

Gaspar del Bufalo

A Saint Scrutinizes a Saint

Deposition
of Venerable Giovanni Merlini
in the Ordinary Process of Albano
for the Beatification and Canonization
of Saint Gaspare del Bufalo

Founder of the Missionaries of the
Most Precious Blood

under the direction of

Beniamino Conti

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

In 1984 the Italian Province of the Society of the Precious Blood published a volume entitled *GASPARE DEL BUFALO* with the sub-title *UN SANTO SCRUTA UN SANTO* (A Saint scrutinizes a Saint). It is a volume of more than 700 pages containing the testimony of the Venerable John Merlini during the process in Albano for the beatification and canonization of Gaspar del Bufalo. The editing of this work was done by Father Beniamino Conti, presently the Provincial Director of the Italian Province serving his second term, who says in the introductory remarks to this volume that whenever he had "to consult the deposition of Father Giovanni Merlini ... he found it always to be thorough, precise and extremely interesting." This volume provides, as he points out, both the "oldest" and yet the "newest" biography of the Saint.

It cannot be doubted that Father Merlini was a most qualified witness since he spent seventeen years of his life working along-side Gaspar as Secretary General of the Congregation as well as his companion in the ministry. He studied the Saint's activities from the first moment when he "watched him from a window" as he was walking past the entrance to San Felice in Giano, to the ultimate moments of his life "when I watched him die with a peace, a quietness, a very great serenity and tranquility, as one who is just slowly falling asleep."

This volume incorporates, in the words of Father Merlini alone, his own personal experiences with the Saint, the reports that he gathered from other members of the Society, documents found in the General Archives, and, of course, a generous use of St. Gaspar's correspondence. The volume depicts not only the virtues of the Saint himself, but also the holiness of Merlini, who is making this scrutiny.

In one of his statements, Merlini observes that in his opinion, "God did not wish to grant to Gaspar an extraordinary type of sanctity, one that would arouse great fanfare and astonishment, but rather an example that would be able to be imitated by our group of ecclesiastical people" in the fulfillment of our ministries.

On different occasions, I was asked to bring this information to the members of the American Provinces, so that we could come to know our Founder better. Consequently, with each issue of the NEWSLETTER I hope to offer selections taken from this volume, and I leave it to the editor of the NEWSLETTER to select his own heading for the series.¹

There is no better way to initiate this project than by having the Venerable John Merlini introduce himself to us just as he did to the panel of judges at that process of Albano for the beatification and canonization of Gaspar.

Raymond Cera, C.P.P.S.

¹ The monthly publication of Merlini's testimony continued from 1/20/1989 until 10/ 1/ 2000, having published the first five chapters of this work, pp. 1 - 375) . The publication was suddenly discontinued without notice or explication, leaving Chapters 5-7 (pp. 376 - 707) not published. Subsequently the rest of this deposition has been translated into English, and is available on CD only.

PRELIMINARIES

The Witness

My name is Giovanni Merlini and I was born in Spoleto. I am around forty-seven years old. I am the son of Luigi Merlini and Antonia Claudi, both still living. I am a missionary father of the Congregation of the Most Precious Blood and, at present, the vice-general and general secretary of our beloved Society.

With the grace of God, I have always frequented the sacraments of confession and communion and I have not failed to fulfill, each year at the prescribed time, my Easter duty. I always ordinarily celebrate holy Mass, and I celebrated it again this very morning. The last time that I went to confession was this past Wednesday.

To answer your question, nothing has occurred in my life, by the grace of God, that called for an interrogation, nor was I ever accused of or processed for any crime.

By the grace of God, I have never been excommunicated or laden with any sort of ecclesiastical censure.

I have not been coached by anyone with regard to the manner of making my deposition nor on how I am to conduct myself during this examination.

Before I actually got acquainted with Canon del Bufalo, I had heard his name mentioned by Father Antonio Lipparelli, my friend and schoolmate, and presently my colleague in the ministry. That took place in the year 1820 on the occasion when the Servant of God was located in San Felice in Giano, the first house of his institute. He was there to give a retreat for priests. Moved by reports describing the blessing that God showered on his work in the ministry, especially in the Marche, where he was considered to be a saint, according to what Lipparelli told me, I got together with Lipparelli in order to take advantage of the opportunity of meeting Gaspar and of making the retreat, as was my usual custom. That is why the two of us decided to go to San Felice in Giano.

There, after our arrival, we met with Canon del Bufalo in his room. He received us very courteously and warmly, so characteristic of him. I confess that I was overwhelmed by his acts of kindness. He then asked us whether we were tied down by duties of residence, and later added that I, along with Lipparelli, should become missionaries. He concluded by saying: "In the meantime, let us make the retreat," which we then proceeded to do. Canon del Bufalo preached very convincingly and reviewed the basic principles to live by.

Once the retreat was concluded, he asked me to remain in San Felice to conduct a retreat for the seculars since he was due to go elsewhere for the ministry, and he assured me of the imminent arrival of Father Gaetano Bonanni, then a missionary and now the bishop of Norcia. I agreed to his request, and as soon as Father Bonanni got there, I returned to Spoleto. When Canon del Bufalo returned to San Felice in Giano, since he had an assignment of a mission to Montemartana, he quickly sent word to me in Spoleto, urgently begging me to be there with him as a help or, if I should not be able, to please ask Lipparelli.

Since Lipparelli was unable to accept, and I had learned that the Servant of God was going to have to handle that mission alone, I, trusting always in God's help, decided to go. I arrived in Montemartana a bit earlier than he did. In the course of that mission, he spoke more than once of my vocation to the Institute. Since he assured me that this was God's call, on the day of the Assumption

of that same year 1820, I made my decision. Having returned then to Giano, I remained in the Institute. I have had the blessing and the consolation of having him close to me often and of speaking with him as well as working with him in the ministry.

My admiration for the Servant of God began already from the time when Lipparelli spoke to me of him in such glowing terms, as I stated previously. My esteem and veneration increased as soon as I got to know him and speak to him. On one particular day, I admired something in him, I just do not know exactly how to explain it, but it was while he was passing by the area of the porter's lodge and I was watching him attentively from a window. Later, I continued to study his actions and bearing with somewhat of a critical attitude, thus solidifying the good impressions that I had already formed of him.

Indeed, upon re-reading something that I had written in Giano in 1830 or 1831, I discovered that I had looked upon him as a soul truly belonging to God and that the Lord, one day, would highly honor him. After his death, that devotion toward him grew in me. I still retain it and I recommend myself to his special intercession for my needs, since he had been a spiritual director for me, as well as for the needs of the Institute.

Officially, since I am vice-general and general secretary, as I mentioned before, I have, for the glory of God, planned for the promotion of the cause of the Servant of God, while adhering to due form and observing the required precautions. I am presently encouraging it and expressing my desire to see him beatified and canonized, always safeguarding the will of God and whatever God is pleased to do. I have nothing else in mind than the glory of the Lord who is honored in his saints. I am ready, as I have always been, to accept nothing other than what the Church will decide in this cause.

I shall answer and I shall speak, insofar as I am capable, with sincerity and fidelity, knowing full well that in a matter such as the one being considered here, it is not lawful to omit anything, even though I may not have been asked a question, that would be applicable either to the advantage or disadvantage of the cause. From every aspect, it is required that full knowledge be submitted concerning the person whose beatification and canonization is being requested.

CHAPTER I

PRIEST

Birth of St. Gaspar

From the public records, from the testimonies that I have read and from what the Servant of God told me himself, I know that he was born in the city of Rome. From his baptismal certificate, which I have read and from what the Servant of God told me himself, he was born on January 6, 1786. Mrs. Paolina del Bufalo told me that at that time the parents of the Servant of God were living in a house in the Monti area. I noticed in his baptismal certificate that he was baptized in the church of Sts. Martino and Silvestro in the Monti area. I am not able to identify precisely the house in which he was born, and, much less the very room.

St. Gaspar's Parents

I know that the Servant of God's parents were Antonio del Bufalo and Annunziata Quartieronì. Antonio was a Roman, but I am not certain of her place of origin. Both of them, however, made their domicile in Rome. In fact, right now, I recall with some certainty that they were both Romans. I made the acquaintance of his father, and spoke to him a number of times. I was informed that his profession was that of a cook. But, it seems to me that at the time that I made his acquaintance he no longer engaged in that profession. I discovered furthermore, that he had been a cook in the Altieri household. I never got to know Annunziata since she had passed on into eternity several years before. The two of them lived together as husband and wife in a dignified manner using the means earned by their work.

In reference to the opinions and reputation that were had of their conduct and uprightness of life, I can say that the Servant of God told me that his mother was a saintly woman and an excellent teacher. I heard this same description from Mrs. Paolina del Bufalo, the Servant of God's sister-in-law, as well as from Fr. Biagio Valentini, the Director General of our Congregation. I know that Antonio, the Servant of God's father, was a pious man, as I judged him to be, and that he showed the greatest concern for religious matters. Just what the estimation of him was that existed in Rome, I would not be able to state with exact precision; but I do know that the Servant of God used to speak of him respect-fully.

Both of his parents were born in the Catholic religion, educated in it and persevered in it until death. That I know from the records. The Servant of God used to tell me of the great concern his parents had for his education as well as that of his brother Luigi. In a special way, he praised his mother who, always attentive, directed him in every way.

He was baptized on January 7, that is, the day after his birth. On August 6 of 1787, because of his illness and the fear of approaching death, he was anointed with the holy chrism; this, I learned from the Servant of God and, furthermore, I noted the same in the record of his baptism and confirmation, which I have checked.

St. Gaspar's Early Residence

I was told that he actually lived in the parish of Santa Prassede, but, because it lacked a baptismal font, the Servant of God was baptized in the church of Sts. Martino and Silvestro in the Monti area. I would not be able to point out precisely the house in which they lived. I know that

shortly after his birth, his parents went to live in the palace of Prince Altieri on the Piazza del Gesu. I think that this move was made because his father had been hired as a cook by Prince Altieri. It was in that residence where, together with his parents, the Servant of God spent his childhood and adolescence in the manner that I shall subsequently relate. What I have said up to this point was learned from Mrs. Paolina del Bufalo and one or the other item from Monsignor Santelli.

At around two years of age, as I learned from one of those two people just mentioned, the Servant of God contracted an illness that placed him in danger of losing his eyesight. His mother, who was deeply devoted to St. Francis Xavier, recommended him to the Saint from whom he obtained the prayed-for grace, for he retained his eyesight until the very last day of his life. Only someone who would look very carefully would be able to see in his right eye a small, white mark which, however, was not something unbecoming nor did it affect his ability to read.

Gaspar's Youth

As he advanced in age, he grew in simplicity of spirit. From his earliest years he showed a strong inclination toward the priesthood as I was told by Maria Tamini, now a religious sister, from whom I also learned that he was quite skilled in the construction of little altars, in singing hymns and in play-celebrating Mass. He even set up a large chair after the fashion of a confessional so that he could pretend being a confessor. Often he would climb on top of a chair and, having first arranged others around him as an audience, he would summon his mother, begin preaching and repeat something that he had heard or was able to express. On occasion he gave special praise to St. Francis Xavier. His talent for preaching appeared to be so exceptional that Maria Tamini's father was compelled to say one day: "This fellow is going to be another St. Francis Xavier."

All this was recounted to me by Maria Tamini from whom I also learned that Annunziata, the Servant of God's mother, used to take her son to the church of Gesu. There, in imitation of his mother, he too knelt before the altar of St. Francis Xavier where he prayed with great devotion. When he was about six years old, he began to go to confession to Monsignor Marchetti who was in charge of that church. Around eleven years of age, he made his first communion at the Cappellette di San Luigi.

The Servant of God himself told me this. His mother, noticing her son's good qualities, did not fail to use all the means at her disposal for his education. On one particular occasion, the Servant of God told me how she would gently train him to be orderly, exact and clean and to be careful even about little things. One day he related to me that if he had, for example, placed a chair without observing the proper symmetry, his mother would call him and together they would place it in its proper condition.

From his earliest years he began to show a love for penance. After puncturing some holes in pieces of tin, he would gird them around his body in the form of a belt. He did not make too frequent a use of that instrument because, when it tore into his skin, he would bleed and he feared that his mother might come to notice it. Maria told me this along with the information that he used to give his breakfast to the poor. His mother, who watched him care-fully, soon discovered that, and she suggested that they give them something else. The Servant of God, however, refused her offer courteously by saying that such a thing would not be as pleasing to the Blessed Mother.

This same Maria Tamini also informed me that the young man had a desire to go out to convert infidels and that he even attempted to put into operation a plan that he had devised, if only

no one would prevent him from doing it. She and Paolina del Bufalo told me about the incident in Rome of the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary opening her eyes which occurred, if I am not mistaken in 1799. Around sunset, the Servant of God would go out to sing the litany in front of the images of the Blessed Virgin that were displayed publicly on the street corners. Followed by others, including his father Antonio, he would do this with devotion and fervor.

I believe it was also from those two women that I found out that he used to go, dressed in surplice, to Tor de' Specchi where he would take part in the festivities in that church. The nuns there were delighted when they saw him so composed and so modest.

I know further that he would spend long periods of time praying in front of the altar of St. Francis Xavier in the Gesu. One day the Servant of God confided to Fr. Biagio Valentini that while praying there one day he felt as though he had been swept away in rapture. He told me one time that, as a young boy, when he viewed the Saint's depiction there in the Gesu, he felt a strong urge to go forth to do great deeds. He indicated this even more precisely when, one day, we had gone there together and were standing in the choir area near the altar of St. Francis Xavier. He pointed to the painting and said something like this: "Right here is where I, as a boy, felt my devotion to St. Francis Xavier grow."

I do not recall with precision from whom I learned that when he was at a tender age his father obtained two teachers for him, one after the other. From the Servant of God himself I found out that one of his teachers was Fr. Ludovico Ponzileoni. Then, later on, he went to do his studies at the Collegio Romano, though I would not be able to indicate precisely the time nor the persons by whom he was instructed.

I know that often along the streetways, he discussed with his classmates the subjects that they were studying and that he had the serious task of composing papers about which the Servant of God spoke to me from time to time. He frequented the Libreria della Minerva, as he himself mentioned to me. From the layman who takes care of that Libreria, I learned that occasionally the Servant of God's father would go there in search of him. Likewise, from Monsignor Santelli, who used to visit the del Bufalo household, especially in the evening when he would spend an hour or so in friendly amusement.

I discovered that the Servant of God was averse to games and diversions and very courteously would excuse himself and go to his room to study. In order to have more quiet, he had obtained a room that was more isolated. I was further informed by Paolina that at a certain time she would bring him his supper, and, that he would say that he did not wish to be a burden for anyone, nor did he want to be unsociable or impolite. If I am not mistaken it was Fr. Biagio Valentini who told me that they admired his conduct: some called him another San Luigi, others, a venerable Berchmans. The Servant of God told me that while he was engaged in his studies, almost every year he suffered from indispositions of health and that he even had some very grave sieges of illness. Likewise, he related to me that his parents were constrained to send him outside of Rome where there was better air with the hope for his improvement.

I know for sure that, one time, when we went to one of the castelli romani, we came to a church which we entered and he told me that he had given lessons in Christian doctrine there, though he was not certain whether it was this very same church or another. Furthermore, I learned that when he was in Arsoli for reasons of health, he stayed with his uncle on his mother's side of the family, Fr. Eugenio Pechi, who was a Cistercian monk and a holy man. There, too, he gave instructions in

Christian doctrine and frequented the church services. I discovered that he would have nothing at all to do with companions who were dissolute, and that he preferred to remain with his father or with those of good moral character.

I have never heard a single thing that would militate against the Servant of God, indicating that he could commit something wrong or vicious.

I have heard only words of praise, since even at that time in his life, the Servant of God was leading a completely virtuous life, as reported regularly by all that I heard. More than this I cannot say, except that I learned from Maria Tamini, I believe it was, that he would receive the most holy sacraments frequently in the Church of the Gesu. Paolina added that he also was occupied in giving catechetical instructions in San Marco's basilica.

Clerical Status

I know that in 1800 he received his first tonsure, as I noted in the records which I consulted myself, and consequently he embraced the clerical status in his youth while pursuing his studies which I referred to previously.

From his youngest years he had an inclination toward the clerical state as I learned from Maria Tamini and others. What stimulated that aspiration, what advice or what authorities were responsible for his embracing the clerical status is not part of my knowledge. The only thing I can say, and this is something which the Servant of God told me himself, is that he was always moved by a desire for doing good works, for promoting the glory of God and seeking the salvation of souls. Even as a simple cleric, he devoted himself to these ends, preaching in certain places in Rome, as was reported to me by Paolina del Bufalo.

With regard to this, I can recall what I learned from Monsignor Cadolini, presently the bishop of Ancona. When, by chance he happened to stop off in the church of Santa Orsola, near Tor de' Specchi in Rome, he heard the Servant of God, only a young man then, giving the discourse on the occasion when they were distributing, as a reward, school texts to the poor clerics, during the Novena in honor of the Immaculate Conception. Truly impressed by him, Cadolini entered the sacristy to express his admiration to Canon Storace and told him to keep his eye on that young man who would one day succeed in being an excellent and outstanding orator, for such were his gifts of delivery and ability to preach.

I learned too, that he frequented the Congregation del Pianto, where he gave catechetical instructions just as he used to do at his own parish church of San Marco.

He was ordained priest on July 31, 1808, after having been dispensed from the defect of age and also permitted to be ordained *extra tempore*, as evidence in the document which I have seen. As the Servant of God himself informed me, this was done because of the upheaval of the times; he said that Pius VII permitted all of those who were deacons to be ordained because of the imminent situation.

In preparation for his ordination, he made a retreat with the Vincentian Fathers in the Montecitorio section, and was ordained in their church on the feast of St. Ignatius. He celebrated his first Mass on August 2 in the church of San Marco, as I saw in a memorandum written in his own handwriting. I am not able to say any more than this with precision.

First ministries

From Luigia or Paolina del Bufalo, I learned that the Servant of God, on the day after his ordination, gave the discourse on Providence in the church of San Pietro in Rome, as was the usual custom. In that same year, he joined Fr. Gaetano Bonanni, who is presently the bishop of Norcia, and Fr. Santelli, in order to establish in Rome a nightly oratory. To accomplish this, they searched far and wide for a church that they could use.

One of the churches that they investigated was the church of Sant'Omobono under the charge of a prelate whose name I do not now recall. The prelate felt inconvenienced by them and his servant treated all three of them in a most discourteous way. They were brusquely dismissed by the answer that he gave them in the name of his employer. It was, in fact, a very firm rejection. Both Fr. Bonanni and Fr. Santelli were deeply distressed, whereas the Servant of God cheerfully comforted them and urged them to be brave, for God would provide in some other way. It was Santelli who told me all of this. Indeed, Santelli added that God really brought them comfort when they were able to acquire the church of Santa Maria in Vincis.

There, in the month of October, 1808, they initiated the nightly oratory with spiritual exercises, as I discovered from a letter,² dated October 11 of that same year, written by the Servant of God to Fr. Santelli, in which he speaks of the means that will be necessary to maintain the work, and urged him not to become discouraged. This letter is preserved in the general archives of our Congregation where there is also another letter,³ dated November 9, 1808, addressed to Fr. Bonanni who was conducting a mission in Velletri. In that letter, after expressing his joy for the good work that Bonanni was doing, he refers to the oratory and says:

"Let us allow those who disapprove of it to think what ever they wish. We shall not desist from the work that God knows was assumed to increase the glory given to him and in every way possible, to procure the salvation of souls."

A bit later, in that letter, he adds:

"In the meantime, God permits that the oratory is not attended by very many people at all because he wants us to pray more and, with work and effort, to bring it to perfection. ... Do not forget to look for some alms in Velletri, and if you see that nothing can be gotten, let us nevertheless place ourselves in the arms of Providence and let us not be fearful."

I noticed in the book of minutes for the Association of Santa Galla that the name of the Servant of God was entered there in May of 1808 and that he was appointed to preach on Sundays until October of that same year. I do not recall if it was at that same meeting or another that he was placed in charge of giving three catechetical instructions in preparation for the feast of Santa Galla. I also observed in that same book that in his own handwriting he states that he will be in charge in August of instructing the poor children, who were lodged there, in preparation for their first communion. Also, that with the alms that he received, he would see that they were properly clothed and would be provided with food for a period of time. I am not able to specify the time.

From that same book, I discovered the notification that in November of 1809, he assumed the task of putting their archives in order. In 1825, he looked after the distribution of bread to the poor on the occasion of their visit for the Holy Year. In 1832, he had the job of secretary, but only for a short while.

After his ordination to the priesthood, he was regularly and exclusively involved in various

² Lett. n. 1.

³ Lett. n. 3.

works of the ministry which now I would not be able to specify exactly, except to say that in general there were spiritual discourses, catechetics to the farm people and the poor, and the recruiting of evangelical workers to provide for those spiritual needs.

From a document preserved in the Vicariate of Rome, dated June 15, 1810, I discovered that the Servant of God was described therein as having excellent and exemplary gifts, as one dedicated to the ecclesiastical ministries, as one often engaged in giving retreats, delivering discourses and panegyrics and, after passing an examination on February 13 of that same year 1810, was approved and became occupied in various churches in Rome to hear confessions with zeal and prudence.

An exemplary priest

For all the time that I was able to be close to him, I know and I declare from my very own experience that, with great devotion and exactness toward ceremonies, he would celebrate holy Mass. He would force himself to make the required genuflections as best he could, despite his own discomfort which may have interfered with his making them perfectly. Ordinarily, he made his preparation for Mass before leaving his room, and his thanksgiving, made in a place set apart, would be long or short depending on the demands made upon him by the ministry.

In making his preparation for Mass and in his thanksgiving, done with devotion and recollection, he edified and gained the esteem of others. At times, one would see him with his attention raised to God and his eyes turned heavenward. Or, as I myself noticed occasionally, they were fixed on the Crucifix or on the Blessed Sacrament, his face assuming a peculiar coloration.

Following the example of Blessed Leonard, he devoted part of each day to thanksgiving and preparation, as I was informed by Fr. Biagio Valentini. I myself saw and observed that each time he celebrated Mass, he did so with the profoundest devotion, I am firmly convinced that he always did so.

As far as I know, the Servant of God fulfilled precisely everything that was prescribed by the sacred canons and the ecclesiastical sanctions pertaining to the way of life and the dignity of the clerical and ecclesiastical status. He kept himself removed from secular interests and dealings to such an extent that he became exceedingly cautious about committing even the least failing. He went about clothed in the vesture proper to his station and avoided places or contacts of amusement, as I witnessed and noted all the time that I was acquainted with him.

Whenever a question arose dealing with the administration of the Houses of the Society, he would always gently but insistently recommend both to me and to other members of our Congregation that we follow in all things and in every way the sacred canons and ecclesiastical sanctions.

Now, to get down to particulars, as far as I have seen, recognized and learned, the Servant of God was a man of precious qualities, exemplary life, one versed in the sacred sciences and in metaphysics. He lived a frugal and upright life. His particular concern was for the things pertaining to God, for the sacred rituals and for the ministry. He made good use of the little that he possessed and was accustomed to say that if he had a penny left over, he knew exactly where to put it to use, namely, in something that would contribute to the glory of God. He was opposed to luxury as well as filth. Anyone who looked at him carefully could observe his propriety, politeness, decorum, cleanliness in every aspect. All of this was completely natural to him, free of all affectation, as he would avoid anything that smacked of superfluity or vanity or whatever might be construed as the

spirit of the world. He was reserved in his glances, a person of composure, stately in his walk, modest in his dealing with others, decisive in his principles, beneficent in his manners.

As for his speech, even in circumstances that made energetic demands upon him as he tried to pursue a good work, I have never seen, witnessed or heard him use improper or impolite manners or words. He, if possible, would rather pardon the individual declaring that either lack of thought or maybe an error of judgment was the cause. Never did I hear, see, learn or recognize him to be involved in any matters that he himself could not approve, but rather I know that, as a matter of principle, such things were alien to him.

For all the time that I was acquainted with him, I know that he lived in Rome with his sister-in-law, Paolina, and his niece, Luigia. I came to know these women very well, starting back in 1820. I always found them to be women of good conduct and upright living. Furthermore, I know that he provided for their sustenance since they lacked goods of fortune. Also, I know that with a gentleness all his own he had habituated them to total dependence upon him. Paolina and Luigia both told me one time that the Servant of God gave them this reminder, namely, that whenever he was outside of Rome, they should consider him still present there, and, this was something that they faithfully observed, as far as I know.

From all that I know, have seen or learned, he would never travel with women present. As a matter of fact, he recommended this very same thing to us and has left this as a reminder to us. Whenever he had to stay somewhere overnight, insofar as it was possible, he preferred to stay in religious houses, avoiding, as often as he could, staying in private homes. When engaged in the ministry, he had the practice, which he has left to us, of not admitting women to look after us.

I do not know that he ever had an interest in hunting, nor have I seen him take any other recreation than a bit of a walk in out-of-the-way places, and this he did only occasionally. When he was in Rome, as I observed, his walk usually took him to some monastery in order to go to confession or to some church or another place where he had duties to carry out.

When he was in the Mission Houses, I noted that he would abstain from visiting places out of curiosity, content as he was to visit the shrines. One time, I do not precisely recall where, when a priest pointed out to him some antiquity or rarity, he gave the impression of looking at it, but, as I noted, it was just a fleeting glance. I am not aware of his ever having carried either offensive or defensive weapons. I know that he would never have carried them since he was by nature quite timid, solitary and pleasingly condescending.

I know, furthermore, and this is something which is very, very well-known by everyone, that he prescribed for the members of his Congregation the wearing of the cassock, even inside the house, and that they should maintain priestly sedateness, decency and seriousness. He wanted other priests likewise to wear the cassock and he rejoiced when he heard that Leo XII had made the same recommendation for priests.

In regard to the handling of church properties, in addition to what he said and recommended in general dealing with the observance of the sacred canons, with great and unusual concern he would get down to even the smallest particulars. The Servant of God, himself, gave me very minute instructions about the practice which he had acquired when he served as Canon in San Marco in Rome. I read the documentation of emphyteusis drawn up by him dealing with all of the properties relative to the benefice of San Bartolomeo which he possessed at that time. In order to be relieved of that benefice, so that he could be engaged in the ministry, he renounced his status of Canon. In that

documentation, I observed the very greatest diligence and accuracy.

In Sonnino, he did not want to permit the renting out of the terrain that adjoined our House. That area had first been assigned to the Passionist Fathers and was handed down to us after they renounced it. He did not allow that to happen since it would have been contrary to the regulations dealing with sacred properties. The same thing occurred in Giano. Likewise, in Sonnino, he refused to accept a simple benefice which a certain person there wanted to grant to our Mission House. He refused that because the individual wanted him to use the income to pay off a sentence of a monetary fine. I think that the Servant of God was fearful that this transaction would smack of simony. It might be pointed out that the amount involved, as I was informed later, was small and the advantage mediocre.

In Frosinone, when it came time for paying off an emphyteusis and for setting up an annuity, upon receiving money granted by a priest for that final payment, which was also to be set up as a part of his patrimony, the Servant of God insisted that all due permissions were to be sought with diligence and exactitude. Also, in Frosinone, when the construction of the new church of San Francisco Saverio was considered, they were supposed to use an area burdened with the payment annually of two *scudi*, which he hoped he would be able to pay. But then that area was granted to an educational institute and he made every effort to get rid of it, following required procedure, precisely because it was untransferable property.

In Vallecorsa, when the need of funds arose in order to advance the building of a Mission House there, he sought and obtained the required permissions to make use of one-hundred-fifty *scudi* which were to be re-invested for a Mission-legacy.

In Sermoneta, he allowed them to take possession of a small legacy left to them in the will of a deceased Scatafagsi, but with complete regularity in observance of all the canonical forms, even though he had been told that, in accordance with the practice of that town, some expenses could be spared.

He would not permit at all the cutting down of trees in the surrounding areas of our Houses nor in other rural foundations.

Whenever it would be useful or there was a need for this, a need that was fully verified, he wanted the proper permissions to be sought. In this matter, he was most particular and exacting so much so that he would review the situation again and again in order to be completely assured of regularity; I, myself, saw him do so in those circumstances. He stressed the need for a written agreement so that they would be properly maintained and improved. I know this to be the case particularly for the Mission Houses in Sermoneta and Pievetorina. In Sermoneta, wanted them to draw up a written agreement precisely because there had been a small cutting made there without the permission of the bishop, and he did not cease insisting on it until he saw this carried out.

In our surroundings here in San Paolo of Albano, where some of the trees were poorly watered and in danger of being lost, I saw him to be quite solicitous in having something done about it. In Vallacorsa, a small piece of arable land had been rented out, I do not recall whether it was for three or more years. It inadvertently had been done without the due permissions. What is certain is that he wanted that contract to be voided and declared null. In Giano, more than once, he directed me to examine the documents dealing with small matters issued in favor of the Mission House and to diligently check to see whether all the agreements had been observed.

In Macerata Feltria, when the question of the payment of a tithe for a given piece of land had

arisen, he did not permit the one in charge of the economy to make that payment until he had checked the facts involved. He pointed out that that area at one time belonged to the Franciscan Fathers; that it was possible that some involuntary misunderstanding could have arisen because of the upheavals of the time and that we could not be careless in handling a pious locale.

Even here in Albano, on many occasions, he had to make efforts to defend the rights of our church, our cloister and its surroundings. He accomplished all of this with wonderful fortitude, as is so well-known to all. The same thing was true for some of our other houses.

A certain religious priest, who had obtained secularization, wanted to set up a Mission-legacy for his own home-town to be conducted by members of our Congregation at a specified time, was told decisively by the Servant of God that he could not do that until the man obtained the special faculty to do so. He was confirmed in his judgment when he discovered that the aforementioned secularization stated specifically "safeguarding the vows *quoad substantialia*". When that individual showed his displeasure, the Servant of God advised him to consult others, but that as far as he himself was concerned he did not intend to accept that legacy unless the man got the special faculty to do so. Later the man, having become docile and convinced, did obtain the due permission and set up the legacy which the Servant of God then accepted with the agreement that he make known that it was he who first advised him to the contrary so that there would be no misunderstandings arising afterwards.

In dealing with ecclesiastical properties acquired during the time of the upheaval, he was accustomed to check whether the required permissions had been obtained; whenever they had not been obtained, he insisted that it be taken care of quickly. On these matters, I often had discussions because of our ministry. Generally speaking, I know that I obtained a sanation for a particularly strange matter dealing with our Congregation. More precisely, I recall that in that House in Pievevitorina, when an emphyteusis had come due for a pious locale, at one-time the possession of the Passionist Fathers, I noted that the person responsible for handling its consignment was not in a position to cover all of the damages stipulated in the document. The Servant of God permitted and wished that the due sanation be obtained. I believe that even he himself made a contribution for the request submitted to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

In a more precise case, I point out that in the Mission an emphyteusis held by Sebastiano Morelli House of Pievevitorina, came due. As a result of a decision made by me, on the occasion of a visitation of that House assigned to me by the Servant of God, a decision that was communicated to our companions as well as in consultation with the most reverend Archbishop on September 4, 1832, it resulted in being condemned. Morelli was made responsible for the repairs to the terrain as well as to restitute 40 *scudi* for a pair of oxen, a *scudo* for a couple of pigs and the cost of five *rubbia* and four *coppe* of seed-grain. When the Servant of God discovered that Morelli was in financial straits, he wished to grant him, as well as the Missionaries, a bit of relief. It would be quite difficult to recover all that Morelli owned, or, at least it could be done only with a great deal of persistence and hard work, not to mention feelings of bitterness.

So, I believe that, upon my insistence, on January 25, 1837 a sanation was obtained from the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, including an exemption for the most reverend Archbishop of Camerino, who subdelegated his vicar, Fuschi, to administer the sanation on April 11, 1837 as can be verified in the archives of the episcopal chancery of Camerino, *Rev., Lib. Div. Suppl., 1837*

Quaderno XXX. In regard to this affair, I note that the Servant of God, in writing⁴ to our now-deceased Missionary, Fr. Tommaso Meloni on August 9, 1832, said: "In reference to Sig. Morelli, it is as far as I can see, that he could give the morally impossible, animal etc. Therefore, we should be thinking about ways and means, *et cum facultatibus*, of doing so and of freeing ourselves of him. You keep on looking into the situation".

Then, on September 24th,⁵ he said: "Unfortunately, it is necessary to wait for things to run their course in this matter dealing with Sig. Morelli, just as everything else; for, otherwise, we could find ourselves in trouble". In writing to the most reverend Archbishop on August 20, 1836, he said: "The petition for the Morelli absolution has been sent to your Reverend Excellency; I am handling this case, *titulo charitatis*. The Sacred Congregation is awaiting information from you. I shall also send you a Missionary".

These and many other facts, which I do not recall now with precision, show how the Servant of God applied himself and how he showed matchless persistence.

But, with a bit more precision, I can add here that in every House, he wanted a particular archive set up in which copies of all the documents would be preserved and necessary memoranda made available. Likewise, that there be a regular check of things in the general archives also so that everything could proceed with the greatest exactness and in keeping with canonical regulations.

He was accustomed to say that the sanctions of the Church are holy and that one must observe them with every bit of diligence. Woe to anyone who contradicted him; that individual would receive an immediate, fully reasoned-out response, indicating that there are those who are not altogether thoughtful and hence fall short.

He desired especially that we adhere to the old way of doing things in as much as the circumstances of the times, the places and the people would allow, directing everything toward the better and to do so without innovations. I can say that whenever there was question on the sacred canons, you could almost read his inner thoughts in his face, so great was his reverence for ecclesiastical sanctions.

Then, too, I must not be silent about the fact that these concerns of his were directed not only toward the laws of the Church in general, but also toward synodal regulations. While with him out in the ministry, many times I heard him ask about synodal matters and how he wished to know precisely which laws were in force. He urged all of his men to follow that procedure as he did also for me at the time when he sent me for the first time as the director of a Mission. Furthermore, in all of our Houses, he wanted the Synod itself to be held, or, at least that there be a record of everything that had been put in force, and, he stressed its observance. He likewise wanted to be up-to-date with those laws so as to govern his own activities as well as to be able to instruct others. I know that he followed this method particularly for our own Houses in Pievetorina and Sermoneta, as I mentioned elsewhere. I am completely certain of these facts, simply because these things passed through my hands and also because of being commissioned by the Servant of God as the secretary of our Congregation.

Finally, I must add that he was never, very sensitive about the laws issued by the Sacred Office. Thereby, in certain cases he would find in practice reasons for obtaining dispensations from denunciations, for procuring required permissions, for facilitating in that way the work of the

⁴ Lett. n. 2395.

⁵ Lett. n. 2411.

ministry, as I experienced in having discussions in general with him.

In regard to his respect for the Holy Office, I add the following. One of our Brothers-in-service heard a sermon given by a certain one who was not one of ours. He ranted against acts of witchcraft. The Brother was scandalized and describing it to another who in turn passed it on to others, the opportunity offered itself for jesting about it. However, with a serious face, he was made to understand that he was obliged to make a denunciation. When the vicar of the Holy Office was informed he gave signs of accepting the denunciation, but not in writing. The Brother was totally upset by what had happened to him and the Servant of God was on hand for the visitation. When he learned from one of our men what had happened, he immediately had that vicar summoned and energetically bawled him out for the abuse he made of his position, telling him that one is not to make fun of the Holy Office. Later, he gave another good bawling-out to the one who, with the other three, had started the whole joke. I found this out casually from two of our members as well as from the Brother himself. The latter told me that he was called into the sacristy and the vicar told him to keep all in mind all of his words for, in the same way, he would have to repeat them before the superior tribunal. For the sake of honor, I shall not name the place nor the persons involved; however, I am very sure of everything that I mentioned.

Canon of S. Marco

I know very well that the Servant of God obtained a position of Canon in the Basilica of St. Mark in Rome, first, as a coadjutor Canon and then as a full Canon. That occurred in the year 1807. I know from reports that he was diligent in attendance at choir and I heard it said that throughout the time of his position as Canon, no *puntatura* (criticism?) was ever discovered; this is the report of Fr., Biagio Valentini.

What is known to me with complete clarity is that he renounced his position as Canon in order to be free to undertake the ministry, as I have mentioned before, and this occurred in 1815, while he still retained a stall of honor. His reason was clearly that he wanted to be more deeply involved in the aforementioned ministry, as far as I was able to gather from the various conversations that I had with the Servant of God. In that way, he made it possible to do the good work that he was inspired to promote.