virtue to bear them in a holy way, I am

P.S. This morning, about two hours ago, Sr. Rosa Vignoli, our fellow member, passed away. I am sure she must be in Heaven, for she was so Angel-like. Please make it a point to inform all your fellow members; remind them to offer the usual prayers for the faithful departed: a holy Communion, *Via Crucis* and Office for the Dead. Once again, best wishes to you.

The unworthy Apostle of Jesus and of Mary

B. C.

Letter 155

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She recommends some girls for the Company of St Aloysius - She refers to the departed Sr. Rosa Vignoli - Evidence of her humility and obedience.

HAIL TO OUR MOST IMMACULATE MOTHER

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

10 May 1829.

I feel it is my duty to send you the enclosed paper so that you may have a look and see if the girls whose names appear in them can be allowed to join the Sodality of St Aloysius. To be quite frank with you, I myself did not feel quite sure about those against whose names I put a tick mark, but after some hesitation I felt I just could not leave them out, at the thought that these who seem to be in the greatest need are the ones of whom St Aloysius will take the greatest care, and make his protection shine out even more. I leave it to your Reverence to decide according to what the Lord and St Aloysius will inspire you, and if you have anyone else in mind, please do as you think best. I should like to let them have their first meeting a week from today as it is the first Sunday dedicated to Him, and make them spend the six following weeks in devout preparation for their Act of Consecration which they will make on St Aloysius' day.

On that day I would ask you, Rev. Father, to preside over the function. All this, of course, on the understanding that you, Rev. Father, are happy about it. Otherwise I will gladly do as you think best.

My Friend Corazzini was very happy and quite satisfied with your kindness to her. I know that she wishes to come another time, and I do recommend her to you most heartily. The Lord wants something great from that soul, and she finds herself in such a situation that she truly needs to be helped in a particular way.

I cannot keep from you the impression left in me by the death of the most gentle fellow member, Sr. Rosa. I cannot stop thinking of her even for a moment, and I cannot help talking of her with anyone. Oh! How fortunate she is; I really trust that she has already attained that blessed homeland which she yearned for with all her heart. I can imagine her among the Choir of Virgins and Martyrs, for she was truly a Martyr of Love. There come continually to mind the words she said to me before she fell ill, asking about the fruits of a preached Mission that you, Reverend Father, and Reverend Fr Angelini, were carrying out: «Ah! how happy they must be», she said, «who have so many outlets to their love of God, and we here in the cloister have no outlet, and we have to keep it all inside: it is a real martyrdom». How happy she must be! - I repeat. Now she can give free vent to all her love, and she will be for ever blessed. I do trust that she will pray for the whole of our devout Union, and for me in particular, because she will surely know how great my needs are.

One day last week I went out begging from my usual companion in order to clothe our statue of Mary; should anyone come to you asking for some permission, I beg you to give it to her *twice* or *three* times over, for you know how poor we are.

The poor use I made of my Method of Life and of other resolutions I had taken is, I am sure, the real reason why God is permitting that I am now without them. I admit that I should not make so bold as to ask you to give them back to me, knowing that I don't deserve them at all; all the same I beg you not to mind my demerits, nor what I have done so far, but to act according to what your charity towards my soul will inspire you. With God's help I wish to promise you that I will make better use of them in future.

I beg you, for charity's sake, to grant me the merit of obedience and of the Sacrament of Penance for all my actions, even the smallest, until Pentecost.

Wishing you the most sublime holiness, I have the honour to be

The unworthy Apostle of Jesus and of Mary

B. C.

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 156

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

Practices to distribute among her fellow members.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister in J. Christ,

I am really ashamed of my laziness. This week I was unable to write anything at all with the result that all sorts of letters have accumulated and I have only a few minutes to spare. I must count on your kindness and goodness of heart to make up for it. I am sending you the results of the drawing of lots for the crowning of Mary. For the way of carrying it out we shall follow what we have done these last two years. You already have the procedure for it.

The Novena of the Holy Spirit is also the usual one; however, in that 'chain', instead of having each member in the company of a Saint, this year we shall join the respective 'Choirs' of Angels that fell to our lot in the month of May. You too can do the same, since you have the whole list of names and duties with you. I have not sent anything to the Romelli sisters, nor to M. Vertova, Rizieri or Ghesa. Kindly do the needful yourself, for which just one copy will do. Please let P. Vielmi with her companion also have a copy. You will be doing me an exquisite kindness.

A thousand thanks and more for the book of St Aloysius. I am waiting for the bill in order to pay for it. I have no time to write more. Be a Saint. That is my fervent wish for you. I am

Love, 23 May 1829.

Yours poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 157

TO REGINA TAERI

She longs to see her - She commends the Novena of the Holy Spirit - An order for a garment to adorn a statue of Mary.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister and Friend,

Your delightful letter brought me extreme joy. I am deeply obliged to you for the affection you expressed in it. I return love for love - be sure of that. I had a great hope of meeting you in the company of your good brother. God has not been pleased to satisfy my wish because I don't deserve it. Patience! However, I desire it with all my heart and I trust that sooner or later God will grant me that pleasure.

The forthcoming Novena of the Holy Spirit seems to be shaking me out of my coldness fairly well. I unite myself closely to you and in all that you do I too intend to take part. May God grant that we do this Novena with as much fervour as St Philip Neri observed it in his time, and so be able to receive that ardent love that he himself experienced on the Feast of Pentecost. I envy you the fervour you have, and I

wish I could imitate you in whatever you will be doing these days to prepare a lovely 'Nest' in your heart for the Divine Guest who is about to come and dwell in it: I would then be sure to share in the beautiful graces that He will bestow on you.

Relying on your goodness of heart and charity towards me, I make bold to beg of you a big favour - a real deed of loving kindness. My fellow members of the Union would like to embroider in gold a garment for the statue of Our Lady, but we over here have neither the gold thread nor any appropriate design.

May I ask you, who have expert knowledge in such things, to buy for me, or make someone draw, two or three designs that would be suitable for the purpose? We would prefer them to be rather low and simple, that can be embroidered around the border of the garment, on the front and on the cuffs. We would like the designs to be entirely done in gold thread, with no colours, and less than 5 inches high. I am asking you for three different designs because as it is something done in common, it must please everyone or at least most of us. Regarding the gold thread, please buy for me all the various qualities you find marked out in the card enclosed herewith. I heard them say that Borghetti shop sells such best-quality types. Just do as you think best. I am sending you some money to buy these articles; if it is not enough, kindly pay for them yourself and we shall refund you without delay. I warn you, though, that I mean to trouble you again for this matter. You will get your pay from the Blessed Virgin Mary, since the whole undertaking concerns Her. All I can do is to beg you to forgive

me for all the trouble I am giving you while assuring you that you will be doing me a big favour if there is anything I could do for you.

The Reverend priests mentioned in your letter have asked me to reciprocate your wishes and regards a thousand times over. Though my dear friends don't know you personally, they have all the same a deep regard for you and are very happy when you are spoken of. They all consider you as a dear Sister in Jesus Christ (but I more than all of them) and heartily send you their warm wishes.

May you be wholly consumed by the Holy Love of Jesus and Mary, and may the beautiful examples of the beloved Sr Aloysius Gonzaga appeal to you strongly enough to make of you very soon a true, perfect copy of his: I need not tell you to pray for me, because our spiritual pact obliges us to remember each other all the time.

I am

Love, 23 May 1829.

Your poor Sister and Friend
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 158

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She asks her help to clear up a matter of a friend - She joins her in doing the Novena of the Holy Spirit.

HAIL TO MARY

Dearest Sister,

I am writing in great haste to ask you to send with a reliable person the enclosed letter to our dear Cesarina.

Please tell her in my name that I have received no more letters from her; she had sent me a message with the Colombi Sisters but I could not understand what she meant because I had not received her letters; tell her that I wanted to write to her but I just had no time. I will do it soon, however, and meanwhile tell her kindly to let me know what she wants from me.

Rev. Don Giuseppe Angelini gave me the charge to send you his regards. May the Holy Spirit fill you completely with His Holy Love.

I join you in a special way in doing the Novena of the Holy Spirit; in that cenacle let us share the light that he will be pleased to give us. Let us become Saints, great Saints, soon, or rather, at once.

Next time I write to you, I will also answer your own letter.

May the beautiful Heart of Mary be our 'Nest'. I am

Lovere, 26 May 1829.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

Letter 159

TO THE SAME

*She thanks her in Mary's name - She speaks of her Religious vocation -
How dear her friends are to her.*

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 4 June 1829.

I was grieved to hear of the demise of the good lady Alessandri. I really trust that God will reward her virtue with the glory of Heaven.

I am sending you the results of the drawing of lots for the forthcoming Novena of St Aloysius. The practices are the same as last year's.

On Monday I offered my holy Communion for you. Mary seemed to be telling me in my heart to thank you very much for all that you have done in Her honour, and for the care you have taken to help others honour her faithfully; She asks you to continue to do so, for She assures you that you are doing something that is also most pleasing to Jesus in doing your best to honour His Mother, your own dear Mamma.

Thank you very much for what you have done for my sake, and to make up for my laziness. God will reward you for everything.

I must just drop a hint on what you wrote to me in the letter before the last. Quite honestly, I have not at all decided on my vocation. I am told to be quiet for the time being, and that is what I'm doing.

You must know that my friends, you above all, are very, very dear to me, and I cherish their friendship as a gift from Heaven. As a punishment God will perhaps take them away from me, but I will never leave them, because I know the spiritual help that they are to me. You more than any of them.

Let us become Saints, dear Sister, truly so. We have very little time to work at it, and then we shall have God to enjoy for ever. Goodbye.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

P.S. Kindly tell the devotees of St Aloysius to recite every day, throughout the Novena, three *Glory Be* for a person who is in great need. Once again, Goodbye.

Letter 160

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

Her tender love for St Aloysius - Presentiment of affliction in store for her Confessor; she advises him especially regarding the celebration of Holy Mass - She recommends an initiative for the good of Priests and a Seminarian - She recommends her own father - She accepts obedience on prayers withheld.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ALOYSIUS.

Very Reverend Father Superior and Confessor,

I am enclosing the Novena of my beloved St Aloysius. The very name of this dear Saint fills my heart with gladness. I trust he will help me and teach me how to love Jesus.

I cannot drive away from my head the idea that at this moment the Lord is visiting you, Reverend Father, with some inner cross and affliction: today it has been very much in my mind, and I could hardly forget it. The reason for this I cannot tell. To begin with, it is not surprising that after the month of May, the Lord was bound to prepare some cross for you; but I beg of you, whatever be the pain you are enduring, instead of worrying over it, just seek comfort from the Lord. You are never so dear to Him as when you suffer for his sake. I may be making a mistake, no doubt, but I cannot help feeling that you are now sorrowing and brooding over the defects that your profound humility makes you find in yourself. If that is so, apply to yourself what in holy charity you teach others: that is, after

acknowledging before the Lord: 'such are the fruits of our orchard, and we will do even worse if you don't help us', we should lift up our heart and hope in God, and in fact, be sure He will see to it that we be able to please him without our knowing it, even. A real act of love of God erases from his 'memory' any amount of defects we may have committed. For absolutely no reason, then: neither out of humility, nor on account of defects, nor for any need unless it is really urgent and extreme, should you omit Holy Mass; you would be wronging the most loveable Heart of Jesus, who in all his charity is waiting for his dear creatures at his Banquet, above all those who are sick, that he may strengthen them, help them and comfort them. I should like to say to you: for humility's sake drop everything else, for that would make a Saint of you, but Holy Mass no, never ...

I trust you have already started doing something about that project you have in mind for the Priests. In case you haven't started yet, this is your opportunity for doing so, and so, at once, this very day you must start, as a token of gratitude and fidelity to God, who has graciously visited you with his crosses. You should not let one single day pass by without doing something about the project. I really hope, moreover, that to repay you for your trouble, God will bless the undertaking so much that he will make it redound to the benefit of those it is meant for, and for his glory. Don't mind if you don't feel like doing it; I consider it as a grace from God because that takes from the devil any chance to tempt you with pride, and you can work at it more gladly by caring for all that God entrusts to you.

I warmly recommend to preach the Holy Mission at Schilpario; only a serious health reason or an obligation of charity could dispense you from it; for the rest you must know that God will be quite pleased if you sweat a bit more over his people, and I trust it will do much good.

Another thing I am concerned about is the future of the poor seminarian Gennari. The Blessed Virgin Mary herself commends him to your charity, Reverend Father. If you can encourage and help him in any way, please do so: it will be a great act of charity on your part. Throughout the Novena of St Aloysius I will ask the Saint's devotees to recite a daily prayer to him for that intention. On my part, if you permit me, I will pay a visit to St Aloysius at his altar and at the usual time allotted for taking the discipline¹ I will say the *Glory Be* 6 times so that the Saint may intercede with God to give light to Monsignor (Bishop) to fulfil God's will, whatever be the state-in-life that the Seminarian is called to, and to give him the grace to carry it out.

I beg you also to give me by Saturday Corazzini's method of life, because she wants it. She wrote to me; she is full of fervour. She has entrusted herself to the care of her Archpriest and so far she has solid desires to do good. May God give her steadfastness and perseverance, which will be of great benefit to her town. If you have a mind to make me happy, I should like you to give me back the formula of the vow of charity, in order to renew it on the Feast of Pentecost. However, do whatever you deem best for my soul.

¹ *'Discipline'*: instrument of penance.

I have opened my heart to you, even too much; I have spoken boldly too; this is my typical work, nor am I good at anything else. Forgive me, I beg of you, and as to my boldness, you have to put the blame on your own humility, which made me go so far.

May the Holy Spirit come down into your heart with the fullness of his Gifts. May He make of you another Peter, filling you with zeal and charity. That is my earnest hope.

I commend my poor soul to you, and implore your Blessing. I humbly pay my respects to you, and have the honour to be ...

Lovere, 4 June 1829.

P.S. This morning I intended to recommend my dear Father to you. Be kind to him. At all events, God wants him for himself, and I am now seeing in him a clear change for the better. To you, Reverend Father, God commits the perfection of his work in him. I beg you to give me your permission to renew the vow of charity, as I forgot to ask for it. Your command that I should drop almost all my Prayer-time was at first painful to my self-love, and I could not restrain my tears, as it seemed to me a punishment for my unfaithfulness. However, now I am quite happy and at peace. I will do my best to take my Lord with me wherever I go. Thank you for everything. With profound reverence,

Your unworthy Daughter in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Very Reverend Father
DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 161

TO PIERINA VIELMI

She sends her practices for Novena of St Aloysius - She comforts her with the thought of Heaven.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ALOYSIUS

Dearly beloved Sister,

I am enclosing the results of the fresh drawing of lots for the forthcoming Novena of St Aloysius Gonzaga. The practices for it are the same as those of last year. Please pass on the information to Chiodi, and give her my warm wishes.

I have received no letters from you since long. I fear all is not well with you. A couple of lines from you would cheer my heart. Have courage, Sister dear. Heaven awaits us. Let us gladly strive hard to attain it. Oh, how happy we shall be if we manage to reach it! A God to know ... love ... contemplate ... with no fear of ever losing him! How blessed is suffering that gains for us such an immense good! I long to see you all-holy. May the Holy Spirit set us on fire with His Love. I am

Love, 4 June 1829.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

PIERINA VIELMI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 162

TO LUCIA ROMELLI

She apologizes and thanks - She recommends recollection - Concerning a fellow member.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sister,

Here I am at last with you, beloved Lucia. Excuse all this delay in writing, but I assure you I was really unable to write; it was not due to laziness on my part.

Thank you for the excellent suggestion you gave me in your last letter: to disregard the world and myself. That is just what God wants from me. I wish I could do as you say.

In my holy Communion I offered for you, the gentle Jesus made it fairly clear to me that I should again recommend to you what I told you last time, because he absolutely wants it from you. I also understood that I should recommend to you inner recollection and tell you that He has great designs over you: that He wants to lead you not by an ordinary path, but that He wants you to be a Saint, a great Saint; above all, He wishes you to love him and serve him as befitting to a true, loyal bride.

Dear Lucia, Jesus wants you entirely for himself: give yourself to him totally, unreservedly.

I am sending you the booklet you asked me for. It costs 6 pence. So I now owe you 3 pence. If you wish me to buy something with it for you, I will serve you gladly; otherwise I will return it to you first opportunity that presents itself.

I am sending the new drawing-of-lots list for the Novena of St Aloysius; the practices for it will be the same as last year's.

I entrust to your care the fellow member Ghesa. It will be your duty, or Giulia's, to send her the papers promptly, and I will send you a copy of the drawing of lots for her as well.

Dearest, be a Saint. Fr. Angelini is due to be there soon. He may be stopping for a while in Valle Camonica. I am

Love, 4 June 1829.

Your poor Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 163

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She thanks her for her suggestions, for warning of death, for loving reproach, etc.

HAIL JESUS, MARY AND LOVEABLE ST ALOYSIUS

Dearly beloved Sister and Friend,

I have greatly appreciated your letter. It brought me much joy. I heartily thank you for your kindness, but I am at a loss what to say except that God will reward you for it. The golden rule you suggested for whatever I do was most welcome; it reached me at exactly the right time. May God grant that I benefit from it. With regard to what you tell me - that St Aloysius expects me soon, and the hint you dropped, which made me think my death might be near - I would be happy about it if I had done and suffered something for the Lord; but seeing myself with empty hands I cannot believe that God wants to call me to himself, unless it be as a token of his merciful love, foreseeing that if I lived longer, I would offend him and abandon him. However it be, may the Lord do as he wills, and I shall be equally happy.

I liked your sweet way of reproaching me for omitting the Novena of the Blessed Sacrament.

I admit that from the first day of the novena, and still at this moment, I have all the time felt a bit guilty. May God forgive me, and I again beg you to forgive me, too: that's the sort of thing I do.

I am enclosing the list of the new drawing of lots for the Novena of the Sacred Heart. Fellow members of the Union of the Sacred Heart will follow the Novena as laid in its Regulations. If you find it suitable for your members there, just do as you think best. I have not yet spoken to Mother Parpani about what you told me to say; I will do it as soon as I can and will let you know at once after that.

Our Reverend Superior has given me the charge to greet you in his name. He is very pleased that you do what you possibly can to persuade those persons you know about to receive holy Communion.

Dearest, let us waste no time. Let us love our dear Jesus truly, sincerely. How many do not love him! ... How many offend him, even grievously! ... Let us, at least, comfort him. I am

Love, 15 June 1829.

Your poor Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 164

TO THE SAME

She is anxious to become holy in the short time she has left to live, in imitation of St Aloysius.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 22 June 1829.

I am enclosing the list of the new drawing of lots for the forthcoming Novena of the Visitation; I'm not sure I'll be in time.

Concerning the girls you wish to enrol in the Union of the Sacred Heart, write out an application letter and send it to me, because Mother Parpani has assumed the charge of enrolling them and procure the Indulgences.

Keep always in mind your poor Bortolamea! I want to live in a holy manner at least the short time I have left. The example of my dear St Aloysius strongly inspires me to love God; all the same, I never do any good. Walking at this pace I shall present myself at God's judgment seat with hands empty of any good deed and full of sins. Help me, for charity's sake.

Dearest, I wish you the most sublime holiness. May St Aloysius be your true exemplar. I am, in the charity of Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA, Unworthy handmaid of JESUS

Letter 165

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She tries to clear up misgivings of a Priest about the Pious Union - She is eager to prepare for her approaching death by imitating St Aloysius - She begs humiliations - She suggests a practice of devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

HAIL TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS, AND HIS LOVER
ST ALOYSIUS

Very Reverend Father Superior and Confessor,

I am enclosing the Novena of the Visitation of Mary, already started. Today I wrote a couple of lines to thank Fr. Taeri for a good number of beautiful holy pictures he procured for me. I availed myself of the opportunity to enclose the card, saying that it came from you, Rev. Father, with your wishes and the assurance that you would soon send him the booklet on the Union, by which his misgivings about the Union would be satisfactorily cleared. I am telling you this to rectify my lie.

The devotees of St Aloysius request you to say Holy Mass for their intention on Thursday. On that day I meant to ask you to conduct the first Union meeting of acceptance of the Daughters of the new Sodality of St Aloysius, but I fear that this time too my plan will end in smoke, because I have heard

them say at home that probably I will have to go to Sellere¹ on that day. If God disposes favourable circumstances for the meeting, I will let you know and ask of you that kindness.

Again on Thursday I intended, with your permission, to do my annual Confession in preparation for the Feast of the Sacred Heart. If I cannot do it on that day, I will do it when you think it most appropriate, and meanwhile I will try to prepare myself for it. The continual urging that I feel in my heart to become a Saint and to waste no time, no time at all, about it, make me sure that my end is near.

You, Reverend Father, have led me to understand that, but more especially I felt sure of it on the feast of my dear St Aloysius.

The whole of that day my heart kept urging me to spend this year as St Aloysius spent his last year on earth. Every moment of my days must be as perfect as his, and the way I think of St Aloysius is always the same: I have always represented him to my mind as one wholly absorbed in God, with no other thought in mind except God and his glory, to the extent that in all that he did, his heart was set solely on that aim, and passing over all created things he went as speedily as a man walking over live coal.

I really wish I could imitate him, and do desire it deeply, but my pride is too great and if God at times makes me

¹ 'Sellere' is a small country-town, close to Lovere, where Ven. Bartolomea possessed a small country-house: there she used to do her annual retreat. There too, especially in Carnival Time, she used to take girls and entertain them in innocent games in order to keep them away from moral danger.

take a step forward, my pride makes me take ten steps backwards. I commend myself to your charity. If God inspires you even with strange means to humble me, do not spare me at all. I know right now that I will not stand even the easiest test, but I am happy about that, all the same, because it will also be a wonderful means to humble me and make me know who I am and what I can do.

I don't want to keep from you a thought that has come to me. I think Jesus will be very pleased if you, Reverend Father, whenever you are hearing Confessions before the Blessed Sacrament, pay him respect with some gentle gesture in between one confession and the next, taking care to do it every single time, with the aim of making up for the monstrous thoughtlessness of so many Christians who never go to visit him.

I forgot to ask you for the Discipline in the current Novena, but I interpreted your reply favourably, and so I mean to ask you the same permission for the forthcoming Novena till the end of August.

I earnestly commend myself to your charity. With deep reverence towards your person, I am

Love, 23 June 1829.

Your poor, devoted Servant and Daughter in J. Christ
BORTOLAMEA, Unworthy handmaid of JESUS

To very Reverend Father
DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 166

TO THE SAME

She asks him various permissions and humbly encourages him in his preaching of the missions.

HONOUR AND GLORY BE TO THE GRACIOUS HEART OF JESUS

Very Reverend and most Zealous Confessor,

I am enclosing the Novena for Our Lady of Mt Carmel. As this feast is for me and for Lucia Romelli a very significant one, we wish to do, in obedience to you, something in addition to what everybody else will be doing. We are therefore enclosing a note with that end in view. If you approve of the practices on the list, you need not take the trouble of telling us so, because I have a copy of it and tomorrow I shall send it to Lucia. If not, let us know, and we shall do what you wish.

After my annual Confession other sins came to mind, and so for my own peace of mind I am enclosing the memo note I wrote from time to time, and also my sins of pride, supplementary to the note itself.

I beg you also to give me permission, throughout the forthcoming novena, to do for an additional hour a day, the Vow you know of, etc.

I am not sure if I do well to mention what I am about to add. More than once my heart seemed to be telling me that God wishes your Reverence to give priority to the Holy Missions, and that it would be pleasing to his Heart if you could hold at least one a month. I do not suppose that I am telling you this by divine inspiration, but through pride. So please give my words the weight that they deserve, as I cannot trust my own heart. However, I could not keep it from you: every time it came to mind I drove it away as a temptation, yet for some unknown reason I felt the urge to reveal it to you. However, don't let it trouble you, for I am sure God is very pleased with what you are doing: do as God inspires you.

I commend myself, for charity's sake, to your Prayer. I am sending you the resolutions I made in occasion of my annual Confession. Please correct it as you like, I beg of you.

With deep esteem, I wish you

Just now, Lovere, 3 July 1829.

Your devoted Servant and Daughter

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 167

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

Protestations of sincere friendship.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 8 July 1829.

Just a couple of lines in a hurry, because drowsiness and obedience do not allow for more. I was very glad to have your kind letter. It revived the fond memories of the Marianna I love so dearly in the Lord, but in saying that I am not open with you, has hurt my self-love, for I don't think I deserve it. Believe me, dearest, in your regard I have not only unbounded trust and sincere love but also all the esteem that your virtue deserves; in fact, I consider it a great honour and grace to have you as a close friend. I really don't understand why you write like that. In your letter you say that I had something to tell you but have kept it from you. Honestly, I don't know what it is, nor can I remember telling you anything of that sort. I cannot think what it could be. Oh, let it be, anyway. Let us drop the whole matter, because it serves no purpose.

Be sure I love sincerely, and just because of that, I will not spare you (anything hard), as I trust you will use that charity with me, because I know you have my spiritual benefit at heart.

I recommend to you the Prayer which Lucia must have spoken to you about. Do give my warm wishes to Lucia and Giulia as well.

In your kindness, pray for me. May I remind you about the Holy Communion of the second Thursday of every month for me; implore Jesus to make you understand what He wants from me, and then write to me about it. The same thing I will do for you, unworthy as I am.

Goodbye, dearest. See you again at the feet of the Crucified Lord. I am

Your poor Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady
MARIANNA VERTOVA
MALEGNO.

Letter 168

TO MARIA & MATILDE MARINONI

Protestations of friendship - Congratulations on good behaviour - News of herself.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sisters and Friends,

Love, 11 July 1829.

I am very glad to avail myself of the opportunity offered by respectable Lady Rillosi to write to you a couple of lines and assure you of my warm affection and sincere regard as dear friends of mine. Don't think I have forgotten all about you just because I hardly ever write to you and generally fail to keep my word. I beg you to forgive me: my excuse for it is simply my negligence and lack of time. The booklet I promised you is not yet ready, but I have all the time had it in mind and I hope I shall soon meet your request.

It makes me very happy to have good news of you and hear about your excellent behaviour. You are truly fortunate because you know what is really good for you, and you put to good use what the Lord expects from you. One day you will have reason to rejoice over it.

I trust you are keeping well. I wish and pray that God may keep you in good health and strengthen you ever more so

that you may use it all for the glory of God and the benefit of your neighbour.

About myself I can give you only good news as far as health of body goes, but sad news about my soul because I am all the time growing poorer in virtue and unworthy of God's graces. I beg you kindly to pray God for me so that I may once for all abandon myself in God's hands and serve him faithfully.

I am very eager to see you and enjoy your company. The good Lady Omio sends you her warm wishes. May the peace and joy of the Lord be always with you.

I am

Your poor Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 169

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She urges her to keep company to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament - She supposes her death to be near - Uncertainty about her own vocation.

HAIL TO THE LOVING JESUS

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 18 July 1829.

Here I am at last with you, most beloved Sister. I am not going to apologize for my delay in writing because I am always the same negligent Bortolamea.

On the first day of the month I offered my holy Communion for you. On that occasion I seem to have understood that God has appointed you Secretary to his most Sacred Heart in the Blessed Sacrament because he wants you to keep him company all the time, physically or spiritually.

Tell him something for me too. To be quite frank with you, I feel that my gentle Spouse is all the time reproaching me because I do not respond to his graces at all, especially now that I think I have very little time left to live on earth. I am also rather anxious about my vocation. Pray God that He may reveal His holy Will in this regard.

I have asked our Reverend Superior if he will be at home next week, and he said he will always be at home except for one day when he wants to go to Trescore to pay a visit to the Monsignor Bishop. He cannot fix the exact day yet because he will have to depend on someone else who will accompany him.

I have a great desire to see you and enjoy your company; when you do come, don't be in such a hurry to leave.

Dearest, obtain for me from God an immense love for Him. I am, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 170

TO THE SAME

She thanks her for her visit - and sends her devotional practices.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

This is Bortolamea who greets you warmly, together with all her dear fellow members. Your hurried visit made me very happy and I want to draw profit from it.

I am now sending you the practices for the triduum that you wanted; very soon I will be sending you also the practices for the Novena of the Assumption. I am eager to have a good opportunity to send you this letter. I commend myself to your prayer, for charity's sake. I am, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Love, 27 July 1829.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Urgent recorded (delivery letter)

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 171

TO THE SAME

She urges her to greater fervour to make up for what she had missed during her trip - She recommends her the reading of a spiritual book.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS

Dearly beloved Sister,

11 August (1829).

Your visit was very precious to me, and so I must simply thank you heartily for it. Your exemplary behaviour was a severe reproach to my heart because I see how far behind you I am. Please pray earnestly to God that I may once for all give myself totally to Him and become wholly His.

I offered a Holy Communion for you, in accordance with our spiritual pact. I could not understand anything in particular except that God is urging you to be ever more ardent in fervour and sense of commitment, in order to make up for what you had to omit during your trip.

I am eagerly waiting for a letter from you, with an account of what you will have understood for my needy soul.

Please tell the good P. Giacomelli that she may let you read the booklet I gave her when she came to see me. If you

find it quite appropriate, I would be happy if you read it out at the Oratorio¹. Rev. Fr. Balardini is very eager to read it. I leave it to you to lend it to him soon.

Have courage, dearest; rest assured that God is with you in your undertaking. However great and endless the difficulties may be, with His grace you will succeed. Volunnia sends you her warm wishes.

May we all be kept steadfast by the holy love of Jesus.
Yours truly

Yours affectionately Sister
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

¹ See footnote pg 55.

Letter 172

TO CATERINA FERRI

She congratulates her on the good results of her exams - Errands run by her.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister and Friend,

Love, 27 August 1829.

I was extremely glad to have your kind letter. The good news about yourself and Marietta made me very happy. I am overjoyed at your brilliant results of the School exams. For it all, let us give glory to God who brought it about. Have trust that God will help you carry out your duties in all respects. What a great joy it must be for you to have these means to use for the glory of God and the good of your neighbour! Let this give you renewed energy, and do remember that God has prepared for you a supremely-great reward in Heaven.

I am now sending you the corporals and palls you had sent me before. The charge for them is 5.4 lire. Those you sent me later are not ready yet.

The money you sent covers all that you owed me. It will be a pleasure for me to serve you - so feel free to ask.

Please give my warm wishes to Maria and to your sister. Pay my respects to Fr. Panzerini and to Lady Erminia. I am keeping well and I thank God for all that He grants me. Dearest, let us heartily love Jesus and Mary; let us serve them faithfully, and we can be sure of attaining Heaven.

I am, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your poor Sister and Friend

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 173

TO THE SAME

She treats of several errands in hand.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister and Friend,

Love, 5 September 1829.

I have enquired at the "Mercanti shop" where I had bought the articles I sent you, and they said that the black Spinone (grosgrain)¹ costs 6.15 lire a measure (60 cm) and the pale-blue Grò 4.5 a measure.

I have received the letter of our dear Donda. I will answer it when I have more time to write at greater length. Give her my warm wishes and pay my respects to Fr. Panzerini and Signora Erminia, and to your Sisters as well.

Remember me, in your kindness. We shall meet again at the Cradle of Maria Bambina. Whisper a word to Her for me, too. I am, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Very Respectable Lady

CATTERINA FERRI

CEDEGOLO.

¹ *Spinone*: a fabric's quality (Grosgrain)

Letter 174

TO MARIA CHIODI

She suggests devotional practices - She apologizes.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Lovere, 10 September 1829.

Please forgive me, dearest, for my delay in sending you the note enclosed. The main reason for it was my laziness. However, make up for my defect and see to it that Mary does not miss a single day by doing after the Octave the days that on account of me you have deprived Her of. May I remind you that on the third Sunday of this month there is the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, in preparation for which we shall observe the Septenary we had done during Lent. You already have a copy of it. The drawing of lots for it also remains the same.

Let us love Jesus. Let us love Mary, dearest Sister. They fully deserve it, and let our love for them be very great. A single act of Love of God is worth more than anything else. I am eager to receive a letter from you; your silence makes me fear that you may be annoyed with me for the little or no company I kept you that day you paid a courteous visit to me.

Once again I assure you that I was very sorry; on my part I had tried to finish my other duties soon in order to have more time to stay with you, but circumstances were against me. Forgive me and be in peace with me. Commend me earnestly to the Lord. A thousand wishes to Pierina if she is there. Dearest Sister, let your whole person belong to Jesus and Mary, and Heaven is yours. I am in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your poor Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Lady

MARIA CHIODI

ARTOGNE.

To be delivered in her hands

Letter 175

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She jokes with her friend, calling her 'mezzana' (go-between) with God.

Dearly beloved Sister
in the Charity of Our Lord,

Love, 18 September 1829.

Here you are - the paper I promised you. Bear with me if I am always late in serving you. If it is of no use for this year, I take comfort in thinking it will be at least of some use next year, and then you will not have to sigh over my laziness.

Enclosed you will find the letter of the virtuous and dear friend Banzolini. For charity's sake pray Jesus that in His love He may not take his Hand off my head, because I am about to get into one of my terrible scrapes again. Entreat him to let me know what he wants from me. For some time I have been restless and anxious; I know that God wants something from me, but I can't make out what it is. Be my *mezzana* (go-between) between me and God and then tell me sincerely what it is.

Oh, Heaven, how beautiful it is! Let us strive hard, very hard, to attain to it. There we shall see God, we shall love him

with all our heart, and we will be sure we would never lose
him. Oh, what a great happiness!

With best wishes to you, I am

Your Unworthy Sister and Friend

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Urgent

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONDI

DARFO.

Letter 176

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She forwards various scripts - Aspirations to holiness - Gravity of her defects in God's sight - About the Institute to be founded - and its Rule - the house to be chosen for it - material means needed - Her trust in God for all this.

HAIL TO THE LOVEABLE JESUS
AND HIS MOST GENTLE MOTHER

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

My spiritual needs are endless, and I am at a loss where to start from. I will say in a sketchy manner what I can. Have the kindness to hear me. I am sending you many things: my daily register, which I have not submitted to you for a long time. Attached to it are my defects of pride. I am not sure if I can send you the whole lot because I am afraid I have *hidden*¹ them away where I myself cannot find them. I am also sending you an account on my Spiritual Exercises that the Lord has given me the grace to do, with the Resolutions I made. I hope

¹ Original in dialectal word: *intambusate*

you will see in them a 'photo' of my conscience through the countless defects I have found in myself besides those which my self-love kept concealed.

I have tried to note everything down as sincerely as possible, and when I felt even slightly tempted to omit something, I think I wrote it at once, though I suppose that my pride must have covered up most of my defects. For these I will ask forgiveness and light from the Lord. On your part, after reflecting on my actual state, and purely for charity's sake, show me how it is and teach me the way of running speedily to my Lord. I know, and several times during these Retreat days my heart told me that the Lord wishes me to be totally His own, that he is not satisfied with what I am doing, that he is calling me through a precise obligation to a state of perfection, and that he is more grieved by my slightest sins than by the more grievous sins of any other person, because mine are more malicious and spring from a heart that should be overflowing with love for God who has lavished so much care on it. I have an ardent desire to make of myself a great Saint, and this must be through humiliations and the cross; I feel that He is calling me to the practice of Prayer: in short, I feel that I must do much in a short time. But I am poor and blind, guided by self-love and driven all along by pride, and so I cannot but recommend myself to your kindness. I abandon myself in your hands, which represent to me those of my Divine Spouse. I am sure you will have all the enlightenment required concerning me, and I on my part will do my best to obey blindly; in that way I am sure I will avoid deceiving myself in any way. I want

to become a saint, without further delay. Help me, for charity's sake, by your advice and by your prayer.

Allow me to say a word on the dear Institute towards which my ardent desires, and yours, are directed.

The Gerosa affair¹ is all hushed up. It is clear that Lady Bartolomea's opinion on the matter must have had the effect that Fr. Dò had feared, because she has never, since then, spoken of it again.

Catterina made me write the thing to Fr. Dò, for his information, but she knows nothing about what Fr. Dò has written to me; she simply saw her Aunt's cold manner on the whole affair. Catterina is very well-disposed and really wants to bring about the division of the property, but from what I can gather, humanly speaking the matter is likely to drag on indefinitely and ten years from now we shall have gone no further.

However, the Lord can do whatever He wills, and nothing is impossible for Him. My intention in the last Novena was to pray fervently to the Lord that he may graciously let me know:

1. the Rule that he wishes to be professed in the new Institute,
2. the house he has set his eyes on; 3. the means he wants to make use of for the start of his undertaking.

¹ She refers to the possessions of Catterina Gerosa, that they wished to be used, as in fact they were, later on, for the foundation of the Institute. Caterina Gerosa, later Sr. Vincenza, was together with B. Capitanio, Foundress of the Institute of the Sisters of Charity in Lovere. She continued the undertaking after Bartolomea's death. She joined her in Heaven when she died in the odour of sanctity, on 29 June 1847, and now the Processes for her Canonization have also been taken up.

I have no doubt that you, Reverend Father, must have had particular inspirations in this regard, and I hope I will see signs of it soon. As to the Rule, I would entreat you not to put it off any longer, provided you too deem it advisable to think over it and choose what will seem to you more closely conforming to God's will and more suited to what is needed. It seems to me that to decide on the Rule on which the Institute is to be based, it is not necessary that the material means be ready at hand. Once the Rule is known and chosen, transactions for the purchase of the house can be taken in hand. I have done something which may or may not serve our purpose.

I felt inwardly impelled in an irresistible manner. I wrote it out to our dear Viganoni who, since she is very rich, could be of help, I think, for the starting of the enterprise. Since this seems to me girlish behaviour I did not wish to let you know till I have heard what Viganoni thinks, but I could not set myself to write to her before I had decided I would show the letter to you first, and so I am enclosing it; kindly read it and correct it as you think best. In case you think that this step is no good, throw it into the fire and I will be satisfied.

But if you think I can send it to her, please return it to me by Wednesday so that I may post it.

I have also thought of another person who could help: first time I have the chance to talk with her, I will speak to her about my plans, so that she might devote herself to the work of the Lord.

Let us try out all the keys and see if with any of them we can open the entrance door to the Holy Work. If after we have tried all possible means we see that God does not will it, we shall kneel at his door and wait till He himself opens it and lets us in. I have great trust in the charity of the Lord, that he will be pleased to provide (what is needed): I desire it with all my heart.

I should like to keep the book you lent me for Spiritual Reading a bit longer to finish reading it. I commend myself to your prayer. Excuse the frankness and freedom with which I speak to you. With deep reverence for your person, I have the honour to be

Just now, from home, 27 September (1829).

Your grateful, devoted Daughter and Servant in J. Christ
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 177

TO REGINA TAERI

*Gratitude for hospitality received and spiritual comfort derived from it -
She sends gifts to her.*

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister and Friend,

Love, 20 October 1829.

Please excuse my poor manners in being so late to give you my news. The grape harvesting has involved so many things that left me no ease to fulfil my duty earlier than this. With Heaven's blessings we had a pleasant journey except for the crossing of the Lake, which was rather rough, but I was not scared.

I related to my dear ones at home the boundless courtesy and care I received from all the gracious members of your family and in particular from you. They too, like me, were impressed and overwhelmed with gratitude. Mingled with their heartfelt thanks they too, like me, wish they could repay you at least in part for so many obligations incurred. In their inability to do so, they join me in warm thanks which they wish to extend to all your distinguished family and to them I once again beg you to convey my humble regards and those of my Mother. –

Quite frankly, my conversation with you, enriched by your edifying example, moved me deeply, and from time to time I let my thoughts dwell on them for my own joy and edification. To my own confusion I must add, however, that I am not at all able to be like you. Thanks be to God who has favoured you so highly; do pray to Him earnestly to help me, too, his poor Handmaid. I am sending you what you asked me for. As to the 'stations' in the Sacred Heart of Jesus I promised you, I will send them to you another time, as I have not been able to copy them out.

My Parents are taking the freedom to send you some birds and some chestnuts. We are really ashamed of sending you such common things. Please don't mind our simplicity and accept them in your loving regard for us.

Don Verzi, Don Bosio and also Banzolini, appreciated your regards and they all gave me the charge of returning them a hundred times over. I am also giving you the trouble to send the enclosed letter, if you can, to Fr. Torlini. With the sweet pleasure of sending you my warm wishes, I profess to be

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

Letter 178

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She encourages her in love of neighbour - She sends her practices for the Octave of the Faithful Departed - Missions in Schilpario etc.

HAIL TO JESUS WITH ALL HIS SAINTS

My dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 27 October 1829.

Here I am with you at last, my dearest Lucia, I am utterly ashamed of my negligence shown in your regard. Forgive me, I beg of you, and have patience with me. These are the fruits of my orchard; to all my Friends all I give is continual practice in patience. Good for me that they are all so kind; otherwise they would have abandoned me a hundred times.

I offered my holy Communion for you at the beginning of this month. God, it seems to me, wants from you exactly what you recommended to me as inspired to you by God: that is, an ardent charity towards our neighbour. How happy we would be if we succeeded in saving even just one soul from perdition! How blessed if we could prevent just one sin! Let us spare ourselves no pains if we can in any way do good to our neighbour. May God help us in our weakness, rectify our

intention and take as done to himself what we do for our brethren: we would then have nothing else to fear.

I am sending you the practices for the Octave of the Faithful Departed. For the feast of the Guardian Angel we shall do something next year. I don't think I had sent you anything last year.

I told our Reverend Superior what you asked me to say: he said he would write to you or to Reverend Vicar over there on the exact date he will fix for the Spiritual Exercises. At this moment he is at Schilpario for the preaching of the Missions.

Be kind to me, dearest; I do not deserve it, but do it for Jesus Christ's sake. Cheer me often with your letters and shake me out of my laziness. I ardently wish to see you among the greatest Saints and, in Heaven, the closest to Jesus Christ. Think of me always as

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

Urgent, please
To Respectable Lady
LUCIA CISMONTI

To be delivered in his hands
DARFO.

Letter 179

TO LUCIA ROMELLI

She sends her practices for the Octave of the Faithful Departed - She apologizes for writing so briefly.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sister,

30 October 1829.

Here you are, dearest. I am sending you the practices for the Octave of the Faithful Departed. Kindly send the same at once to the usual fellow members. Commend me to God, for charity's sake. Bear with me for being so abrupt. I just have no time. A thousand wishes to dear Giulia. See you again in 'Heaven' tomorrow where all the Saints are waiting for me.

I am, in the name of Jesus Christ

Your poor Sister

Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Respectable Lady

LUCIA ROMELLI

CIVIDATE.

Letter 180

TO PIERINA VIELMI

Industrious zeal for a young girl she commends to her.

HAIL TO BABY JESUS AND HIS IMMACULATE MOTHER

Beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 13 December 1829.

I am glad to have this opportunity offered by the return to the home town of a fellow citizen of yours, to write a few lines to you. I did the little I could to recommend to her a love for a devoted and honest life. She has been receptive to what I said to her, and she has come to see me several times. Above all I recommended that she should attend the Sodality regularly, and to make sure she does so, I told her of my intention to write to you and ask you to give her something to do which you think fit for her, in order to keep her close, and she promised to co-operate. You will of course do as you think best. I wanted her to go for Confession to Rev. Don Bosio, and she had also promised to do so, but he was all this time away for the preaching of the Missions. The girl expressed a great desire to learn how to read, and I would have been very glad to meet her desire had she stayed at Lovere longer.

As I could not fulfil this desire of hers, I entrust her to your care. I beg you to spare fifteen minutes a day and spend it for the benefit of this young girl. This will also serve you as an 'excuse' to keep an eye on her, help her form the habit of obeying, correct her more confidently and win the kind regard and respect of her Parents, and so do of her what you wish. Do try to fulfil her wish in this. I also recommended that she be modest in her dress and to shun vanity in her own dress and in that of others, and she promised to do all that.

Lastly, I exhorted her to have trust in you and be friendly to you and remain close to you. I could not do more myself. Let us commend her to Baby Jesus and hope for the best.

Remember me too with God, I am

Your affectionately

the Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Lady PIERINA VIELMI

ARTOGNE.

YEAR 1830

Letter 181

TO LUCIA ROMELLI

She encourages her to care for the youth - Drawing of lots list for Carnival Time.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 8 January 1830.

Forgive my delay in writing to you. I am sure you guess the reason for it. Last month I offered my Holy Communion for you. It seems to me, as I understood, that the Lord wants from you a renewed commitment for the good of souls, especially for the youth; he wants you to redouble your care and lead to his Heart some stray soul. On my part, I am waiting for the result of the Holy Communion you did for me.

Here below I am writing out the new drawing of lots list for the practices of Carnival Time: these are the same as last year's. Please ask Marianna to tell the young girl Bettina that the woman, her former hotel-keeper, wants her to send her back, as soon as possible, the key of her door, because she cannot find it anywhere. I take leave of you in the Sweet Heart of Jesus, where to become a Saint. I am

Your poor Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

DRAWING OF LOTS

| | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|--------|----------------|---------|
| Romelli L. | ---- | January | 11, 24 | February | 6, 19. |
| Rizieri M. | ---- ---- | ---- ---- | 12, 25 | ---- ---- ---- | 7, 20. |
| Sacellini | ---- ---- | ---- ---- | 13, 26 | ---- ---- ---- | 8, 21. |
| Vertova, Romelli G. | | ---- | 16, 29 | ---- ---- ---- | 11, 23. |

To Respectable Lady

LUCIA ROMELLI

CIVIDATE.

Letter 182

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She consults him concerning the admittance of a widow to the Pious Union - Her profound humility.

HAIL TO JESUS, JESUS, JESUS, FOR EVER AND EVER. AMEN.

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Just now, from Home, 19 February 1830.

This morning I intended to explain a thing relating to our Pious Union, but I felt too shy without knowing why (something that never happened to me before) and so I dared not express my opinion to you. But since Mother Parpani had pressed me to inform you of the matter, she would be displeased if she knew that I have not spoken to you about it. Be kind enough, therefore, to hear me out through this letter.

When a rumour reached Mother Parpani that in the place of the late virtuous Gerosa, Lady Clelia was to be admitted into our Union, she told me to make it a point to speak to you, Reverend Father, and to convince you to prevent Lady Clelia from joining the Union, for the simple reason that she is a widow, whereas our regulations say that all the members should be Virgins.

Besides, Don Tomini had affirmed that as far as he knew that is what the Regulations say. I was thoughtlessly late in telling you of these reasons; meanwhile, as you know, the requests of some fellow members prevailed and Lady Bazzini was accepted. Mother Mistress (Parpani) was greatly displeased at this, and the whole fault was mine both because I had kept quiet and because I was the cause that requests for the admittance of this widow were put forward. In the meantime I was secretly thinking of a married woman from Breno, Guelfi by name; which means that if the latter were accepted, the widow, too, could be admitted. To avoid all difference and also to reassure Mother Parpani, I simply explained the matter to Don Tomini, since you were away at the time, in reply to which is the letter I am now enclosing. I am now asking you to give me your advice on this matter, at your convenience. As far as I am concerned, it is enough that I have mentioned it to you so that you may have time to think over it lest there should be cause for disinterest in the Union or that we should go against its Regulations. We shall all abide by the decisions you will take in this regard, because whatever I did was done in secret and nobody knows anything about it, except Mother Parpani. Our decisions should not come as a surprise (I hope so, at least) because, if you yourself deem it advisable, they will be given out to the Members at the meeting when you hand them the Rules of the Union, and so it can be said that what has been decided is in conformity with its Rules. Commend me to God, I beg of you. That blessed nail, firmly fixed in my mind, salutary but so dreadfully bitter, of losing God any moment,

that pride of mine that makes me fear as something almost unavoidable the possibility of forfeiting my salvation, causes me deep anguish. Oh God!

I pay you my respects. Don't mind my being such a nuisance; as long as I live, I can't help being so.

Your poor Servant and Daughter

BORTOLAMEA

Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 183

TO REGINA TAERI

She apologizes for her delay in writing, due to her father's illness - She asks for a discipline for a young girl - She spiritually accompanies her mother and sister on a visit to her.

HAIL TO JESUS, JESUS, JESUS, FOR EVER AND EVER

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 20 February 1830.

My long silence might have given rise to some doubt about me in your heart. However, the reason for my delay will, I trust, expel any dark thoughts of that kind. For nearly two months my Father was ill, of such serious illness that he nearly died of it. Throughout this time, as you can imagine, I have not had a moment free. That was the reason for being so late in answering your most welcome letter, a letter that brought much comfort to my heart.

Thank you very much for the trouble you took for my sake in procuring for me the gold lace. I really liked it. I must again try your patience. A good young girl asked me for a discipline. Over here there is no way of getting one. If it is at all

possible, I would ask you to have someone prepare for me four '*braccia*' (about two yards) of iron chain, like that used for Rosary beads, but a bit thicker and not of brass but of iron wire.

You can ask to have it done by a maker of Rosary beads. To cover the expense my Sister will be giving you 2 Svanziche¹, and if it costs more than that, kindly write to me. You can entrust this errand to your good brother Mister Giovanni, and I am sure all will go well, because I know that he has expert knowledge on such things ... Forgive me the trouble, I beg of you, and take your time about it, as it is not urgent.

My Mother and my Sister are going there on business. They intend to take the liberty of coming to pay their respects to you and all your esteemed family. My heart, too, is coming to your house, and I would feel really blessed to have a chat with you again. However, I expect you here at Lovere, sooner or later, without fail.

I commend myself to your Prayers. When you write to me, tell me something about Prayer. That would be for me an exquisite charity from you. Goodbye, dearest.

Your faithful Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS AND OF MARY

To Esteemed and Respected Lady

REGINA TAERI

BRESCIA.

¹ See footnote pg 29.

Letter 184

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She apologizes - She is anxious to see her.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

26 February (1830).

I have heard from Fr. Zandrini that you have been complaining, quite rightly, about my long silence. Yes, you have good reason to complain; my laziness is always getting the better of me. I humbly ask your gracious pardon. However, I have received only your last letter; the other two you refer to must have been lost. I was slow in sending you the current drawing of lots because we have decided to draw lots for the whole year, and we have sketched them out. I have only to make a copy of them and then send them to you at once. You can rest assured that I value and cherish your friendship; since you know the reason why I seldom write to you, you must not take it to mean that I don't care enough for your friendship.

Pray earnestly that the Lord may free me from a dreadful laziness, which makes me neglect many duties.

I hope to see you soon: your virtuous presence will, I trust, shake me out of my lack of eagerness to do good.

A thousand wishes to your dear fellow members.

May we always find comfort in Jesus and Mary.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

B.C.

Letter 185

TO REGINA TAERI

She thanks and apologizes for reasons connected with the visit of her mother and sister - She wishes her to write - Expressions of warm gratitude.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

My dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 2 March 1830.

In her delight of seeing you and getting to know you, my Sister forgot to hand you the money for what she had asked of you; I am now sending it to you herewith, with my apologies for the incident ... Take your time over it.

I don't know how to thank you for so much courtesy shown towards my Mother and my Sister; the debt of gratitude we owe you increases moment by moment, while we have no happy opportunity to repay it in some way. Both were very sorry they were no longer able to come to you personally to thank you and your Parents; this happened because that evening they missed you in Church and however much they looked around, they could not spot you. Next morning, in attending to last-minute things before setting out, they had no

time to do it, either. In your goodness of heart you will understand how things came about and you will accept their apologies along with their sincere thanks.

I was grieved to hear of the demise of the good lady Giuseppa: God has been pleased to give her an early reward for her good works and outstanding virtues. How blessed she must be! ...

I am very glad that all is well with you and I wish and hope that your efforts may be crowned with success. Please send some news to me as well: that would give me an immense joy. Cheer me with a welcome letter of yours, and be sure you mention in it what I asked you about in my last letter. My sister sends her warm wishes to you. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be our refuge now and for ever. I am

Your loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA, Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

(please, see over)

P.S. I intended to send a letter of thanks to your Parents: I ran short of time, and so I cannot do as I would have wished, nor even fulfil my obligation. I beg you to give them a thousand thanks on my behalf for what they have done for my Mother and Sister. Pay them their respects and mine, and say to them what you would say if you were in my place ...

Once again, goodbye.