

Letter 186

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She urges her to a risen life in Christ - She praises Don Bosio and commends him to her prayer in his poor health.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Loveve, 13 April (1830).

I avail myself of this opportunity to write this letter to you. I have offered my Holy Communion for you. I seem to have heard Him say: «Tell my Cismondi that she must be risen with me, that my glorious life, my resurrection, should serve as example and model for her».

On my part, I am waiting for a letter from you. I am enclosing the practices for the Novena, etc. which starts on Saturday.

Our Reverend Superior told me to give you his best regards and tell you that with regard to the Spiritual Exercises he had promised you to conduct at Darfo, he is absolutely unable to keep his word. In fact he is so broken in health that you would feel pity to look at him. This Lent, he has delivered only three sermons here in town, and he was in such great pain that he had to admit that he felt like dying. All the same,

yesterday he left to preach a Mission that the Monsignor Bishop is very keen on, but we dread to think what may happen to him, and he himself was not sure how he would manage. Pray much for him. Let us pray God to give him good health, which can be of such great use and benefit to so many people. Ask other good people to say some special prayer for that intention.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. I am

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

DARFO.

Letter 187

TO THE SAME

She passes on to her Don Bosio's reply, and asks her to pray for him because he is seriously ill.

Beloved Friend,

Love, 3 May 1830.

I told Reverend Superior what you had said to me, and I have received his reply: that you must not say anything to anybody; that if he feels he would do well to speak to him about it himself, he will do so without the need for you to forestall him. He also told me that the one who wishes to speak with you is not the Bishop, but Fr. Taeri. However it may be, Rev. Superior said that he himself will tell him that you cannot come, and that you would be happy to express your opinion to Rev. Don Dò. As to the drawing of lots for the month of May: I sent it to you long ago, but I addressed it to Breno. Reverend Superior is seriously ill. He keeps to his bed and so I earnestly recommend that you ask some good soul to do a novena of some kind; you know how precious his life is.

I give you my best wishes in great haste.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Lady
LUCIA CISMONTI

DARFO.

Letter 188

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She comforts him in his illness, caused by zeal for the glory of God - Day by day she sends St Aloysius to visit him - She urges him to get better soon.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Love, 6 May 1830.

A letter addressed to you has been handed to me, and I cannot forward it without adding to it this letter of mine, though I fear it may trouble or inconvenience you.

You might as well try to find out what has made you fall ill, but you will not find a better or more consoling cause of your illness than the actual one: it was your desire to give greater glory to God, the strain and stress of leading souls to Him, your tireless labour for their benefit. Other people may say what they like, even reproach you or put the blame on you; you still can, and must be, not only in peace of conscience but also perfectly happy, because whatever you did was done to please God and to do what is delightful to him, and God as a token of his pleasure has willed to repay you with this illness.

It is quite true that in this way the Lord is letting you know that from now on (at least for a good length of time) he wants your desire to do good without expecting the work itself from you. On my part I have to tell you that before you set out for your last Mission, I felt almost compelled to write to you and ask you to give it up and just offer God your good will; but my pride prevented me from telling you of it.

After that, I felt a kind of remorse but even then I told the Lord (because I never want to blame myself for anything) that He should make himself "heard" more clearly, or make things happen in such a way that you yourself would be persuaded.

I envy your present situation because I am sure that you will experience what a certain busy person used to say when he was keeping well: «At least when I am sick I have more time to pray and remain united with my God».

Mary herself, our good and dear Mamma Mary, has marked you out by particulars all suited to your present condition: the special virtue by which you are to adorn her Crown is holy Acceptance of God's will, and the 'place' assigned to you is among the choir of the Archangels who, I believe, are most dear to Mary. Even your days of service, 8 and 22 May, are both Saturdays. In this way Mary shows you how much she loves you and holds you dear. I beg you to accept a visit that I send you every day, generally at 6 a.m.

I am sure it will not disturb you, because the visitor I ask to come to you is my dear St Aloysius: I beg him to stay with you for at least an hour to refresh and assist you, in a word: to do

what you require of him. I am sure this Heavenly Visitor will show you what he can do.

Excuse my writing at such length and for taking too much advantage of your goodness. Take heart. Avail yourself of every means and treatment to get well soon as, God willing, I do hope. A comforting thought for you: very many people are praying for you; as an act of charity, put in a word to the Lord for my soul too. Bless me from your sick bed and accept my humble regards

Your devoted Servant and Daughter in J. C.
Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary
B. C.

Letter 189

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She accepts God's will regarding Don Bosio's sickness - Praise for him.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Beloved Sister,

Love, 8 May (1830).

I read your letter with great delight. I spoke with Fr. Taeri and I understood what he wished to tell you. In fact, it would have been a very good thing if you had been present. However, I advised him to talk to Rev. Fr. Dò, and I am sure he will be able to explain a certain detail almost more clearly than you yourself could have done. He will tell you all about it. Our Reverend Superior is so so. Yesterday, by chance, I had to go and see him in his room. I was taken aback when I saw him looking so worn out, pale and thin. There came over me a wave of sadness and I could hardly keep back my tears. What more can I say? He is a fruit ripe for Heaven; if God wants to grant him that reward, he deserves it and I am quite happy about it. All the same, let us keep praying that God may graciously consider not so much his merits as the needs of a multitude of souls.

Pray that he may be able to say from the heart: «*Thy will be done*»¹. I am sending you a new drawing-of-lots list. Not to let you wait so long and because I have no time to make a copy, I am sending you my own, though it is untidy with so much cancelling out. As to what I sent you with the Breno address, I had posted it.

Goodbye, dearest. May we find all our joy in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

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

To Esteemed Lady
LUCIA CISMONDI
DARFO.

¹ *Original in Latin: 'Fiat voluntas tua'.*

Letter 190

TO REGINA TAERI

She thanks her for the chain, etc. - She thinks the charge should have been higher.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Beloved Sister and Friend,

Love, 9 May (1830).

I heartily thank you for the splendid service done me regarding the chain etc. However much I thank you, I will never do so enough because my obligations to you have become practically boundless, with never any opportunity to repay you. Rev. Don Taeri, your brother, sent me back 1½ Svanziche¹. I suppose he must have made a mistake because the chain undoubtedly costs more. I insisted on his keeping it, but with no success. If I owe you more than what I paid, kindly tell me so.

I really enjoyed your letter. I read it with exultant joy: I liked your account about your ... I will be on the lookout to spot out anyone you may have in mind, up to now with no success.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer; especially in

¹ See footnote pg 29.

this sacred month, wholly dedicated to our Mother Mary, I intend to join you and make with you a new spiritual pact.

Convey my wishes and those of all my dear ones to all your highly-esteemed family.

Remember that I am, and will ever be

Your loving and grateful Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

B.C.

To Esteemed Lady

REGINA TAERI

BRESCIA.

Letter 191

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She urges her to offer herself totally to God and strive hard for his greater glory - News of Don Bosio's sickness - His commands to two fellow members - Persons chosen to crown Mary.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Love, 22 May 1830.

I received your most welcome letter with the two other letters enclosed in it. I at once gave them to our Reverend Superior to read, and then sent them to their destination through a very reliable person. I offered my holy Communion for you. The only thing I can tell you about it is that the Lord wants you to be totally His, wholly devoted to bringing about His greater glory.

Don Bosio sends you his kind regards. He is keeping better now, but he will not recover so easily. We still fear much for his health. Yesterday he himself told me that he is taking a long time to regain strength, and every day presents some setback to his recovery. I am telling you this so that you may continue to pray and make others pray for him, because perfect healing must be entirely the fruit of prayer. He expressly said we may encourage others to pray, and even to

command the Rev. Dò' Sisters, in his name, to receive holy Communion with the usual frequency, because he really wishes it, and asks that they be done without delay. As a matter of fact, he begs them the kindness to offer two holy Communion a week for him.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. I am in extreme need of it. I survive thanks to the merits of others, in a lazy sort of way. I shall come and see you perhaps one of these days, but I cannot make up my mind. If God is pleased by it, I do wish it. Here below I am writing out the names of the four fortunate ones who will crown Mary at the end of May. The practices for it are the usual ones. May both of us be consumed by the Love of the Holy Spirit. When I see that Fr. Superior has started to hear Confessions again, I will let you know. Goodbye.

Rev. Don Tomini
Rev. Don Forlini
Cismondi L.
Ferrari

Your loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 192

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

About going for a change for health reasons - Advice and encouragement in his illness - Desire to respond to the love of Jesus.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS DEVOTEE ST PHILIP NERI

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Just now, from home, 27 May 1830.

My needs force me to write to you this letter, though I fear it may be a disturbance for you and that I may be disobeying a bit.

In accordance with your order to inform you of my health, I can tell you that the medicine has not done me any good and so I stopped taking it. The medicine you ordered me seems to me the most beneficial of all though so far I cannot say that it makes me feel much better. However, this morning I am well; I have slept peacefully the whole night, and I must say that I have very little of the usual trouble and pain. The other days I had felt it, though on most days not so much. The doctor has told me to go for a change for six or seven days. There are three opportunities available but I don't know which one to take. For one, I would be glad to go to the Vallecamonica region and meet my dear fellow members of the Union, but my Parents would not be so happy about it because, knowing how

I am, they are anxious that I would be too shy to ask for what I need and end up getting worse.

Another opportunity would be that of going to Brescia with my dear Catterina Gerosa and several others, who are going there next week.

My parents would be happy about it, I suppose, though I have not spoken to them about it yet. They had also suggested that I should go about in cart during the evening in this town itself, but I don't feel ready for that. To avoid making mistakes, I will keep to what you suggest to me. I also beg of you the kindness to exempt me from fasting next Saturday.

For my own peace of mind I must add that I greatly fear my self-love may be deceiving me, making me take for illness or health need what is sheer lack of good will. I must therefore assure you that I am fairly well, and I am all the time praying that the Lord himself may let you know the whole truth in this regard.

You may be feeling anxious on account of the coming feasts of Pentecost: on the one hand not feeling fit enough to hear confessions, and on the other hand seeing the need for it. I feel urged to tell you that God accepts your desire rather than your carrying it out. However, if you feel really well, He will be pleased if you hear Confessions for an hour at the most. I fear that what prompts me to speak is pride, but I cannot be silent, because my conscience still reproves me over the last Mission, and all the more so because this thought came to me as I knelt at the altar of Mary. Take heart: I hope to see you soon restored to health. God has in store for you new

commitments for his glory, and he is preparing you with this illness. Make up your mind on going for a good, long change somewhere: I really think it will do you much good. Your good Saint Philip (Neri) and my dear 'Luigino' will be your inseparable companions, and will bring you much joy.

From time to time my sister tells me that she would like to renew her vows, but she does not have the courage to speak of it with others. If you wish, you can tell me something I could say to her.

The good Maria Conti (known as of Agata) would like to go to Brescia for the outing mentioned above, and her Parents forced her to say 'Yes', but she is not at peace with herself till she knows what you would advise her to do. If you see her, please tell her what you think, or tell her through others, just as you think more appropriate.

For charity's sake commend me to God. My needs are increasing by leaps and bounds, I do want to please Jesus who makes me feel his presence so much; I want to love him with all my heart, but day after day I am unfaithful to him and commit some ugly thing.

I thank you most heartily for your great charity to me, in soul and body. May the Lord pour divine love into you, in return.

Impart your holy Blessing on me, I beg of you. Don't take the trouble to write even a single line. The Lord will let me have a chance to see you somewhere.

Excuse me. With humble reverence

Your devoted Servant and Daughter

B.C. OF JESUS

Letter 193

TO THE SAME

She brings to him the case of a friend - Concern for the health and holiness of her Confessor - Her trust in St Aloysius.

HAIL TO THE ANGELIC 'LUIGINO' GONZAGA

Very Reverend and Zealous Confessor,

From home, 21 June 1830.

I am dropping a few lines because I am not sure of meeting you today. I have given my word to the good Giustina Pennacchio that I would tell you that her brothers are continually harassing her because they would like her to come to you and explain to you many reasons in their favour in the matters already known to you. She told them many times that she does not want to meddle in their affairs, but they keep urging her. As that gentleman is coming here tomorrow, Mister Orazio Gallini advised her to request you, very Reverend Father, kindly to go with him to the magistrate's Court, otherwise much money would be spent, maybe for nothing. Giustina is asking this favour from you, and I too beg it of you for charity's sake.

I have a little thing of my own to tell you, something I am anxious about. The first opportunity I have to see you, have the kindness to hear me.

For some days I have been anxious about your health; it seems to me you are not keeping well; however, today I placed all my trust in my dear St Aloysius, and I am sure to obtain the grace. Though unworthy, I always say to the Lord: «I want him to live; I want him healthy; I want him holy». If the Lord keeps us in such an anxious desire for your health, it is because he wants us to understand that good health is purely a gift from him, and that it is therefore most valuable. I am very glad of it, and I heartily desire to see in you a great Saint, above all to see you consumed with love of God.

Forgive me the continual trouble I give you. However, I am not promising to give you no more trouble in future. As long as I live, I can't help being what I am. I will pay all my debt to you if I am fortunate enough to go before you to Heaven. Today's feast fills my heart with exultant joy. My dear *Luigino* is mine in all respects. How I wish I could be like him! ...

If only I could go soon to enjoy his delightful company! ...

With profound respect, I am

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

To Very Rev. Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 194

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She recommends prayer for Don Bosio who is again ill.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS WITH THEM

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 24 June (1830).

Here you are, dearest: I am enclosing the drawing-of-lots list for the current Novena of the Visitation of Mary. I am hard pressed for time and can't write more. I again recommend our Reverend Superior. He had been restored to perfect health, but it is a whole week now that he has been suffering from the same trouble, and today he is in bed, in danger of falling seriously ill. For charity's sake, do pray and tirelessly ask others to pray for him.

Once again I commend myself to your prayer. Give my wishes to all the members. May we be wholly consumed by the holy love of Jesus. I am

Your grateful, loving Friend

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Urgent

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONDI

BRENO

Letter 195

TO REGINA TAERI

*She asks for prayers - Sentiments on the Feast of St Aloysius -
Protestations of affection and gratitude.*

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 29 June 1830.

Let me just be with you for a while through this letter, my most gentle friend: one of my dearest friends is coming to your place, and so I take the opportunity to write to you. May I remind you that I am in great need of your prayer. I beg you to help me out of pure charity, to be faithful to my God and to love Him with all my heart. Day by day I receive new graces from my God; every day He makes himself felt in my heart, and every day I am ungrateful; I offer resistance to Him and fail to love Him.

The Feast recently celebrated in honour of our beloved St Aloysius is still fresh in my mind. How strongly this admirable Saint drives me on through his examples to the heights of holiness! How well he teaches me to love God most generously! ... I do wish to imitate him! ... I would love to be a true copy of him, but I see myself too different, and with all my yearning I am

left utterly confused by my own monstrous ingratitude, a creature full of sinfulness. But enough of this ... May I be granted to love God: that will make me fully happy.

Do remember our spiritual pacts. Unworthy though I am, I keep them, and I trust that you too are doing the same in my regard. I need not profess to you the sincerity of my affection for you: I suppose you are convinced of it. You, my dear *Regina*¹, are always there, engraved in my mind, I speak with sweet pleasure of you, I am eager to see you and enjoy your company and above all I long to be with you for ever in Heaven.

My Parents and my Sister send you a thousand wishes and best regards. Pay my respects to your esteemed family in the name of my Mother as well.

Goodbye, dearest. I long to see you a Saint, a great Saint. I am

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

¹ *'Regina' in Italian language means 'Queen'.*

Letter 196

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She proposes to make a Novena for the full recovery of Don Bosio.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY, AND ST ALOYSIUS WITH THEM

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 2 July (1830).

Just a few lines in a hurry to forward the drawing-of-lots list for the forthcoming Novena of Our Lady of Mt Carmel. On my holy Communion offered for you, I will give you an account next time. We have come to know that Rev. Don Bosio is better now. At the moment he is in Brescia. Fellow members of our Union have planned to make a novena for his complete recovery. I trust you too will join. It starts on 3 July. If this letter does not reach you in time, you can start it later. It consists of: Reciting every day the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus, or else Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be nine times, and lastly, receiving the Sacraments. I recommend it to your kindness, that it may bear good fruit.

Commend me to God. Give my wishes to all our dear fellow members. I take leave of you with the greeting of the Blessed Virgin Mary: – *Magnificat anima mea Dominum.*

Your grateful, loving Sister

The handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

urgent, please

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONDI BRENO.

Letter 197

TO THE SAME

She tells her to look after her health - A new member enrolled in the Union.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 4 August (1830).

Here you are, dearest, a reminder to keep your devotion ever alive: I am enclosing the new drawing-of-lots list for the Novena of the Assumption.

I was sorry to hear that you have been ill: I earnestly beg you to look after your health as much as you can, for God wants to make use of it fully for Himself. Make me glad by sending me, from time to time, news of yourself and of your fellow members; such news fill my heart with joy. Do shake me out of my laziness and stimulate my desire for what is good, for I need it badly. Maddalena Grassi has been admitted into the Union, as you wished. Give my wishes to all the Members, and commend to each one of them the needs of my soul.

May Jesus be our solace, Mary our hope and Aloysius our example. Goodbye.

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO

Letter 198

TO REGINA TAERI

She gratefully acknowledges her brother's visit etc.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS

Dearest Sister,

Love, 10 August 1830.

I am unable to explain to you how pleasant, refreshing and edifying the visit of your good brother, Rev. don Angelo, was to me. Each time I see in him new virtues that inspire me to love God with all my heart.

Dearest, it would have been even more pleasant had you too been with him! ... I am bound to say: *I am not worthy*¹ of so bountiful a grace; it made me say, however, "I will not go to Brescia as long as my dear Regina does not come and stay at least a few days at my home".

Thank you for thinking of me. I beg you, for charity's sake: have compassion on my poor soul which is in extreme need; remember me often with the Lord; ask him to let me fall head over heels in love with Him.

Pay my deep respects to your Parents, on behalf also of

¹ Original in Latin: '*Non sum digna*'.

my dear ones here at home, particularly my Mother, who desires to see you and all of you again.

May God fill you to overflowing with his choicest blessings, make you live of pure love, and make you a great Saint.

Love me and believe me to be

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Respectable Lady

REGINA TAERI

BRESCIA.

Letter 199

TO N. N.¹

With a bearer, she sends to their uncle the orphans who could no longer be kept at the orphans' Home; she recommends them to his care.

Dear Sir,

Love, 12 August 1830.

Following upon the agreement you made with our Reverend Parish Priest concerning the Francesconi brothers, your Nephews, we have all this time been waiting for you, expecting you to come and take them with you, as you had promised the said Parish Priest. Up to now we have been disappointed, all the more so because we heard that you came here to Love and did not even care to keep your promise.

We are therefore informing you that the boys can no longer remain and be maintained at the charity Home where they have been so far, because the limited resources and the number of Orphan boys, beyond the capacity of the Place where they are, make it impossible to cater for more: and so, with the consent, or rather the order and will of our Reverend

¹ No indication of the identity is given.

Parish Priest, we are having the said boys accompanied to you by the bearer of this communication, so that you may take proper care of them and put them to some honest trade, or else have them admitted, if you can, in some Parish institution of our provincial town. We trust that you will not accept these poor orphans against your will, because you already know the terms agreed upon with our Parish Priest and besides, since they are of your own flesh and blood, they cannot fail to be dear to you, though they may be of some burden to you. We feel we don't even need to recommend them to you, for we are sure you will grow to love them, since they are yours, and in need. We therefore hope you will do all that is possible to bring them up as good Christians and skilled labourers, able to earn their own living.

We are glad to have this opportunity to give you our sincere regards.

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 200

TO BERNARDINA VALDINI

She agrees to admit her daughter in the School, and suggests suitable lodgings for her.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dear Madam,

Love, 22 August 1830.

I have received your letter in which you again recommend your daughter to my care, following upon the verbal request made through Fr. Pietro Franzoni and by yourself personally.

I hereby wish to assure you that your daughter will be admitted into my School, which will open in the beginning of November. I will do my best not to disappoint your hopes of a good success that you have formed for your daughter. However, you must be content with little, because my capacity is very limited.

You can come at your convenience to look for a room where your daughter can stay. I have already found a suitable one myself; if you are happy, you can arrange to have it reserved for your daughter.

Commend me to God. Don't hesitate to ask any service I
can render to you.

I humbly pay my respects to you. I am

Your devotedly Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Respectable Lady

BERNARDINA

Wife of Mister ANTONIO VALDINI

Badeto, CETO

Letter 201

TO DON ANGELO TAERI

Devotional practices for the Bishop's good health.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father,

I am enclosing a new list and the drawing of lots for the forthcoming Novena of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary. The practices are the same as those of these last years.

This month all the 'Brothers' and 'Sisters' of our Union have observed the usual Novena of Prince *Hoenthoe*, for the full recovery of our Bishop. I did not tell you, Rev. Father, beforehand because I was sure you would have done it gladly.

I beg you kindly to commend me to the Lord. Convey my sincere regards to all your esteemed family, especially my dearly beloved Regina. May the Lord have you in his keeping for many, many years to come: that is my fervent wish for you.

I am

17 September 1830.

Yours devoted humble Servant

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Rev. Father

DON ANGELO TAERI

Parish Priest of 'Pace' Church

To be delivered in his hands BRESCIA.

Letter 202

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She asks him to place her resolutions within the Heart of Jesus - She urges him to present the petition to the Bishop for the Institute willed by God - Her grateful affection.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I beg you kindly to read the paper enclosed, and for charity's sake place it within the most gentle Heart of Jesus so that I may receive from Him the grace to put it into practice as well. What is more, remind me of it always because usually I first make promises and then fail to keep them. Jesus has showered on me exceptional graces during this precious time. I want to be grateful to Him but all I do is offend Him.

I warmly recommend the Institute to you. Do all that is possible to send the petition to the Bishop before he leaves Brescia. Solicit his support as much as you can, bear up with it if at times you must appear to be a nuisance to someone; you must know that you are doing something that is pleasing, most pleasing, to the Lord, and that He clearly wants you to devote your energies tirelessly to his Work.

May God reward you for all the kindness you are continually showing for my spiritual good, and also for my physical well-being. Yesterday, in my Holy Communion, I really prayed Him very earnestly for you, though I am most unworthy, because I have no opportunity of showing my deep gratitude.

May the Lord make of you a great Saint and reserve for you an elevated place in his Kingdom, so that you may love Him intensely. With humble reverence.

Love, just now, 26 September (1830).

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

Letter 203

TO A FRIEND

Thanks - She urges her to respond to God's gifts - She highly appreciates her friendship - She desires an intimate conversation with her - She offers ready help.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST 'LUIGINO'

Most beloved Friend and Sister
in Jesus Christ,

Love, 12 October (1830).

May heartfelt thanks be rendered to the Lord, who at last gives me the time and leisure to fulfil a strict duty of mine: that of answering your two letters which I appreciated more than I could ever explain to you.

I am extremely ashamed and sorry for the trouble you must have taken in looking for the medicine; I really hoped I would come to know the price, instead you have made me a gift of it. Thank you very much. I don't know how I can ever repay you.

Dearest, may Jesus be always with you. The good and holy resolutions which he is continually making you feel in your heart are sure signs that he wants you totally for himself, and I dare say what you have not said yourself: «He wants you to be a Saint, a great saint and a Saint at once». You are a thousand times most fortunate!

Respond generously to divine grace, and you will experience how sweet and light is the yoke of the Lord, the road to sanctity. To be quite frank with you: from the moment I came to know you, I have always detected in you special designs of God and I understood that your heart was endowed with spiritual gifts, and so I was sure I would see in you fine fruits of virtue. I have always wanted to establish with you an intimate friendship, and I assure you with utter sincerity that when I read your letters and felt the trust you have in me, the sincerity with which you speak and the affection you show towards me, I greatly rejoiced; in fact, I considered myself unworthy of your friendship; on the other hand, the goodness of heart I saw in you encouraged me. I would very much wish you to come and see me, at your convenience, and on your own, so that I may talk to you for some time. I have many things to tell you and I should like to be quite open to you myself. As to the booklet of the Sacred Heart, I will send it to you as soon as I can. Each letter you write will be a gift to me. Wherever you think I can serve you or help you, command me and make use of my services, for you would be doing me a real favour, and I do expect it from you. *Remember me*¹, dearest. Thousands of wishes to your Sister. Goodbye. May Jesus and Mary be nearest and dearest to us. I am

Your poor Sister and Friend

CAPITANIO B. Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

¹ *Orinal in latin: 'Memento mei'.*

Letter 204

TO THE SAME FRIEND

She has been edified by her letter - She urges her to be moderate in bodily penance and to practise more especially internal self-denial.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY AND BELOVED ST ALOYSIUS

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 12 November (1830).

I hope to receive a letter from you tomorrow. That will really be precious to me. This evening I am writing to you something that comes straight from my heart. I was deeply edified by what you wrote in your letter. God is at work in your soul and he wants you to be holy. He is pleased with the promise you vowed to him, but it should also cost you sweat and blood. Don't let that daunt you; provided Jesus is pleased, we should not shrink from anything. However, I beg of you: the promise you have made does not oblige you to mortify your body. You would in no time undermine your health by it, and that is also a snare of the devil, and you would be sorry for it afterwards. Let it rather lead you to have a greater vigilance on your passions, to control and tame them, to overcome yourself and, even more especially, to harass the 'ugly beast' of self-love and pride.

We must live crucified, yes, but crucified with Jesus Christ, seeking humiliations, rejoicing at being left aside and forgotten, living solely with Jesus and for Jesus. He is our most loveable Spouse. He has every right to claim all our affections. Let us be generous. Let us give him our heart, soul and will, our desires, thoughts and even our sighs. Our life should be angelic, but of angels still on the way; that means that we must be always cautious lest we stumble and fall. Let us place all our confidence in Jesus, and we are sure that He will help us. I am sending you the booklet of the Sacred Heart. I hope you don't mind if it is rather soiled. I commend my poor soul to your charity. A thousand wishes to dearest Maddalena.

I take my leave of you at the foot of the Cross to suffer with Jesus.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 205

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She sends her devotional practices - Promises a reply.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister,

23 November (1830).

Your letter made me very, very glad. For charity's sake commend me to God; I need it so badly that I am at a loss how to explain it to you. I am sending you the new list of the drawing of lots. If you have not yet received the practices for the Patronage of Our Lady, you have only my laziness to blame. Please accept my hurried wishes. Concerning the young girl Teresa, I will send you a reply as soon as I get to know the wishes of our Superiors. As far as I am concerned, I am quite happy. May we be wholly consumed by God's love. I am

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONDI

DARFO.

Letter 206

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

About the Regulations of the Pious Union and recommends new candidates - Vow of a friend of hers - Ceaseless efforts to avail herself of all opportunities to humble herself all the more.

HAIL TO JESUS †

HAIL TO MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

(December 1830).

At last God is pleased to make me overcome my laziness and so here I am to serve you by sending you what you wanted. I have always tried to cover up my persistent carelessness and negligence with regard to our Congregation (Union) with so many empty excuses, but the true reason is my pride, because as I no longer have any will to do good, I am sorry to see others doing so much good, and not to bear the shame of knowing myself to be the least of all, I give up trying to do my best. In this regard, I cannot keep from you something I am concerned about. From time to time my fervent fellow members ask me for the Rules of the Program of our Union, and they are very eager to have them, and I myself ardently desire to have this devout Union well established.

If the reason for your delay is a judicious care to avoid the risk of giving rise to a fresh persecution against piety, let everything remain silent till Judgment Day, because of two evils, it is better to choose the minor evil. But I have a feeling that the reason is not that, but rather that the Rules are not appropriate, that they are confused, lacking in substance and abounding in trifles of no importance; adopting them as they are is not wise, nor can they be amended because they are too confused, and so, since they can neither be followed as they are nor be suitably corrected, the whole thing is better passed over in silence.

I had that feeling right from the beginning, though I chose not to speak out, because in my pride I was afraid I might be taken at my word, and I would be sorry not to do it myself since I like to outshine others etc.

However, I now beg you, Reverend Father, in the name of Baby Jesus, to withdraw the manual and burn it up and then see to it that the Union may soon be perfectly-well established. I beg you this favour most earnestly.

As the good Lady Panzerini joined the Canossians' House at Verona, her place as a member of the Union is now vacant. Lucia Cismondi would like to admit a young girl, a relative of hers, who is angelic in her ways. Others would be happy to admit Giovannina Grassi of Zorzino (but Mother Parpani is not very much in favour of her).

Please tell us yourself what to do, and we shall carry it out and so the matter will be settled peaceably. Giovannina Grassi herself wrote to me that I should consult you.

With the approval of her Spiritual Director Fr. Camplani, she made a Vow *sub levi* (under pain of venial sin) never to please herself in anything: neither in thinking, nor in speaking, nor in doing anything.

This vow gives rise to certain fears and worries because she is always afraid of going against it; at the same time she says that deep down in her heart she has a sense of peace and a real joy, and so she feels closely bound to God.

She says that if she were sure that God wants this sacrifice from her, she would not find it hard to bear, and that the only fear she has is that of deceiving herself by undertaking a thing against God's will and therefore dangerous and harmful to her soul. And so she wants to seek your advice about it.

I am in Advent, a holy time of penance, but I dread it. Instead of seeking more of it, I beg you to exempt me from the obligation of fasting¹. If you want me to do something else instead, maybe I will do it, if you command it.

Kindly pray Baby Jesus that with his almighty power he may break down the ice of my heart and the haughtiness of my mind. I beg you, for charity's sake, the merit of obedience for what I do.

I am adding nothing about my conscience, because I am at a loss what to say. May God grant me to sing his mercies for ever and ever.

¹ One must note that besides being sickly and very busy, Ven. Bartolomea was also a school teacher to a good number of girls, big and small.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. I humbly pay my respects to you. As to my health, I am keeping very well; I am not suffering much from stomach ache, either. Perhaps the Lord wants to take away even this slight opportunity to suffer, to deprive me of the pleasure of being shown pity by others, because He saw that what was precious to me was not so much the opportunity to suffer as the pleasure of being able to say that I was in pain; and if at times I pretended to conceal it, I did it so that they might imagine it to be worse. Now I am well, I am happy. ... Oh Baby Jesus, in your love cast a glance on one who needs it badly!

Bless me, Father, I humbly beg of you, and never grow tired of being kind to me.

Your grateful, loving Servant and Daughter in J.C.

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 207

TO A FRIEND

She informs her that she has been admitted into the Pious Union - About a vow of self-denial - Various errands.

HAIL TO BABY JESUS

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 21 December 1830.

Forgive my delay in answering your kind letter. I am negligent in everything, and so my friends have the chance to practise with me, or on account of me, a high grade of virtue. The good news I am about to give you will make you make peace with me. The Lord has granted you what you desired; you have been admitted into our Union. You will join it on Christmas Night. I am sending you the current practices to begin with; later on I will send you the others as well. First time we meet I will explain to you what you don't know yet, but in the meantime I request you to say nothing to anybody that you are joining it, etc. I will tell you the reason when we meet.

I mentioned your Vow to the Very Reverend Priest you spoke of. He approved of your intention, but he said it is too vague; he said he is of the opinion that you limit it to these

terms: «never to satisfy yourself in what you do except in necessary things». Later on, if this one works, you can extend it again. This is what he thinks, and so you can adapt it to your life-situation.

As to the booklets you mention, I have found no trace of them. Perhaps they do have them, under a different title. If you yourself come here, we shall go together to look for them. You do me wrong to talk about money, etc. Thank you very much for the medicine you gave me. I can say that thanks to it I don't suffer so much from stomach ache.

Kindly commend me to Baby Jesus. Cheer me with a letter of yours. Goodbye. We shall meet again at the Stable of Bethlehem. A thousand wishes to Maddalena. I am

Yours grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 208

TO THE SAME FRIEND

She advises her on changing of spiritual director.

HAIL TO JESUS

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 22 December (1830).

Your kind letter brought me much joy. The trust you have in me binds me all the more to you, though I make a poor use of it and put your own patience to the test. I like the advice you gave me with regard to the drawing of lots; I shall follow it, starting with the new year. With regard to the matter you confided to me on whether to change the Spiritual Director or not, according to my very modest opinion, I should say this: «Try for some time longer, make a real effort to have trust in your first guide and resolve to continue with him as long as there is no obvious reason for changing him, all the more so since he is a man of merit. If in spite of all your efforts, there is in you a persistent lack of confidence together with the other uneasy feelings you experienced in the past, then I should see in it a clear indication of God's will and in that case you would do well to change him with freedom of conscience». This is the

opinion which I, who have never been able to change it, can offer you even though I had in mind to advise you to change the Confessor. – In any case, don't feel bound by what I say, but do what you think is better.

Here below I am noting down the new drawing of lots for the Octave. I commend myself to your prayer. I am

Your loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary B.C.

Letter 209

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

Prayers for the election of the new Pope - Acceptance of a girl put off.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 22 December (1830).

I am enclosing the new drawing-of-lots list for the Octave of Christmas. The practices are the usual ones. May I remind you that on the Feast of St Stephen we shall start the usual practices in view of the election of the Holy Pontiff. Our Superior was against the idea of admitting into the union, at the moment, the girl recommended by you, because the place left vacant by Panzerini was given by him to another girl for good reasons and for prudence' sake. Have patience.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. May Baby Jesus be your comfort now and for ever. Goodbye.

Sincerely Yours

The unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONDI

BRENO.

YEAR 1831

Letter 210

TO LUCIA SIGISMONDI

Longing for Heaven and conformity to God's Will.

Here is another reminder from me: the drawing-of-lots list for Carnival practices, which remain the same as over the last years. I appreciated your letter very much. Thank you for thinking of me, unworthy though I am. For charity's sake remember my poor soul frequently; at the feet of our Crucified Lord, entreat Him to carry out in me His holy Will. Please say some prayers, and ask others to do the same, for various intentions that are very important. When will it be, dear Lucia, that we be entirely, wholly of God! ... When will it come about that our heart will be afire purely with his holy Love! ... When will it be that, leaving behind this deceptive world, we can enjoy, in the gardens of the Lord, the peace and quiet of the righteous! ...

May the Lord work out his holy Will in us and lead us, too, by the path that is most pleasing to Him. May he make us

worthy of loving him, and that would suffice.

As to your letter addressed to Rev. Fathers Passi, I posted it at once. After that, I haven't heard anything else.

Goodbye, dearest. Next time we meet will be in Heaven, perhaps! ... May God make us worthy of it. May Jesus be loved for ever! Goodbye.

2 January 1831.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Esteemed Lady

LUCIA SIGISMONDI

To be delivered in her hands

DARFO.

Letter 211

TO VOLUNNIA BANZOLINI

She thanks her for gifts sent to her - She comforts her in her spiritual desolation.

PRAISE TO JESUS, JESUS, JESUS FOR EVER.

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 5 January 1831.

I have not yet thanked you as I should have done for the lovely cabbages you sent me, the designs you lent me and the thousand other kind deeds you have lavished on me. I am deeply indebted to you and I am profoundly grateful to you. Forgive my delay in fulfilling this duty of thanking you. I beg you not to overwhelm me any more with so much kindness that I know I don't deserve at all. Only be so kind as to keep up your friendship with me, for that in itself is exceedingly dear and precious to me.

My heart fills with profound compassion as I think of your sorrow and distress, and I wish I could in some way be of comfort to you. When God withdraws from a soul all spiritual consolation and delight, it cannot help feeling deeply troubled and dismayed: all it can still do, however, is to love the Supreme Good all the more. Be comforted, dearest Sister;

God wishes you to give him proof of your fidelity and steadfastness and of your great love for him. That is why he has hidden his face from you; he has let you experience the (limited) worth of creatures and of things of this world so that you may more generously cling to his heart. He is eagerly waiting for you, for he loves you immensely and takes delight in you, and he has chosen you as a most faithful Bride of His. Have courage, dearly beloved, this is the right time to offer pleasing sacrificial offerings, now is the time for you to be most generous. Don't fret: Jesus is in you, Jesus is with you, Jesus is at work for you, even though you are not aware of it. Abandon yourself lovingly in His hands and have no fear. Lovingly kiss the left hand of Jesus who is so wisely hitting hard at you, and tell him that you want to love him immensely, that you want to become a great Saint, that trials endured for his sake are sweet to you, and that you have no other desire than that of doing his Holy Will. Thank him heartily for this chance to humble your self-love but that you want instead so much more love of God. Have no fear, my dear Sister, your heart will soon have calmer times. Remember, though, that God wants you to be a Nun, soon. «Be generous». Oh! What a happiness! ... Pray God to give you the courage to do it.

Goodbye. *Remember me*¹.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

¹ *Original in Latin: 'Memento mei'.*

Letter 212

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

Trust in God's merciful love - At a loss in discerning on her vocation.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND THE SPOTLESS ALOYSIUS

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

I am enclosing a paper herewith; kindly correct it as the Lord inspires you and then send it back to me so that I may do something in this time of revelry. I should tell you something about my soul, but to tell you the truth, I don't know what to say to you. I would like to hope to be in the hands of the Lord. He knows that I am in need of everything, that the load I carry is made of frailty and sinfulness and that I am greatly in need of his merciful love. I trust He will have mercy on me, because he is my most beloved Father, and so I trust in Him with a tranquil heart.

During the Christmas Novena I was so strongly urged to run away and retire in some Convent that I don't know how I managed to resist it. But on Christmas Day itself, when I had planned to tell you, Rev. Father, what I had in mind and then decide according to your advice, my heart was filled with perfect calm and an overwhelming desire, instead, to do what I

can for the good of others. I felt that Baby Jesus was pleased with a word from me that I would wait even till Judgment Day for the start of his Work, if he willed it so, and meanwhile to devote my energies for the benefit of my neighbour. I don't know what path God wants me to go by; may He grant me the grace to follow Him anywhere, and that is enough for me.

I earnestly commend myself to your prayer: for charity's sake, remember my poor Father too, sometimes. I need not tell you anything about the Institute because I know you are doing your utmost for it. I will just tell you that a day seems to me a century, so great is my yearning for it to start. It gives me great joy to hope that the good Giovanna, your Sister, may have the good fortune of being among its first members, though I do feel sorry for the pain of separating herself from her dear ones.

I humbly ask your blessing: may it effectively obtain for me some willingness to do good. With best regards.

8 January (1831).

Your devoted, grateful Daughter in J. C.
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary
B.C.

To Very Reverend Father
DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 213

TO THE SAME

Suggestions for the Day of Recollection for girls - She reports on certain fellow members.

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I trust you know that his Reverence the Parish Priest has announced that this evening your Reverence will open the Recollection day. If you think it appropriate, I would ask you to remind the Leaders of their duty to watch over the girls in their group, and the latter of their obligation to obey, etc. There is a real need for this. Recommend also holy Perseverance: it worries me to see how certain girls who were formerly fervent are now becoming so indifferent; they are, in fact, less willing than the others to return to the path of virtue. Insist also on the need to have done with all this talk about love-making etc.

The good Volunnia is in great distress. I beg you to give her some of your time: she is coming to Church about an hour after lunch. If you can make her open out to you, it would be of immense help and solace to her.

Camilla is now calm and quiet: she obeys very humbly and is courageously advancing in virtue.

The good widow Bianca would like to remind you of the kindness you promised her, to buy books for her son.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. If only I could be truly converted on this occasion! ... Excuse me all this trouble I am giving you. With profound respect and grateful thanks

19 January (1831).

Yours devoted Servant and Daughter
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Reverend Father
DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 214

TO A FRIEND

She comforts her in her spiritual tribulations and encourages her to prepare herself for the religious life.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearest Sister,

Love, 10 February (1831).

I greatly appreciated your letter. It brought home to me your inner suffering and oh! how gladly I would comfort you if I could! ... God is putting you to the test; he wants to see your steadfastness in actual fact. Have courage, my dear Sister. Adorn your crown with gems of acceptance of God's will, fervent love and constancy. Be faithful to God even in little things. Remember that your actual life-situation is very pleasing to God, though to you it seems quite different. Beg like the *Canaanite* woman with regard to Holy Communion, but don't lose your peace of mind nor be too downcast if you are not granted permission to receive it. Make up for it with a great number of spiritual Communions, and you will see that God will comfort you and help you equally well, and perhaps even more. Regarding your Bond, remember that God cherishes it and cares for it, and you must be faithful to him as if you were to renew it every hour of the day. Religious life awaits you, but

wants to receive you as a saint, and so do your very best to become wholly, totally possessed by Jesus, and the gates of the Heavenly Garden will soon open to let you in.

Don't distress yourself over your actual condition, due to the lack of a Spiritual Director. With all that you are going through, you should rather rejoice since you bear the distinctive mark of Jesus Christ. Mingle with your tears so many acts of love and thanksgiving to Jesus. One look up towards Heaven and then be at peace. One look at the Crucifix and then say with joy: I will endure gladly and I will always love my Lord Jesus with all my heart.

I will send you as soon as possible the results of the lots already drawn for our devotional practices. Commend me to God, I beg of you. Live calm and quiet in the arms of Jesus, and be sure of attaining Heaven. With all my heart, Goodbye!

Your loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 215

TO THE SAME

About her admittance into the Pious Union - True happiness lies in self-denial for Jesus' sake.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister,

20 February 1831.

Here you are: I am passing on to you the Novena we are starting on Friday, that is, on 25th instant. I spoke to Mother Parpani about your admittance into the Pious Union and she was extremely happy about it. She added that had I not made it a point to recommend you, she herself intended to do her best to have you admitted. Thank the Lord with all your heart for it. I am not going to speak about the Union because I don't have time, nor do I want to write down on paper things I want to remain secret. First time we meet I will tell you everything.

Dearest, take courage, be steadfast. True happiness and gladness is found only in denying ourselves constantly for the sake of Jesus Christ. However heavy the cross may be, Jesus helps us, and he bears most of it himself.

Let us love our beloved Jesus and be always faithful to

him ... Commend me earnestly to the Lord. For charity's sake, I request you to offer a holy Communion for a very important matter.

A thousand wishes to Maddalena. May our dear Mamma (Mother Mary) protect us and defend us always. Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 216

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She encourages him in his commitment for the erection of the new Institute - Her humility makes her hesitate to write out the plan for it - Wise counsel concerning Gerosa and another aspirant - Difficulties met in teaching at school.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

I am breaking the brief silence kept with you. I keep telling myself that I should not be too much of a nuisance to you with my frequent writing, but that is how I am. I am always starting from scratch. However, my experience of your goodness of heart is all the assurance I need. I was overjoyed last Thursday, when I saw how concerned you are about the longed-for Institute. I felt so happy when you said, «I don't want to give up the undertaking. On the contrary, I want to do my utmost till it be successfully brought about». Words that greatly cheered the heart of our good God, words He has already written in Heaven in letters of gold. May He grant you the perseverance needed for such a great undertaking; may He give you an invincible steadfastness, immense patience, uncommon tact and an aptitude for any activity so that with the Lord's special assistance you may soon bring His Work to a good end.

Be assured that the Lord has chosen you, Reverend Father, as one of the main instruments for His work, and almost without your realizing it, he himself made the promise contained in the very words you uttered.

The undertaking is as great and important as it could be. God certainly wants it. So many needs that there are call for it most eagerly.

Be sure that God is in you and with you, and every time you speak, think, do anything or suffer anything for this Undertaking, he will grant you some special grace, and in Heaven He will be your greatest Crown.

After what you told me about the matter on Thursday, I had some uneasiness about what you told me to write etc. Allow me to confess to you all my pride, if I can.

I can clearly see that all I do, think or write, everything is always tainted by my ugly pride and is spoiled by it.

I therefore feel within myself that for the good of the Institute, and not to be an obstacle to what the Lord wants to do about it, I had better not meddle in His affairs, never say anything nor ask anything, nor even think of it, but simply pray the Lord to make me worthy, for charity's sake, not to exclude me from the number of His Handmaids; thus, I will then remain in holy indifference waiting till He opens the door for me.

On the other hand I have an inner urge to obey blindly, and several times I felt driven to write something of what you commanded me, but my pride is too great.

You already know of it, to some extent, since I turn to you (for

help), and so I beg you, if you approve of what I think, to order it as an obedience, because my pride is so subtle that it will find pasture everywhere, even where it meets only with misery and reasons to be humbled.

I beg you to take into account how harmful my pride is, and I am sure you will order me to remain in the lowest place.

In this hurry I beg you not to act according to the intention of asking Catterina to go and see the Parish Priest. She is in deep distress at the moment; what Father Dò said was enough to worry her and upset her even physically though Fr. Dò praised her intentions and assured her of his support - even if indirectly, not to raise the suspicions of Lady Bartolomea¹.

Please wait a bit longer, Father. I feel it is prudent to take that step only when the transactions for the division of the property have been dealt with.

Meanwhile, not to waste time, you could speak to the Parish Priest, tell him what you think and discuss the matter with him, but for the time being please spare Catterina; otherwise I am afraid we might get into a worse fix. However, I trust in your great sagacity. If you act on it you cannot make a mistake.

One more word, if you don't mind, concerning the good Marsiglia. The other day I felt pity for her, poor soul. She could not hold back her tears when you told her that you are not

¹ Caterina Gerosa's aunt, who stood in the way of the division of the property. See Letter 176.

pleased with the idea that she should join some Convent immediately. If, when she comes back to town, she has the same yearning, I beg you for charity's sake to let her go gladly, lest you should leave her with a nagging pain in her heart. It will be a sign that we are not worthy to have such a great joy. If we make her wait against her will, for a long time, maybe, and then put her in a new sort of Retreat where there will certainly be great obstacles to overcome, I would also fear that she may not find the joy, quiet and sense of security that she desires and longs for so ardently.

If the Lord wants her in the new Institute, he will lessen her great eagerness to go at once, and little by little he will draw her to the holy Institute. But I am just talking foolishly. May the Lord let you know what He wills in this matter. I would be only too happy if she were to be one of the first stones of such a holy Edifice.

The Lord has restored my former peace of mind: it is a pure token of his great mercy, and I thank him with all my heart, because a single day of dejection weighs more heavily on me than a hundred pains and aches. May He grant me the grace to love Him immensely and serve Him faithfully, for that is all I seek.

I earnestly recommend my poor School to you. For charity's sake help me with your advice and warning that I may not go against God's designs. Keep shaking me out of my laziness, put me right when I am thoughtless, instruct me in my ignorance, be a support to me, the weakest instrument of God's designs. On the one hand the School is a very heavy

burden, especially when I think of the endless obligations and duties I have towards it, to the extent of almost feeling oppressed by it. On the other hand the Lord is so good and merciful that he helps me almost in a tangible way, and I realize that He is doing everything himself. And yet so often, or rather all the time, my pride sets itself against Him and because of that He is forced to keep from me so many graces, however much he wishes to grant them to me, and so I make endless mistakes. All the same, on Monday, by the grace of God and for His glory, I will resume classes. I ask you, Reverend Father, to grant me the merit of obedience in all that I will do in it, down to the tiniest action, so that the Lord himself may assist me. I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer.

Today I have said enough to tire you out for three months on this letter, but maybe three hours will not pass before I tire you again. Be patient with me, I beg of you.

I pay my humble respects to you and ask your holy Blessing. I end with an earnest request to put my head under the feet of everyone and keep me down, down.

Love, 9 April (1831).

Your devoted humble Daughter in J. C.

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands LOVERE.

Letter 217

TO THE SAME

He encourages him to have trust in Mary for the establishment of the Institute, and to complete the plan for it in Her month.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

1st May (1831).

Here below I am marking your new part in the drawing of lots for this month of May: the practices for it are as in past years. I suppose you have a copy of them, but if you, Rev. Father, do not find them, I shall be glad and honoured to serve you.

Many good little girls have started it with fervour, and I have the trust that their innocence will draw Mary's loving kindness on them. In presenting the month to them I had our longed-for Institute in mind, and I do hope that Mary will take it under her protection: *we are safe, then.*

Obstacles and difficulties should not daunt us, however great they may be. If God wishes to make use of the means we know of, he will know how to bend the heart to his Will. If he wants some other means, I have no doubt that he will let us know what it is, and even if, humanly speaking, every hope of ours may seem to fail, I don't think it would be temerity on our

part to ask God for a miracle in order to start an undertaking that is entirely His and that He surely wants to be carried out for His greater glory. Let us with great trust knock at the door of the Heart of our Jesus and you will see that he will soon hear us. Our dear Mamma Mary will be as gracious as ever. St Aloysius who, fittingly enough, presents himself with his Sundays, will be our Advocate before Jesus and Mary: he will soon cheer us. I trust you have by now started to write out the Plan for the smooth running of the project. I earnestly beg you to get on with it and finish it by the end of this month: its days are all sacred, and Mary will hold your pen and make sure you write what God wishes. For charity's sake commend me to Jesus and Mary. I feel strongly impelled to observe this month really well, stimulated by the thought that it may be the last May that I spend on earth. I wish you the holiness of St Philip and the innocence of St Aloysius while with reverence I thank you. I am

Yours, devoted Daughter in J. C.

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

DRAWING OF LOTS

Rev. Bosio - with the Choir of Archangels -

Humility:

(May) 3, 20

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 218

TO THE SAME

She is glad to send him the plan of the new Institute on the first Sunday of St Aloysius - She has hopes of its foundation - She only fears that her pride and sinfulness may be an obstacle to it.

HAIL TO THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY
AND TO THE SPOTLESS ST ALOYSIUS

Reverend Father Confessor,

Today, as the Lord has given me some free time, I am allowing myself the sweet comfort of saying a few things about the pious Institute that forms the main object of your holy attention and concern, and of my own yearning. I am very glad it is such a lovely day: I mean to say that it is the first Sunday of our dear St Aloysius who, I greatly trust, will also be committed to this cause, so much so that I feel already sure of that grace.

The paper I am enclosing was not written all at one time. I need not tell you that I have written it simply to obey, and that I expect it to be soon thrown into the fire because you too, on reading it, will see how inadequate and useless it is. The Lord withdraws from me lights which he might have been ready to

grant me, on account of my pride, which always turns everything into nourishment for itself: may He do as He wills, for that is all I seek, nor do I need anything so badly as to be humbled.

I cannot keep from you that for some time now I have been experiencing in myself a very intimate trust, and such a sure hope that the Institute will soon be started, that I feel as if I were already on its threshold.

So many good dispositions that are seen in those who must be the main stone are surely the effects of the promises of our good God. I confess to you quite frankly that I cannot even for a moment be unaware of this sweet hope, and it fills my heart with such joy that even the greatest difficulty I can imagine seems to me insignificant.

Day and night, the blessed Institute is always in my mind, and when I dare to hope that I too, purely for charity's sake, may have the lowest place in it, I cannot hold back my tears at the happiness of it. I really think it will be a House especially blessed by the Lord, favoured by many exceptional graces, and in it there will be rendered great glory to the Lord.

And the many needs there are in this town, needs that the Institute will be able to meet, are surely such as will fill with gladness the heart of every Christian! ... One thing alone makes me very anxious ...

I greatly fear that my pride and sinfulness is the one real obstacle to the graces that the Lord wishes to pour on this pious Institute. Whenever I feel impelled to do good, it is like hearing a voice saying: «So that you may be well-disposed for

what the Lord wants from you». And my continual resistance to the calls and graces of the Lord, I seriously fear, may be hindering what He would like to do to establish the Institute. I will do my best to make myself less unworthy of such an exceptional grace, but if my sinfulness is in the way, I beg you, my Jesus, punish me but let the Institute prosper. I beg you, Reverend Father, drive me on with stick in hand, because I am an ass that will not move a step unless pricked with a goad.

Let us firmly hope the Lord will graciously comfort those who pray to Him. The Holy Spirit will bring some gift from Heaven that will cheer our hearts – I ardently desire to kiss those walls that will be the House of the Lord – I desire to find my refuge in it – I desire to please my Jesus – I desire to bury myself to the world and to myself – I desire to do what God expects from me.

I earnestly beg you to commend me to God. May the Holy Spirit sanctify your promise, Reverend Father, that you don't want ever to give up working and striving till the Institute is founded; may He continue to keep you working till it is completed to perfection. With profound respect and grateful thanks I have the honour to be

Just now, 15 May (1831).

Your devoted humble Daughter in J. C.

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

PROMEMORIA

Loveve, 26 April, 1831.

I write under obedience.

After receiving holy Communion I think I had this thought: The Institute which will be founded in Loveve is to be totally founded on Charity and this must be its principal aim. This Institute in particular must be of assistance to young women in moral danger, excluding none of them, regardless of their age, social status or character, as long as they are in spiritual or material need and the Institute is able to do any good to them. The Institute must offer its assistance in every possible way to this kind of young people, because there are few means of bringing them back to the good other than by keeping them away from dangers, etc.

Another time, I think, I had this thought during Prayer. The Institute is not only to be founded on charity, which will constitute its *active life*, but the *contemplative life* must also be added to it so that those who consecrate themselves to this Institute may live both forms of life; which means, that in this Institute a good part of the day must be devoted to Prayer especially to Holy Meditation so that, all their works of charity may produce good fruit because they are an outcome of Prayer and that those persons may be able to teach others what they have learnt from God in Prayer. Not much time is to be devoted to vocal Prayer in common so as not to take away the time dedicated to charity and not to overburden the sisters who, having to spend themselves in instructing and in teaching, could find it perhaps too burdensome and even harmful to their health.

Another time, while I was at work, I had the following thought which was later confirmed during several Communion and Prayers:

The Institute must be founded on the principles and examples left us by Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that its Rule may be a copy of his actions. So all the Rules, Prescriptions and Regulations are to be directed to the imitation of what Jesus Christ did in this World and He must be our Protector, Norm and Guide. Just as many Institutes propose either the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the imitation of a particular saint, so this Institute should propose to itself to honour the Redeemer and imitate his examples, so that a person who consecrates herself to it may become a true daughter of Jesus Christ through her imitation of Him.

In this regard it seemed to me that God desires a new Institute, although I am opposed to it – at least according to my limited understanding – for it seems to me that the difficulties will be more and greater than if we would embrace an Institute already approved. However, if God wants it, He will provide for everything. This idea of the imitation of the Redeemer etc. became clear to me in a way I am unable to explain, and the rules appropriate to reach this goal, appeared beautiful and sweet to me, although I could not see them clearly.

But every time this thought returned to me it left a great sweetness in my heart, and, at times, a sense of gratitude as well, in knowing that Jesus Christ would grant us a wonderful grace if he would call us to such heights.

Once again at holy Communion, I felt that the Institute should have as its main aim the Education of poor young Girls without parents, keeping them even by providing for their full support, until they grow up and learn some work by which to earn an honest living.

Furthermore, it seems to me that it would be very pleasing to our Lord if, besides the day-school conducted free of charge for the poor, the Institute could provide a boarding school as well for all those girls, either coming from the place or from elsewhere, who desire to be educated there, and that especially if they have the intention of becoming school Teachers or if they are good natured, thus giving hopes of lending themselves for the service of the neighbour.

More than once I felt in my heart that the persons who consecrate themselves to this Institute are to be endowed with an extremely solid piety, with outstanding virtue and a natural disposition to love young people. Therefore great caution should be used in accepting a candidate: her virtue and Vocation are to be carefully tested because, this being a free Institute, there would be the grave risk of extremely damaging consequences. It seems to me that our Lord wishes for these persons a very strict and rigorous Novitiate, during which the observance of the Rules must be inculcated in them and the importance of the commitment to be assumed clearly understood by them. Further, they should be made aware that this kind of life is somewhat more difficult than that of Cloistered nuns, because there are greater dangers and more distractions through frequent contacts with secular persons.

So they must feel the need of a great trust in God and of a true spirit of charity, motivated by a genuine purity of intention, through which everything becomes easy and pleasant.

It would be good, at this stage, to make them aware of all this, so as to instil into them the true spirit required by the Institute. It seems to me that our Lord desires that none of them should be engaged in any kind of work or in external services of charity, during the time of the Novitiate (except during the beginning of the Institute when it will be necessary to do only what is possible), because the candidates should first learn the true spirit of the Institute and then put it into practice in every service that will be entrusted to them.

It seems to me that our Lord wishes that the Institute have the three vows of *Chastity*, *Obedience* and *Poverty* common to other religious congregations. The vow of Enclosure should be excluded, so that the members of this Institute may go out, with all necessary precaution, for charitable work. However, in the absence of a precise obligation, they must strictly observe enclosure as it is very necessary for the smooth functioning of the Institute.

Regarding the purpose of the Institute: besides Charity that must reach out to all young Girls, be they poor, needy, rich or in whatever condition, it seems to me that it would be very pleasing to our Lord if the Institute should devote itself to the relief of the poor sick as well, and especially to the care and the direction of Hospitals, where the sisters will serve the sick, comfort them and provide them with spiritual and material help. This must be a branch of the Institute, springing forth

from that sincere Charity which should be an ornament of those who consecrate themselves to this kind of life, very similar to that of our most lovable Redeemer.

Furthermore, I cannot free my Heart from the thought that Jesus requires from this new family a holy concern for the upkeep of his Holy House and therefore, that he recommends that it engages itself in keeping the sacred vestments and the Church linen of the place washed, mended and ironed, with every care and diligence; that a holy decorum and a great cleanliness be observed in it, without exacting any reward for their labours other than the blessing of the Lord.

Although I have already mentioned it, I cannot avoid repeating that I think I felt deeply in my Heart that (at least at the beginning) great care must be taken in accepting candidates for this holy undertaking.

From among the good only the best must be chosen and special care must be taken to select persons inclined towards Charity, meek and quiet by nature, who feel truly inclined to this kind of life and have a great desire for it. In fact, it seems to me that everything depends on it because at the beginning there will be no lack of hardships, difficulties and troubles coming from external circumstances, or to put it better from the Providence of God who disposes everything for the best.

If in the midst of all this there would be some restless or malcontent persons, it would be the cause of dampening the enthusiasm and also of some harm.

The members of this pious Institute are not bound to a formal

Enclosure, so that they may more easily dedicate themselves to Charity. However they must be very careful to keep away from useless contacts of friendships, superfluous conversations or frequent talks with Secular persons.

Charity and duty must be the only reason for their dealings with them. In any other circumstance they must observe Enclosure or withdrawal to an even greater extent than cloistered nuns, because even a single word picked up may be sufficient enough to cause dissipation among all the members of the Institute, and that will be its ruin, being it the plague of the Houses of the Lord.

The members of this pious Institute ought to be endowed with every virtue, but their characteristic virtues should be *Charity*, *Gentleness* and *Humility*, in imitation of our most lovable Redeemer who seemed even to glory in them. And it seems to me that our Lord demands that these virtues be practised so perfectly by them so as to truly shape their character in such a way that everyone, just looking at them, or dealing with them, will recognize them as true followers of the Redeemer.

Although this Institute should be a simple "Retreat", yet it seems to me that our Lord desires in it the greatest Charity among the Individuals, a perfect Community with total equality among all, without any partiality whatsoever, neither for the rich, nor for the frail nor for any other human consideration. From the time of joining the Institute, everyone should be a perfect Sister to the poor Daughters of this Institute.

The true demands of illness will be the only reason to dispense the Sisters from this Universal Community. Furthermore it seems to me that our Lord wishes that in accepting a candidate to the Institute, no regard should be paid to the goods she could bring with her, but rather to the basic, solid virtues she should have. Even when the Institute is in greatest need of material help and there is someone who could provide for it with her large Dowry but perhaps lacking the necessary virtues, let the Institute be left in need that God will provide for it – but let no person be accepted because of these human motives. God would be displeased with it and would withdraw the graces He would wish to give for its benefit.

It seems to me that in this pious Institute God desires (regarding the Dowry) that the Institute may help those poor candidates who would be suited for its purpose and have a strong desire for it; yet for lack of means they cannot have the consolation they desire.

Let the way be left open for them and let the Institute receive them, trusting in that unfailing Providence of God which never fails those who trust in it.

All the more so, since almost no Institute follows this particular policy, with the result that many candidates who would be successful are abandoned for this reason. And it seems to me that God wants it precisely in order to be consistent with the end which the Institute must have, of imitating our most Holy Redeemer. In fact, when someone showed the desire to follow Jesus, He asked him first of all to renounce all his possessions,

and He did not demand anything from those who followed Him. Instead He required such a detachment from them that He said to those who followed Him that He himself had neither a house nor a shelter. This total surrender of goods cannot possibly be followed in the Institute, for we must not expect miracles from God for such things that could be achieved through human means. Therefore it will be necessary to fix a reasonable amount for the Dowry of each Candidate who wishes to consecrate herself to this Institute. At the same time it must be kept in mind that if someone has all the necessary qualities to be successful and is only lacking the Dowry, she should nonetheless be accepted as a member of the Pious Institute.

Last Friday, when receiving Holy Communion, I felt in my Heart more clearly than at other times, and with special tenderness, that the Institute to be founded here shortly should really be called the Institute of the Redeemer and those persons who consecrate themselves to it the Daughters of the Redeemer. It seems to me that God wishes it to be called by this particular name both to indicate the predilection which He will have towards this pious Retreat and to teach those who consecrate themselves to it, the way to holiness; all the more so as no other religious Congregation is known by this unique and particular name and God has reserved such a great and charitable enterprise for these times, when the need is great and extreme.

The Novitiate might well represent the hidden life of Jesus Christ and it seems to me that He wants it to last a long time, at least for two and a half years. The life that follows it should be

wholly engaged for the good of the neighbour, without exceptions, and could be in some way, an imitation of the active life of Jesus Christ during the three years of his preaching. The fourth Vow of Charity which it seems to me that the Lord requires of these persons, would bind them to do everything possible, suffer everything and even shed their Blood for the good of their neighbour. These could be considered as a distant imitation of the consuming love of our Redeemer in dying for us. Frequent Prayer, and specially Holy Meditation for a considerable length of time everyday, could resemble the frequent periods of solitude that our lovable Redeemer spent apart from people to be with his Divine Father and to intercede for us all. The number of twelve Workers, excluding domestic helpers, who may perhaps be sufficient for this pious Work, could indicate the twelve Apostles whom He chose for the salvation of mankind; but since our Lord accepted Disciples as well, this number could be increased if required by the circumstances. May our most lovable Redeemer make us his true followers. Amen.¹

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

¹ That this first design of the Institute was truly what God inspired to his Venerable Handmaid is clear from the fact that it was verified little by little in every substantial part of it, though B. Capitanio died a few months after founding it and in the course of the years the plan met with many obstacles to the perfect realization of it.

Letter 219

TO A FRIEND

She sends her the Novena of St Aloysius etc.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 19 June (1831).

Here is the Novena of St. Aloysius. Please forgive me for breaking my word. I do have Don Tomini's letter in mind, but I will do as you desire another time. In your kindness, commend me to God.

Be comforted in the thought that you have a chain that binds you closely to God. Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 220

TO A FRIEND

Golden chains by which she should cling to the Lord.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 24 June (1831).

I am enclosing a Novena, with the understanding, as usual, that you will return it to me, at your convenience. I am waiting to have back the booklet of the Sacred Heart, because they have asked for it, as it is not mine.

I commend my poor soul to you: say a good word for it to the Lord. God wishes to be served by you in holy gladness, with freedom of heart, with the utmost diffidence of yourself and immense trust in him, and with sincere humility. These are the golden chains by which he fastens his bond with you more tightly. Kiss them and hold them precious.

A thousand wishes to Maddalena.

Tell her I will soon pay off the debt I owe her.

May St Aloysius be our exemplar in loving Jesus. Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 221

TO COLOMBA MORA

She inquires after the health of a friend - Her attitude to the world and her love for Jesus.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS WITH THEM

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 30 June 1831.

Permit me to send you a few lines to inquire after my dear Martina. I am anxious about her because I heard she was ill and I don't know whether she is keeping well now or is still sick. Last time I wrote to her I asked her to give me news of herself, but no reply came to reassure me. I therefore turn to you and earnestly beg you to let me know what our dear Sister is suffering from, how long it has taken and how she is keeping at the moment. I will be highly obliged to you if you do me this big favour.

I hope you have done the current Novena of the Visitation though I failed in my duty to send you the drawing-of-lots list for it. I warmly recommend our Pious Union to you. If

only we could respond to the designs that the Lord has over us! ... We would be truly fortunate! Days pass by, they pass swiftly by, and all we are left with are the deeds, good or bad, that we do. The world is deceptive, it betrays us, and how many souls it robs of our loveable Jesus ... But for goodness' sake, let us, at least, be faithful to our dear Jesus, for he deserves it so much. ... How happy we shall be one day! ... My dear, pray much for me; my need is very great. I too want to be faithful to my good God, but every moment all I do is offend Him. Love him on my behalf, for He deserves it.

Greet for me our sick Sister and also our fellow member Afrina: tell the latter that God wants her to be a great Saint. You, too, be a Saint: that is my fervent wish for you, with every blessing. Goodbye. I recommend to you the Novena of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel.

Your grateful, loving Sister

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady

COLOMBA MORA

TAVERNOLA.

Letter 222

TO REGINA TAERI

She thanks her and asks for prayers.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS

Dearest Sister,

Your letter made me extremely happy: it had seemed to me ages since I last had news of you; I had missed them and looked forward to them very eagerly. I thank you for meeting my wish and even more especially for thinking of me with love. I need not assure you of my own affection for you, for you know that among my friends you are one of the dearest to my heart.

Kindly think of the countless needs of my soul and commend me to God. Tell him I need all his Merciful Love.

In your contemplation and in the sweet union that you enjoy with your gentle Spouse, remember also the one who is unable to give up the *onions of Egypt* and so deprives herself of the Heavenly Manna of the Children of Israel. How I wish I could share in the lot of those who, being dead to the world and to themselves, live solely for their God! ...

My dear ones at home appreciated your wishes very highly: they with me beg you to accept ours in return and to extend them a hundredfold to all your esteemed family.

Dearest, see you again in Heaven, but before that I shall wait for you on Mt Calvary to take up the Cross and climb up with it happily to Heaven. Goodbye.

Lovere, 20 July 1831.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 223

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She treats of a dampening fervour within the Pious Union and blames herself for it - She revives her zeal - She refers to a long illness both of herself and of her father - This deprives her of holy Communion.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 25 September 1831.

I was very glad to have news from you; at the same time I was sorry to hear that not all is well with our Pious Union there. The cause of this dampening of fervour is surely myself, because I am negligent, because I am bad, because I am proud. However, we don't have to get disheartened by this; the Enemy is at work to disturb a good work that is perhaps damaging his plans. Let us too work very hard, with God's grace, not to let him prevail over us.

Concerning our fellow members who, you say, are growing rather tepid: I recommend them earnestly to you. Don't wait for them to come and ask for the Novena practices, but reach out to them yourself. Encourage them to keep it up, make them understand the great grace that they have received from God, in letting them partake of so much spiritual

richness. Tell them that hundreds of other girls aspire to have their fortune and the Lord is leaving them without, to reserve it for them instead, but that it would go hard for them if they do not respond as they should. Don't let the loss of our good fellow member discourage you, my dear sister. God wanted to humble our pride. Let us thank him and pray that we may draw benefit from this very situation for his greater glory. I will do my very best to have in hand our Manual of Rules and distribute it. Let us have trust that Jesus and Mary will help us.

As to my health, I now start feeling better. After forty-two days of 'fasting' from it, I have at last today received Holy Communion, with much difficulty. The same sickness came over me three times over. My father was at death's door, but we are now having hopes of his recovery. What a debt of gratitude I owe to Jesus!... You too thank him on my behalf and pray that He may grant me the grace to sanctify all the tiny moments of life, which I now receive as a most precious gift from his hands. I deeply appreciate your concern for me. May God reward you for it, as I most earnestly pray. A thousand wishes to all the fellow members over there. Exhort them in my name also, to be faithful to our most loveable Jesus, and they will be rewarded over and above. Let us love Jesus immensely. Goodbye.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

BRENO.

Letter 224

TO DON BORTOLO CELERI

She asks him to celebrate a Mass for her father - She thanks him for his assistance at his death and funeral.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father,

Just now, 16 November (1831).

Will you kindly say Holy Mass tomorrow for the repose of the soul of my poor father? In occasion of his death and funeral rites, I did not thank you, as I should have done, knowing fully well how much you, Rev. Father, have done for him. Forgive us this failing, and be sure we are truly grateful to you and eager to show it in some concrete manner if opportunities to do so present themselves. We did not come to you in person to do our duty towards you because our bereavement was very distressing and everything that reminded us of our loss became unbearable. We now request you to accept our sincere thanks and apologies to you. To so many acts of kindness shown, we ask you still another: that of remembering our dear Departed one in your Prayer, so that he may be assured of the prayers for the repose of his soul, which he will greatly need.

Recommend him also to the kindness of esteemed Father Rector, and convey my best regards to him.

I commend myself to your Prayer: my need is very great. Tomorrow, about 3 p.m., I should very much like to have a word in Confession with the Rector; kindly let him know; if he can kindly hear me, I would greatly appreciate it. If not, *'Fiat'*.

Excuse me the trouble. I am, in the Lord

Your devoted Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Reverend Father

DON BORTOLO CELERI

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 225

TO A PRIEST

She expresses warm gratitude in the name of her family, and offers a gift.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Reverend distinguished Father,

Our indebtedness to you and to all your family is boundless. Whenever we approached any of you, we have always come to know your goodness of heart and your kind favour towards us. But in occasion of our misfortunes, the charity you showed us, the concrete help you gave us, the favours you lavished on us, were innumerable, and we can truly say that you and Mr. Simone have cared for us with fatherly affection, and so too all the other members of your family. Still now we continue to give you trouble, though we would prefer to spare you; but our insufficiency and your goodness of heart towards us whenever we turn to you for help, encourage us to avail ourselves of it. The only thing we are sorry about is that we never have the slightest opportunity to express to you in a concrete way our deep gratitude for all that we receive from you. In all sincerity we wish to say that it

would give us a great pleasure if we could do anything that would please you. However, God himself will abundantly make up for our inability, and in our trust that he will hear us we earnestly pray to Him to gladden your family and bestow on it his choicest blessings; may He make it prosper at all times and in all respects.

We beg you, Reverend Father, graciously to accept a little outfit for Mass that we make bold to send you, purely as a token of acknowledgement of your kind support, and that we would be eager to reciprocate if we could. It is a tiny satisfaction that we have in expressing our immense gratitude, and we hope that you on your part will gladden us by accepting it, though it is such a small thing.

We pay our humble respects to you, begging you to excuse us if we are too bold in our confidence. We have the honour to be,

27 November (1831).

Devotedly and gratefully yours

CAPITANIO - Mother and Daughters

Letter 226

TO DON RUSTICIANO BARBOGLIO

She informs him of an obstacle to the division of the Gerosa property, and urges him to promote the founding of the Institute.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Parish Priest,

Loveve, 29 November (1831).

Allow me to tell you something that is very dear to my heart. Today I spoke to Rev. Fr. Dò about the current Gerosa affair. From what he said it seems clear to me that unless she is conceded Gerosa House in addition to a half of the property, Lady Bortolamea is sure to break the word she gave to the dividing of the property. I informed the good Catterina of all this. She felt that such a pact would be grossly unfair but she uttered these words: «I wish to speak out about this, and if I am told to agree to it, I will do so». I feel it is right to inform you beforehand so that you may have time to think over it and advise her for the best. If Catterina had been induced to take these steps for a purely human motive, or for her own interest, one would say that reason, justice and the will itself are all in her favour and that therefore she would do well to stand firm in not agreeing to concede to her aunt the house that she wants over and above

her fair share. But we know that her aim in agreeing to the pact is to be able to start the Institute that God is showing us clearly to be his will; and so if with the undertaking God expects this sacrifice from her as well, I feel that God will be pleased with it and will accept it graciously. Many times what we should not do for creatures, we can and should do, instead, for the Lord to whom all things are due. You must take into account that if Catterina refuses to give in, the whole affair (if I understood right) will be held up and nothing else will be said about it, and things will go on as before without even the hope of coming to any definite agreement.

Forgive me if I am taking so much liberty to speak, but I am doing it so that you may be fully informed of how things stand and may give the advice that your eminent prudence will show you to be most appropriate. I beg of you to keep in mind the Lord's undertaking, the Institute we have in mind, and see to it that the affair does not drag on.

If you don't mind, I beg you not to let Catterina know that I have written all this to you; I ask you this in order to keep peace and harmony between us. I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. I humbly pay my respects to you and ask you to bless me.

Yours devoted Servant and Daughter in Jesus

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA Unworthy Handmaid Of Jesus

To Very Reverend Parish Priest

DON RUSTICIANO BARBOGLIO

LOVERE.

Letter 227

TO DON ANGELO TAERI

She recommends one of her cousin seminarian - and suffrages for her father.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father,

Last week I was in Brescia where I enjoyed the warm hospitality lavished on me by all your family, particularly by my good Regina, who would have honoured me with her company in my own house had not she been prevented from doing so by the actual condition of your esteemed father. However, she promised she would do so as soon as she can, and I shall be eagerly looking forward to her visit. I should like to ask of you a big favour. This year a cousin of mine, a Seminarian (bearer of this letter, Davide Petenzi) is coming to Brescia.

His Parents and I warmly commend him to your charity. The young man is very well-behaved and virtuous. He is diligent in his studies and has in fact obtained very good results, and so all our Reverend Priests, and more especially our Parish Priest, are very fond of him. However, this cousin of mine is rather shy by nature, which makes him fearful and easily discouraged. His dear ones at home commend him to your kindness, that you

may instruct him, recommend him to the right persons, introduce him to good company and help him in what he may need. Add to that, he is rather poor; his family work as hard as they can to help him become a Priest. I therefore earnestly request you to be kind to him, to say a good word for him to the Bishop, by asking him to do all the good he thinks he can do for him. I am sure that you, Reverend Father, will not mind the trouble of doing what I am asking from you and that in your charity, which I know is very great, you will not think it below your dignity to help this poor Seminarian.

Forgive the excessive liberty that I take, but you have your own goodness of heart to blame, which makes me so bold.

All your friends send their best regards; so too my own family. As you undoubtedly know, the Lord has deprived me of what I held dearest in this world: this loss is weighing heavily on my heart and I cannot get over it. Pray God for me and say some *Eternal* rest for the soul of the one God has robbed me of, that He may give him rest and to me peace.

Let me have good news of the Bishop and of yourself. With deep reverence and grateful thanks.

Love, 30 November 1831

Yours devotedly

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Reverend esteemed Father
DON ANGELO TAERI
Father of St Filippo Congregation
BRESCIA

Letter 228

TO REGINA TAERI

She looks forward to her comforting visit - She asks prayers for the repose of the soul of her father etc.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Your courtesy and kind attention have remained so deeply impressed on my mind that I am at a loss how to describe it. I wish I had some opportunity to express in a concrete way my sincere gratitude to you. Make me happy some time with a kind visit: it will make me glad and help to cheer my afflicted heart. A thousand thanks for all that you and your family have done for my sake and for my family.

I trust your esteemed father is keeping well. I will be very glad to have news of him. In that case, may I remind you of your promise.

Volunnia and lady Clelia were very glad to have news of you. They send you their warm wishes and commend themselves to your Prayer.

Don't forget to pay my respects to the whole of your Family especially your esteemed father. Tell him that I wish

him good health and a long life filled with all blessings for both soul and body. My mother and Camilla send you and all your family their sincere wishes and thanks.

Thank God we had a very good journey. We kept saying: if our good Regina had come with us, she would not have got scared.

Commend me to God, for charity's sake. My need is extremely great. Remember now and then my dear father, too. Pray once in a while for the repose of his soul: I will be very grateful to you if you do.

May the company of all the Saints urge us to become Saints. Goodbye. A thousand wishes to Teresina and to your Secretary. Commend me to the Prayer of both of them. Hail to Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, for ever and ever.

Lovere, 30 November 1831.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Lady

REGINA TAERI

BRESCIA.

YEAR 1832

Letter 229

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She forwards Conte Passi's letter in favour of the Institute - She wishes him good health.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Reverend Father Confessor,

I trust this letter will anticipate a holy delight awaiting you. On entering the house I found Rev. Conte Passi's letter covering the one I am enclosing herewith. I read it and re-read it over and over again. As I interpreted it very much in favour of our own plans, it made me so happy that the burden of my misery was gone, it seemed to me, and I was simply overwhelmed. Our Parish Priest wept with comfort when he read the letter, and said: "*We would like to undo, but the Lord wants the Enterprise*".

Catterina is very happy. With all our heart let us bless the Lord. I am sending it to you at once because I should like to recommend to you not to work too hard, so that you may spare yourself the energy you will need to go to Bergamo where you will also be able to settle a few matters relating to our Institute.

Your dear ones at home are all keeping well. They were very happy to have news of you and receive your message; they also gave me a letter that I am enclosing with mine. I was deeply touched by your Angelina. As soon as she saw me coming she began to clap her hands with joy and in four rapid steps she crossed the road, ran up to me and hung to my neck; then she blushed and did not know how to explain her gladness. What a lovely heart she has! If she consecrates herself totally to the Lord, I am sure she will love Him immensely.

We are eagerly looking forward to having you back. May the Lord give you new strength to use for Him. I ask you to bless me while I call on you every grace from Heaven. Humbly paying my respects to you, and thanking you.

Love, 1st March 1832.

Your devoted Spiritual Daughter
The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary.
B.C.

very urgent - recorded-delivery (letter)

To Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

Zealous Preacher of holy Mission

at St Peter's Seminary

BRESCIA.

Letter 230

TO THE SAME

She tries to dissuade him from abandoning Lovere.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

I am at a loss how to start this letter. I wish I could silence my self-love and give utterance to Jesus whom I have ardently called upon.

To my dismay I first heard and then read in your esteemed letter of the strange commitment you have undertaken¹ ... What a misfortune for our town! ... But I must also say it: it serves me right.

A few moments ago I met our Reverend Parish priest (dear Father of our souls and the one God meant to be our Superior); he handed me the letter enclosed, and told me to send it to you as soon as possible, and in his goodness of heart he read it out to me as well. He is very prudent in what he writes, but you should have seen and heard him; he made

¹ He was designated Rector of the Seminary of Brescia, but the plan was later given up.

a pitiful sight. With tears in his eyes he said that he had received you, Rev. Father, from the Bishop and no one could take you away. He added that you are his God-given support in his old age and did not know how to manage without you. Then he said: "I will do what I can, but without someone to help me I will leave the Parish to anyone who wants it; God does not expect miracles, etc. etc..."

He said countless other things which I don't want to repeat to you, but which moved even stones to pity. I cannot understand how you, Rev. Father, could accept such an appointment when you know the critical circumstances of our town, for whose good God seems to have purposely made you best fitted. And if our beloved late Bishop, with all the desire he had to have you close to him¹ and had found you promising for various posts yet on coming to know the needs here and what you could do if you stayed here, what you were doing, etc. not only gave you up but also used to say that he was happy to have you here and wanted you to remain here, why now, without a real command from your Superior, do you accept a proposal to the detriment of a whole population? ... Is it perhaps charity to do harm to one in order to do good to another?...

As to our project, the work of the Lord, you can be sure it will go up in smoke, because no one will dare undertake such great works without any support, and if it were taken lightly it would do harm rather than good. In short, I will not say anything else. I suppose this is a punishment, and I really deserve it, and

¹ As his Secretary.

I have already given it up in sacrifice. But God is good; we shall pray so hard that he will give in to our request. You too listen to Him, and consider that it is not by chance that you were born in Lovere. It must be the means you have to use to attain to Heaven; it is the field of your labour.

May God speak to your heart and make you discern His will. I do hope He will be gracious to our prayers. The good Catterina is utterly dismayed and she is already withdrawing if you don't come where you belong. I sincerely pay my respects to you.

I am not telling you anything about those at your home, because they made an extremely pitiful sight, and you must already be finding it hard in that respect. Thank you for the charity you showed me by the exemption you granted me. I am in a nasty mess myself: here with a broken health, not in a state to join a Convent (had I gone at the proper time I would be there by now), deprived of all hope of being able to do what I yearned for so much. My God, help me, I beg of you. ...

May the Blessed Virgin Mary help us. May we find strength in her our Refuge. I ask you to bless me. Volunnia sends you her sincere regards.

Lovere, 7 March 1832.

Your devoted and humble Daughter in J. Christ

BORT. CAPIT. Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

(Very urgent)

To Very Reverend

DON ANGELO BOSIO

at Peter's Seminary

BRESCIA.

Letter 231

TO THE SAME

She takes back what she had written previously with the aim of dissuading him from accepting the appointment as Rector of the Seminary - She accepts God's will.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

To withdraw what I wrote in my last letter and to lay my conscience at rest, allow me to write a few lines more. I beg you to take them from where they come without paying any heed to them, because I am writing for myself, not for You.

I assure you that my heart now reacts in quite a different way from the manner in which I wrote to you; it seems very clear to me that God's will is that you be Rector, at Brescia, of His future Priests, and I feel within myself this strength to such an extent that if I had found myself in your circumstances I would not have done even what you did to discern His will.

However, I am not sorry: I mean to say, I have no remorse for what I did and said to dissuade you, because I don't think I offend God's goodness in using every human means to keep an instrument the Lord made use of to do so much good among a whole population.

You yourself, I think, can carry out God's will with a greater peace of mind when all efforts have been made to know it clearly. I confess to you that even in the midst of my anxiety I have never in this matter made any other prayer to the Lord than this: «Grant, Lord, that the interests of your glory be above all our interests and that your will be done, at any cost». Wipe away all tears from your eyes, then; the Crucified Lord will give you the strength to overcome all obstacles.

In your new commitment you will become a great saint; you will experience the peace of heart that God grants to those who overcome all obstacles for His sake and by God's grace you will make of your Seminarians true Ministers of the Lord. God will provide also for Lovere; we too shall profit from your charity. Let the Institute spring from the denial of our will; it will be more firmly established in that way. I foresee that I will suffer, but I greatly deserve it, and I am glad.

As far as I am concerned, I assure you that from the start I had offered it in sacrifice and I realize that for my soul it is a token of mercy.

I am unable to rid myself of my self-love and pride and for a year or so I have been ardently praying that the Lord may let something happen to set me free from it. Now that He is doing just that, thanks be to Him.

However, I commend myself to your charity more earnestly than ever, and I beg you to keep doing so till death. With God's assistance I have resolved to respond to Him more fully. I feel that I have been negligent in the service of God.

I have resolved to devote myself with all my strength especially in the holy exercise of charity; as long as I have breath in me, I want to use it for the good of others. Shake me and help me in this, for I need it very badly. If you can please return to me the vow of charity, I think it will do me good.

Tomorrow, if I don't have to go to Sellere, I hope to come for Confession; otherwise I will do so on Friday, if I may. I am sending you a letter that was sent to me a few days ago. I cannot keep from you a thought that my natural will prompts to me: Who knows if the Lord accepts your entire sacrifice and some unexpected thing happens which will bring you back to your town? ... Well, may God's will be done. I shall keep all complaints for Him alone, when I have no more fear of deceiving myself. At this moment: *Your will be done* from my heart.

I beg you kindly to forgive my excessive boldness. Recommend me to the Lord and bless me. With grateful thanks, I am

Just now, 14 March (1832).

Yours devoted Daughter and Servant

BORT. Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 232

TO REGINA TAERI

Sound advice and comfort in trials.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Beloved Sister and Friend,

Love, 22 March 1832.

I can understand what you are going through. My sincere affection for you makes me share all the more in its bitterness, and the very thought of the situation you are in is painful to me as well. But ... God visits the righteous and to those he loves best he gives the gift of suffering. Dear Regina, in the midst of your afflictions be comforted because you have a clear sign of being very precious in God's sight. Till now our Lord has treated you almost as a child, feeding you with the milk of his consolations. Now he is treating you as his faithful Bride, letting you share in his Cross. A '*Fiat*' - Your will be done - uttered at this moment is worth much more than all the prayers you could say when everything was going on smoothly. Don't be alarmed, however, if human nature moans under the burden of afflictions, for it needs to take its course. Suppressing our feelings unduly may cause harm to our health, and make the pain still worse. God does not expect us to suppress our

nature but to conform our will firmly to His most holy Will. In all simplicity I assure you that if I could do the least little thing to make you feel better, I would be extremely happy. His Reverence your brother promised to bring you here in Spring. The climate of our hills may suit your health, who knows: it may help lift your spirits as well... I am looking forward to your coming so much that I am counting the days that still remain. ... Last time I came to Brescia I was extremely sorry to do without coming to see you and to greet all your family; but I just could not gather the courage to come forward: your Brother reproached me for it and I cannot even excuse myself for it, because if you had done the same thing with me, I would have felt very sorry about it. Forgive me. Another time I will not do like that. In fact, I will tire you out till you will have to drive me away from your house. Please give me news how you and your brother, Signor Giovanni, are keeping in health, as I heard he has been ill. Every time you let me know how you are keeping, I promise I will repay you by recommending you to the Lord through many good people. My family send their best wishes to you and all your family. Kindly give my sincere regards to your Reverend Brother and your Mother. Goodbye. May the Cross of Jesus be our comfort.

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

B.C.

Letter 233

TO ANGELO FERRARI

She returns a favour.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

I am returning the umbrella, with thanks. I trust you will excuse the liberty I take in paying back the money you lent me. We have had a safe crossing, and your Santina arrived here cheerful and happy.

I hope you don't mind if I make bold to send you a small '*soppressa*'¹. With best regards in the name of all my family, I am

Love, 26 April 1832.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Respectable Dear Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO.

¹ '*Soppressa*' is a good quality of salami.

Letter 234

TO THE SAME

*She gives news of his daughter - She sends him Santina's needlework -
Thanks for gifts received.*

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

Our dear Santina received the pillow-cases and the towel, which she is now sending you back with her embroidery on them. She is ever so attentive to her study, receptive and obedient, becoming dearer to us day by day. She is keeping very well and is happy to stay on. She sends to you, to her mother, grandfather and aunt a thousand kisses and wishes. The sooner you come to see her the happier we and she herself will be.

We are overwhelmed by the endless trouble you are taking for our sake. We thank you for the lovely cauliflower you sent us and for all the other gifts; but please don't be so lavish any more, for we don't think we are deserving of so much bounty. All at home send you and your wife their warm regards. With deep esteem, I am

(1832).

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Respectable Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO.

Letter 235

TO THE SAME

On the good behaviour of his daughter, etc.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

I am sending you the shirt with Santina's embroidery on it, with the sample you had sent us long ago. She is now waiting for further orders. She has always been healthy, cheerful, happy and obedient. She is making steady progress in her studies and applies herself gladly to it. She sends to all of you a thousand wishes and a hundred kisses.

On our part we pay our respects to you all. We should like to know if you have sent our cloak, because it has not reached us yet.

Kindly deliver the letter enclosed to the addressee. We are looking forward to meeting your wife and Santina's aunt.

With profound respect, I am

Love, 22 May (1832)

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO.

(parcel attached)

Letter 236

TO THE SAME

She informs him of his daughter's sickness.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

Love, 25 May (1832).

I feel it is my duty to tell you something that may perhaps sadden you. As there kept appearing one kind of rash on Santina's hands and feet, we took her to a Surgeon, and he fears it may be scabies.

We cannot think where she could have caught it, for we are all immune to it and the girls who do needlework with her are perfectly free of it.

We are at a loss; we are sorry to inform you that your daughter has contracted this disease; on the other hand we cannot afford to keep quiet about it as we cannot make the girl understand that she has to remain apart from her companions. Besides, we cannot take the risk of applying any ointment, fearing lest you be not pleased.

I therefore beg you kindly to come yourself or send your Wife so that we may together see what is the best thing to do.

We are very sorry and embarrassed, but we really don't know how she got it. I hope she will soon get rid of it.

For the rest she is perfectly healthy and is always well-behaved. With sincere regards to you, I sign in haste

Yours faithful Servant
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Santina liked the cherries very much, and we thank you for them.

Letter 237

TO THE SAME

Wishing a speedy recovery of his daughter - She places a few orders.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

We were very glad to have news of Santina, all the more so as they were good news: that she is getting better. We should like her to get cured soon and perfectly well, because we very much wish her to be back among us, but we must bear to miss her till she has recovered completely, lest we should again put you to trouble, and ourselves be sorry to see her again going away. Please give her our warm wishes and give her a kiss for us. When she comes back we hope to see, without fail, also Lady Domenica and Aunt Margherita.

If you don't mind the trouble, kindly buy for us four young hens, the best you can find. For this purpose we are sending you 4 Svanziche¹. If they cost more, kindly pay the extra money and tell us so that we may refund it. Sorry for the trouble.

Hoping to have good news again soon, I pay my respects to you in the name of all at home.

Love, 3 June 1832.

Yours faithful Servant
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister
ANGELO FERRARI
(with 4 Zwanzigs) ISEO.

¹ See footnote pg 29.

Letter 238

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She proposes a new self-offering to God and consults him on her Annual Confession.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

For some time now I have been having an inner urge to make the self-offering enclosed. On Pentecost day I felt it even more strongly, and so I beg you to go through it and if you approve of it I should like to do it on the Feast of *Corpus Christi*; it is also the feast day of my St Aloysius.

I am enclosing a small offering with the request that you say a Mass in honour of St Aloysius for all his devotees. I would be glad if you can do it on his feast day, but if it is not possible, say it when you like; but please pray hard to this dear Saint for all the girls, so that not a single one may go astray.

With regard to my annual Confession, of which I spoke to you the other day, allow me to point out a few things. It will certainly do no harm to my health, and I would feel rather sorry to put it off: I would feel like doing a wrong to God. On the other hand, due to the little time and less eagerness I have

to examine myself, and even more especially the confused state in which my mind has been for some time, my thoughts are all in a muddle even for the usual weekly Confession. All this makes me think it would do me no good.

In any case I will abide by what you tell me. I don't want to do it nor leave it unless it be in obedience.

I earnestly commend myself to your charity, and to your Prayer.

With profound reverence

Love, 18 June 1832.

Yours devoted Daughter

CAP. BORT. Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

to be delivered in his hands

Letter 239

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

She announces the death of a fellow member believed to be already in Heaven - Start of the Institute very near.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY AND THE LOVEABLE GONZAGA WITH THEM

Beloved Sister,

I am breaking our long silence with some comforting news. Our saintly fellow member, the Capuchin Sr. Livia Astori, passed away from this earth to Heaven during the night of *Corpus Domini* and the feast of St Aloysius. I do not mention so many particulars concerning this saintly Soul, because you know them already. I can only assure you of my belief that she went straight to Heaven. Please pass on the news to your fellow members, and recommend the usual suffrages for her, even if she does not need them. Encourage them to keep it up, all the more so since we see that God is building up our Union so well in Heaven. Pray much, really much for me. Here, the Institute will soon be starting. The Lord is blessing it with extraordinary graces. Pray that He may continue to do so. May the Cross of Christ be our sweet comfort. At its feet I leave you, and there I intend to find you again day by day. With a loving embrace

Love, 23 June 1832.

Your loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA Handmaid of JESUS and of MARY

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA SIGISMONDI DARFO.

DARFO.

Letter 240

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She apologizes - She recommends prayers for a Union member recently departed - She hopes the Institute will start soon.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 21 June¹ 1832.

I am at last breaking my silence. Forgive me, dearest. In my laziness I never find time to fulfil my duties. I received several letters from you, all of which I have deeply appreciated. I found in them some tasks you set me and I am not sure if I have attended to all of them. If there is something you are expecting from me, kindly write to me again what I have to do because I can't remember anything else. I communicate to you the death, or rather the happy transit into Heaven, of our fellow member, the Capuchin nun, during the night before the Feast of *Corpus Domini* and of St Aloysius. God is establishing our Pious Union very well in Heaven. In that way He encourages us to imitate the examples of those who are reserving a place for us in Heaven. I recommend the usual suffrages to you and to the other Members for our virtuous departed one.

¹ 27 June, according Original.

God is favouring our Institute with exceptional graces, and it is making fast-and-steady progress. I hope to start the New Year in the Lord's fold. Recommend me to God, and believe me to be

Your loving Sister

BORT. the Handmaid of JESUS and of MARY

No. 3 Notebooks Penny 13 each one	lire 1.19
1 notebook (large size)	0.18
1 book on the month of May	0.15

Letter 241

TO ANGELO FERRARI

She asks him to come with his daughter ahead of day fixed.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

I was delighted to hear that on Sunday you intend to bring our dear Santina back to us. I should like to ask you to give us that pleasure a day ahead of that, that is, tomorrow, Saturday, because I wish her to enjoy the feast of St Anthony, which will be celebrated on Sunday. Your wife and aunt Margherita will not fail to come with you, I hope: that is what you promised.

My mother and sister pay their sincere respects to you. Meanwhile, in all haste, I give you my best regards.

Love, 13 July 1832.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister
ANGELO FERRARI
ISEO.

Letter 242

TO THE SAME

She thanks him for fruit sent to her - She gives good news of his daughter.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

We have received the choice fruit you graciously sent us and we enjoyed it as a token of your love. We warmly thank you for it.

Your Santina is very dear to us. She is always well-behaved, receptive, obedient and attentive, all of which makes us hope in a very good success. There is no trace of the disease and I do hope by God's grace that she will not give us any cause for anxiety. She enjoys perfect health. She is also very cheerful, and fills our day with joy. She sends you wishes and kisses, extending them to her mother, grandfather and aunt. *She tells me to remind you to give something to 'eat' to Our Lady of Sorrows.*

My dear ones pay their respects to you and to your wife. With sincere esteem I have the honour to be

Love, 22 July 1832.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

(with a basket ...) ISEO.

Letter 243

TO THE SAME

She gives news and places orders.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

This is a hurried greeting, on behalf of your daughter as well. She has always been well and behaving still better. I am sending you 6 Svanziche¹, with the request to obtain for me some cockerels, the best ones you can find.

Sorry to trouble you. Best regards from my family.

Lovere, 30 July 1832.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

(with 6 Zwanzigs)

ISEO.

¹ See footnote pg 29.

Letter 244

TO THE SAME

She inquires after his wife's health.

Dear Mr Ferrari,

We were alarmed to hear some vague news that your esteemed Wife is seriously ill. Lady Laorina is also very anxious because she does not know exactly how she is. I therefore earnestly request you, if it is not too much of a trouble, to write a couple of lines to give us precise information about her illness. On my part I assure you that your Santina does not know anything, nor will she be told. She is quiet, calm and healthy. She is sending a thousand wishes and kisses to you and all her loved ones.

Lady Laorina sends you and her Sister her warm wishes, and wants you to know that she herself is keeping very well. I shall be anxiously waiting for news of your wife. With best regards also on behalf of my family, I have the honour to be

Love, 9 August 1832.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Mister
ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO.

Letter 245

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She recommends initiatives for girls and suffrages for her father.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Will you kindly say your Holy Mass, tomorrow, in honour of St Rosa, Patron Saint of my Sodality Group. You can celebrate it when and where you like because the Members of my group are all peasant girls and so it is not possible to have them come together all at the same hour.

I heartily thank you for so much charity, both spiritual and material, that you lavish on our Oratorio¹. I thank you in particular for all the trouble you took for the preparation of the garment of our statue of Mary. We cannot repay you except with some *Hail Marys*, praying Mary to reward you in her usual gracious way.

I recommend to you our Day of Recollection and our function.

¹ See footnote pg 55.

Among those recommended at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, I beg you for charity's sake to have the soul of my poor father, who must be in great need of it.

I commend myself to your Prayer. May the Lord grant that I remain gladly at the foot of the Cross and teach me to love Him truly through suffering.

With profound reverence and grateful thanks.

Just now, 1st September 1832

Yours devoted humble Daughter in J. C.

BORTOLAMEA, Handmaid of JESUS and MARY

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 246

TO REGINA TAERI

She comforts her in her sorrows - She invites her to Love, etc.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister,

Your esteemed good Brother has been telling me of the various happenings that have saddened your family and you most of all. I was grieved to hear of it and I would have been only too glad to be of some comfort to you. But God who disposes everything in wisdom has strengthened your spirit with heroic constancy sufficient to bear such painful trials. It is evident that God loves you in a very special way and that you are precious in his sight, and most beloved. In the midst of your suffering let your heart be glad and have trust, knowing that a rich reward has been prepared for you.

Your brother Antonio has really improved in health. The mountain climate agrees with him, and I do hope it will do good to you as well. And so, the early days of October without fail I will come over to you with my mother to fetch you, but mind you, don't let me make the journey for nothing, because I am coming just for you.

I have one big favour to ask: please procure for me about 15 yards of wire to be used as a discipline (penance chain), like the one you had made them do for me last time: when I come to you, I will pay off my debt.

Forgive me the liberty I am taking. I commend myself to your Prayer.

Give my best regards to all at home, especially your esteemed Mother.

Looking forward eagerly to seeing you

Love, 18 September 1832.

Your Very loving Sister
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Esteemed Lady

REGINA TAERI

To be delivered in her hands

Letter 247

TO ANGELO FERRARI

She thanks him and makes her apologies to him.

Dear Mr. Ferrari,

Love, 4 October 1832.

I am returning your three chairs and the umbrella, with many thanks. I am highly obliged to you for your kindness, and your courtesy puts me to shame. I can only thank you most heartily. Will you please send with a trustworthy person the letter enclosed, recommending that it be delivered immediately, because it is very urgent.

I am sorry I could not bring your dear Santina with me here. Don't mind the way things have turned out. I expect to have her back soon.

My sincere regards to your esteemed wife and warm wishes to Santina. Kindly send me back the two cloaks I forgot there. With deep esteem.

Yours faithful Servant

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Respectable Dear Mister

ANGELO FERRARI

ISEO

Urgent, please

Letter 248

TO A FRIEND

Concern for her friend - She encourages her to bear suffering.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 22 September 1832.

I sincerely care for you, nor can I ever forget you. Since the last time that God put your patience to the test, I have had no further news of you. Perhaps you have been severely reprimanded. However, remember that we never serve the Lord so well as when we suffer something for his sake. Let your self-love protest if it must, you have only to be generous and tread it underfoot. Be firm, my dear, have courage; the path to Heaven is thorny, narrow and hard to go by, but we must walk along it with firmness, otherwise we may easily lose heart.

Remember that you have made great promises to the Lord, and you have to keep them at the cost of much suffering. Lovingly kiss the left hand of Jesus who is striking you, and keep in mind that you have to remain faithful to him, cost what it may.

Frequently call to mind the saying of the Servant of God, Fr Paolo Cafaro: «We must suffer, sweat, labour and tire ourselves out to become Saints».

I hope to see you soon. Ask permission for it humbly, beg for it, and you will get it. I recommend to you Holy Communion and Prayer. Remember that you have now to be more careful in fulfilling your duties. Recommend me to God in your prayers, I beg of you, this week especially. I leave you at the feet of the Crucified Lord, that you may become a Saint.

Goodbye.

Your loving Sister

BORT. CAPIT.

Letter 249

TO HER SISTER

She announces her departure from home - She entrusts their Mother to her care.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Most Gentle and Dear Sister,

Please hand the enclosed letter to our dear Mamma yourself. From it you will come to know the date fixed for my sacrifice. Dear Sister, offer it with me, you too, and let us beg God to accept it graciously. It costs me very, very much that I have to go away and leave you: you know how dearly I love you ... But ... God is Lord of all ... Try to be comforted yourself and at the same time to comfort our good, afflicted Mother. Your sorrow is the greatest distress that weighs on my own heart ...

I would have a thousand things to tell you, but tears and sorrow choke every word I could say ... Forgive me the many times I hurt you. I assure you that I cherish in my heart all the good you have done me, and I will be grateful to you for it before God.

Remember that I expect you to avail yourself of my help in any service I can render you, for I will always be at your service. If you do, I will know how much you love me. Once

again I entrust Mamma to your care; do on my behalf what I would have done for Her. She deserves all the good done to her. Look after Grandma. Remember also the good Flaminia. Let her stay in my place.

I beg you to remember me in your Prayer. With a thousand kisses, I leave you at the foot of the Cross to become a Saint.

Just now, 16 November (1832).

Your affectionate and grateful Sister

BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Miss

CAMILLA CAPITANIO

To be delivered in her hands

Letter 250

TO HER MOTHER

She takes leave of her Mother with reassuring expressions of love.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearest and most beloved Mother,

Impelled by duty and to my own sorrow, I am about to take a step that is very painful to me and that will also bring sorrow to your heart. My Superiors have decided that next Monday I should open the School in the building that has been chosen, and that on Wednesday I should go to live there with my companions. The aim is to start the Institute for which they are working so hard, in the hope that it will bear beneficial fruit for the good of society. Though I know that this news will inflict a fresh wound in your heart because of the love you have for me, and that by telling you ahead of time I am only anticipating your sorrow, yet out of respect and obedience that I owe you, I am communicating it to you before telling anybody else, with the request that you accompany me with your holy blessing. I need not tell you how hard it is for me to offer in sacrifice a Mother to whom I owe so much or rather, to whom, next to God, I owe my whole self. Your sorrow weighs heavily on my

heart; it is so grievous that without God's help I would be unable to overcome it. I assure you that had I not clearly understood that my vocation is truly willed by God, I would not take this step for all the gold of the world. However, God is the Lord of all; let us offer Him this sacrifice, Mother dear: you of a Daughter you have always loved so much and I of a Mother for whom I profess love, respect and the utmost veneration. Our sacrifice will be pleasing to Him, and one day he will reward us for it.

With my whole heart and with tears in my eyes I humbly beg you to forgive me so much sorrow I inflicted on your heart, so many times I displeased you and disobeyed you. Forgive me everything and think of me kindly, always. With my whole being I thank you for so much care and the incalculable good you have done to me. My heart throbs with warm gratitude which I wish I could express to you even if it meant offering my life-blood as a rendering of thanks to you. However, remember that I will not cease to be yours; I assure you that you will be doing me a very special favour every time you avail yourself of my help, in whatever I can please you.

May you be comforted by the thought that though our separation will be painful, yet our reunion in Heaven will be much more joyous, and we shall bless the sacrifice that won for us such a great reward from God.

Concerning Santina, if she is dear to you, and you don't mind the trouble, you could keep her at home and let her come to School.

But if you find it too difficult to keep her, we shall keep her at the Place¹ all the time. Just do about it as you prefer.

I would need a bed by Wednesday evening. I beg you to give me one, whichever you like. If you are happy about it, I will ask someone to carry the School desks and the two benches to the Place.

May Jesus and Mary be your comfort. My dear sister will be there to cheer you. Once again I implore your Blessing and the help of your Prayer for me; with a thousand loving kisses, I profess the privilege of being

Just now, 16 November (1832).

Your loving, devoted and humble Daughter

BORTOLAMEA

¹ The new Institute building.

Letter 251

TO SR. FRANCESCA PARPANI

Her happiness in her new state-of-life - She exhorts her not to drop Holy Communion out of fear of her faults.

HAIL TO JESUS

AND HIS MOST ADORABLE WILL

Most beloved Mother Mistress,

I am sure you have prayed for me, and since I am very much obliged to you, I cannot let two days pass without writing to you. I am very happy to be in the Lord's Sheepfold. Though he has permitted things to happen in such a way that I am quite alone these first days here, yet the company of my God and of my dear Mamma Mary is all the more keenly felt as a sweet and gentle presence. They are helping me in a way that can be expected of them! I have no fear because I am in the hands of God who loves me as a Father. I am incapable of even the slightest good work, but he can do all things in me, and I surrender myself entirely to him. Continue to pray for me, I beg of you. I am in great need of your prayers, for these are moments of struggle and of pain.

Dear Mother Mistress, Heaven is beautiful beyond compare; we must gain it by sheer suffering; Saints are fashioned through their cross. Take heart. Let us endure

everything for the sake of a most deserving God. Abandon yourself totally to Him, for He is a really good Father. In the Lord's name I tell you that you wrong Him if you again omit Holy Communion when you are aware of defects in yourself. Instead, approach him with greater trust because he is more obliged to be compassionate and kind to you.

Forgive me if I am too bold. For charity's sake, help me. A line from you would make me extremely glad. I deeply revere you. We shall meet at the foot of the Cross. Say an *Agimus*¹ to God on my behalf.

Lovere, 22 November (1832).

Your grateful, loving Pupil

CAP. BORT.

To Very Reverend Mother
MOTHER FRANCESCA P ARPANI
at St Clare's Convent.

¹ *We give you thanks...*

Letter 252

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She begs him to celebrate a Mass - She advises him to hold on firmly to the drawing up of a contract.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

Our memory failed us on Christmas Day: we did not ask you, as we usually do, to offer a Mass for both of us. We don't want to lose the habit, however, and so we would like you to offer it for our intention on New Year's Day. Tell the Lord whatever you wish on our behalf, for our needs have redoubled. Let me say just a word about our Chapel. I entreat you with all my heart to hold on steadfastly and see to it that the contract be drawn up. Don't expect a further word from Catterina, but you can be sure that she will in fact do much more than what she says. The obstacles we are coming up against in this undertaking make us sure that it will be of great benefit to many. And so, take your courage in both hands and do all that is possible to succeed. You must hold on to the principle that you, Reverend Father, are continually repeating to us: «Trials are necessary for the surer success of the most perfect enterprises».

Be sure, besides, that you are not taking a hasty step, because I myself know that Catterina is free to make use of certain resources. It is only her excessive shy that makes her have doubts. Have patience with me and forgive the excessive liberty that I take. For charity's sake, commend me to the Lord.

May Baby Jesus forgive my sins and burn out what in us is not His; may he truly be our absolute Lord. With humble respect and profound reverence.

Just now, 28 December (1832).

Your grateful Daughter

BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

YEAR 1833

Letter 253

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

She sends her a book with the wish that she be wholly owned by the Lord.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY WILL

Dearest Sister,

I could not send you earlier the booklet you wish to have; I am sending it to you now. Please let me have it back as soon as you can, because it is the only copy I have.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. You know already the need I am in.

I wish to see you wholly owned by the Lord; work hard for Him who has reserved for you an everlasting reward. Give my wishes to Canossi, my best regards to those at your own home and to Fr. Guarinoni, who paid me a very welcome visit.

I am ever close to you in the Name of the Lord.

Love, 31 January 1833.

Yours loving Sister

BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Lady

MARIANNA VERTOVA

MALEGNO.

Letter 254

TO A FRIEND

News of her new state of religious life - In practice she finds it a real death to self.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY WILL

Beloved Friend and Sister,

Love, 31 January 1833.

I am breaking our long silence at last. I have been through so many happenings, my dear, and now I finally find myself in the Lord's Sheepfold, as you must have come to know by now. My heart rejoices at it, and every day I feel happier and happier. I cannot say, however, that my desires have been totally fulfilled, because in this place where I am with two companions, one as a housemaid and the other as a Sister, but who one day will be my Superior, there is no precise plan at all, no Rule, no method; at the moment we even have to leave the house to go to Church. However, everything is based on charity and obedience; everything is done in an orderly manner, and little by little we are settling down. We do hope that what we have in mind will soon be firmly established.

To be quite frank with you, I have always thought of religious life as a real death to self. In actual fact I find it even more truly so.

With no right to manage your own life, you must always comply with the ways of others, adapt yourself in everything to others, trample self-love underfoot, forget yourself for love's sake, keep silent, bear patiently and look cheerful, and have no bent even for the holiest things the moment it does not fit in with the duties of your state, in short, to be as good as dead to everything so as to live of Jesus Christ alone and of his most Holy Will. It is a truly crucified life. But oh! How sweet it is made by our loveable Spouse who graciously accepts the sacrifices of his Handmaids! I would not change it for all other joys, by which I mean not merely those of the world but even spiritual consolations, because what makes me perfectly happy is the certainty that I am doing the Will of God. Kindly commend me to the Lord, and beg him to let me die rather than be an obstacle to his work.

Please do drop me a couple of lines. Your friendship is something that I cherish, and if you happen to be passing round here, a visit from you would give me much joy.

Give my wishes to Chiodi. Let us love our beloved Jesus who is wholly ours for love's sake, and let us bear gladly what he sends us. Heaven awaits us; let us have courage in our suffering, for up there we shall be happy for all eternity. With all my heart, Goodbye.

Your ever loving Sister
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 255

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She encloses an offering for a Mass - She dissuades him from conducting the Spiritual Exercises at the Canossians' and tells him to look after his health - She comforts him in the Heart of Jesus.

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

I am enclosing a small offering for the Mass celebrated in our Oratorio¹, with my thanks. Allow me to tell you one thing: though a hundred times I said to myself that I would not speak to you about it, yet I just can't keep quiet and say nothing. It seems to me that, considering your poor health, the Lord does not want you to conduct the Spiritual Exercises at the Canossians' House. I earnestly urge you to withdraw your engagement with the Nuns so that they may have the time to engage another preacher, because they are counting on your promise and they will be greatly upset if, later on, you are unable to keep your word.

I heartily entreat you to have a little more care of your health; remember you do not own yourself, but should keep well for the benefit of your neighbour, for such is the obligation of your state-in-life. Apply to yourself what you so kindly suggest to others: «The Lord's Ass must be well looked-after if

¹ See footnote pg 55.

it has to have the strength to carry its burden». You would be doing a real wrong to Our Lord, who with so much charity commands you to look after your health, if you don't allow yourself that much. Do all that is possible to rid your heart of all dejection; hand over to the Divine Heart everything that weighs heavily on your mind and you will see how in that Source you will find once more the best reason for remaining cheerful.

I earnestly commend myself to your Prayer. I wish you all that is good. Forgive me for taking so much liberty. Ever devotedly and gratefully

From the beloved House of Charity
11 February (1833).

Yours devoted and humble Daughter
The Unworthy Bride of Jesus Christ
B.C.

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

Letter 256

TO THE SAME

She wishes him to clear a misunderstanding with Gerosa over some construction work in the new house - She refers to a picture of St Vincent de Paul given her by L. Cismondi.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY WILL

Very Reverend Father,

Allow me to trouble you with a few lines. I am a bit worried over yesterday's misunderstanding regarding the gate and wall meant to be erected around the playground etc. I was to blame for the misunderstanding because Catterina had warmly recommended me, yesterday morning, to tell you to come and see and she had ordered the masons not to do anything before she had consulted you.

I told you about it in a casual sort of way and so, thinking that the matter was not so urgent, you were late in coming, and Catterina, not to leave the labourers idle, told them to start, believing you would agree to it; she was upset and anxious when she realized that you, Rev Father, thought differently.

I suggest you take the earliest opportunity to speak to her and so hear how she feels about it, and I am sure you will find yourselves in perfect agreement.

In fact, taking it for granted that you, Rev. Father, sought what is best, Catterina had to support your intention and plans and she told the labourers to stop working till she agreed with you on what was to be done. It may be useful for you to know all this; excuse me if I am too bold.

I am very glad our dear Father Saint Vincent de Paul has come to our house, though we neither sought him nor even thought of having him. He made up for our negligence because Lucia Cismondi presented us with his picture. We like it more than we can say. We conclude from this that he cares for us and that from now on he wants to be the Patron Saint of our House, and so he will also be its Protector, Founder and Advocate. Please come soon to see it. I am sure you will be pleased with it.

For charity's sake commend me, in my poverty, to the Lord; entreat Him to have pity on me. I wish and pray that God may accompany with his blessing the plans you have formed for his glory and that he may make of you a great Saint.

With deep reverence

Lovere, 10 March (1833).

Yours faithfully Daughter

B. C. Handmaid of JESUS CHRIST

UNDATED LETTERS
written between 1824 and 1833

Letter 257

TO MARTA ANDREOLI
Condolence to a young girl.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sister and Friend,

Love, 9 April.

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

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

Your loving Friend

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

To Dear Young woman

MARTA ANDREOLI

PIAZZE D'ARTOGNE.

¹ "Your will be done".

Letter 258

TO VOLUNNIA BANZOLINI

She encloses devotional practices for the Novena of the Purification.

Dearly beloved Sister,

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

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

To esteemed Lady

VOLUNNIA BANZOLINI

To be delivered in her hands CORTI.

NOVENA OF THE PURIFICATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

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

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

HAIL TO MARY

Letter 259

TO BARTOLOMEA N.

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

HAIL TO THE CRUCIFIED LOVE

Beloved Sister and Friend in Jesus Christ,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Letter 260

TO DON ANGELO BOSIO

She humbly asks various permissions.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Superior,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Letter 261

TO THE SAME

She begs effective humiliations.

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

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

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

Your humble and devoted Daughter in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA C.

Letter 262

TO THE SAME

She invites him to the Sodality of St Aloysius.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY WILL

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

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

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

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

Humbly imploring your Blessing I am

Yours faithful Servant and Daughter

BORTOLAMEA

Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and Mary

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 263

TO THE SAME

She comforts him when about to leave for Breno.

HAIL TO JESUS CRUCIFIED AND OUR LADY OF SORROWS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours faithful Daughter in Christ

CAP. BORTOLAMEA

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 264

TO THE SAME

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

HAIL TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours devoted Daughter in Christ

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 265

TO THE SAME

She proposes devotional practices for a fellow member.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

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

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

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

Yours poor Servant and Daughter in J.

BORTOLAMEA, unworthy Handmaid of Jesus

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 266

TO THE SAME

Trust in Maria Bambina - Complaints concerning St Aloysius.

HAIL TO THE HEAVENLY INFANT MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

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

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

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

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

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

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

To Very Reverend Father
DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 267

TO THE SAME

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

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

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

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

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

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

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

Yours faithful Servant and Daughter in J. C.

BORTOLAMEA CAPITANIO

Letter 268

TO THE SAME

She sends papers - invites him to a Sodality Meeting.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

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

I bow to you in reverence. I am

Just now.

Yours poor Servant and Daughter in J. Christ

BORTOLAMEA, the Handmaid of Jesus

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

Letter 269

TO THE SAME

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

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

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

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

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

Your devoted, grateful Daughter in J. C.

CAPITANIO B.

Letter 270

TO THE SAME

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

Very Reverend Father esteemed Confessor,

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

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

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

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

Very Reverend Father,

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

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

Letter 271

TO THE SAME

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

HAIL TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours faithful Daughter in J. C.

The Unworthy Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

Letter 272

TO THE SAME

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

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

My Revered Superior,

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

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

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

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

I ask you to bless me. I am.

Your poor, unworthy Daughter in J.

BORTOLAMEA, I wish I could say 'of Jesus'

Letter 273

TO THE SAME

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Very Reverend Father Confessor,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sunday, 21 January, during the night.

Your devoted and humble Spiritual Daughter

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 274

TO THE SAME

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

PRAISE BE TO GOD

Reverend Father Confessor,

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

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

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

From country of Sellere, 12 July.

Your devoted, grateful Daughter in J. C.

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Very Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands

LOVERE.

¹ See footnote pg 55.

Letter 275

TO THE SAME

She commends herself in occasion of her Spiritual Exercises.

HAIL TO MARY

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

With profound esteem

Just now, from Home, 18 September.

Yours lowly Servant and Daughter in J.C.

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary

To Esteemed Reverend Father

DON ANGELO BOSIO

To be delivered in his hands LOVERE

Letter 276

TO GIOVANNA BOSIO

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Friend and Sister,

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

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

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

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

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

Your loving Friend and Sister

CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To Esteemed Lady

GIOVANNA BOSIO

LOVERE.

Letter 277

TO MARIA CHIODI

Consolation in bearing the Cross.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND ST ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Most beloved Sister
in Jesus Christ,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 278

TO THE SAME

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

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

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

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

Your unworthy Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Miss

MARIA CHIODI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 279

TO THE SAME

Congratulations - She accepts a new pupil.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 19 February.

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

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

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

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

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and Mary

To Esteemed Miss

MARIA CHIODI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 280

TO THE SAME

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

HONOUR AND GLORY BE TO JESUS AND MARY

HAIL TO ST ALOYSIUS GONZAGA

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 14 June.

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

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

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

Your loving Sister
The Handmaid of Jesus and Mary

DRAWING OF LOTS FOR THE NOVENA OF ST ALOYSIUS

Vielmi – Union with God

Chiodi – Conformity to God's will

To Esteemed Miss

MARIA CHIODI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 281

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

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

PRAISE BE TO JESUS AND MARY

Sister most dear to my heart,

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

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

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

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

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

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

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

urgent, please

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONTI

To be delivered in her hands DARFO.

Letter 282

TO THE SAME

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearest Sister,

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

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

In all haste, let me end.

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 283

TO THE SAME

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

PRAISED BE JESUS AND MARY

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

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

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

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

Your loving, grateful Sister
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

Letter 284

TO THE SAME

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

Dearest Sister,

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

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

Love Jesus for me too. I am

Truly yours BORTOLAMEA

Letter 285

TO THE SAME

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister,

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

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed Lady
LUCIA CISONDI

DARFO.

Letter 286

TO THE SAME

She sends her the procedure for the Crowning of Mary.

MAY THE HOLY SPIRIT KINDLE HIS LOVE IN OUR HEARTS

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

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

To Esteemed Lady

LUCIA CISMONDI

BRENO.

Letter 287

TO THE SAME

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

Dearly beloved Sister,

Love, 8 October.

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

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

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

Your grateful, loving Sister

The Handmaid of Jesus and Mary

To Esteemed Lady
LUCIA CISMONDI

DARFO.

Letter 288

TO MARIA DÒ

Postscript to a letter of her sister.

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

Your loving Friend and Sister in J. Christ
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA

To very esteemed Lady

MARIA DÒ

MONTECCHIO.

Letter 289

TO CATERINA FERRI

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Sister and Friend,

Lovere, 24 April.

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

Your loving Friend

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To esteemed Lady

CATTERINA FERRI

CEDEGOLO.

Letter 290

TO CATERINA GEROSA

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

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

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

Your grateful, loving Sister
BORTOLAMEA, the Handmaid of Jesus

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

Letter 291

TO Sr. FRANCESCA PARPANI¹

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

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

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

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

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

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

Letter 292

TO THE SALARI SISTERS

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Dearly beloved Friends and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Love, 1st May.

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

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

so bold. Kindly commend me to God.

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

Your grateful, loving Friend
CAPITANIO BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To Esteemed sisters

SALARI SISTERS

CAPO DI PONTE.

Letter 293

TO LUCREZIA SINISTRÌ

She encourages her to resist self-love.

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Dearly beloved Sister in Jesus Christ,

Love, 22 November.

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

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

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

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

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

Urgent, please.

To esteemed Lady

LUCREZIA SINISTRÌ

to be delivered in her hands EDOLO.

Letter 294

TO DON ANGELO TAERI

She sends him a gift.

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

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

Ever glad to serve you

Urgent, please.

To esteemed Reverend Father

DON ANGELO TAERI

Bishop's Secretary

BRESCIA.

Letter 295

TO THE SAME

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND HIS MOST HOLY CROSS

Very Reverend Father,

Love, 28 March.

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

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

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

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

Yours faithful Servant

The Handmaid of Jesus and of Mary B.C.

DRAWING OF LOTS

Rev. Taeri – St John the Apostle

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

Letter 296

TO REGINA TAERI

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

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

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

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

great desire to know you and be with you.

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

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA, the Handmaid of Jesus

Letter 297

TO THE SAME

Thanks and errands.

HAIL TO JESUS, MARY AND DEAREST ST ALOYSIUS

Dearly beloved Sister,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To esteemed Lady

REGINA TAERI

in front of the Women's Hospital

BRESCIA.

Letter 298

TO THE SAME

Errands.

HAIL TO MARY

Dearly beloved Sister in the Lord,

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

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

Your poor Sister

BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

To esteemed Lady

REGINA TAERI

through Rev. Taeri, respected Bishop's Secretary

BRESCIA.

Letter 299

TO MARIANNA VERTOVA

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

HAIL TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS

My Dearest Sister,

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

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

¹ *Jesus burning with love.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Your grateful, loving Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

Letter 300

TO PIERINA VIELMI

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY

Most Gentle Sister, most dear to my heart,

Love, 8 October.

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

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

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

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

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

To esteemed Lady
PIERINA VIELMI

ARTOGNE.

Letter 301

TO LUCIA CISMONDI

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

HAIL TO JESUS AND MARY AND THE SPOTLESS ST ALOYSIUS

My most Gentle Sister,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Your poor Sister
BORTOLAMEA OF JESUS

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