

**Saint Gaspar del Bufalo,  
Apostle of the  
Blood of Christ**

**Volume II: The Preaching of  
Saint Gaspar on the  
Devotion to the Blood of Christ**

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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

In the first volume of this work we learned of the origins of the devotion to the Blood of Christ in St. Gaspar and how this great mystery shaped his life and ministry. Gaspar's devotion bore fruit in the founding of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1815.

This volume examines St. Gaspar's preaching on the devotion to the Precious Blood. Gaspar was renowned as one of the great preachers of his day and the Congregation he founded in 1815 had as a special aim the preaching of missions and retreats for the renewal of the Church. Ironically, however, no texts of Gaspar's sermons on the Precious Blood have come down to us.

Nevertheless it is possible, as Fr. Beniamino Conti amply demonstrates in this volume, the second part of his *San Gaspare Del Bufalo apostolo del Sangue di Cristo*, to know something of the nature and goals of Gaspar's preaching. He introduces the reader to the sources for understanding the preaching of St. Gaspar on the Blood of Christ and how he saw preaching on this mystery as the appropriate response to the need for re-evangelizing the Church of his time.

Conti traces three main themes in Gaspar's preaching: making reparation to Christ, propitiation of the Eternal Father, and the sanctification of souls. Gaspar promoted these themes not only in his preaching but also by means of various devotions, among which were the Seven Offerings, the Chaplet of the Precious Blood, and the veneration of the Madonna of the Precious Blood, all of which continue to be part of the devotional practices of the Congregation and of the Church today. He concludes the book by reviewing how St. Gaspar

asserted the legitimacy and excellence of the devotion which, given the opposition it generated, certainly needed his able defense.

The extensive and valuable appendix contains eight of the most important extant works of St. Gaspar on the Blood of Christ as well as excerpts of the memoranda or “memorials” written in defense of the Congregation and its title, written to three successive popes.

As I noted in the translator’s introduction to volume I, Fr. Conti has had a lifelong dedication to research on the life of St. Gaspar. This book was originally published as a single volume, first in 1970 and then reprinted in 1978 and 2002. It is an especially valuable work since it introduces us to so many of the original sources, providing us with better insight into the thought and heart of the great Apostle of the Blood of Christ.

A few technical remarks are in order. Translations of the letters of Gaspar generally follow those of the late Fr. Raymond Cera, C.P.P.S. These translations are available in a loose-leaf photocopied version as well as in a digital edition, for which we can thank the late Fr. Milton Ballor, C.P.P.S., who scanned hundreds of pages for the project. Fr. John Colacino, C.P.P.S., provided his English translation of *In omnibus divites facti estis in illo* ‘In all things you have been made rich in him.’

Gaspar generally did not include chapter and verse references when quoting the Bible and used the Latin Vulgate for such quotations. I have supplied these references, enclosing them within brackets in the text. For the English translations of the biblical texts I have usually relied on the Douay-Rheims version, an English translation of the Vulgate.

English translations of Italian or Latin words or phrases in the text are provided within single quotation marks. I have not provided English translations of the titles of works available only in Italian or Latin cited in the endnotes, since I believe that anyone wishing to pursue such references would have some knowledge of the

language in question. I have tried to provide references to English translations of Italian and Latin works where these are available.

In matters of capitalization and punctuation in the documents quoted I have adhered to the original text, even if this does not conform to current English practice. With regard to Gaspar's family name, for example, modern Italian generally renders it as "Del Bufalo" even if Gaspar himself generally used "del." In our English language publications we commonly use the latter form, "del Bufalo."

No project like this is the work of an individual, and I would like to acknowledge the support and assistance of several people who have been involved. Fr. Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S., encouraged me to undertake this project while he was editor of C.P.P.S. Resources. A special word of thanks goes to Pauline Vokits, who formatted and carefully proofread both volumes and who offered many worthwhile corrections and suggestions. Jean Giesige, director of communications for the Cincinnati Province of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and a C.P.P.S. Companion, likewise read the text and contributed helpful comments. Mark Yates, C.P.P.S., also provided valuable proofreading services for this volume. Finally, thanks to Fr. Yuri Kuzara, C.P.P.S., for permission to use the image of St. Gaspar that appears on the cover.

Translating this work has been a gratifying project, drawing me closer to the mind and heart of our founder, St. Gaspar, and helping me to understand the burning devotion to the Blood of Christ that impelled him to give his life in its service. I hope that many may come to know better the great Apostle of the Precious Blood.

*Jerome Stack, C.P.P.S.*

May 24, 2009

Memorial of Our Lady, Help of Christians  
Secondary Patroness of the Congregation



## INTRODUCTION

What are the distinctive features of the spirituality of St. Gaspar del Bufalo within the great company of saints venerated in the Church?

Witnesses to his life and his activity have given us ample descriptions of those features in their depositions for the canonical processes for his beatification and canonization. We find the features of his spirituality in his biographies and particularly in his writings. The precise and unmistakable characteristic, one that will be continually associated with him as a specific title, is described by the documents of the Church that marked the path to the solemn proclamation of his canonization.

Already in the decree *Benedictionibus Dulcedinis* (January 15, 1852), introducing the cause of the beatification,<sup>1</sup> St. Gaspar is presented as the founder of a Congregation of Missionaries under the title of the Most Precious Blood of the Divine Redeemer. This will be repeated in all future documents.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, he is recognized as having the honor of having given the Church, with this Institute, a new splendor in the service of the care of souls (“. . . *novo hoc instituto . . . , Ecclesia sponsa Christi ad uberrimum animarum lucrum decorate effulget*”).

The decree *Almae Huius Urbis*<sup>3</sup> (May 29, 1904) that approved the two miracles for his beatification describes Gaspar as a herald of peace and salvation in the Divine Blood for his troubled times. Against the errors and vices of his contemporaries, Gaspar proposed the Blood of Christ, the Blood of Christ that was the force of his apostolate as well:

It is the signal splendor of this beloved city of Rome, source of all piety and devotion, to have given birth to a man who, in that very agitated period at the end of the 18th century, '*pacificans per Sanguinem Crucis ejus*' 'making peace through the Blood of his Cross' (Col 1: 20), kept the avenging hand of God from his people, fulfilling what the Apostle says: '*Justificati in sanguine Ipsius salvi erimus ab ira per Ipsum*' 'justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him' (Rom 5: 9).

Strengthened by the Blood, which became *his banner*, the Venerable Servant of God Gaspar del Bufalo exercised a very diverse apostolate, but one *sustained by a single ideal*: to promote the devotion to the Most Precious Blood with indomitable and ardent love.

He used this weapon against the errors and vices of his day. It was a weapon all the more powerful since it inwardly permeated the testimony of a life of great integrity. From the Blood he drew all the energy for his love, urging on people of whatever condition to faith in holiness.

The decree *Educta ex Christi* (June 24, 1904),<sup>4</sup> declaring that the beatification could proceed, affirmed that while the fruit of Gaspar's missionary work was "the salvation of people" (*salus populi*), he himself appeared in the Church, a field made fertile by the Divine Blood, as the one whom the Lord sent as an instrument of redemption: "*Dominus redemptionem misit populo suo*" 'The Lord has sent redemption to his people' (Ps 110: 9). He is also called an angel of the living God who had the mission of announcing the message of the Blood of the Lamb in the Church: "*Erit Sanguis Agni vobis in signum*" 'And the Blood of the Lamb shall be a sign to you' (cf. Ex 12: 13). Moreover, in this

pontifical document and those following, the Institute of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ is also linked to Gaspar's Congregation:

Flowing from the side of Christ, the Church, the mystical field made fertile by the Divine Blood, produced abundant and varied fruit, according to the various charisms of the gospel workers (*operai evangelici*) and according to the opportunity of the times, guided by the Providence of God. Among the holy workers in the vineyard of the Lord, the Venerable Servant of God Gaspar Del Bufalo, founder of the Congregation of the Most Precious Blood, to which the Sisters who bear the same name are linked, *in a special way* has exercised his apostolate under the auspices of the same font of holiness and of salvation: [the Blood of Christ].

It seems that he is like that Angel bearing the '*signum Dei vivi*' 'a sign of the living God' [Rv 7: 2] with which is announced: '*Erit Sanguis Agni vobis in signum*' [cf. Ex 12: 13].

The image of St. Gaspar as the propagator and standard bearer of the devotion to the Most Precious Blood returns in the Apostolic Brief *Salutare Illud* (August 29, 1904),<sup>5</sup> with which St. Pius X formally declares the beatification of Gaspar and grants the recital of the Divine Office and the celebration of Mass in his honor in the churches and oratories of the Missionaries and of the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood and in the diocese of Rome.<sup>6</sup>

After the beatification, the pontifical documents that trace the spiritual physiognomy of Gaspar in the Church continue with the decree *Summa Romanorum*<sup>7</sup> of July 22, 1949, summarizing the cause of Gaspar, which would come to a happy conclusion five years later. In this decree and in the following, *Christiano Sensu* of May 4, 1954,<sup>8</sup> approving the miracles for canonization,

Gaspar is presented only as the founder of a Congregation of Missionaries of the Most Precious Blood, to whom are connected the Sisters Adorers under the same title.

The final two documents, however, namely the decree *Beatus Gaspar* (May 8, 1954),<sup>9</sup> affirming that the canonization could safely proceed, and the decretal letter *Sanguinis Pretiosissimi Laudes* (June 13, 1954),<sup>10</sup> by which Gaspar could be accorded the honors due to saints, present Gaspar in a more solemn and complete way in the light of the mystery of the Divine Blood.

In the first document, Gaspar appears as the one who, absorbed and strengthened by the cry of the Blood of Jesus, presented it to the souls of his time and spread its cult, which will bring Blessed Pius IX to extend that devotion to the universal Church:

Blessed Gaspar Del Bufalo, the illustrious boast of the Roman Clergy, meditated deeply on how our Lord Jesus Christ willed to shed all of his Most Precious Blood for the redemption of the world, how he chose to undergo the most terrible torments and be condemned to a shameful death, so that men and women would not be deprived of this infinite treasure through sin and thus be punished with eternal condemnation. . . . He gave himself over to labor for the salvation of souls. Then . . . he founded a Congregation of Priests, so that they would evangelize the people under the banner of the Most Precious Blood . . . He himself, in the meantime, strengthened by the Divine Blood, dedicated himself to the ministry of the missions . . .

Finally, in order to spread the cult of the Most Precious Blood, fountain of salvation, among the faithful, [Gaspar] worked hard and with diligent zeal for the institution of the feast of the Most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus

Christ, which was extended to the entire Church by Pope Pius IX.

As already noted, in this decree Gaspar is given credit for being promoter of the liturgical cult of the Divine Blood for the entire Church, even if in fact it was Don Giovanni Merlini, his faithful disciple and executor of his wishes, who obtained this from Blessed Pius IX on August 10, 1849.

The second document affirms that after Sts. Peter and Paul extolled in a special way the benefits of the Precious Blood there has never been lacking in the Church very holy persons who have spread the cult of the Divine Blood among the faithful. Nevertheless, the document recognizes that St. Gaspar in recent times enjoys a glorious preeminence with regard to this great mystery: "*Unus omnium nitet beatissimus Gaspar Del Bufalo*" 'One out of all of them shines brightly: the most blessed Gaspar Del Bufalo.'

The glories and efficacy of the Most Precious Blood, with which the Son of God bathed the hard wood of the Cross and the dry earth, were celebrated by no one with a more grateful affection than by the Apostle Paul.

Recalling the ancient sacrifices mandated among the Hebrews, he not only said that no remission of sins was possible without the shedding of blood, but also that the blood of Christ was immensely more powerful than the blood of goats and calves in expiating sins, since He Himself enjoys the unsurpassed dignity of the only-begotten Son of God and possesses the eternal priesthood.

Peter, the first leader and head of the Holy Church, admonished the band of Christians that they had not been redeemed by a large sum of gold or silver but by the crimson blood of Christ, the most spotless and most holy Lamb of God.

There has been through the centuries no lack of very pious men and women who, moved by love of the divine Redeemer, have popularized among the people a devotion venerating His Blood. But *in this age*, among those whose love and devotion have been stirred up by the Blood and who, with vigilant attention and passionate zeal, eloquently preach the benefits of that Blood that was shed, the one who shines brightly, *alone among all*, is Gaspar Del Bufalo, whom today we have adorned with the crown of Saints.

This *unus omnium* attributes to Gaspar a particular excellence in spreading the cult of the Divine Blood. His *proper* title, thus, is to be that of *Apostle of the Most Precious Blood*, even though this is recognized as being limited to our age. One more step and every restriction will be withdrawn.

This happened with Blessed John XXIII, a pope very well disposed to the devotion to the Precious Blood. Blessed John described St. Gaspar as the “distinguished champion” (*assertore insigne*)<sup>11</sup> of the devotion to the Most Precious Blood and wrote that “the Most Precious Blood was the point of light of the apostolate of St. Gaspar Del Bufalo, the glory of Rome.”<sup>12</sup> But in the solemn allocution held in St. Peter’s Basilica on January 21, 1960, at the close of the Roman Synod, he recommended devotion to the Precious Blood in a special way to the priests and laity of Rome and hailed St. Gaspar as “the true and greatest apostle of the devotion to the Most Precious Blood in the world.”<sup>13</sup>

Again, in the apostolic letter *Inde a Primis* (June 30, 1960)<sup>14</sup> he definitively bound the name of St. Gaspar to devotion to the Precious Blood, just as that of St. Bernardine of Siena was linked to the devotion to the Holy Name and St. Margaret Mary Alacoque to the devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

Following these testimonies of Blessed John XXIII, the figure of St. Gaspar leapt to the forefront in the history of Precious Blood devotion. He emerges as its *principal apostle* and as such he will pass into the history of the Church and of Christian spirituality.

Our work is divided into two parts. In the first we sought to study the development of this devotion in St. Gaspar and his apostolic ministry to spread the devotion. In the second, we will attempt to reconstruct his preaching on the devotion to the Precious Blood on the basis of his schematic writings. We will close this volume with an appendix with a collection of Gaspar's more important writings on the Blood of Christ.

We nourish the hope that this modest research, in allowing us to understand better the relationship of St. Gaspar to the devotion to the Precious Blood, will encourage Gaspar's spiritual heirs—the Missionaries and the Adorers of the Blood of Christ and all devoted to him and to the Most Precious Blood—to mature with greater commitment in their Christian vocation in the spirituality of the Blood of Christ, in the phrase we rightly use today.

In reprinting this work thirty years after its original publication we acknowledge its substantial validity and publish it again without significant modifications. At the same time, following the publication of all the writings of St. Gaspar (letters, sermons, and rules) and above all in the light of the documents found in Tarquinia (Viterbo) in 1997 in the *Archivio della Società d'Arte e Storia*, we must correct some notes contained in previous editions<sup>15</sup> (1970, 1978) and add a few others, especially with regard to the Sisters of the Most Precious Blood, in order to give a more complete and exact picture of St. Gaspar's activity for the devotion to the Blood of Christ.

*Don Beniamino Conti, C.P.P.S*  
Rome, October 21, 2002  
Solemnity of St. Gaspar del Bufalo.



## Abbreviations

- AAS** *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (Rome, 1909–).
- AGCPPS** General Archives of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, Rome.
- ASS** *Acta Sanctae Sedis* (Rome, 1870–1909.)
- Direttore diretto** St. Gaspar del Bufalo, *Direttore Diretto nella guida delle anime alla perfezione* ‘The Director Directed in guiding souls to perfection,’ Rome, 1825.
- Metodo Missioni** St. Gaspar del Bufalo, *Metodo delle Sante Missioni fatto stampare dalla Ve. Archiconfraternita del Preziosissimo Sangue del N.S. Gesù Cristo per uso dei suoi Missionari e di tutti quelli che voranno approfittarsene.* ‘The Method of the Holy Missions printed by the Venerable Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood of O.L. Jesus Christ, for the use of its Missionaries and of all those who wish to make use of it.’
- Positio super virtutibus** *Romana Beatificationis et Canonizationis Venerabilis Servi Dei Gasperis Del Bufalo Fundatoris Congregationis Missionariorum Pretiosissimi Sanguinis D.N.J.C. Positio super virtutibus.*
- Regolamenti** Gaspar Del Bufalo, *Regolamenti dei Missionari del Preziosissimo Sangue, I–III,* Rome, 1998–1999.

*Scritti spirituali*

*Gaspar Del Bufalo, Scritti  
spirituali, I–IV, Rome, 1995–1996.*

## Outline of the Life of Saint Gaspar del Bufalo

January 6, 1786	Birth of Gaspar in Rome
July 31, 1808	Ordination to the priesthood
December 8, 1808	Founding of the Confraternity of the Most Precious Blood at San Nicola in Carcere, Rome
June 13, 1810	Gaspar refuses to take the oath to Napoleon
July 15, 1810	The exiled Gaspar arrives in Piacenza
December 1810	Gaspar is transferred to Bologna
October 20, 1811	Death of Gaspar's mother, Annunziata Quartieroni
January 12, 1813	Transfer to the prison of Imola
May 16, 1813	Transfer to the Rocca di Lugo
December 20, 1813	Arrival in Florence on the way to Corsica
February 1814	Return to Rome
September 1814	Pius VII commits Gaspar to the popular missions

August 15, 1815	Foundation of the C.PP.S at S. Felice, Giano dell'Umbria
December 27, 1817	Gaspar becomes director of the missions of the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood
November 24, 1819	Death of Bishop Francesco Albertini
March 10–25, 1822	Mission in Vallecorsa (Frosinone)
mid-May 1830	Maria De Mattias seeks Gaspar's counsel regarding her vocation
October 31, 1831	Death of Gaspar's father, Antonio del Bufalo
March 4, 1834	Foundation of the Adorers of the Most Precious Blood in Acuto
December 28, 1837	Gaspar dies in Rome
January 3, 1838	Gaspar is buried in the Church of St. Paul, Albano Laziale
1861	Gaspar's body is moved to the Church of Santa Maria in Trivio, Rome
December 18, 1904	Beatification of Gaspar by St. Pius X
June 12, 1954	Canonization by Pope Pius XII
January 4, 1963	Visit of Blessed John XXIII to the tomb of St. Gaspar at Santa Maria in Trivio, Rome





## Chapter One

### **Precious Blood Themes in the Preaching of Saint Gaspar**

In a previous work, *Saint Gaspar del Bufalo, Apostle of the Precious Blood, Volume I*, we looked at the formation of St. Gaspar as the Apostle of the Blood of Christ and his activity in spreading and defending that devotion. In this volume we would like to attempt a reconstruction of his preaching on the Precious Blood.

Before outlining the themes of his preaching in this chapter, it is necessary to say a few words about the sources I have used for this reconstruction.

#### **The Sources**

Regrettably, one must recognize that the thought and preaching of St. Gaspar about his beloved devotion are not sufficiently known. The principal reason for this is that much of Gaspar's thought was to be found only in manuscripts in the general archives of the Congregation that were accessible only to a few. Now, with the publication of nearly all of the writings of St. Gaspar<sup>1</sup> it will be easier to undertake systematic studies on the theological, spiritual, pastoral, and historical levels.

The biographies of St. Gaspar offer us a summary presentation of his activity in spreading the devotion to

the Blood of Christ, but, with the exception of brief citations from some of his letters, do not offer us a more comprehensive picture of his thought on this devotion.

Don Amilcare Rey (1893–1950) gathered all of the passages regarding the Blood of Christ from the writings of St. Gaspar and compiled an anthology of texts arranged schematically. This collection was published in 1981.<sup>2</sup>

The only study of this topic of some length available up until now is an article by Don Luigi Contegiacomo (1913–2000) in 1958 and later edited in a small volume in 1968.<sup>3</sup>

There has been a desire to have a better knowledge of the thought of St. Gaspar as Apostle of the Precious Blood. We are ready to respond to this desire but not without a certain trepidation when we look at the research done by Rey and Contegiacomo. Above all we have dedicated ourselves to the careful study of the writings of St. Gaspar regarding the Blood of Christ.

To be sure, these writings are not many, as one can see in the four volumes in which are collected the spiritual writings of St. Gaspar. For example, even Rey writes:

in looking through the very dense volumes of manuscripts of St. Gaspar, I searched many times in vain for abundant material and for discourses on the devotion which was so close to his heart.<sup>4</sup>

There are frequent references to the Precious Blood in Gaspar's letters, a genuine mine of spirituality. There are some brief but important passages in some memoranda to the ecclesiastical authorities and a few outlines for preaching, written mostly for the use of one or the other Missionary and which, therefore, have fortunately come down to us.<sup>5</sup> Finally, there are various prescriptions in the rules of the Congregation regarding the practice of the devotion to the Precious Blood.<sup>6</sup>

St. Gaspar never composed an extensive work on the Divine Blood, although as we have noted he had wished others to do so and sent them material for this purpose. This can be surprising, all the more so when we consider that St. Gaspar was aware of having received from God the mandate to spread the devotion to the Blood of Christ. As he writes in a letter to Innocenzo Betti: “God wanted me out in the field to propagate the great devotion to the Divine Blood.”<sup>7</sup> Gaspar’s time, however, was eaten up by his ministries:

If I had the time, I would like to set down my thoughts in a small composition which would be so very helpful to the interests of our religion. I have no difficulty in saying this. God supplies me with beautiful ideas, and that is that. However, the devil continues to assault both me and our Institute. But, it has also been written: *ipsi vicerunt draconem propter Sanguinem Agni* ‘they overcame the dragon through the Blood of the Lamb’ [Rev 12: 11].<sup>8</sup>

For the rest of his life, however, he simply did not have enough time.

Instead of committing them to paper, Gaspar engraved these “beautiful ideas” on the hearts of his hearers in conversation and in preaching. Thus, when his Missionaries received outlines for preaching they were easily able to develop them more fully, faithful to all of the nuances of his thought. For us, however, this is a difficult task.

For this reason, any attempt to reconstruct the preaching of St. Gaspar on the Blood of Christ will always be lacking. Only a prolonged study of all of his writings will gradually fill in the lacunae.

With this introduction to the sources we have also clearly revealed the limits of the present work and we place this under the judgment of all who will have the

patience to follow the reading. We also note that this work reproduces the text of the first edition of 1972.

### **An Overview of the Theme in the Preaching of St. Gaspar**

In a preaching outline written out for Don Michele Palombi, Gaspar writes the following exhortation: “Themes for this devotion whose propagation is taking place with zeal today.”<sup>9</sup> In various other writings, especially in the documents sent to Popes Leo XII, Pius VIII, and Gregory XVI, Gaspar also expresses the main reasons for which the devotion to the Blood of Christ is being spread in his time.

St. Gaspar held that the devotion to the Precious Blood was “the mystical weapon of the times,”<sup>10</sup> given by God to the Church to “build a dam against the torrent of iniquity,”<sup>11</sup> for reawakening religious fervor among the faithful. Devotion to the Precious Blood was thus a special saving intervention of God in favor of his people at an opportune moment. Hence preaching was an opportunity for devotion to the Blood of Christ as the mystical weapon of the times.

In preaching the devotion to the Precious Blood Gaspar had three ends in mind. They were: reparation to the Redeemer, propitiation of the Eternal Father, and the sanctification of souls. This is how he expresses it:

For three purposes the devotion of the divine Blood is promoted. First, to pay a cult of compensation for the abuse that sinners offer it. Second, to present to the Eternal Divine Father an offering of the price of our redemption and to implore peace for our times. Third, to point out to the people that *justificati in Sanguine salvierimus ab ira per ipsum* ‘justified in [his] Blood we shall be saved from wrath through him’ [Rev 5: 9].<sup>12</sup>

We shall see that in realizing these ends, St. Gaspar in his preaching would come back to the *substance* as well as the *object* of the devotion, as well as its *ends* or *aims*. Since we desire to come as close as possible to his thought, we will treat the two arguments in the chapter titled, "The Aims of the Devotion to the Precious Blood."

Very closely connected to this theme was his preaching *on the acts of devotion or practices of piety in honor of the Blood of Christ* which, on the one hand formed the faithful in this devotion, and on the other enabled them to live according to its spirit.

The fundamental points on the preaching on the Precious Blood—opportunities for the devotion, its ends and cult—are brought together in harmony in the introduction to a question that St. Gaspar posed to the secretary for apostolic briefs in 1818 in order to obtain certain faculties for his Missionaries. There he writes:

The aim of spreading the devotion of the Most Precious Blood is to rouse up the fervor of the people. In every age the Lord has raised up devotions suitable for building a dam against the torrent of iniquity. If, however, in the history of the Church we see her fighting against one or the other [false] dogmas, in our times the war is for Religion in the totality of its objects and for the Crucified Lord. Therefore it is advisable to present the glories of the Cross and of the Crucified One, our Redeemer, and to open the fountains of mercy, even as the demon would like victims of justice. Now it is necessary to tell the people again the price of their redemption: *Empti sumus* 'we have been bought . . .' It is fitting to acquaint them with the ways in which the Blood of Jesus cleanses and sanctifies souls, principally by means of the Sacraments. To shake the present day lack of awareness it is fitting to recall that this Blood is offered daily on

the altar and in opposition to the blasphemies and sacrileges we must adore and bless [that Blood] . . .<sup>13</sup>

This passage points out the intimate connection between *the suitability* of the devotion to the Precious Blood as an antidote to the “torrent of iniquity” that was sweeping over the church at that time, *the aim* of the devotion, as a message of mercy and of salvation for souls, and the *invitation to the cult* of adoration and of reparation to the Divine Blood.

These themes, however, do not constitute the entirety of St. Gaspar’s preaching on the Blood of Christ. If one keeps in mind that with the apostolate of our saint the devotion to the Precious Blood was in a certain way a novelty in the Church, inasmuch as it was not widely propagated among the faithful,<sup>14</sup> and if one also keeps in mind that he had to defend his dear devotion from attacks by those of a Jansenist bent who would smear him, one discovers another aspect of this preaching, namely the demonstration *of the excellence and legitimacy of devotion to the Blood of Christ in the Church*.<sup>15</sup>

With this final argument we believe that we have delineated, in a panoramic view, all of the fundamental points of the preaching of St. Gaspar on the Blood of Christ. To summarize:

1. Suitability of the devotion to the Precious Blood, mystical weapon of the times.
2. The aims of devotion to the Precious Blood:
  - a. Reparation to Jesus the Redeemer.
  - b. Propitiation of God.
  - c. Sanctification of souls.
3. Devotions in honor of the Precious Blood.
4. Excellence and legitimacy of the devotion to the Precious Blood.

These are the four pillars on which, in Gaspar’s line of thought, it seems possible to reconstruct adequately all of his preaching on the Blood of Christ.

In the following chapters each theme will be developed with material gathered from the writings of St. Gaspar. One must note, nevertheless, that not all the themes will have the same breadth and development, inasmuch as in his notes St. Gaspar does not offer us an equal amount of material for each of them.



## Chapter Two

### **An Opportune Devotion: The Precious Blood as the “Mystical Weapon” of the Times**

Observing the spiritual misery of his era, St. Gaspar exclaimed with sadness: “I am always very cognizant of the confusion with which we are presently faced in these miserable times of ours”;<sup>1</sup> “I weep before God when I see the wretched situation of our times.”<sup>2</sup>

#### **The Times of St. Gaspar**

Those were truly very sad times! Several movements were coming together in Gaspar’s day: the errors of the Enlightenment, the excesses of the French revolution, the upheavals of the Napoleonic era, and the harshness of the Triple Alliance. It was indeed a critical period. The symptoms of this crisis were evident in many social phenomena which were reflected in the moral conduct of the era: liberalism; the sectarianism of the freemasons and the *carbonari*, [a secret revolutionary society], which often led to assassinations and revolutions; and brigandage, which spread terror and loss of life, especially in southern Lazio.

St. Gaspar identified these evils with a profound compassion. He noted that there was a “diminishment in

piety, education, and dependence on the Church.”<sup>3</sup> The states and their governments were “at risk.”<sup>4</sup> “Brigandage” was born “out of greed for money, out of personal rivalries and vendettas between families”<sup>5</sup> or else “out of a certain hatred between the poor and the well-to-do, especially with regard to economic interests.”<sup>6</sup> The harvest of brigandage was innocent victims and it generated and fostered undying hatreds. “The self-styled philosophism,”<sup>7</sup> that is to say the Enlightenment, which spread “among the people . . . a fatal indifferentism in sacred and religious matters,”<sup>8</sup> had become the fashion of the middle classes and of the intellectuals. In such a state of decay not only had they “forgotten the mysteries of Redemption and the love of Jesus Christ, who redeemed us with the price of his Blood,”<sup>9</sup> but actually opposed these truths.

In one of the documents presented to Leo XII in defense of the Congregation, Gaspar notes that in other periods of the history of the Church there were attacks

on one or the other dogma, but now one sees that sacred things are subjected to scorn in one or the other part of the Catholic world. In our miserable times, the crisis among the people is a general one, with indescribable perversion of basic principles and of proper living.<sup>10</sup>

The evil had infiltrated even the ranks of those whose mission it should have been to be apostles of the good, namely, the clergy: “The Lord is not happy with his sacred ministers.”<sup>11</sup>

As one can see even with these brief quotations, they were indeed gloomy times, so gloomy that Gaspar exclaimed: “What a sad picture [these times] present to our eyes!”<sup>12</sup>

### **The Need for Reform**

Faced with such a spectacle, “Holy Mother Church weeps inconsolably, and lifting up her voice to Heaven,

she works tirelessly to call souls to penitence and to a sincere reform of life” and “endeavors to inspire in all the affection of the Crucified Lord.”<sup>13</sup>

This wake-up call was given either by the pastors of the Church, who had the primary responsibility to announce the message of salvation to the people, or by a great number of apostles, who had chosen to oppose the “torrent of iniquity” by restoring order and calm to troubled consciences, raising up in the Church a wave of spiritual renewal, commonly called at the time “the Reform.” The great company of the saints active during the period of 1815–1870 and the foundation of religious institutes dedicated to the missionary apostolate and to charitable and educational works are a sign of this great fervor for renewal in the Church and society of the age.

### **Gaspar Takes Action**

St. Gaspar also wanted to make his contribution to this renewal, not only by presenting to Leo XII some proposals regarding the reform of various categories of persons,<sup>14</sup> but primarily by means of his apostolic charism: the founding of a congregation of missionaries for preaching missions and retreats and for spreading the devotion to the Blood of Christ.

St. Gaspar was deeply convinced that, beyond the administrative reforms needed in the government, moral renewal was needed. This moral reform would be achieved primarily by means of missions and retreats. On July 2, 1820, he writes to Mons. Nicola Mattei, archbishop of Camerino: “Missions and Retreats: these are the two great means for the reform of the world.”<sup>15</sup> Likewise, to Mother Nazzarena De Castris of Priverno: “Is the reform to take place? The two great means, or at least the principal means are: Missions and Retreats.”<sup>16</sup> Similarly he writes to Leo XII on September 1, 1825: “The Holy Missions and retreats . . . are surely the principal bases for reform.”<sup>17</sup>

By means of these forms of preaching one could reach a great number of people more easily, instructing them in the “moral culture” that was more urgent especially for “illiterate people.”<sup>18</sup> Through this preaching one could “call souls to penance,” “to sincere repentance,” rousing them “to holy divine love.”<sup>19</sup> “The mission [is] a great fishing for souls.”<sup>20</sup> In addition, “the Missions and Retreats give life to so many of the clergy”<sup>21</sup> and, in general, provide for “the urgent needs of the people to effect the reform of their daily lives.”<sup>22</sup>

Gaspar considered that along with these specific forms of the apostolate, their very soul had to be devotion to the Most Precious Blood. This was the inspiration he had for the founding of his institute:

The Gospel Workers labor so that the Blood of Jesus will be applied to the salvation of souls, and this they must offer continually, asking pardon for sinners; if other Institutes assume the charge of spreading one or the other devotion, this [Institute] of the Missions must be intent on spreading that devotion which incorporates all the others, that of the price of our Redemption.<sup>23</sup>

St. Gaspar emphasized the need for the devotion to the Precious Blood in his day with strong supporting evidence: “We live in times in which the whole world needs to be cleansed in the Blood of the Lamb”;<sup>24</sup> “. . . for the present times the devotion and cult of the Divine Blood”;<sup>25</sup> “. . . let us use this devotion (*di questa devozione serviamoci*) for the great benefit of the longed-for Reform”;<sup>26</sup> “. . . there is . . . no doubt that the devotion to the Divine Blood is the mystical weapon of the times”;<sup>27</sup> “. . . do not cease promoting such an important devotion, from which will come peace for the Church.”<sup>28</sup> These and similar expressions occur again and again in the writings of St. Gaspar.

Why, we might ask at this point, did St. Gaspar see in the devotion to the Blood of Christ the mystical weapon for the reform of the Church? Why, in short, did he consider the devotion to the Precious Blood so necessary?

Guided by Gaspar’s thought, it appears that there is a fourfold answer to this question.

Devotion to the Blood of Christ was necessary for the reform of the Church because:

- this is the witness of the sacred Scriptures;
- this is the lesson of some examples from the history of the Church;
- this devotion roused and sustained in a special way the zeal of the apostles even to the point of martyrdom;
- it awakens in the faithful the desire for perfection and at the same time helps them to attain it.

Regarding the first reason, St. Gaspar takes as a starting point a very simple analogy: as Jesus bought the Church with his Blood, today he wants to bring new life to it with his Blood. He writes thus to Cristaldi:

A priest here in Albano reminded me of you. He is a man who, within a short time, will be going out to give testimony for the good of the Church of Jesus Christ, so greatly loved by our most beloved Redeemer who acquired it through his Blood, and now, *through his Blood, wants to call it back to the tenderest glories of religion!*<sup>29</sup>

To Leo XII he writes:

Is it not also a fact that Sacred Scripture itself gives us the steps to take for the Reform? *Pacificans per Sanguinem Crucis eius sive quae in coelis sive quae in terris sunt?* ‘making peace through the Blood of his Cross, both as to the things that are on earth, and the things that are

in heaven' [Col 1: 20]. Do we ourselves not know that *Christus dilexit ecclesiam tradidit semetipsum pro ea . . . acquisivit sanguine suo* 'Christ loved the church, and delivered himself up for it?' [Eph 5: 25]. Does not Divine Wisdom tell us that *justificati in Sanguine salvi erimus ab ira per ipsum* 'justified in the Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him?'<sup>30</sup>

In the history of the Church we have examples of saints—Gaspar cites Catherine of Siena—who made use of the devotion to the Most Precious Blood to bring peace back to the Church.<sup>31</sup>

Devotion to the Blood of Christ also constitutes a very efficacious invitation to motivate apostles to work for souls and to sustain them in the face of the inevitable difficulties in their ministry.<sup>32</sup> Turning his thoughts to those preaching the Gospel, St. Gaspar exclaims: "Oh, you athletes of religion, who made you so generous?" He responds: "It was the sight of Jesus, drenched with Blood for humankind."<sup>33</sup>

Finally, the devotion to the Precious Blood was the mystical weapon of the times for Gaspar because the fullness of love shown by the Savior in the shedding of all of his Blood served to awaken in the faithful a strong desire to return that love:

If sin was always the cause of the interior suffering of the Savior, then in the universal crisis among people today, it has caused unspeakable damage to the interests of the faith. And what does the demon fail to do so that souls will not profit from the Divine Blood? Ah, recreating such an important devotion in the memory of the people will stir them from the fatal sleep of spiritual death which crushes them.<sup>34</sup>

Clearly, as a consequence of what has been said above, devotion to the Blood of Christ was presented in

St. Gaspar's preaching as a saving intervention of God in his Church, in wretched times, by means of "the enlightenment of the soul . . . so favored,"<sup>35</sup> to call people back "to the study of the Crucified One and thus to see in him the application of the Redemption and of his Divine Blood;"<sup>36</sup> as "a valuable means,"<sup>37</sup> provided by God for the disposition of his Church, to conquer the demon and make a barrier to the iniquity that was threatening the salvation of souls.

This devotion, spread widely, especially by means of the preaching of missions and retreats, must recall to souls the depth of God's love and the sense of sin, revive in them the gift of faith, and stimulate their apostolic zeal even to the giving of their lives, if necessary, following the example of the Redeemer.

This is what Gaspar meant when he preached the timeliness of the devotion to the Most Precious Blood as the "mystical weapon of the time."<sup>38</sup>



## Chapter Three

### The Aims of Devotion to the Precious Blood

The core of St. Gaspar's preaching on the devotion to the Precious Blood is found in the *ends* or *motives* for which devotion to the Divine Blood was spread with zeal and "with particular dedication (*impegnò*)" at the time.<sup>1</sup>

We have already said that this theme is found not only in preaching on the aim of the devotion, taken in the narrow sense, but also in preaching on the doctrinal substance or object of the devotion.

We know that according to St. Gaspar there were three aims of the devotion:

First, it is a cult of compensation for the abuse given to the Divine Blood by sinners. Second, [it exists] in order to offer the price of our redemption to the Eternal Father for our present needs. Third, [it is] to stress the true bases (*le vere basi*) for our reform . . . the verification of those words *justificati in Sanguine ipsius salvi erimus ab ira per ipsum* 'justified in his Blood we shall be saved from wrath by him' [Rom 5: 9].<sup>2</sup>

This classification of the aims is found in a letter written by St. Gaspar on April 29, 1832.<sup>3</sup> Using the same

order and nearly identical words this classification is repeated in a letter of March 6, 1833<sup>4</sup> and in another letter of July 24, 1834,<sup>5</sup> addressed respectively to Canon Don Antonio Gammarelli of Rome and to Mr. Vincenzo Adriani of Perugia.

The perfect parallelism of concepts and the nearly perfect parallelism of words that stand out in these diverse letters written years apart convince us that St. Gaspar, at least in the latter period of his life, had more or less standardized concepts and phraseology for preaching on the aim of the devotion to the Precious Blood.

Even before 1832 we discover this aim in the writings of our founder, even if the phrasing is not the same, but with the same completeness and the same order that we find in the passages cited above. We have confirmed this in some documents written to Leo XII (1823–1829)<sup>6</sup> and to Pius VIII (1829–1830).<sup>7</sup> For example, the memorial or memorandum to Leo XII concludes with this synthesis:

[T]he divine Blood . . . will placate the Divine Eternal Father (=offered to the *Eternal Father*), that will purify our hearts and will inebriate us with love for Jesus who *dilexit nos, et lavit nos in Sanguine suo* 'loved us and washed us in his Blood' [Rv. 1: 5] (=sanctification of souls and compensation to the Redeemer).<sup>8</sup>

Also from this period, more precisely from May 22, 1826, is a letter to Cardinal Cristaldi that reinforces this point. St. Gaspar writes:

I see a multitude of workers who are gradually making their way throughout the entire earth with the holy chalice of Redemption, offering to the Divine Father the Divine Blood: *Pacificans per Sanguinem* 'making peace through the Blood' [Col 1: 20]; and, at the same time

applying it to souls: *Justificati in Sanguine*, etc. 'justified in Blood' [Rom 5: 9]. While there are many who will be giving abuse to the price of our Redemption: *Quae utilitas in Sanguine meo* 'what profit is there in my Blood' [Ps 30: 10] . . . there will also be a huge army of souls who, with solemn worship, will be seeking to make compensation for the many wrongs that Jesus receives, etc., etc.<sup>9</sup>

As is easily noticed, in these expressions there is only a change in the order, but the concepts regarding the ends of the devotion are the same.

If we go back to the first years of the apostolate of our saint, we find the same concepts, to the extent that we can affirm that the preaching on the aims of the devotion to the Precious Blood marked the beginning of the apostolate of St. Gaspar and of his Congregation. In a letter to Don Gaetano Bonanni written on March 1, 1815, Gaspar says: "The Gospel Workers labor so that the Blood of Jesus will be applied to the salvation of souls, and this they must offer continually, asking for pardon for sinners . . ." <sup>10</sup> Therefore, spreading the cult of the Divine Blood has as its aim the application of the benefits of redemption to souls (first and third aims) and the propitiation of God the Father (second aim).

From this quick glance that encompasses the entire apostolic life of St. Gaspar, which could be amplified with so many other citations from his writings, the clear conclusion is that his thought on the aim of devotion to the Precious Blood was quite precise: compensation or reparation to the Redeemer, an offering or propitiation to God the Father, and the sanctification of souls.

This was the scheme that St. Gaspar developed more fully in his preaching on the Divine Blood. The greater part of the preaching material on the Precious Blood that has come to us from St. Gaspar relates to this theme. It will be understandable, therefore, that in reconstructing this theme we also go into more detail.

This chapter will treat the following points:

1. Devotion to the Precious Blood and reparation to Jesus the Redeemer.
2. Devotion to the Precious Blood and the propitiation of the Eternal Father.
3. Devotion to the Precious Blood and the sanctification of souls.

## **DEVOTION TO THE PRECIOUS BLOOD AND REPARATION TO JESUS THE REDEEMER**

In the prefatory material of *Metodo delle Sante Missioni*, St. Gaspar, outlining the aim of his apostolate, writes these words:

Because the mysteries of Redemption and of the love of Jesus, who has redeemed us with the price of his Blood, have been so forgotten, see how [the Church] seeks to inspire in everyone the love (*affetto*) of the Crucified Lord.<sup>11</sup>

Gaspar reached this aim primarily by means of spreading the devotion to the Precious Blood. In the first place, this devotion had as its aim compensating Jesus for the abuse of his Blood on the part of sinners, that is, he had to bring the redeemed to appreciate the gift of the saving love of the Redeemer, which had its fullest expression in the shedding of his Blood.

St. Gaspar developed this argument in various stages. He began with the meditation on the benefit of redemption, brought about in the Precious Blood and motivated by the love of the Redeemer. After speaking of the pain of Jesus as he sees that his love is not returned (*l'incorrispondenza humana*), he would conclude by inviting the faithful to make reparation for such ingratitude.

### **Benefit of the Redemption and of the Blood of Jesus**

For St. Gaspar, speaking of the “Blood of Jesus” meant synthesizing the whole work of salvation: “[referring to] the Blood of Jesus Christ is to make known the dignity of Redemption.”<sup>12</sup> In an exhortation for the month of the Divine Blood he writes:

O you faithful, adoring the inestimable price of our redemption is the tenderest subject that I can propose to you! From it we receive the treasures of Wisdom and of Sanctification; from it liberation from the pains of hell. How great it is to have the possibility of possessing the holy glory of heaven through the love of Jesus in virtue of the Divine Blood!<sup>13</sup>

In sum, the whole poem of salvation is written in the Blood of Christ.

In some of the reflections for the month of the Divine Blood,<sup>14</sup> after an introduction explaining the *motives* for making the month well and the way to observe the practice, St. Gaspar then sets the benefit of redemption before the listener. In the discourse he emphasizes the work of Jesus for the salvation of humanity as the antitype of the work of Moses, who liberated the Hebrew people from the slavery of Egypt.<sup>15</sup>

In treating this subject, St. Gaspar’s preaching would see the Blood of Christ as the source of all of the gifts of grace that had been so lavishly bestowed by the Savior.<sup>16</sup> Such gifts are concerned with the Church militant,<sup>17</sup> suffering (*purgante*)<sup>18</sup> and triumphant.<sup>19</sup>

### **The Love of the Redeemer and the Divine Blood**

The preceding argument was brought to completion by preaching on the interior sentiments of the Redeemer for the benefit of salvation. Such sentiments all flow together in love and the Precious Blood is the most eloquent witness to that love.<sup>20</sup>

In the reflections for the month of the Divine Blood already mentioned, St. Gaspar, having spoken about the benefit of redemption, asks: "What was the cause of Redemption?" He responds: "[It was] love: *propter nimiam caritatem qua dilexit nos . . . oblatu s est* 'for his exceeding charity wherewith he loved us [Eph 2: 4] . . . he was offered up.'" Then he goes on to establish the qualities of this love: it is eternal, magnanimous, tender, suffering, forbearing.<sup>21</sup> It is a love that permeates the entire work of salvation, from the incarnation of the Word to the final glorification of humanity. Gaspar invites those who have been redeemed to reflect:

Oh soul, redeemed by the Most Precious Blood of Jesus the Redeemer, lift up your thoughts on this point and realize that this ineffable benefit and august mystery, together with the Incarnation of the Son of God, was a flaming outburst of love (*incendio d'amore*): *exinanivit semetipsum formam servi accipiens* 'he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant' [Phil 2: 7]. It was a flaming outburst of love that he submitted himself to so such pain and trials, finally expiring in a sea of sorrows on the infamous scaffold of Calvary. It was a flaming outburst of love to leave himself entirely in the Eucharistic banquet. It was a flaming outburst of love for him to find his delight in us miserable creatures . . . and his burning desire for our eternal salvation in the beloved homeland of heaven.<sup>22</sup>

With these first two considerations, in which the activity and the love of the Redeemer come together, under the sign of the Divine Blood, St. Gaspar intended to recall to his hearers the generous and loving divine initiative toward the redeemed. They did not, however, profit from their own salvation and thus were holding it in contempt.

This sad observation, made more evident by the miserable moral conditions of the times, offered St. Gaspar the impetus to speak of the suffering of Jesus on account of the lack of response to his love.

### **The Suffering of the Redeemer and Human Unresponsiveness**

St. Gaspar asks:

Now who would believe it? Instead of seeing in souls a sentiment of tender response to Jesus, one sees ingratitude, a lack of gratefulness among the redeemed sons and daughters that cannot be expressed in words.<sup>23</sup>

Sinners are abusing [the Divine Blood] and the Lord, in the transports of his love, is saying: 'What profit is there in my Blood?' [Ps 30: 10].<sup>24</sup>

Gaspar continues noting that this is the cry, repeated by Jesus in the Garden of Olives,

That will cause him sorrow in a special way . . . when he sees that through their own fault so many will not profit from his Redemption and from the Divine Blood. Oh, this was certainly the principal reason for his terrible torments.<sup>25</sup>

In this way St. Gaspar brings his listeners to meditate on the displeasure of Jesus on account of "the incomprehension of the redeemed soul."<sup>26</sup> He develops the discourse through three points: in the first place he proposes the "laments and justified grievances (*doglianze*) of Jesus the Redeemer" because of human ingratitude in the face of the benefit of redemption;<sup>27</sup> then he goes on to speak of the thirst that the Lord "has for redeemed souls, for whom he searches (*va in traccia*), because his creatures are ungrateful": "an ardent thirst, unceasing, extending to every soul"; a thirst expressed by the Lord "in the period of waiting, in the time of

Redemption and after he ascends to heaven.”<sup>28</sup> Finally, St. Gaspar gets them to meditate on the “incitements (*eccitamenti*) that [Jesus] gives to those he loves,” when they cooperate with his designs: “he arouses the apostles, strengthens them in their sufferings, and animates them.”<sup>29</sup> He sets up the priesthood, the sacrifice, and the sacraments by the application of the benefits of his Blood to souls.<sup>30</sup>

The grace of salvation is viewed in this theme as the immense gift of love on the part of Jesus.

### Compensation to the Redeemer

The preceding considerations lead the preaching of St. Gaspar on the first aim of devotion to the Precious Blood to conclude with an invitation offered to the hearers to *compensate* for human ingratitude toward the Savior, either by profiting from the gift of the Blood for their own sanctification or by performing acts of worship in reparation “for the injury that the Divine Blood receives from sinners.”<sup>31</sup>

With regard to the first means of compensation or reparation, we could express Gaspar’s preaching by citing the thoughts and language on the topic that are contained in *Il mese di Giugno consacrato al Sangue Preziosissimo*:<sup>32</sup>

How great was the desire of Jesus during his entire mortal life to shed his Blood for the Redemption of the world, and all the more burning is his desire that all benefit from it, that all souls share in it. Thus he invites us to this fountain of mercy: *Bibite ex hoc omnes* ‘Drink from this, all of you’ [Mt 26: 27]. In his most sacred wounds he opens four fonts, as St. Bernard declares: The font of mercy, the font of peace, the font of devotion and the font of love. He calls all souls to them so that they can relieve their thirst: *Si quis sitit, veniat ad me* ‘If anyone

thirsts, let him/her come to me' [Jn 7: 37]. And why did he institute the Most Holy Sacraments, which are like channels through which the merits of this Most Precious Blood are communicated? Why does he offer [his Blood] continuously to the Eternal Father in heaven and why does he desire that he come each day? Why did he reawaken in the heart of so many of the faithful, especially in our time, a similar devotion, if not because his own heart longs ardently and obtains the waters of his wounds from the fountains of those most sacred wounds by means of this Blood? But what monstrous ingratitude that one neglects and does not profit from such an efficacious means of salvation.<sup>33</sup>

With regard to reparation to the Redeemer by means of the adoration of the Precious Blood, a theme to be treated in the following chapter, St. Gaspar writes to Leo XII:

Sinners are abusing [the Divine Blood] and the Lord, in the transports of his love, is saying: 'What profit is there in my Blood' [Ps 30: 10]. So, let there be someone who obtains the adoration of [this Blood] in compensation through sacred, solemn cult . . .<sup>34</sup>

With this sort of exhortation to reparation, St. Gaspar would conclude his discourse on the first aim of devotion to the Precious Blood. He sought to revive faith in the Redeemer and in his saving work among his hearers, by means of the sign of the Blood, in order to render it effective in the souls of the faithful. Therefore St. Gaspar was quick to speak of the benefits and motive of redemption: love. He would conclude with the invitation to appreciate "the mysteries of redemption and the love of Jesus."<sup>35</sup>

## DEVOTION TO THE PRECIOUS BLOOD AND THE PROPITIATION OF THE ETERNAL FATHER

The second end for which St. Gaspar promoted devotion to the Most Precious Blood was “to present to the Eternal Divine Father the offering of the price of our ransom (*riscatto*) and to implore peace for our times.”<sup>36</sup>

This theme was also constantly reaffirmed in his preaching. Mons. Santelli, a friend of Gaspar, testifies that “in nearly every discourse he spoke [of the Divine Blood] saying that it was the devotion of the times, that this devotion will save us from the punishment that God is about to send us on account of human sinfulness.”<sup>37</sup> Don Ferdinando Angelici, another witness at the canonical processes for the canonization of Gaspar, summarized a conference of St. Gaspar on the Precious Blood, presented “in three magnificent reflections: the Blood of redemption is a Mystery of faith, Basis for hope, Pledge of love.” With regard to the second point he says:

In the course of the conference, and precisely in developing the second reflection, it happened that after having spoken about the social evils that have occurred<sup>38</sup> and of the divine mercy in having restored freedom to the Church, Gaspar would suddenly stop speaking and appeared as if seized by some great thought. He would become flushed in the face and then would interject in an almost prophetic voice: ‘No, the punishments of God have not ended yet; there will come even sadder times and the divine justice will be placated by the devotion to the Blood of Jesus Christ.’<sup>39</sup>

This theme in the preaching on the Precious Blood, based on the power of blood to ward off evil (*sul valore apotropaico*) and starting with the first Passover in

Egypt (cf. Ex 12: 12–13), was the common patrimony of those promoting the devotion at the time. By way of example, we would like to refer to the passage we find in the preface of the work on the month of the Precious Blood by Strambi and Bonanni:

The most loveable God, who in the midst of his Justice makes his infinite Mercy shine as well, how many times has he in his anger wished his human children to feel the terror of his punishments[?] [But] has he likewise given a means of placating his anger and restraining the lightning of his right hand (*la sua destra fulminatrice*) . . . It is clear that he is discouraged with our time. Who has not seen and does not see each moment the signs of his righteous anger? Who does not fear that he will forever pour out the bitter chalice of his wrath upon us? Now, in order to disarm the weapon in his hand (*disarmare il suo braccio*), he has awakened the tender devotion to the Most Precious Blood of his Only Begotten divine Son, so that the souls that are sprinkled by this Blood, offering it with lively faith and ardent love to the divine Majesty, might placate him so that he will be merciful to us . . .<sup>40</sup>

These are words and concepts which, as will be seen, one could attribute to St. Gaspar without difficulty.

But what was the preaching of St. Gaspar on this topic?

Despite the fact that this second topic was emphasized in the preaching of St. Gaspar, among his writings we do not find specific outlines for preaching that would help us reconstruct this as was the case, when we were treating the first aim. We find only some brief expressions from which, nonetheless, one can attempt to reconstruct an outline of his discourse on the topic.

As the basic text for such a reconstruction one can take a part of the memorandum sent to Leo XII, entitled “*Rispettose avvertenze sull’Archiconfraternita del Preziosissimo Sangue di N. S. G. C.* ‘Respectful observations on the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ.’”<sup>41</sup> In this document St. Gaspar describes the miserable moral state of his society as a consequence of sin, basing his argument on the teaching of Sacred Scripture, and holds that it is necessary to offer the Divine Blood to the Eternal Father to beg for mercy and grace. The flow of the discourse would thus embrace the following reflections: sin and its consequences, and the necessity of offering the Blood of Christ to God in order to obtain mercy from him.

Sin and its consequences in the social order have already been treated in the beginning of the second chapter, where, using Gaspar’s own words, we have sought to describe the moral climate of his time. We also know from the testimony of Santelli and Angelici, noted above, that the sad social events of his time were considered by Gaspar as punishments of the justice of a God who was provoked by sin.<sup>42</sup> In such a situation, according to the saint, beyond carrying out an appropriate apostolate for the sanctification of souls, one must “find a means of placating the Eternal Divine Father,”<sup>43</sup> which occurs only by offering the Divine Blood. Here are a few of the numerous texts that could be cited in support of this: “The affairs of the world are going badly. Let us offer the Divine Blood often and trust in God.”<sup>44</sup> In two letters to Cardinal Belisario Cristaldi he makes his thinking known to us. In the letter of March 6, 1827, he writes:

Oh, my Monsignor, if only everyone would meditate on that text of the Apocalypse: *‘Ipsi vicerunt draconem propter Sanguine Agni’* ‘They have conquered the dragon on account of the Blood of the Lamb’ [Rv 12: 11]; if only

everyone would consider that reference to the reasons for which the doors of the Hebrew people were stained with blood; also, the image of the Red Sea as well as the ancient sacrifices . . . how people would come to realize that Jesus, before becoming the Judge, reproduces and revives the remembrance of that inestimable price of redemption wherein souls are justified in that bath of eternal life.<sup>45</sup>

In the letter of June 29, 1827, he practically repeats the same concepts:

A great Servant of God once said to me that the Lord, before coming as judge, would call back to the memory of people the inestimable price of redemption, thus summoning all to repentance. The Divine Blood, indeed, is the offering to be presented to the Eternal, Divine Father, for it is written: *'pacificans per Sanguinem Crucis ejus sive quae in caelis, sive quae in terris sunt'* 'making peace through the Blood of his Cross, both as to the things that are on earth, and the things that are in heaven' [Col 1: 20].<sup>46</sup>

The faithful are to make such an offering of the Divine Blood to the Eternal Father continually,<sup>47</sup> especially by priests in the sacrifice of the altar,<sup>48</sup> and by the Missionaries.<sup>49</sup>

Why was it necessary, according to St. Gaspar, to make such an offering of the Blood of Christ? What arguments did he marshal to prove this necessity?

St. Gaspar based his assertion on the teaching of Scripture. The blood of the paschal lamb, sprinkled as a sign on the doorposts of the Hebrews in Egypt, delivered the chosen people "from the avenging sword."<sup>50</sup> Jesus, in the Blood of his sacrifice, delivered humankind from the divine wrath and from the slavery of sin,<sup>51</sup> bringing peace between humankind and God.<sup>52</sup> Thus, in those

miserable times, it was necessary to interpose the same Divine Blood to conquer the demon,<sup>53</sup> to placate and propitiate the divine justice, to expiate sins, to reconcile God with humankind, to implore grace, to restore peace to the Church and to society.<sup>54</sup> These are the beneficial effects that St. Gaspar expected from the offering of the Blood of Christ to the Eternal Father. This offering certainly would reach its aim,<sup>55</sup> because “the Blood of Jesus cries out, begging mercy for us; and he cries out in such a way that the noise of our sins is not heard!”<sup>56</sup> “The Blood of Christ sounds like a trumpet.”<sup>57</sup>

The conclusion of St. Gaspar’s preaching on the second aim of spreading the devotion to the Precious Blood was therefore an invitation to confidence in God, who was propitiated by means of the offering of the Blood of his son. His niece, Luigia del Bufalo, confirms this in her testimony in the canonical processes: “In order to arouse everyone to greater trust in God, he would recommend offering to the Eternal Father the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, and he himself would make this offering and hoped that all would make use of this means.”<sup>58</sup>

Thus a discourse which at its beginning touched on the theme of the great divine justice could strike fear in the hearts of its hearers’ sentiments would conclude by inspiring a great confidence in God and in his protection. The Blood of Christ was the source of this confidence, “the foundation of hope in divine mercy.”<sup>59</sup>

## **DEVOTION TO THE PRECIOUS BLOOD AND THE SANCTIFICATION OF SOULS**

The third aim for which St. Gaspar propagated devotion to the Precious Blood was the sanctification of souls. Preaching on this theme was strictly linked with the two preceding themes. In fact it would be useless to speak of the *compensation* to render to the Redeemer for the abuse which sinners made of his Blood if they did not have the benefit of that same Blood for their salvation.

It would be absurd to placate the divine justice with the offering of the Blood of Christ, if its effects (*efficacia*) had not already been applied to souls. Thus when Gaspar suggests to Leo XII the remedies for the evils of his time he wrote: "Therefore, there are two things that must necessarily be done nowadays. The first is to find a way of placating the Divine Eternal Father . . . The other is to try to find a way of effectively applying those merits to souls."<sup>60</sup>

This theme was of very great importance in the preaching of St. Gaspar. Its importance is also confirmed by the fact that the most important extended writing of the saint on devotion to the Precious Blood develops precisely the present theme. This work is entitled: "*In omnibus divites facti estis in illo 'In All Things You Are Made Rich in Him.'*"<sup>61</sup> There are also outlines of preaching for the month of June [then the month of the Precious Blood] that Gaspar sent to Don Luigi Mosconi, a Missionary living in Albano, in 1822. In these outlines he describes the spiritual journey of the soul from its conversion from sin to its highest perfection in love. This journey is divided into the traditional three ways: the purgative, or state of sin; the illuminative, or state of grace; and the unitive, or the state of perfection.<sup>62</sup> The entire way is illuminated, guided, and supported by the Blood of Jesus.

In reconstructing the preaching of St. Gaspar on this theme we are following the itinerary traced out for us in this important document. Note, however, that we will emphasize only the principal points, since each of these can deepen our understanding of the text found in the Appendix (pars. 43–73).

### **The Soul in the Purgative Way**

Following common doctrine, St. Gaspar gives this definition of the purgative way in his little ascetical work entitled *Direttore Diretto nella guida delle anime alla perfezione* 'The Director Directed in Guiding Souls

to *Perfection*,’ published in Rome in 1825:<sup>63</sup> “It is a certain state of the soul in which obstacles are to be removed gradually so that [the soul] would be suited to obtaining perfection by cultivating Christian virtues.” In the purgative way the soul gradually must remove obstacles (sin) so that it might obtain perfection through exercising the virtues.<sup>64</sup> St. Gaspar distinguishes two principal moments: in the first, the Blood of Jesus instills trust in divine mercy in the sinner. In the second, the crucified Redeemer, described as having the function of teacher, points out to the soul the way of the good and starts it off on the path of virtue.

First of all, hope in divine mercy must be stirred up in the sinner. So, “devotion to the Blood of Jesus Christ is the foundation for hope in divine mercy.”<sup>65</sup> On the one hand he invites the sinner to consider Jesus as an advocate before the Eternal Father, to whom “he presents his wounds and his Blood that speaks more eloquently than that of Abel,”<sup>66</sup> and on the other, he has the sinner consider Jesus as the Good Shepherd, who “seeks out the sinner in his entire passion,” making the sinner understand “the efficacy of the means of reconciliation: his own Blood.”<sup>67</sup> The Good Shepherd strengthens the sinner against the temptations of the demon who seeks to bring him down with empty fears,<sup>68</sup> and strengthens him against losing confidence in persevering in the good.<sup>69</sup>

This entire profound effort to persuade is supported by appropriate considerations gathered from the Blood of Christ. Therefore, St. Gaspar concludes the description of the first moment of conversion of the sinner with this explanation: “Oh, how true it is that the one who is in the purgative way must count his riches *in Sanguine Agni!*”<sup>70</sup>

In the study of Jesus crucified the converted soul finds appropriate lessons for perseverance and growth in goodness. First of all, the Redeemer seeks to remove the soul from the proximate occasion of sin,<sup>71</sup> motivates it to

accomplish good works,<sup>72</sup> and finally makes it want to carry the cross with patience, joy, and love.<sup>73</sup>

At this point the soul “begins to participate in the illuminative way as it continues on its way, imitating the examples of the Savior.”<sup>74</sup>

### **The Soul in the Illuminative Way**

St. Gaspar also accepts the common understanding of the illuminative way. He defines it thus:

It is a certain state of the soul in which it is now suitable for cultivating Christian virtues since the obstacles have been removed. It is led by repeated acts to practice them habitually in order to be purified more fully and be better disposed to obtaining its perfection.<sup>75</sup>

In the illuminative way, therefore, the soul must acquire virtue by repeating virtuous actions and must purify itself even more fully so that it can progress toward perfection.

In his writing St. Gaspar speaks in a special way of the virtues of faith, of religion, and of hope. He speaks of the others in a generic way.

### ***Devotion to the Precious Blood and Faith***

“In the illuminative way, the converted soul begins to notice the greatness of [Christian] faith,” which converges in the Blood of Christ (*che trova la sua convergenza nel Sangue di Cristo*).<sup>76</sup>

This is a thesis typical of our saint. He considered the Blood of Jesus as the center of all the truths of Christianity. Don Ferdinando Angelici gives the following testimony in the canonical processes for canonization, synthesizing another point of the same conference of St. Gaspar on the Precious Blood, which was noted earlier:

Regarding the Divine Blood being the mystery of faith, he [Gaspar] said that all of the

mysteries of the faith are interpenetrated (*si recompenetran*) in the infinite price of redemption, as the lines of a circle to the center point. Jesus Christ himself calls it the *misterium fidei* par excellence.<sup>77</sup>

It is a theme that recurs quite frequently in his writings,<sup>78</sup> a theme, therefore, on which he preached often.

St. Gaspar proved his thesis by demonstrating that in the Blood of Christ there shone the glories of the unity of faith, of the divinity of faith, and of the propagation of faith.

*The unity of faith.* In the Blood of Christ one discovers the unity of faith between the Old and New Testaments:

- a) *In the sacrifices*; “the sacrifice of Melchizedek, the blood of Abel (*Abele sve-nato*), [and] the sacrifice of Isaac, allude to this victim”<sup>79</sup> as do the other “sacrifices of the Old Testament.”<sup>80</sup>
- b) *In the salvation given to the just of the Old Testament* “the soul at the foot of the cross meditates on how all are saved in the faith of the coming Messiah.”<sup>81</sup>
- c) *In symbols and figures*: “The Hebrews were ordered to tinge the doors with the blood of the lamb in order to be free of the punishments meted out in Egypt, a symbol of the liberation of our souls from slavery to the devil.”<sup>82</sup>

He concludes: “See, in the meeting of ideas and in the agreement of the Old and New Testaments are the glories of the unity of faith.”<sup>83</sup>

*The divinity of faith.* For St. Gaspar, the glories of the divinity of faith consist in the fulfillment of the oracles of the Old Testament in the person of the Redeemer, oracles which “our devotion . . . calls to mind,”<sup>84</sup> to the

extent that he can assert that “all of the prophecies are gathered together in this devotion.”<sup>85</sup>

*The propagation of faith.* The Divine Blood also proclaims the glories of spreading the faith: “the apostles went out to sanctify the world in the Blood of the Lamb, applied in the Sacraments.”<sup>86</sup> The martyrs found the strength to defend their faith in the Blood of Christ; the confessors found constancy in virtue; the virgins, the innocence of purity; and the saints, heavenly glory.<sup>87</sup>

To the aforementioned glories of faith, centered in the Blood of Christ, we can add many others, according to St. Gaspar’s thinking: redemption,<sup>88</sup> the Church,<sup>89</sup> the sacraments, which “are like channels through which the merits of this Most Precious Blood are communicated to us,”<sup>90</sup> indulgences,<sup>91</sup> the priesthood, “instituted to apply the price of redemption to souls”<sup>92</sup>—in sum, all of the spiritual benefits that come from the Redeemer. Thus Gaspar can exclaim: “O my Lord, when I see you there covered in blood, how many matters of religion I call to mind! Oh great devotion of the Precious Blood!”<sup>93</sup>

### ***Devotion to the Precious Blood and the Virtue of Religion***

The virtue of religion disposes a person to give to God the worship that is due to God as principle of everything that exists. The virtue consists of four fundamental actions: adoration, thanksgiving, supplication (*impetrazione*), and expiation. The spirit of Precious Blood devotion, especially by means of the Eucharistic sacrifice, facilitates the fulfillment of these acts of religion. St. Gaspar writes that the soul

... goes on to consider that it possesses its riches by the merits of Jesus Christ, while, lovingly seeking to render the worship of religion, recognizes its own miserable state, and takes the chalice in hand: *Calicem salutaris accipiam!* ‘I will take the chalice of salvation!’ [Ps 115: 13]

. . . *Calix inebrians quam praeclarus est!* ‘the chalice which inebriates me, how goodly is it!’<sup>94</sup>

In the chalice of the Blood of Christ the soul *adores* God,<sup>95</sup> “*gives* [God] *thanks* for benefits received,”<sup>96</sup> *intercedes* for others,<sup>97</sup> and *makes expiation* for sin.<sup>98</sup>

### ***Devotion to the Precious Blood, Hope and the Other Virtues***

In the illuminative way the soul is also strengthened in the virtue of hope; it is “the Blood of the Savior” that “comforts it,” giving it greater trust in the merciful love of God: “[The soul] sees the wounds that have been opened by sins, groans with tenderness, but by those wounds gains the mystical waters [of grace] by means of which it hopes to be saved.” Thus, trusting in the goodness of God, using supernatural means and “full of courage,” the soul continues along its way of sanctification in the practice of all the virtues, clothing itself in the justice of Christ that includes “every good work.”<sup>99</sup>

Nor does the soul permit itself to be lured by the demon, who “loves to see it in sin again.”<sup>100</sup> The soul seeks to “establish better the attachment to the good” and therefore “little by little orients itself to following the story of the pains suffered by Jesus,”<sup>101</sup> meditating on the Crucified One. In this meditation it comes to reflect on “the open side . . . which calls to mind . . . the tenderness of the love of Jesus, who *dilexit nos et lavit nos in Sanguine suo* ‘loved us and washed us in his Blood’ [Rv 1: 5]. Jesus gave his Blood for us up to the last drop . . . the soul begins to taste the ways of love.”<sup>102</sup>

### **The Soul in the Unitive Way**

From the reign of virtue we have arrived at the reign of love. The unitive way

is a certain state of the soul in which it has removed obstacles and has acquired the habitual practice of the virtues and is now more

disposed to obtaining its perfection. It is more closely joined to God through love and is daily disposed to great purification and growth by means of ongoing practice.<sup>103</sup>

The unitive way is that state of the spiritual life in which the soul, after purification from sin and the acquisition of virtue, unites itself more closely with God in love by greater purification and growth. In this last stage of the path, therefore, the soul must progress in love of God until reaching an intimate and ongoing union with him. St. Gaspar describes the persons who are found in this state as “loving, ardent, just, fervent,”<sup>104</sup> that is to say, souls that are governed by a lively love of God.

At the very beginning of the unitive way the domination of love is in evidence: “The soul, marvelously illuminated at the foot of the Cross, seeks the means by which it can be united with *an intimate relationship of love* to its beloved Lord.”<sup>105</sup> Therefore it loves perfection, studies it, and practices it.<sup>106</sup>

*The soul loves perfection.* Meditation on divine love, manifested principally by the truths which recall the devotion to the Precious Blood, roots the soul ever more firmly in the love of Christ.<sup>107</sup>

“*The soul studies perfection*, seeking the way to obtain in the Crucified One the motivation for growing in its own perfection and holiness each day.”<sup>108</sup> The crucifix (*Crocifisso*, which can also mean “the Crucified One” in Italian), is “a book opened by Jesus Christ to offer new instruction to the world,”<sup>109</sup> a book to be acquainted with, to love, to imitate.<sup>110</sup> In the crucifix is sculpted the merciful and zealous goodness of the Savior even in the face of human ingratitude. The soul thus learns in the crucifix zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of one’s brothers and sisters even to the point of martyrdom.<sup>111</sup> At the foot of the crucifix the soul learns to offer itself as a victim of love with Jesus.<sup>112</sup> Full

of fervor, Gaspar exclaimed: "Oh, the sentiments that [the soul] gains in the study of the crucifix!"<sup>113</sup>

*The soul practices perfection.* Meditating on the divine love and the study of the crucifix would be in vain if it were limited solely to illuminating the intelligence and stimulating the will to perfection by means of lovely sentiments. Such sentiments of perfection must be translated into practice. Therefore, the soul in the unitive way "gives itself to a delicacy of conscience, which seeks gradually to combat habits and less serious sins."<sup>114</sup> "It loves . . . the life of prayer,"<sup>115</sup> "seeks God continually . . . ; it is revolted by the present state of affairs (*nausea le cose presenti*),"<sup>116</sup> the soul resists the temptations of the demon who oppresses "with inexpressible discouragements (*con abbattimenti inesprimibili*)." <sup>117</sup> The soul knows the centrality of the scandal of the cross in the history of salvation and the need to continue within itself the sacrifice of Christ: "As Jesus could be said to have consummated everything, thus [the soul] must have the proportionate motivation one day to repeat '*consummatum est*.'" <sup>118</sup> "Since the Cross must be the ladder to heaven, [the soul] is no longer terrified when it hears 'suffering,' but rather suffers *with gentleness . . . with joy*,"<sup>119</sup> and continues, following the example of the Savior, to be zealous for the good of one's neighbor, even if it only receives ingratitude in return.

With the guidance of St. Gaspar we have arrived at the peak of this marvelous spiritual journey, illuminated and strengthened by devotion to the Blood of Christ.

Finally, St. Gaspar takes us "into the great valley of Jehosaphat," to the day of universal judgment, when the elect, with the palms of victory in their hands, will be able to "sing the praises of that Divine Blood, by which [they have] the wedding garment and the garment of cheerfulness and exaltation."<sup>120</sup> The reprobates, on the other hand, will despair, because "they trampled on this Blood with sacrileges and blasphemies."<sup>121</sup> To distract his hearers from the sad lot of the latter, St. Gaspar

closes his work by exhorting all to enrich themselves “with the treasures that we have in applying the Blood of Jesus Christ,” because “in proportion to our applying [the Blood] will the degrees [of] glory in Paradise grow.”<sup>122</sup>



## Chapter Four

### Devotional Practices in Honor of the Blood of Jesus

By the term “devotional practices” (*pratiche di culto*) we mean any expressions of the cult of the Blood of Christ, from liturgical actions to exercises of piety and other manifestations of devotion.

Devotions cannot be sustained without devotional practices. These practices both reveal and nourish a devotion. St. Gaspar, who wanted to spread a living devotion to the Blood of Christ among the faithful, advocated the cult of the Precious Blood and spread suitable devotional practices.

Thus he writes to Leo XII:

Sinners are abusing [the Divine Blood] horribly and the Lord is saying in the transports of his love: ‘What profit is there in my Blood?’ [Ps 30: 10]. Therefore, let there be one who procures *with the sacred and solemn cult the adoration of compensation*.<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to Cardinal Cristaldi on June 29, 1827:

It is a just thing to render a cult of special compensation, especially in our times, to Jesus who

continues to repeat: '*quae utilitas in Sanguine meo*' 'what profit is there in my Blood?' [Ps 30: 10].<sup>2</sup>

Elsewhere Gaspar, exhorting the faithful to observe special practices during the month of June, which at that time was dedicated to the Precious Blood, says:

It was appropriate, therefore, O faithful ones, that to compensate for the ingratitude of humankind that we consecrate this month to adoration of the Divine Blood, and through it our hearts will be moved.<sup>3</sup>

Similar exhortations to have a special veneration of the Divine Blood are frequent in the writings of St. Gaspar.<sup>4</sup>

The aims that he chose in this devotional practice were the same that he had proposed to achieve in the spread of the devotion: compensation to the Redeemer, reconciliation with God, and the sanctification of souls. These three general ends included particular aims.

St. Gaspar wanted the cult of the Blood, which could be either private or public,<sup>5</sup> to be perpetual.<sup>6</sup> He wanted to see "a huge army of souls who, with solemn worship, [would seek] to make compensation for the many wrongs that Jesus receives."<sup>7</sup>

Devotional expressions recommended by St. Gaspar were many and diverse. For convenience, we will organize them under the following titles: the Eucharistic mystery and the sacraments, the liturgical feast of the Precious Blood, contemplation of the mystery of the Divine Blood, devotions, particular functions, and miscellaneous initiatives.

### **The Eucharistic Mystery and the Sacraments**

Among the cultic expressions of the devotion to the Blood of Christ, the Eucharistic mystery and the sacraments occupy the central place. In fact, when St. Gaspar

speaks of the Eucharistic sacrifice and of the sacraments in relation to the devotion to the Precious Blood, he seems to emphasize a particular bond:

From this devotion . . . comes the renewal of that good which the Divine Blood has effected in us in the regeneration of Holy Baptism; from this special relationship to the other sacraments, and especially the sacrament of Penance . . . which, if we direct the gaze of faith to the table of love, to the sacrifice of the altar, oh, how religion recalls the most tender mysteries of redemption!<sup>8</sup>

For St. Gaspar, the mysteries of redemption were synonymous with the Blood of Christ.<sup>9</sup>

The sacraments are “an ongoing application of the merits of the Blood of Jesus Christ”;<sup>10</sup> in them “are applied the mysteries of the sheddings of the Blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>11</sup> The Precious Blood “is that which cleanses us in the sacraments,”<sup>12</sup> “*est medicina in omnibus sacramentis*” ‘it is the medicine in all the sacraments,’<sup>13</sup> “*est thesaurus infinitus in sacramentis*” ‘it is the infinite treasure in the sacraments.’<sup>14</sup> From these short phrases one can easily argue that Gaspar considered the sacramental life as the soul of the cult of the Precious Blood.

The Eucharistic mystery, then, perennial and central source for the application of the benefits acquired by the Redeemer by the shedding of his Blood,<sup>15</sup> occupies a special place in the devotion to the Precious Blood. As this devotion is the compendium of the entire faith,<sup>16</sup> thus the Eucharist is the compendium of all of that is good<sup>17</sup> of the entire faith with its glories.<sup>18</sup> Accordingly, there is established between devotion to the Precious Blood and the Eucharist a quasi equal relationship.

St. Gaspar considers the Eucharistic mystery in relation to the Blood of Christ in terms common to the

Catholic theology of the time: as sacrifice, meal and sacrament.

In the sacrifice of the altar, the offering of the Blood of Christ to the Eternal Father is renewed<sup>19</sup> for the same ends for which Jesus offered his bloody sacrifice on Golgotha: for adoration,<sup>20</sup> for thanksgiving,<sup>21</sup> for expiation,<sup>22</sup> and for entreaty (*l'impetrazione*).<sup>23</sup> This offering continues for the same sacrificial ends by the Eucharistic Jesus, the permanent sacrament in the tabernacle.<sup>24</sup>

Communion is a table of love<sup>25</sup> in which Christ gives us his Blood as drink together with his Body as food.<sup>26</sup>

The Eucharistic mystery, therefore, is not only the soil in which the devotion to the Precious Blood is nourished and develops, but is also its soul. This is the reason for St. Gaspar's frequent invitation that those devoted to the Blood of Christ express their devotion in the august mystery of the Eucharist.<sup>27</sup>

### **The Liturgical Feast of the Precious Blood**

The liturgical feast of the Precious Blood with its proper Mass and Office had already been instituted in the Church for some dioceses and religious congregations, who celebrated the feast on different dates.<sup>28</sup>

On March 26, 1822, St. Gaspar obtained the privilege of celebrating the Office and the solemn Mass of the Divine Blood on the first Sunday of July for the Archconfraternity of the Precious Blood. This privilege was extended on May 27, 1826, to those churches in which the Pious Union of the Most Precious Blood had been established.<sup>29</sup> He wanted the feast to be extended to the whole Church: "Oh how much I want to get the Office and the Mass of the Divine Blood for the first Sunday in July extended throughout the entire Catholic world!"<sup>30</sup> He had made a request for this to the competent authorities many times,<sup>31</sup> and he would have considered himself "very happy if before I would die" that he would have "such consolation."<sup>32</sup> He was not able to have

this consolation during his earthly life, because the feast was extended to the universal Church by Pius IX only on August 10, 1849, with the decree *Redempti Sumus*. Gaspar, nevertheless, undertook to have granted to others the same privilege that he had obtained for himself.<sup>33</sup>

In the Office and Mass of the Divine Blood he found such spiritual nourishment for “moving . . . the heart.”<sup>34</sup>

The day of the feast was a solemn glorification of Jesus the Redeemer. In the morning, during the Mass, general Communion was distributed to the faithful and the Blessed Sacrament was exposed for adoration during the course of the day. In the afternoon they would hold the service of the Seven Bloodsheddings, with spiritual pep talks (*fervorini*) and hymns. In a letter to his niece, Luigia del Bufalo, St. Gaspar reveals those sentiments that he certainly nourished in his heart in this recurring celebration:

Here we are at the Feast of the Divine Blood . . . . What a great feast of love for Jesus is this feast of ours! Yes, let us love Jesus incessantly, irrevocably, so that we can love him eternally in paradise. To look at Jesus as he pours out his Blood is an act of religion which helps us do great work for our own eternal salvation as well as that of our neighbors, praying in a special way for the success of the Missions and for the apostolic work that is being promoted throughout the Catholic world. For us, the Crucifix is a mystical tree of salvation; blessed is the soul that stands in the shadow of this plant, gathering in its fruits of holiness and paradise. It is, at one and the same time, the book in which we read of the love of a redeeming God. Finally, it is a weapon against the devil, while also being the ladder to heaven. These are the sentiments that we should nourish with the recurrence of this very holy solemnity.<sup>35</sup>

### **Contemplation of the Mystery of the Blood of Christ**

Under this title we include those forms of the devotion of the Blood of Christ that had as their primary aim the instruction of the faithful, namely: the month of June, the triduum (or spiritual exercises), the octave or seven-day devotion, the preaching on the Divine Blood in the mission, meditation, and hymns.

#### ***The Month of June***

The observance of the month of June in honor of the Precious Blood was introduced by St. Gaspar himself.<sup>36</sup> It would begin thirty days before the feast of the Precious Blood<sup>37</sup> and was a preparation for the feast. “In the month of June,” writes Gaspar, “the people are roused to meditate on the mysteries of the love of Jesus who has redeemed us with the inestimable price of his Divine Blood.”<sup>38</sup> St. Vincent Pallotti also testifies to the purpose of the month of June:

[The people] already moved by simple preaching and by gathering for an hour of adoration for a month . . . , would be more satisfactorily enlightened in mind and sweetly involved in heart to know the pleasant attractions of the ineffable mystery of the Most Precious Blood of the Redeemer; they would be more perfectly converted from evil and confirmed in good in the love of Jesus Christ.<sup>39</sup>

The month, therefore, ordinarily involved preaching, but one could also read some relevant book. Highly recommended by St. Gaspar was *Il Mese di Giugno* of Strambi.<sup>40</sup>

#### ***The Triduum of the Divine Blood***

In the places in which it was not possible to observe the month of June, St. Gaspar recommended at least a triduum before the feast, congratulating those who would cooperate effectively to carry out his wishes. Thus

he writes to Signor Camillo Possenti of Fabriano during the first days of July of 1831:

Excellent, holy, and hardly ever sufficiently to be praised, is the donation of 60 *bajocchi* for the triduum of the Divine Blood, a devotion which I always recommend more and more to your well-acknowledged zealous spirit. *Ipsi vicerunt draconem propter Sanguinem Agni* ‘They conquered the dragon through the Blood of the Lamb’ [Rev 12: 11].<sup>41</sup>

### ***The Octave or Seven-Day Devotion***

This seven- (or eight-) day devotion to the Divine Blood (*Settenario o Ottavario del Divin Sangue*), which St. Gaspar called “glorious” and which gave him consolation,<sup>42</sup> was another exercise of piety in honor of the Divine Blood. Canon Albertini established that, in the octave after the month of June, the Chaplet and the Seven Offerings be solemnly recited, with “preaching matter . . . in the form of a short colloquium” in thanksgiving;<sup>43</sup> therefore it was called also the “seven-day devotion of thanksgiving.”<sup>44</sup> St. Gaspar wanted to preserve and disseminate this practice where the devotion of the month of June was held, lamenting if it was neglected. On this point, he writes to Mons. Gregorio Muccioli, president of the Archconfraternity of the Precious Blood:

We know that the works of God are brought forth in thorns. Yet, I cannot express to you the spiritual consolations that we experience through this good work. Let us give thanks to the Almighty a *quo omne bonum* ‘from whom [comes] all good.’ One thing still pains me and that is the removal, from the members of the Archconfraternity, of the octave and the seven-day devotion of the Divine Blood after the month [of June]. This was obtained by Albertini, and I would like to see it kept intact.

I feel confident that, with your industrious efforts, you will find a way of having this segment of good work revived. Also, I humbly pray to Jesus, our Beloved, that the cult of the Divine Blood will not be diminished in the least degree.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Preaching on the Divine Blood in the Mission***

St. Gaspar prescribed, in his *Method of the Missions*, “never to neglect . . . the preaching of the passion and of the Precious Blood.”<sup>46</sup> At the end of this preaching, priests dressed in red vestments would solemnly bring into the church the coffin of the dead Christ, while others went before it and accompanied it. The coffin was covered with red damask and beautifully adorned with flowers. In the meantime, the preacher said to the faithful: “See how far the love of Jesus extends . . .” “With such a beautiful exercise . . . the people were roused to kiss in spirit those holy wounds, sources and springs of eternal life.”<sup>47</sup>

### ***Meditation and Hymns***

Among the diverse forms of contemplation of the mystery of the Blood of Christ we must recall, finally, the invitation to meditate on the Precious Blood (“*meditatio circa mysteria effusionum Sanguinis D.N.J.C. est praeferenda*” ‘meditation on the mysteries of the sheddings of the Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ is to be preferred’)<sup>48</sup> and to praise it with “hymns of devotion” (*canti devoti*), especially in the month of and on the feast of the Precious Blood.<sup>49</sup>

### **Devotions**

Under this title we include the prayers and practices of piety most frequently recommended by St. Gaspar to those devoted to the Precious Blood. These are: *The Chaplet of the Precious Blood*, the *Seven Offerings*, the recitation of the *Gloria Patri*, ejaculations, and hours of adoration.

### ***The Chaplet of the Precious Blood***

The *Chaplet*, the work of Albertini, is composed of brief meditations on the seven sheddings of the Blood of Christ (the circumcision, Gethsemane, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the way to Calvary, the crucifixion, the piercing of the side), with the recitation of the Our Father and the verse “*Te Ergo Quaesumus*” ‘*We ask you, therefore, [help your people whom you have redeemed in your Precious Blood]*’ in between. It concludes with a prayer to the Precious Blood. St. Gaspar spread its public recitation everywhere. In the houses of the Institute and in the time of mission, he would ordinarily “have it recited during the first Mass, just as the Dominican Fathers recite the Rosary,”<sup>50</sup> “animating the people in such manner as to hope for all that is good from the Eternal Father, the mercy of the inestimable price of our redemption, which is offered on the altar in bloodless sacrifice.”<sup>51</sup>

### ***The Seven Offerings***

In the *Seven Offerings*, a practice of “a special efficacy,”<sup>52</sup> which also flowed from the heart of Albertini,<sup>53</sup> the Blood of Jesus is offered to the Eternal Father, while praying for the needs of the Church, of society, and for the poor souls. Between the invocations of the various offerings is praise to Christ, Redeemer through his Blood, with the invocation: “Praise and thanksgiving be evermore to Jesus, who with his Blood has saved us” (“*Sia sempre benedetto e ringraziato Gesù, che col suo Sangue ci ha salvato*”).

### ***The Seven Gloria Patri***

For gaining indulgences, St. Gaspar recommended to members of the Archconfraternity of the Precious Blood the daily recitation of seven *Gloria Patri* in memory of the principal sheddings of the Precious Blood.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Ejaculatory Prayers***

Gaspar also recommended the use of ejaculatory prayers in honor of the Precious Blood,<sup>55</sup> especially the “Eternal Father, I offer. . . ,” promoted by the Passionists. According to testimony given in the process for his canonization, St. Gaspar

. . . used to recommend it with zeal to all in his sermons, in confessions, and whenever the occasion presented itself, saying that he hoped for all the graces and the means necessary for attaining eternal salvation by the merits of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. He wished that the Missionaries at the end or at the beginning of their sermons would always offer to the Divine Father the Most Precious Blood of his Son with the ejaculatory prayer of the ‘Eternal Father.’<sup>56</sup>

### ***Hours of Adoration of the Divine Blood***

The hours of adoration of the Divine Blood were set for “all the Fridays of the year.”<sup>57</sup> St. Gaspar spread this pious practice wherever possible, and it was a feature in the new houses of his Institute. In the minutes of a house meeting at Sermoneta on October 5, 1822, at which St. Gaspar was present, we read:

One should seek out persons who can adore the mysteries of the Most Precious Blood on Fridays, at an hour to be decided. They should pray for the ongoing fruitfulness of the holy missions and spiritual exercises and in particular for the good progress of our Work.<sup>58</sup>

On February 20, 1835, St. Gaspar, writing to Canon Giuseppe Ottaviani of Ancona, suggests to him “two ways to strengthen devotion to the Divine Blood,” one of which was the following: “. . . on Fridays, select seven devout persons who will divide seven hours of prayer,

one hour each, adoring and offering the Divine Blood, the price of our salvation.”<sup>59</sup> We will speak of another form of adoration suggested by St. Gaspar in the next section.

### **The Perpetual Worship of the Divine Blood**

We have said that St. Gaspar wanted the worship of the Divine Blood to be perpetual. He promoted the *Hour of the Divine Blood* and the *Month of the Divine Blood* as forms of this worship.

The *Hour of the Divine Blood* consisted in an ongoing adoration of the price of redemption for the entire year. The faithful would choose an hour for adoration by signing up on an appropriate sheet,<sup>60</sup> thereby “filling all the hours of the year and of the feast days of the year with so many men and women adorers of the mysteries of the Blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>61</sup> Through this, one would realize “a special perpetual adoration of the inestimable price of our eternal salvation.”<sup>62</sup> This work of adoration could be done:

. . . at home or in church, on one’s knees or sitting down, . . . either before the Blessed Sacrament or else before some holy image of Jesus crucified, always praying for the Supreme Pontiff, for the needs of the Church, for the foreign missions in the East and for all the Missionaries.<sup>63</sup>

For the perpetual worship of the Divine Blood on a *monthly* basis, St. Gaspar advised that this would be practiced in private, by twelve persons consecutively for the entire year or, in public, by twelve churches, each of which would choose its own month of the year. In the letter to Don Giuseppe Ottaviani already cited, St. Gaspar suggests the second method for a greater strengthening of the devotion to the Divine Blood:

[S]elect from the communities, or wherever possible, for example, 12 persons who will each

take one month to practice the devotion; this can also be arranged with 12 different churches as has been done for some time now in Rome. As for the churches, one could, for the sake of economy, recite, for example, the Chaplet during one of the Masses; or whatever you find to be most feasible.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Procession of the Dead Christ**

A particular feature of the devotion to the Divine Blood was the procession of the dead Christ, which occurred in the missions on the evening of the day in which the preaching on the Precious Blood took place.<sup>65</sup> The aims of this practice were the following: “to compensate for the crimes and public scandals by which Jesus, who has redeemed us with his Blood, is profaned in public ways,”<sup>66</sup> to rouse in sinners the desire for virtue and the joy of the Christian life, and to “promote all the more a tender devotion to the Blood of Jesus Christ.”<sup>67</sup>

A festive solemnity permeated the whole procession, such that it was also called a “triumphal procession.” The bier of the dead Christ was covered with red damask and beautifully decorated with flowers. The clergy were garbed in solemn vestments and red stoles and all of the confraternities participated. The streets of the town were illuminated by lights carried by the faithful or placed in the windows of the houses; the bells rang festively to invite

. . . the people to bless the Blood of Jesus. Various choirs sang hymns of praise to the Precious Blood and short sermons were given along the way. The procession would conclude with the singing of the *Te ergo quaesumus*. All of this constituted a solemn glorification of Christ, Redeemer in his Blood.<sup>68</sup>

The procession of the dead Christ held on Good Friday was of a similar character. St. Gaspar instituted

this procession wherever he would establish houses of the Institute, defining it as “a very touching ceremony entirely in keeping with one who is promoting the great devotion to the Divine Blood.”<sup>69</sup>

### **The Way of the Cross and the Three Hours of Agony**

Always seeking to exalt the mystery of redemption, St. Gaspar spread the practice of the Way of the Cross and of the three hours, “in order to animate a tender love for our most lovable Redeemer.”<sup>70</sup> St. Gaspar also introduced the practice of the “Holy Carnival” to the cult of the Precious Blood by means of the recitation of the Chaplet of the Precious Blood.<sup>71</sup>

### **The Madonna of the Precious Blood**

Another means that St. Gaspar used in his ministry to stir up devotion to the Precious Blood was the painting of the Madonna of the Precious Blood.

Like all the great missionaries who were dedicated to conducting popular missions, St. Gaspar had his Madonna of the missions, which he took with him on those occasions. He also prescribed the use of the picture for his Congregation. Thus we find in the *Praxis* for article 6 of the *Rule* approved by Gregory XVI in 1841:

It is also the custom of the Congregation that in our churches there be an altar in which an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary is displayed. In this image, the Blessed Virgin carries the infant Jesus in her arms and in his right hand he holds the chalice of his Precious Blood, waiting to show it to his mother. The Virgin invites sinners to make use of this divine remedy, prepared with such love for men and women for the forgiveness of their sins and to clothe them again with virtue.

Our Venerable Founder established that our priests make use of the same image in the missions.<sup>72</sup>



**Madonna of the Precious Blood**

This painting, as described in the *Praxis*, is an image of the Madonna with the infant Jesus on her right arm, offering the chalice of his Blood. In the tradition of the Congregation of Missionaries of the Precious Blood, the painting has been given various titles: Our Lady,

Help of Christians; the Madonna of the Missions; the Madonna of the Chalice; the Madonna of the Precious Blood.<sup>73</sup>

Given the importance that St. Gaspar gave to this image, it is important to discuss both its history as well as its spiritual significance. An expert examination of the image from an artistic perspective has been done by Dr. Maria Antonietta De Angelis.<sup>74</sup>

### ***The History of the Painting***

Some evidence asserts that Pius VII gave this image to St. Gaspar when he entrusted the preaching of missions in the Papal States to him. In fact, on the reverse of the painting of the Madonna of the Precious Blood, given a new backing at the end of the nineteenth century and now preserved in the museum in Albano Laziale, there is the following inscription:

Memorandum. According to the testimony of old Missionaries and mentioned by the Most Reverend Giacinto Petroni, who brought it from 'Sora Gigia' [Gaspar's niece, Luigia Del Bufalo], and by Most Reverend D. Nicola Pagliuca, [this image of] the *Auxilium Christianorum*, the image used by Venerable Gaspar in the holy missions . . . is the original picture. Brother Adeodato De Filippis states that he always understood that this image was given by Pius VII to our Venerable [Gaspar].

*Joseph Schaeper*, Missionary. Rome, September 16, 1898.

There is no doubt that the Madonna *Auxilium Christianorum* is the original that St. Gaspar carried with him on the missions. However, so far research into the testimony given in the processes for St. Gaspar's canonization has not confirmed the assertion that this image is the one given to Gaspar by Pius VII, as Br. De Filippis asserts. There is only a single reference in

Merlini's testimony regarding the gift of an image of the Madonna to St. Gaspar by Pius VII, but it is not relevant. Merlini states:

It is quite well known to all that with peace restored in the Church, the servant of God occupied himself not only with the ministry of the holy missions, which he found highly stimulating, but also with other kinds of preaching. And I must note that he wanted to become a Jesuit. Accordingly, I have confirmation from Gaspar himself that he was thinking about carrying out his holy desires in the Society of Jesus.

It happened, however, that in those early years, Pius VII, of happy memory, wanted to have the holy missions preached in the principal cities of the state with the aid of ecclesiastics. Among others he called the servant of God, who presented himself to His Holiness.

Because, as he told me one day, he was not accustomed to present himself [in the papal court], while standing before the pope while he spoke to him about the holy missions, Gaspar found himself at a loss for words and did not know how to respond except with "Yes, yes, most Holy Father, I will do what you want." The servant of God also told me that when Pius VII sent the missionaries to Benevento, among whom was Gaspar himself, the pope graciously said to them: 'When you are in Benevento, do not say *Madonna mia* but *Madonna mea*,' and further, he told me that he had as a gift an engraved copperplate print (*un rame*)<sup>75</sup> of the Most Holy Virgin. I saw that he had it in a frame in his room in Rome and he himself pointed it out to me.<sup>76</sup>

If Merlini is speaking here of an "engraved copperplate print of the Holy Virgin," which Pius VII gave to all

the missionaries who had to go to Benevento, elsewhere, speaking of the paintings which St. Gaspar had in his room in Rome, and referring to the very image of the Madonna given him by Pius VII, he affirms that it was an image on paper: "In front of the bed he had *the image of Holy Mary on paper*; it was the one given him by Pius VII, of which I have spoken."

I have examined all of the depositions given by Merlini in the processes of St. Gaspar thoroughly, but have not found other references to the image of Mary given to St. Gaspar by Pius VII besides the one I have just referred to. Therefore, the image of the Madonna in the first quotation is the same as the Madonna on paper in the second. It is thus not possible, as stated in the so-called "memorandum" of Br. Adeodato De Filippis, that the painting of the Madonna of the Precious Blood, which is neither on copper nor on paper but on canvas, was given by Pius VII to St. Gaspar, because "he surely would have left some note of this"<sup>77</sup> and we would find some trace of it in his writings or in the depositions of the canonical processes.

We know that in the first missions preached in Benevento and in Frosinone by order of Pius VII in 1815–1816, in which St. Gaspar, as he himself says, was only the "caretaker in the missions,"<sup>78</sup> the choice of the painting of the Madonna was up to the director of the mission. Later on, after the foundation of the Congregation (August 15, 1815), the Missionaries used to take along only the painting of the Madonna del Soccorso of Don Gaetano Bonanni, first superior of the house of San Felice in Giano. In fact St. Gaspar, in a letter of November 22, 1820 to Missionary Don Francesco Pierantoni, simply calls it the "Madonna of Bonanni."<sup>79</sup> Valentini, in his deposition, always refers to this "Madonna del Soccorso" when speaking of the Madonna of the missions prior to 1820.<sup>80</sup> Therefore, in the same letter of November 22, 1820 to Pierantoni, who was in residence in Giano with Bonanni, St. Gaspar affirms

decisively: "The Madonna of our missions will always be uniform: for now the image of Bonanni is to be used."

Nevertheless, a few days later, precisely on November 29, 1820, St. Gaspar in another letter to the same Pierantoni, writes something that appears to contradict this provision: "You tell me that Bonanni leaves the crucifix, etc. Very well. But our Madonna must be uniform. It will be good, however, to have also the one of Bonanni."<sup>81</sup> Why does Gaspar not say again: "For now the image of Bonanni is to be used" but reaffirms, on the other hand, that "our Madonna must be uniform," distinguishing it from that of Bonanni, which he wants to have along with his crucifix? What is this "our Madonna?"

This mystery was sufficiently resolved in the biography of St. Gaspar written by Santelli.<sup>82</sup> The latter, having certain knowledge that Pius VII intended to make Bonanni a bishop, wrote to him at San Felice, Giano, to communicate the news to him on September 7, 1820. St. Gaspar was also informed of the promotion of Bonanni to the episcopate. In a letter Gaspar wrote to Pierantoni between August 29 and September 2, 1820, he was still uncertain "if the episcopate [of Bonanni] would come to nothing."<sup>83</sup> In another letter of October 7, 1820, to the same Pierantoni, he says that "the episcopate for [Bonanni] is said to be *very certain*."<sup>84</sup> Cristaldi confided this to me."<sup>85</sup> Thus, even though St. Gaspar had been informed that Bonanni was promoted to the episcopate, without knowing when he would be leaving San Felice, on November 20, 1820, he wrote to Pierantoni that in the missions it was necessary to use the Madonna of Bonanni again. On the other hand, in the letter of November 29, while reasserting to Pierantoni the principle of uniformity of "our Madonna" of the missions, he also expresses to him the desire to have not only the crucifix of Bonanni at San Felice but also his Madonna.<sup>86</sup> This is an indication that Bonanni had decided to leave San Felice for his episcopal see in

Norcia and that Gaspar had to establish the uniformity of “our Madonna of the Missions” with another painting. This painting is the one which St. Gaspar many times calls “my Madonna” in his letters, that is the painting of the Madonna about which we are speaking.<sup>87</sup>

At first, St. Gaspar always used the Madonna of Bonanni in his missions; from the time of the mission preached from December 8 through December 21, 1820, in the Church of San Nicola in Carcere, he will always use “his Madonna.”<sup>88</sup>

In a letter of November 13, 1825 to Signor Giovanni Francesco Palmucci of Offida, St. Gaspar lets us know that this image of the Madonna “was being carried in the mission by other missionaries now deceased.”<sup>89</sup> Gaspar had only the chalice in the hand of the infant Jesus added. (It is not known what had been painted previously in the hand of the infant Jesus: a little cross? a scapular? an olive branch?) In the same letter to Palmucci he writes that in “Rome there is no information as to who painted my Madonna. The one who added the chalice is Signor Pozzi.”<sup>90</sup> Probably St. Gaspar also had Pozzi add the golden gown of the Infant,<sup>91</sup> whose image was returned to its original form during the restoration carried out in 1984.<sup>92</sup>

The original painting is attributed to Pompeo Batoni (1708–1787), in his early period.<sup>93</sup> Batoni, by the way, is the same painter who produced the painting of the Sacred Heart venerated in Rome at the Church of the Gesù, just a few steps away from the altar of St. Francis Xavier.

St. Gaspar had several copies of the painting made for his Missionaries or for other persons who asked him for one. He did not want them to have other images painted and then used for the missions. In a letter of July 1, 1836, to Don Orazio Bracaglia, he writes with delicacy but with firmness: “I do not know whether it is true that you had some influence on the new design of our image of the most holy Mary of the Missions. If this

is true, I would not be able to give it my approval. It would be wrong.”<sup>94</sup>

The reproductions of the Madonna of the Missions had to be perfect and beautiful. He writes thus in May 1837 to his niece Luigia, asking her to repeat his very words to the painter Luigi Spalladoro: “. . . tell Spalladoro that he should make a beautiful Madonna for our Missions; a beautiful one, not sad-looking, not with a drawn-down face, not languid. Tell him very clearly what I am pointing out here.”<sup>95</sup>

### ***The Spiritual Significance of the Painting***

St. Gaspar never speaks explicitly about the spiritual significance of “his Madonna” either in his letters or in his preaching. We already know the description of the painting and its significance as given in the *Praxis* of article 6 of the 1841 *Rule* of the Congregation.

According to this explanation, the infant Jesus presents the Eucharistic chalice of his Blood to his Mother and she in turn invites sinners to “make use of this divine remedy,” not only that they be purified of their sins, but also so that they might be clothed again with all the virtues.

Another interesting interpretation of the painting of the Madonna of St. Gaspar comes to us from the deposition of St. Vincent Pallotti (1795–1850) during the canonical processes for the canonization of St. Gaspar. Speaking of the Marian devotion of St. Gaspar, Pallotti makes the following statement regarding this image of the Madonna of the Precious Blood:

This same active faith toward the great Mother of God, following the example of other missionary saints, induced him to include in his regulations for missions that a sermon on the Madonna should be given, urging the people to have devotion to her by bringing before them the sacred and devout image of Mary. Thus I

know him to be the promoter of that sacred image of Mary that his Missionaries used to carry when on a mission.

That image, I believe that I can say, could be called the expression of the servant of God's faith in Most Holy Mary and in the infinite power of the Precious Blood of her divine Son Jesus, since one sees in that picture a loving invitation stirring hearts to devotion. I mean to say that it is an image of our dear Mother Mary holding on her right arm the child Jesus, who shows, through a chalice painted in his right hand to have been moved by the prayers of Mary to offer to his eternal Divine Father his most Precious Blood to obtain the abundance of divine mercies for us miserable sinners.

In promoting the pious use of such a holy image I do not know how to consider adequately how vigorous was the exercise of faith in the servant of God, because I am not aware of all that he did and all the hard work he had to sustain to spread such an image, which is distinctive to the Institute. I can say, however, that having known the servant of God so intimately (if it is permissible to say so) and passionately, that I believe he had wished to promote its use everywhere in the world and that it would be his great consolation if he had seen everyone engaged in promoting the use of said image.<sup>96</sup>

Thus, according to this interpretation, the infant, moved by the prayers of Mary, offers to the Eternal Father his Precious Blood to obtain the abundance of divine mercy in favor of sinners.

What is to be said of these interpretations? It seems to me that they are not faithful to the *pictorial language* of the image itself. The painting presents us with Mary and at her right the Infant Jesus, who offers the

Eucharistic chalice. With her left hand the Madonna holds up the Infant and with her right invites the viewer to receive the chalice offered by her son.

To whom does Jesus offer the chalice? In the painting both the eyes of the Infant and those of his Mother are directed to the observer, from whatever angle it is viewed.<sup>97</sup> Thus it does not seem that the Infant presents the chalice of his Blood to his mother, as article six of the *Praxis* suggests, nor does he offer it to the heavenly Father, according to Pallotti's interpretation, even though one cannot exclude these truths from a more comprehensive understanding of the mystery of the Blood of Christ.

Nevertheless, given that the eyes of the infant Jesus and of the Madonna meet the gaze of the observer directly, that the infant offers the observer the chalice of his Blood, and that with her right hand the Madonna invites the observer to accept the chalice, there is no doubt that the fundamental meaning intended in the painting is the offering of the chalice by the infant Jesus to all those who look at it, to those who gaze on it with faith, as if to repeat for them the words of the last supper: "Take this all of you and drink from it. This is the cup of my Blood for the new and eternal covenant, poured out for you and for all in remission of sins." The Madonna reinforces this with her loving gaze and with the gesture of her right hand, welcoming the offering of her son. Who would refuse such an offering made by such a tender and innocent Infant, confirmed by the face of his mother, so beautiful and gentle?

It seems to me that one finds the direct interpretation of the spiritual significance of the painting of the Madonna of the Precious Blood in the first of several books on the subject of the month of the Precious Blood,<sup>98</sup> which St. Gaspar regularly used for meditation and which he suggested that others use as well:

How great was the desire that Jesus had in his mortal life to shed his Blood for the redemption

of the world, how great his desire that all should benefit from it, that all souls share in it. Therefore, inviting us to this fountain of mercy he says: ‘All of you, drink from it.’<sup>99</sup>

Elsewhere, speaking of Mary, Mother of the Savior, St. Gaspar says that she also wished that everyone “should profit from the price of redemption.”<sup>100</sup>

St. Gaspar, as I have said, has left no concise written interpretation of the Madonna of the Missions and the painting seems to emphasize only the aspect most desired by the Missionaries in the missions, that is, the participation of the faithful at the Eucharistic table after being purified of their sins. Nevertheless, this does recall all of the fundamental elements of the preaching of St. Gaspar on the devotion to the Blood of Christ:

It is, therefore, the divine Blood that will placate the Divine Eternal Father, that will purify our hearts and will inebriate us with love for Jesus who *dilexit nos, et lavit nos in Sanguine suo* ‘loved us and washed us in his Blood’ [Rv 1, 5].<sup>101</sup>

In this painting of the Madonna of the Missions the Holy Virgin exhorts us to receive with confidence the chalice of the Blood, since she was the first to experience its saving effects and thus she presents to us the perfect model of the person redeemed by the Blood of Christ. She, in fact, is the creature who *welcomed in herself* the saving power of the Blood of Christ in all its fullness, from her Immaculate Conception because she was greeted by the Archangel Gabriel as “full of grace” (Lk 1: 28). Moreover, she *collaborated* in a very special way with her Son in the work of redemption so that on Calvary she was proclaimed Mother of the Church by Jesus (cf. Jn 2: 4; 19: 26–27). Thus Mary, who already knows through personal experience the immense benefits contained in the Precious Blood of her Son, with the gesture

of her right hand invites all to drink from the same chalice, that all might *welcome* its saving power for their own sanctification, that they might *collaborate* with Jesus in the work of redemption (cf. Col 1: 24) and *also seek that others welcome the same offering of the divine Blood*, thus expanding—by means of the holy chain of *welcoming, collaborating* and *offering*—the saving effects of the Precious Blood upon the great evil of the world, “so that God might be all in all” (1 Cor 15: 28).<sup>102</sup>

Precisely because of the catechetical significance attributed to the painting of the Madonna of the Precious Blood, St. Gaspar prescribed that during the missions, after the preaching on the Blessed Virgin, also called the “preaching of the triumph,”<sup>103</sup> the painting always be present on the platform together with the crucifix until the end of the mission.<sup>104</sup>

### Miscellaneous Initiatives

There were other initiatives for devotions to the Precious Blood suggested by St. Gaspar in order to keep alive the memory of the Blood of Christ in the faithful and to inspire in them feelings of gratitude and of trust in the redeeming Blood.

Gaspar recommended that a special *votive habit* in honor of the Precious Blood be worn by someone who sought to obtain some grace. The habit consisted of a black dress or habit (*veste*) with red ribbons or cords hanging from the waist.<sup>105</sup>

There were also *inscriptions* related to the Divine Blood, which Gaspar had inscribed above the doors of a house or on the walls. In fact, in the missions, “in imitation of St. Bernardine of Siena, he carried with him a carved block of wood (*traforo*) in which were inscribed the names of Jesus and Mary along with the motto ‘*Viva il Sangue di Gesù Cristo.*’ With this block and a brush he would print the names and the mottos above the doors or in other places of the houses,”<sup>106</sup> to implore the

protection of the Lord, “as the Hebrew people were ordered to mark their doors with the blood of the lamb.”<sup>107</sup>

In the houses of the Congregation, the entrance to every room had to be marked with the words: “*Viva il Sangue di Gesù Cristo!*” Other phrases of invocation or of praise to the Blood of Jesus were written in areas that were used more frequently. For example, in the house of San Felice, the first house of the Congregation, one reads (in addition to some biblical expressions) the following invocations: “O my dear Jesus, whom do I love if not you, who have given your Blood and your life for me?” “I desire, O my Jesus, that all creatures adore you and praise you through the Blood you have poured out for us.”<sup>108</sup>

At the end of this description of the various Precious Blood devotional practices recommended by St. Gaspar, by way of synthesis we can say that all of them were aimed at bringing the whole person—mind, heart, and action—to make use of the benefits of redemption and to witness to and glorify the salvific love of God, manifested in the gift of the Blood of his Son (cf. Rm 5: 8–9).



## Chapter Five

### **An Excellent and Legitimate Devotion**

When St. Gaspar used to speak or write about the devotion to the Precious Blood, he would often use similar adjectives: “most efficacious,”<sup>1</sup> “most beneficial,”<sup>2</sup> “most important,”<sup>3</sup> “most tender,”<sup>4</sup> “great devotion,”<sup>5</sup> “devotion based in dogma (*divozione dogmatica*),”<sup>6</sup> and so forth. All of these adjectives would qualify devotion to the Precious Blood as an excellent and legitimate devotion in the Church.

Thus we take up another theme in the preaching of St. Gaspar on the Blood of Christ: the excellence and legitimacy of the devotion to the Precious Blood.

We know that in his apostolate St. Gaspar felt that he had been given the mission of opening to the faithful the treasures of the devotion to the Blood of Christ, part of the patrimony of the Church that had been confined to small groups of believers. He had to explain the beauty and excellence of the devotion to the faithful, since many of them found Precious Blood devotion to be something of a novelty, in order that they too would become devoted to it. Further, we know that in his ministry St. Gaspar encountered many who opposed him precisely because he was a Missionary of the Precious Blood, that is, a propagator of the devotion to the Blood of Christ. To

these he had to explain not only the beauty of the devotion but also its legitimate place in the Church.

To the laity he would speak mainly of the excellence of the devotion, explaining the doctrine behind it, its ends, its pious practices, and its efficacy. Little exclamations, placed here and there in the outlines, emphasize the culminating moments of the discourse. These exclamations not only are a witness to St. Gaspar's love for the Blood of Christ but also reveal his lively desire to stir up enthusiasm in his hearers for his beloved devotion.<sup>7</sup>

To Church authorities, poorly advised by persons tainted with Jansenism who, out of some sort of pharisaic reverence, claimed that it was a profanation to name the Blood of Christ,<sup>8</sup> St. Gaspar would explain the legitimacy of the devotion.

### **Hierarchy of Devotions**

To frame this discussion I offer an introduction on the notion of the hierarchy of devotions.

It is a fundamental and common notion, reinforced by Blessed John XXIII in the apostolic letter on Precious Blood devotion, *Inde a Primis*, that devotions are not all equally important or necessary. Among them, therefore, one can establish a hierarchy. Theologians use *intrinsic criteria* and *extrinsic criteria* to accomplish this.<sup>9</sup> Among the intrinsic criteria they list the elements that constitute the devotion: its object, the motivation that determines it, the aims that it pursues, and the devotional practices that animate it. The extrinsic criteria are considered to be *preceptive* and include divine revelation, theology, the religious sense of the Christian people, and the magisterium of the Church, whose judgment is determinative in declaring the legitimacy of a devotion. This judgment can manifest itself in various ways: from solemn and explicit approbation in specific documents to other acts which in some way reflect the will and the mind of magisterial authority.

Even though he did not speak with the technical precision of professional theologians, St. Gaspar used similar criteria, which he called “intrinsic reasons” and “reasons from the history of the Church,” to prove the legitimacy and excellence of devotion to the Precious Blood.<sup>10</sup>

### **Intrinsic Reasons for the Value of the Devotion to the Divine Blood**

The intrinsic reasons that demonstrate the value of devotion to the Precious Blood are its own constitutive elements: its object, its motive, its aims and devotional practices, that is to say, what we have written from the second to the fourth chapter of this volume. It is thus not necessary to repeat these here. We will only follow again, in a schematic synthesis, the route we have already traveled, in order to have a comprehensive view of the entire doctrine of St. Gaspar on the Precious Blood.

#### ***Object of the Devotion***

The object is quite simply the Blood of Christ, the inestimable price of redemption.<sup>11</sup> The Precious Blood is, for Gaspar, the sign or sacrament of Christ the Redeemer who, prefigured in various ways in the Old Testament, was made flesh in the fullness of time to carry out the mission of salvation by means of the shedding of his Blood. The Blood is the sign of the passion, of the cross, of the Crucified One; the Blood is the sign of the inner consciousness of the Redeemer. The Blood of Christ includes all of the benefits of redemption and is the font of grace for supernatural life; the Eucharistic mystery, the sacraments, indulgences: all these are an application of the merits of the Divine Blood.<sup>12</sup> Precious Blood devotion also has for its object the risen Christ, either as mediator before the Father<sup>13</sup> or as the one who glorifies the redeemed. The Blood of Christ, therefore, is the synthesis and luminous center of the whole

Christian faith: “in this devotion we have a compendium of faith itself (*è compendiata la fede istessa*).”<sup>14</sup>

### ***The Motive for the Devotion***

St. Gaspar was convinced that devotion to the Precious Blood was like an anchor of salvation cast out by God to the Church for its salvation and for the redemption of society. This devotion was to be a dam against the “torrent of iniquity” that was spreading to immense ruin of souls. The devotion was the “mystical weapon” that would be used by many zealous apostles to call souls back to repentance (*ravvedimento*).

### ***The Aims of the Devotion***

Devotion to the Blood of Christ has three aims:

- *Glorification of the Redeemer*: Devotion to the Precious Blood must bring the faithful to understand the tremendous gift of love offered by Jesus and, consequently, to return this gift.
- *Glorification of God*: The offering of the Blood of Jesus to the Eternal Father keeps alive the memory of the covenant established between God and humanity in the Blood of Christ and gives confidence to those redeemed that they find mercy and benevolence before God in all their needs.
- *Glorification of souls*: “In this [devotion to the Precious Blood] . . . is placed the salvation of souls”;<sup>15</sup> “in this devotion we have the treasures of wisdom and of holiness, in this devotion our comfort, our peace, our health.”<sup>16</sup> St. Gaspar writes:

When people recall such an important devotion it stimulates them to rise from the fatal sleep of spiritual death, which oppresses them . . . By means of the application of this inestimable price, by which we are redeemed, may the sinful soul find the sacred and religious motivation to hope for mercy and pardon; may the penitent

find in this inspiration to grow in the Virtues and in Holiness; and finally, may the just person find a most ardent zeal to save Souls for the Lord.<sup>17</sup>

***Practices of Devotion to the Blood of Christ***

Devotion to the Precious Blood is beautiful and important because it brings back to life Catholic piety in the faithful: “This is the devotion that brings Religion back to life . . . in its practices.”<sup>18</sup>

One understands the excellence of devotion to the Blood of Christ if one considers the importance it bestows on the life of the sacraments; this was of all the more value at the time of St. Gaspar when the faithful were still terrorized by a rigid Jansenistic mentality:

From this devotion, besides, comes the renewal of that goodness which the Divine Blood has created in us through the regeneration of Holy Baptism. From this devotion comes special respect for the other Sacraments and especially for the Sacrament of Penance . . . Oh, that we might turn the gaze of our faith to the Table of love, to the Sacrifice of the Altar; oh, how religion calls us to the most tender mysteries of redemption!<sup>19</sup>

From considering these intrinsic reasons for the beauty of the devotion to the Precious Blood, St. Gaspar concludes:

Our devotion is based in dogma; it is an essential devotion and one cannot help but recognize the values that it offers . . . to say nothing about what could be said about . . . the Priesthood . . . the Sacraments . . . religion all of which beckons us to exclaim: *Redemisti nos Domine in Sanguine tuo et fecisti nos Deo nostro regnum et sacerdotes* ‘You have redeemed us in your

Blood, O Lord . . . and have made us for our God a kingdom and priests' [Rv 5: 9–10].<sup>20</sup>

This devotion, besides, in its practices “renews Religion in its principles . . . in its glories.”<sup>21</sup>

The excellence of the devotion also is derived from a comparison with other devotions: “Other devotions are all means for fostering Catholic piety, but this devotion is the basis, the sustaining force, the essence of the others.”<sup>22</sup> Gaspar even says that this devotion contains all of the others.<sup>23</sup>

Other devotions, the products of various periods in history, present to us an epoch that is in principle always holy and praiseworthy, but this devotion is so ancient that it dates back to the moment of Adam’s sin and thus called for Jesus: *agnus occisus a constitutione mundi* ‘the lamb slain from the creation of the world’ [Rv 13: 8].<sup>24</sup>

### **Reasons from the History of the Church**

In addition to these intrinsic reasons, St. Gaspar also spoke of extrinsic reasons, which he calls “reasons from the history of the Church,” particularly to demonstrate the legitimacy of his beloved devotion against those who denigrated and opposed it.

His thesis could be summarized as follows: The Church, both as teacher and as disciple, was always solicitous of the devotion to the Precious Blood in various ways. Thus, such a devotion is legitimate and very useful for the faithful. Here is what he says in the memorial to Leo XII:

Indeed, it is an essential devotion in Christianity, venerated by our mother, the Church *quam acquisivit sanguine suo* ‘which he has purchased with his own blood’ [Acts 20: 28].<sup>25</sup>

In another places he writes:

Holy Mother Church is concerned about the special cult addressed to the price of our redemption: *Christus dilexit ecclesiam, tradidit semetipsum pro ea, acquisivit Sanguine Suo* 'Christ loved the church and delivered himself up for it; he has purchased [it] with his own Blood' [Eph 5: 25; Acts 20: 28].<sup>26</sup>

Having offered this sketch of St. Gaspar's thesis, we move on to see how Gaspar marshaled proofs for it.

*Revelation*, that is to say the Old and New Testaments, is full of texts, symbols, and images related to the Blood of Christ. Thus St. Gaspar writes of the Church Fathers:

Would that we were given the means of reproducing, through the public press, the glories of this inestimable treasure of our souls, along with the noble compositions of the Fathers of the Church for the understanding of the sacred text; and especially so, since, in our days, generally speaking, this is not sufficiently known. However, the Lord will recreate them in the hearts of people!<sup>27</sup>

*Theologians* understood the importance and value of devotion to the Blood of Christ:

St. Thomas says: 'The Blood of Christ is the key to paradise.' St. John Chrysostom says: 'The Blood of Christ is the salvation of souls.' St. Ambrose: 'The Blood of Christ is fine gold.' St. Bernard: 'The Blood of Christ sounds like a trumpet.'<sup>28</sup>

The *authority of the Church* promoted the liturgical cult in honor of the Divine Blood, granting a proper office and Mass and enriching some prayers to the Blood of Christ with indulgences.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the Supreme

Pontiffs gave approval for the erection of confraternities with the title of the Precious Blood. This was the case with Popes Paul III, Paul IV, Sixtus V, and Pius VII.<sup>30</sup> One could also cite the interest of various bishops noted for holiness and doctrine, who following Church tradition, were committed to promoting the devotion to the Divine Blood among the faithful. Among so many names that one could cite<sup>31</sup> there stands out Vincenzo Strambi, bishop of Macerata and Tolentino and author, along with Gaetano Bonanni, of the “splendid little book titled *Il mese di Giugno consacrato alla divozione dei misteri del Divin Sangue*, which presents the documents particularly important for this devotion.”<sup>32</sup> There is also Francesco Maria Giampè, bishop of Assisi; Luigi Piervisani, bishop of Nocera, and Cardinal Antonio Gabriele Severoli.<sup>33</sup> St. Gaspar asks: “How could it ever have been possible for these most respectable bishops, among whom we include his Eminence Severoli, to give their consent to the diffusion of this good work if there had been the least disagreement with the principles or the practices of the Church?”<sup>34</sup>

Finally, *the faithful*, and in first place among them *the saints*, experienced the efficacy of this devotion either for themselves, for the sanctification of souls, or for holding back the flood of evils of the society in which they lived. “St. Catherine of Siena, during the schism of her time, received the inspiration from the Lord that on this devotion depended peace within the Church.”<sup>35</sup> St. Camillus De Lellis was very devoted to the Blood of Christ;<sup>36</sup> Blessed Giacomo of Bevagna had great confidence in the Blood of Jesus.<sup>37</sup>

After citing many very valid arguments, St. Gaspar concludes: “These are . . . the intrinsic reasons and those of the history of the Church,”<sup>38</sup> which render legitimate and very precious the devotion to the Blood of Christ; one should not, therefore, impede its spread.<sup>39</sup>

Gaspar was not only a defender of the devotion but became its champion, as he writes to Leo XII:

We conclude by saying that the adherence to basic principles, the observance of fundamentals, the welfare of our times, the glory given to the Redemption as well as the scorn that hell itself will receive, all demand that your Holiness, rather than derogating and removing this most august title [of the Most Precious Blood], should be exultant with it and promote it throughout the entire Catholic World with a solemn decree, extending the use of the Mass and the Office of the price of our Redemption.<sup>40</sup>

This was a desire which unfortunately, as we know, St. Gaspar did not see realized during his earthly life.

### **Conclusion**

We have come to the end of our work. We have tried to trace the personality of St. Gaspar as Apostle of the Precious Blood, describing how he was formed in the spirituality of the Blood of Christ and how he lived and defended it. We have also seen how he worked tirelessly to spread the devotion and the themes of his preaching on the Blood of Christ. This, in brief, has been the aim of this work.

Have we succeeded in presenting the personality of St. Gaspar in its true stature? The reader must decide. We are aware that we have not said everything. There are many spiritual riches of our saint waiting to be explored in his writings, nearly all of which are now available to everyone, at least in the original language. We nourish the hope that others who follow will fill in the gaps and will investigate in greater depth the thought of St. Gaspar and the influence that he and his spiritual heirs—Missionaries, sisters, and the laity—have had in the Church under the living impetus of the Blood of Christ.



## Appendix

This appendix contains a small anthology of the most important of St. Gaspar's writings on the Precious Blood.

For the most part these are outlines for preaching on the Blood of Christ that Gaspar prepared for the Missionaries who had asked him for material for preaching on the topic. They are not refined outlines, but are rather barely rough drafts based on the living and logical thread of discourse articulated in the mind of St. Gaspar. His Missionaries were able to comprehend these outlines easily since they were familiar with Gaspar's preaching.

The texts are reproduced as they are found in the original manuscripts according to the editorial criteria we have outlined in the presentation of the first volume of the *Scritti spirituali* published in 1995.

*Translator's note:* These documents are presented in a translation that conforms to the original as closely as possible. Most of the originals are a mixture of Latin and Italian; the Biblical quotations are usually in Latin, from the Vulgate. These have generally been translated using the Douay-Rheims version, an English translation of the Vulgate text. St. Gaspar generally did not include chapter and verse indications. These have been added and are in brackets. The inconsistencies in the capitalization of certain words reflect the original text.

The translation of *In Omnibus Divites Facti Estis in Illo* is by Fr. John Colacino, C.PP.S.

## I. ON THE MOST PRECIOUS BLOOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

[*Scritti spirituali*, pp. 196–97.

This outline for preaching  
was written by Missionary Michele Palombi.]

### Exhortation

1. Motives for this devotion which should be spread with zeal.

Let us look into its intrinsic value.

It is the mystery of faith—Because all of faith is centered in this devotion, because all of the holy faith in its glories derives from this devotion.

2. All of the prophecies are centered in this devotion, etc. “He shall wash his robe in wine and his garment in the blood of the grape” [Gn 49: 11] . . . “You have anointed my head with oil; and my chalice which inebriates me, how goodly is it” [Ps 23: 5] “. . . I have believed, therefore [have I spoken]” [Ps 116: 10] . . . “The Lamb slain from the creation of the world” [cf. Rv 13: 8].

“And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with blood; and his name is called the Word of God” [Rv 19: 13]. “Why then is your apparel red, and your garments like theirs that tread in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone” [Is 63: 2–23].

(To the Hebrews) “Christ, being a high priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made by hand, that is, not of this creation: Neither by the blood of goats, or of calves, but by his own Blood, entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption” [Heb 9: 11–12].

The sacrifices, etc. . . . the Images . . . the doors of the Hebrews colored by the Blood of the Lamb, etc. The mysteries, etc., therefore, etc.

3. “In Christ Jesus, you, who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ” [Eph 2: 13]. “Making peace through the Blood” [Col 1: 20] . . . “The Blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin” [1 Jn 1: 17].

Triumphs of the faith on account of the Blood, etc. the Sacraments . . . the preaching . . . the conversion of evildoers . . . the improvement of the penitent . . . “[You have] not yet resisted unto Blood” [Heb 12: 4] “. . . in loving souls . . .” “Christ loved us, and washed [our souls] in his Blood” [Rv 1: 5] . . . See, the martyrs . . . he conquered the world not with iron but with wood. And like soldiers, who give their lives, etc. thus, etc. Glory to God and to the Lamb [cf. Rv 5: 13] . . .

“They conquered the dragon through the Blood of the Lamb” [Rv 12: 11] . . . “These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and from where do they come?” [Rv 7: 13].

## II. THE DIVINE BLOOD AND THE SOULS IN PURGATORY

[Found in *Letter 581*. This part of the letter  
is in Latin rather than in Italian.]

4. The Precious Blood of Jesus Christ is the price by which we have been freed not only from the pains of hell, but from purgatory.

1. In this regard, let us wonder at the goodness of God in preparing a multitude of means flowing from the Redemption.
2. In this regard, let us wonder at the goodness of God in accepting these same means in regard to the practice of the faithful.

5. 1. It is proven. Nothing written is defiled, etc. But if souls, even though burdened down lightly with guilt, have any defilement, how will they be able to possess the glory of God? Even if they undergo suffering in fire as satisfaction, nevertheless the good of purgation from venial fault is always connected with Redemption and the blood of the immaculate Lamb. For He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world [cf. 1 Jn 2: 2] and is the Lamb who was able to open the book and the seals and to cancel [its] lamentations and to write in it a song of happiness and exultation [cf. Rv 5: 9–10].

If, however, there is a question of making satisfaction for temporal punishment, the good of satisfactory suffering receives its value from Jesus the Redeemer. But oh, how great is the love of God in its sweetness. You brought to souls detained in purgatory the means of religion so that they may more swiftly depart from the fire. Behold the merits of the saints, behold the prayers, behold the indulgences, behold the Sacrifice of the Mass which is the summation of all that is good . . . who does not admire the tenderness of God in preparing [this] and in preparing a multitude of means? For generally the treasuries of the Church are applied as much as possible to Purgatory. How good God is, [O] Listeners . . . .

6. 2. He promised, however, through these means to free more swiftly the captive souls, etc. . . . and I ask that the very wise order of providence be considered. For each soul the time of merit is the present. When this most miserable life is over there will be no more time. But the soul burdened with venial sin does not merit the pains of hell, for it has not lost the state of grace, but God requires satisfaction for another reason. How, therefore, will these viewpoints be reconciled? Behold how God gives to the wayfarer (*homini viatori*) the key to Paradise for the benefit of souls in order that they might not suffer for the sake of satisfaction [of their sins] to the last penny but rather that on account of his love they be

more quickly freed. Behold, he says to the faithful, the promise of my will: just as I did penance for all, so you also are to exercise love for one another. Make satisfaction in yourselves for what is owed to justice. Are grace and other things of this kind necessary? It is present in you; but if an individual is ungrateful regarding its own matters, still the Church, the spouse of Christ, will not cease to admonish us with tears and to cast out from us the weight of human sloth. That we may be filled with a great heart and a willing spirit God instills a personal good in us. For if the same measure . . . and if salutary devotion is necessary in the application of means, let it even be strengthened by miracles. Therefore, O fountain of salvation, it is necessary that I thus explain myself! O Blood that is on the altar, that is in indulgences . . . displays balm and the mystical oil of mercy, etc. . . .

### III. YOU HAVE BEEN BOUGHT AT A GREAT PRICE<sup>1</sup>

Exhortation to the faithful  
on the importance of devotion to the Divine Blood  
[*Scritti spirituali*, I, pp. 252–253.]

7. The abuse which the price of our Redemption suffers in these days and the urgent need to give continued compensation to the Divine Redeemer for the ingratitude of humankind demands that devout lovers of Jesus be involved in promoting perpetual adoration of the Divine Precious Blood of the Savior.

8. Twelve Churches in different areas would successively observe the month consecrated to the mysteries of our Redemption. They would carry out that cult of compensation that seeks to placate the Lord, who is angered by our sins. Whoever does not have the book for the month [of the Precious Blood] composed by the late bishop of Macerata and Tolentino, [Vincenzo] Strambi,<sup>2</sup> can

also use the Chaplet [of the Precious Blood] composed by the late bishop of Terracina, Sezze, and Piperno, [Francesco] Albertini,<sup>3</sup> Propagator of such a lively devotion.

Whatever is said of the pious practice of a Church in the public realm is also valid for private devotional practice.

9. Finally, the Ecclesiastics with faculties to inscribe the faithful to participate in the Indulgences of the Archconfraternity of the Precious Blood are asked to divide the Hours of Prayer for devotion in such a way that the perpetual Cult of adoration might occur, which will be rewarded by the Most Loving God with the gentleness and sweetness of his mercy. Amen.

*G. C. Del Bufalo*  
Apostolic Missionary  
and Director of the Missions

#### IV. EXHORTATION FOR THE MONTH OF THE DIVINE BLOOD

[*Scritti spirituali*, I, pp. 442–444.]

“You have been bought at a great price” [1 Cor 6: 20].

10. My faithful people, the adoration of the inestimable price of our redemption is the most tender subject that we can propose for our consideration. Through it we receive the treasures of Wisdom and Sanctification. Through it we are freed from the pains of hell in proportion to our love of Jesus. Through it we take possession of the holy glory of heaven, in virtue of the Divine Blood! “You have been bought at a great price; glorify God in your body” [1 Cor 6: 20].

11. Now who would believe it? Instead of observing sentiments of tender response (*corrispondenza*) in Souls, one sees ingratitude, an inexpressible lack of awareness in the sons and daughters who have been redeemed! “What profit is there in my Blood?” [Ps 30: 10]. The Lord has already lamented this with His Prophet. It is just, therefore, O faithful ones, that to compensate for the ingratitude of humankind, we consecrate the present month to Adoration of the Divine Blood and by it soften our Hearts.

12. By means of the application of this inestimable price by which we are redeemed, may the sinful soul find the sacred and religious motivation to hope for mercy and pardon; may the penitent find in this [price] inspiration to grow in the Virtues and in Holiness; and finally, may the just person find a most ardent zeal to save Souls for the Lord.

13. If sin was always the cause of the inner sorrows of the Savior, then today, in the universal crisis of the people, it has caused indescribable harm to the interests of faith. And what does the demon not do (in order that souls not profit from the divine Blood)?

14. Ah, when people recall such an important devotion it prods them to rise from the fatal sleep of spiritual death, which oppresses them. “I will take up the chalice of salvation, and I will call on the name of the Lord” [Ps 116: 13] . . . “my chalice which inebriates me, how goodly is it!” [Ps 23: 5]. Now, I mean that in the Old Testament the Lord was pleased with the Blood of the Victims, inasmuch as this prefigured the Blood of the Lamb shed in the fullness of time on the altar of the Cross. “For if the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh: How much more shall the Blood of Christ, who by the Holy Spirit offered

himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works?" [Heb 9: 13–14]. From this devotion, besides, comes the revival of that goodness which the Divine Blood has created in us through the regeneration of Holy Baptism. From this devotion comes a special respect for the other Sacraments and especially for the Sacrament of Penance, where one finds fulfilled the passage: "justified in Blood, we will be saved by him from the wrath" [Rom 5: 9]. Oh, that we might turn the gaze of our faith to the Table of love, to the Sacrifice of the Altar; oh, how religion calls us to the most tender mysteries of redemption!

**15.** Jesus, dearest people, is therefore our beloved, white and ruddy. He is white, because he is pure at the core of his being. He is ruddy, because of his Divine Blood. "My beloved is white and ruddy" [Song 5: 10]. Everywhere I fixed my attention, I did not remember nor did I see that Blood . . . the wounds of the feet, of the hands . . . the Head crowned with thorns . . . the open Divine Heart stirs us to love all things in return . . . let us even use the words of the Church in the Hymn of the passion of Jesus Christ, "stand at the cross mourning; anoint the sacred feet . . . wash them with your tears, dry them with your hair, and kiss them with your mouth."

**16.** Oh my Jesus, I pray that you accept the supplications of this holy month, in compensation for so many iniquities of humankind; and while the enemy of good seeks to keep the sons of Adam from remembering your love, may the devotion to the Divine Blood bring our souls closer to your Divine heart = "you have been brought near in the Blood" [Eph 2: 13] = May our minds, therefore, always be occupied with pondering the mysteries of your love and may our hearts be occupied with love for its application. May our bodily sentiments be occupied with showing the triumphs of that love for our

sanctification and that of others. Thus may this inestimable price by which we have been redeemed be indelible in our memory: “For you have been bought at a great price. Glorify God in your body” [1 Cor 6: 20].

## V. FOR THE MONTH OF THE DIVINE BLOOD

[*Scritti spirituali*, III, pp. 390–392.]

17. Division of the days into the three ways: *purgative*, *illuminative*, *unitive*.

### Introduction

“Christ loved the Church, he gave himself up for her [Eph 5: 25] . . . he purchased [her] with his own Blood” [Acts 20: 28].

We are living in times in which it is necessary to cleanse the entire world anew in the Blood of the Lamb.<sup>4</sup>

### Purgative

18. *Laments of Jesus Christ* . . . “what profit is there [in my blood],” etc., [Ps 30: 10] . . . “And his sweat [became as drops of blood],” etc. [Lk 22: 44] “. . . What are these wounds? . . .”

“Making peace through the Blood,” etc. [Col 1: 20].

*Triumphs of the Divine Blood* in the response of those invited (*in corrispondenza degli inviti*). “Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with clean water . . . Let us hold fast the confession of our hope” [Heb 10: 22–23].

“You, who sometimes were afar off, are made near by the Blood of Christ” [Eph 2: 13].

(The Office and Mass of the Divine Blood are to be read.)

### Illuminative

19. *Greatness of the price*. “You have been bought at a great price” [1 Cor 6: 20]. Hence some illustration about

having a great esteem for Jesus Christ, whom so many are insulting today, etc.

*The tenderness of love in the way* in which he sheds the divine Blood. Oh, my, everywhere I direct my gaze whether toward the scourging, etc., or toward the Crowning with thorns, etc., all of this stirs me to tenderness. = “And he was clothed with a garment sprinkled with Blood” [Rv 19: 13] . . . “Why then is thy apparel red,” etc. [Is 63: 2–3]. *Jesus is covered with Blood* . . . What lessons, etc.

*The industriousness of charity in applying [the Blood]* to Souls in the Sacraments, in offering it to the Eternal Father in the Divine Sacrifice of the Altar (devotion is that which renews Religion in its principles, in its practices, in its glories, etc.).

#### Unitive

20. We have not resisted to the point of blood.<sup>5</sup> *Courage in standing with Jesus on the cross, in defending holiness, virtue, etc., etc., and conquering the infernal dragon with the Divine Blood, making ourselves capable of greater union with Jesus Christ = they conquered the dragon through the Blood of the Lamb.*<sup>6</sup>=

*Love for Jesus Christ in sufferings*, which is an extension of perfection beyond the courage which unites us to the Cross. It begins *with courage to suffer, continues with cheerfulness of love*, and is pleased with what is of value (*se ne gustano i preggi*), etc.

In the end, *our glory is to be found* in suffering for our most tender devotion, etc. *Glory in the prophets* who announced the glories and the triumphs, *glory in the Apostles*, etc., etc., who preached to the people, etc., *glory in the Martyrs* who resisted with this devotion, etc. In the Confessors who took Courage, etc. *Glory of the Priesthood*, and prefigured, etc., and then fulfilled in Jesus Christ. First in Symbols, now in truth. “If the Blood of goats” [Heb 9: 13], etc. *Glory in the sons and daughters of Redemption*. For by the Blood of Jesus

Christ we can have the earth as an inheritance. Glory in the Saints who always sensed the fruit of redemption, glory in blessed Eternity, etc. Glory to God, *and to the Lamb.*<sup>7</sup>

On the day of the feast

21. “And this day shall be for a memorial to you: and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord in your generations with an everlasting observance” [Ex 12: 14] and that [observance will be]:

1. to express gratitude for benefits,
2. to seek new [benefits],
3. to triumph by means of [the benefits] with the Divine Blood in eternity, etc.

## VI. REFLECTIONS ON THE MONTH OF THE DIVINE BLOOD

[*Scritti spirituali*, III, pp. 400–405.]

“Forget not the kindness of your surety: for he has given his life for you” [Sir 29: 20].

Introduction

22. 1. *The motives*, for making the month fruitfully.  
2. *The way*, to keep [the month] well.

*Motives*

1. for making a Cult of Compensation.
2. for acquiring for ourselves a great hatred for [our] faults.
3. for becoming more zealous for the good of our neighbor.

*Means*

Placing before our eyes the book of the Cross of Jesus, in order to know, love, and imitate Jesus Crucified.

## Benefit of the Redemption

“You have been bought at a great price” [1 Cor 6: 20].

**23.** The fact of the liberation of the Hebrew people from the slavery of Egypt.

Moses with the Staff a figure of Jesus Christ with the Cross.

The passage of Eritrea (*passaggio dell'Eritreo*) – “Let us sing to the Lord” [Ex 15: 1].

What were we if Jesus, etc.

The Hebrew people were ungrateful in the desert, oh, how many are ungrateful to Jesus, etc.

What was the cause of the Redemption?

**24.** Charity (*carità*) = “on account of his exceeding charity with which he loved us” [Eph 2: 4] . . . “he was offered up” [Heb 9: 28].

1. Eternal love (*amore*) – “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn you, taking pity on you” [Jer 31: 3].
2. Magnanimous love, going beyond *redemption* (*riscatto*), he wanted to be an example for the Martyrs . . . he wanted to show how much he suffered voluntarily, so that we might love him . . . he wanted to stir our hearts. Therefore the Prophet exclaimed that the mercy of the Lord was great. He wanted to open for us the fountains of mercy in his wounds.

He wanted to administer that mystical oil to us, etc., “the lamps thereof are fire and flames” [Song 8: 6]. “I have come to cast fire on the earth,” etc. [Lk 12: 49].

3. Tender love for the way Jesus applies redemption to us.

He calls sinners, etc. “Come to me all you” [Mt 11: 28] . . . “I will cast your sins to the

bottom of the sea” [cf. Mi 7: 19]. “You . . . who were far off are made near by the Blood” [Eph 2: 13].

He rouses the penitent = “you have not resisted to the point of Blood” [Heb 12: 4].

He animates the fervent = “My beloved to me, and I to him [who feeds among the lilies] . . . “the beloved is white and ruddy” [Song 2: 16; 5: 10].

4. Suffering love, patient love . . . “[the Lord] is patient and full of mercy” [Ps 145: 8]. He says to the Eternal Divine Father = “look on the face of your Christ” [Ps 84: 10] =.  
(This is divided into two days).

To whom love was directed, and why

**25.** Idea of the Exhortation. A shepherd who sacrifices for the sheep, etc., the love that stirs up, etc., But why?

The soul is the *Image* of the Lord. What is it that the Lord loathes in the Soul? On the question of offering [the Blood] at Holy Mass, or the Communication of Indulgences, St. Thomas [in] *Opusc.* 50. c. 25 applies the verse from Leviticus = “I have given [Blood] to you, that you may make atonement with it upon the altar for your souls” [Lv 17: 11].

*With a loud cry.* According to St. Ambrose, this phrase was the shedding of the Blood of the Redeemer, for whose efficacy every gift is shared by the Supreme Giver for the benefit of those redeemed = the shedding of his Holy Blood is a loud cry that is heard by God the Father.

St. Bernard [Sermon 9 on the Nativity] = in order that he heal my wounds by the precious balm of his blood.

How displeased is Jesus *with the lack of response (incorrispondenza) in Souls that have been redeemed.*

**26.** With more precision. (Divided into three days.)

Exhortation. The story of the prodigal son. The story of the lepers. One of them came back to the Savior, etc.

1. from the known laments and just complaints (*doglianze*) of Jesus the Redeemer,
2. from the Thirst that he has for Souls redeemed, whom he seeks because his Creatures are ungrateful,
3. from the encouragements he gives to his Beloved Ones, so that they cooperate with his plans, etc.

**27.** 1. My people . . . the doors of the Hebrews in Egypt dyed with the blood of the Lamb, etc. I led you out, etc.; and you prepared a cross, etc. "Seeing the city he wept" [Lk 19: 41], etc.

2. Thirst. "I thirst" [Jn 19: 28] . . . "why have you forsaken me" [Ps 22: 2] . . . an ardent, incessant thirst, extending to every Soul.

(Images) either of the shepherd who watches over the flock now of the farmer, etc, or of the father, etc. "I stand at the door and knock" [Rv 3: 20]. Behold the open fonts, etc., etc.

**28.** On the second point

"Many waters cannot quench love" [Song 8: 7] . . .

"I have come into the depth of the sea: and a tempest has overwhelmed me" [Ps 69: 3].

(Many waters, *many tribulations*) But Jesus with an ardent thirst, etc.

Thirst signified by the Lord in the time of expectation; in the time of Redemption and after his ascension to Heaven and he said = "as the Father has sent me" [Jn 20: 21], etc. (passage to the 3rd point).

On the thirst signified in the time of expectation is explained by the text = "from Petra of the desert, to the mount of the daughter of Sion" [Is 16: 1] =.

**29.** “I do not wish the death of the sinner” [Ez 33: 11], etc. “Go [therefore,] teach” [Mt 28: 19], etc., “I have set you this day . . .” [Jer 1: 10], etc., “Go into my vineyard” [Mt 20: 4].

He rouses the Apostles. He goes before them in suffering. He animates them.

One continues reflecting on the responsibility given principally to ministers by the Lord, etc.

#### Glories of the Priesthood

**30.** “You have redeemed us, O Lord, in your Blood, and have made us for our God a kingdom, and Priests” [Rv 5: 9–10].

1. The Glories of the Priesthood prefigured
2. The Glories of the Priesthood in fulfillment
3. The Glories of the Priesthood in the triumphs that result

Another division to observe when preaching

- 31.** 1. the Elevation of dignity (What love of Jesus, etc.)  
 2. the efficacy  
 3. the means (*modo*)
1. The Elevation of dignity . . . Oh, the greatest of the wonders that the Lord has done! And for applying the Divine Blood! (in two days).
  2. The efficacy of the ministry in the use of authority, etc.
  3. And how is it efficacious? By the Divine Blood of Jesus Christ.
- 32.** One should explain why in the words of the Consecration is said “the mystery of faith.”
1. Because the entire faith is concentrated, etc., etc.
  2. Because the entire faith presents its glories, etc.
- 33.** One should explain the verse “You are a Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” [Ps 110: 4]. (One continues to explain the “Mystery of Faith.”)

34. One should speak of the Mass which in a special way is a compendium of the objects of faith and spreads their glories.

## VII. THE SEVEN-DAY DEVOTION TO THE DIVINE BLOOD

[*Scritti spirituali*, III, pp. 408–413.]<sup>8</sup>

35. 1. Having . . . a confidence [in the entering into the holies] in the Blood of Christ; a new and living way which he has dedicated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh . . . Let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith (St. Paul to the Hebrews, ch. X).

Applications (*si applichi*) =

1. The Blood of Jesus Christ *animates trust*, etc., *trust in the Blood*
2. *makes trust* fruitful in its effects because *he has initiated for us* (fulfilling those things that are lacking in the passion), etc.
3. finally, *strengthens trust through the veil, that is to say, his flesh*. (The Crucifix is a mirror, etc.)

36. 2. “You are worthy, O Lord, to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; because you were slain, and have redeemed us to God [in your Blood,] out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us to our God a kingdom . . . and we shall reign [on the earth]” [Rv 5: 9–10].

I would apply [the quotation] thus = The Cross is the open book of Jesus Christ for instructing the world anew = in these last days he has spoken to us in [his] son (not only by the preaching of a word, but by the holiness of [his] example). Indulging the passions is wrong and repressing them is a good thing = “always bearing in our

body the mortification of Jesus, etc., that the life of Jesus be made manifest [in our bodies]" [2 Cor 4: 10].

Observe the humbled concupiscence of the senses . . . Jesus makes satisfaction, etc., and in order better to read this book observe the wounds, the Blood, *Behold*, how you are worthy to open *its seals because* you are slain = (One alludes to the wounds as signs of love, signs of salvation, etc.).

The concupiscence of *ambition*, etc., humbled by Jesus Christ who is the *lamb [who] was slain* . . . he humbled, etc.<sup>9</sup>

The concupiscence of the same interests (*degli'interessi del pari*) humbled, etc. The man was attached to things, etc., and offends God. And observe what generosity Jesus employs, etc., loving us to the last shedding of Blood. And our hearts are so constricted (*E noi di cuor così piccolo*).

(In addition, for three discourses one can extend, etc.) (I submit to those who are wiser than I. Correct the errors. See, a warning to the reader.)

**37. 3.** "Let us run . . . to the fight proposed to us looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith" (to the Hebrews) [Heb 12: 1–2].

Seeing Jesus Christ drenched in Blood

1. *Let us run, etc., preventing and detesting obstacles (impediendo et detestando scandala).*
2. Let us run looking to the author of the faith . . . For by faith the Saints (by doing good) have established justice, have acquired, etc. (by the zeal of redemption) have become strong in battle,<sup>10</sup> etc. . . . we have not yet resisted to the point of blood<sup>11</sup> . . . nevertheless if it is the work (*attamen si opus est*).
3. Let us run looking at Jesus who finished the race . . . who "by his own blood entered once into the holies" [Heb 9: 12], etc. Even undergoing

martyrdom if there is need for this, so that God may be glorified, and that our souls may be safe, etc.

38. 4. “Always living to make intercession for us” (to the Hebrews) [Heb 7: 25].

*He intercedes* for us with the voice of [his] Blood which *speaks better than that of Abel* [Heb 12: 24]. Hence the Eternal Father is honored by the Son, by him sins (*debita*) are expiated, graces are restored, benefits will be acquired so that in all things we have been made rich<sup>12</sup> . . . and with him he has given us all things . . . “he did not spare his own son” [Rm 8: 32] . . . but oh, the ingratitude of humanity, etc. (to be developed).

39. 5. “You have redeemed [us] in your Blood” [Rv 5: 9].

1. Therefore the Blood of Jesus Christ is an inestimable price . . .”For you are bought with a great price” [1 Cor 6: 20]. (Consider the Author, consider the Love in the author, and consider the extent of his love).
2. [The Blood] is a remedy (*medicina*) in all the Sacraments, and in the Sacrifice of the Mass.
3. [The Blood] is the cup by which we are inebriated in the Wine cellar. This is every wound of the Crucified One; in this refuge (*asylo*) of salvation we are given to drink of the *wine of compunction* and love is directed to our Crucified King; for by the cross he reigned, etc. “[The King] brought me into the [wine] cellar” [Song 2: 4], etc. “Who will separate us from the love of Christ?” [Rm 8: 35].

40. 6. “Come my Dove in the clefts of the rock . . .” [Song 2: 14].

What are these clefts . . . The wounds of Jesus Christ . . . “for the rock was Christ” [1 Cor 10: 4] [a rock] pierced by the chisel of sufferings.

Come. *Dove*, for the Blood has made you white; therefore you go to the fountains of salvation from which the price of redemption . . . the rock is therefore the refuge of rock-badgers (or sinners, etc.).

Come, *my dove*; you have been made white by my Blood; if you abide in my wounds you will not lose your whiteness (*si mea in meis vulneribus siste ne amittas candorem extravagando*). (Let the Dove of Noah be for you an image of salvation.)

Come, dove. For the Blood by which you have been cleansed will wash you more fully in perfection, etc.

41. 7. "Christ loved the Church" [Eph 5: 25] . . . "he purchased it with His Blood" [Acts 20: 28].

Let it be understood, [O] Hearers, the reason why today, etc. He purchased by [his] Blood, etc. Act thus, Christian Soul . . . let *devotion to the Blood* be displayed to men and women so that *the Church in its sons and daughters* may find purity of conscience, the splendor of grace, a Temple that gives life to souls.

*He purchased with His Blood*; therefore in the Blood of Jesus Christ let all find the fountain of all good things, *repose in trials, the security and peace* one can have when hesitation arises, etc., *the union of love, the foundation of faith* (*for it is the mystery of faith*), the basis of Christian patience, the cause of rejoicing in Heaven.

The Blood of Christ is the glory of martyrs, the strength of Confessors, etc., the purity of Virgins, etc.

The Blood of Jesus Christ opened the gates of paradise, obtained glory, humbled the devil, refreshes the souls in Purgatory, etc.

Behold, how the Church in her sons and daughters, etc.

Because if the Church is considered in its Own holiness, the Blood of Christ proves the love of its Head and Spouse, the Blood of Christ gives the strength of salvation to the law and therefore taking the book *he sprinkled* the Blood, saying, etc. The Blood of Christ is an

infinite treasure in the Sacraments, completes and fulfills the oracles, brings dignity to the Preaching of the Word; the blood red (*purpurea*) Cross makes holy the world, expels demons, overturns the temples of the Gentiles, deprives the demon of his Kingdom. For the Cross fixed in the hearts of men and women circumcises them in spirit, etc.

Therefore, “all things are cleansed with blood: and without shedding of blood there is no remission” [Heb 9: 22].

Behold the Church, in whatever way it may be considered, loved by the Blood, noble in faith, strong in battle, invincible in authority.

**42.** 8. For the day of the feast – “This day shall be for a memorial to you: and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord in your generations *with an everlasting observance*” [Ex 12: 14].

An everlasting observance because the Lamb was slain from the beginning of the world<sup>13</sup> = in the decrees, in the expectation of the prophets. “In you have our Fathers hoped” [Ps 22: 5], etc.

An everlasting observance in the state of grace. We were far off . . . we have been brought near in the Blood of Christ.<sup>14</sup>

(To sum up the month) “Blessed are they that wash their robes in the Blood of the Lamb” [Rv 22: 14].

An everlasting observance. Even in Heaven we will sing to the God of glory and to the Lamb,<sup>15</sup> and in kissing those luminous wounds of glory, etc., etc.

### VIII. IN ALL THINGS YOU ARE MADE RICH IN HIM<sup>16</sup>

*(In Omnibus Divites Facti Estis in Illo)*

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

**43.** With what riches devotion to the Most Precious Blood adorns the soul! We can distinguish three states in

which the soul may find itself: the state of sin, the state of grace, and the state of perfection (the three ways: *purgative, illuminative, unitive*).

#### The Purgative Way<sup>17</sup>

Devotion to the Blood of Jesus Christ is the foundation of hope in divine mercy.

#### 44. *Ipse est propitiatio* 'He is propitiation.'<sup>18</sup>

1. Because Jesus is our Advocate = "we have an Advocate with the Father, [Jesus Christ the righteous one]" [1 Jn 2: 1]. "*Look*," he says, "upon the face of your anointed" [Ps 84: 10]. For if the prayers of the Patriarchs obtained for the people such singular favors, then we may assume the same for ourselves. [Christ] presents his wounds together with his Blood which "speaks more eloquently than that of Abel," etc., etc. [Heb 12: 24].

#### 45. *Ipse est pastor* 'He is the shepherd.'

2. Because Jesus, while praying to the Father, calls out to us with *inexpressible groanings*,<sup>19</sup> he is also the Shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep, etc.<sup>20</sup> But in seeking his little flock, how reddened is the path of the good shepherd with blood.

How costly we are to Jesus, oh [you his] faithful ones, He calls out to us with as many mouths as he has wounds. He shows us his opened heart, etc. "Come, my son," he says, "cleanse yourself in this blood, etc." . . . Sin is a leprosy: "*Wash and you will be clean*" [2 Kgs 5: 10].

#### 46. *Ipse est vita* 'He is life.'

3. Because Jesus, while seeking and praying for us, allows us to know, if we are open, the

efficacy of the means of reconciliation, his divine Blood. ([This blood is] the power of the sacrament of penance; it is the price of sanctifying grace; it brings about a revival of good works, etc.)

47. *Ipse est solatium* 'He is comfort.'

4. The devil, seeing that a soul wants to return to God, seeks to discourage it with vain fears. But Jesus, our comfort, says to the soul: "How can you doubt that I am unwilling to pardon you, since I call and invite you to give you an opportunity for repentance, leading you by the hand? Look at me in the garden; I sweat Blood from the pain of foreseeing that many would not be saved through their own fault: 'What profit is there in my Blood?' [Ps 30: 10]. See me upon the cross. 'I thirst'" [Jn 19: 28].

48. *Ipse est quies* 'He is repose.'

5. [The soul protests]: But not once I have come near to repenting, yet, etc. [Jesus responds]: Well now, the purpose of life is one of amendment. It is true you deserved punishment, but just as the lintels of the Hebrews were marked with blood and thus passed over by the Angel, so [you too, have been marked]. Jesus said to St. Peter: "No, I tell you, not seven times but seventy times seven" [Mt 18: 22].

Jesus, therefore, is our repose. Observe how he is scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified; notwithstanding even the repetition of so many sins, I tell you, his reply was still, "Father [they] know not [what they are doing]." He still said: "Father, they know not," [Lk 23: 34], etc.

How true it is that those in the purgative way must depend on the riches of the Blood of

the Lamb, etc. “[How much more then, since we are now] justified by his Blood, will we be saved through [Christ] from the wrath” [Rm 5: 9].

49. *Ipse est magister* ‘He is the teacher.’

6. Jesus leads the converted soul to the wounds of his feet so that it might persevere, saying: “Flee, daughter, from the near occasions of sin, lest you reopen these wounds and trample this blood. Your sins would then serve as nails.” [The soul responds]: “Lord, make my steps steadfast in your paths . . .” [Ps 17: 5].

“My foot has stood on the direct way . . .” [Ps 26: 12]. “Walk while you have the light” [Jn 12: 35].

50. *Ipse est magister*

7. Jesus then leads the soul to the wounds of his hands, and says: “Observe, daughter, how I am wounded for you. The hand is the instrument of the Deed. Blessed are you if you strive for Heaven and apply to yourself my divine Blood which flows from my hands, enriching the soul with merits, etc.” [The soul responds]: “As the eyes of a maid are on the hands of her mistress, [so are our eyes on the Lord, our God]” [Ps 123: 2]. In reflecting on [these] “eyes on the hands,” [the soul] knows that what it sees with the mind’s eye must be acted upon.

“[His] hands are turned [and as of gold, full of hyacinths] . . .” [Song 5: 14] symbolize in their smoothness the perfection of one’s works, full of hyacinths.

But for *grace* to work, *the sacraments* [are needed]. And is not all this but a continuous application of the Blood of Jesus Christ? If you, the faithful, frequent the Sacraments, if you assist at Mass, etc., what else do you do if not, etc.

51. *Ipse est magister*

8. To act [well], however, it is necessary to carry the cross. And here Jesus shows us the wound of his shoulder: “Whoever wishes to come [after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me]” [Mt 16: 24]. [First], suffering is *necessary* for us, especially when obstinate sinners persecute the good; joining with them is not fitting, however, etc. Second, [suffering] is *useful*, moreover, since by it we detach ourselves from this miserable world. Let us not rely on ourselves. Let us have recourse to prayer. Third, [suffering] is *glorious*, since the cross is the royal ladder to heaven: “Was it not necessary [that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?]” [Lk 24: 26]. How much should the example of Jesus inspire us! “What are these wounds?” [Zec 13: 6].

52. *Ipse est magister*

9. Willingly bearing the cross, [the soul] must beware of weariness, and reflect on Jesus who “for the sake of the joy that lay before him . . . endured the cross, despising its shame” [Heb 12: 2]. The soul thereby grows in knowledge, noticing how Jesus, though himself innocent, nevertheless did with a flood what he could have done with a drop. “He loved us and has washed away our sins in his own blood” [Rv 1: 5]. [The soul] thinks of its own sinfulness and *loves its sufferings in peace* (thereby marking an increase in repentance). *It does not complain* in the midst of suffering.

[The soul] loves *the cup* the Father gave [Jesus].<sup>21</sup> It does not complain: “Jesus, however, was silent [and answered nothing]” [Mk 14: 61]. And behold how the soul already begins to

participate in the illuminative life through its imitation of the Savior's example.

It sees the torn Jesus and each moment despises its disgusting vices if it was dishonest.

It sees Jesus crowned and dripping blood, despising its vanity should the soul have been proud.

It sees Jesus crucified and does not give in to the wiles of the enemy who goes about saying: "Come down from the Cross," etc.<sup>22</sup> Jesus proved he was the Son of God when, despite the darkening Sky, he still did not come down from the Cross, thus making himself our teacher, that we might never abandon the Cross.

### **The Illuminative Way**

*In omnibus divites facti estis in illo*

**53.** Having understood well the teaching explained above, we continue on to the illuminative way seeing how all the riches we possess are ours in the blood of the Lamb.

Here the well-known text comes to mind: "[Christ Jesus] . . . became for us wisdom from God, as well as righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" [1 Cor 1: 30].

**54.** 1. *Sapientia* 'Wisdom'<sup>23</sup>

In the illuminative way the converted soul begins to notice the greatness *of faith*.

It sees the *unity* [of faith] insofar as the sacrifice of Melchizedek, the blood of Abel (*Abele svenato*), and the sacrifice of Isaac [all] allude to this Victim [who is Christ], etc. The soul meditates at the foot of the cross on how all were saved through faith in the future Messiah: "In you our fathers hoped," [Ps 22: 5] etc. . . . "Without shedding of blood there is no remission" [Heb 9: 22], etc. . . . "If the blood of goats [and bulls and the sprinkling of

a heifer's ashes can sanctify those who are defiled so that their flesh is cleansed], how much more will the blood of Christ" [Heb 9: 13]. The ancient priesthood, the sacrifices, etc.

Different themes converge marking the harmony of the Old and New Testaments, and the glories of the unity of the faith. For these reasons, Jesus was thus called "the Lamb . . . slain before the foundation of the world" [Rv 13: 8; cf. 1 Pt 1: 19].

What a grand thought! Etc. Such a devotion to be revived in [our own] times.

Oh faith! Etc., etc.

### 55. 2. *Sapientia.*

The soul proceeds to notice the glory of the faith in the inspiration of the sacred Books of which our devotion reminds us. Were not [the following things] said of Jesus in times long past: "Behold, I am ready for scourges" [Ps 38: 18] . . . "Many bullocks surround me" [Ps 22: 13] . . . "My bones all tremble" [Jer 23: 9], etc. . . . "There was in him no stately bearing . . . nor appearance [that would attract us to him]" [Is 53: 2].

Oh, my Lord, when I see you covered with blood how many religious thoughts I call to mind! Oh great devotion of the Precious Blood! "From the sole of the foot to [the head there is no sound spot]" [Is 1: 6] . . . "What are these wounds?" [Zec 13: 6], etc. How one laments the loss of respect for holy things.

### 56. 3. *Sapientia.*

The soul proceeds in the illuminative way to have a stable faith whose glories are seen in the Apostles spreading the gospel. They sanctified the world in the Blood of the Lamb, applying it in the sacraments. The soul beholds the marvels of the cross reddened with Blood; it sees how souls are regenerated: "You have had yourselves washed" [1 Cor 6: 11] . . . It sees the prodigies which accompany apostolic undertakings. Truly God has

reigned from a tree. And yet how many are the enemies of the cross today?

**57. 4. *Sapientia.***

The soul proceeds to consider how it possesses the riches it has through the merits of Jesus. While delighting to render worship, the soul knows its own poverty. So it takes the chalice in hand: “The cup of salvation [I will take up]” [Ps 117: 13] . . . “And [my] chalice which inebriates me, how goodly it is!” [Ps 23: 5]. In the Old Testament there was the sacrifice of worship, but in the the Mass during which, etc. What respect and zeal therefore should everyone strive to attain while being thus nourished?

**58. 5. *Sapientia.***

The soul sees how in the Blood of the Lamb it gives thanks for favors received. “How shall I make a return [to the Lord]?” [Ps 116: 12] (Eucharistic sacrifice). There is nothing more terrible than ingratitude as seen in our own day. *Forgetting the gifts one has received . . . repaying favors with evil*, at the same time abusing these very gifts: [all these things] constitute varying degrees of ingratitude.

**59. 6. *Sapientia.***

The soul sees that to obtain grace there is nothing to do but offer the blood: “Look upon the face of your anointed” [Ps 84: 10], etc. (Impetratory sacrifice).

Oh love of our divine redeemer! “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one” [1 Jn 2: 1]. “Thanks be to God who gives us [the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ]” [1 Cor 15: 57]. And this is how: “I am with you [always, until the end of the age]” [Mt 20: 28].

In the Sacred Ciborium Jesus is there pleading. For this reason the unbloody Sacrifice is renewed every morning. The Church offers no prayer which does not

conclude without a reference to Jesus' merits. (Cf. Pinamonti's<sup>24</sup> *tree of Life*.) Oh, what need we have of Jesus! It is said in the ancient text that in order to obtain grace it is necessary to call on the God of Abraham: not because God is not the God of all people, but because of the merits of the patriarchs. But the merits of Jesus Christ are, in a special way, the foundation of all the saints' merits.

**60. 7. *Sapientia*.**

For the just expiation of its sins, the soul ponders its affection for heavenly wisdom, and thereby experiences greater sorrow for having sinned. It seeks to make satisfaction, aware that whatever good it does and suffering it endures will be useful for the remission of sins. It knows that goodness, salutary works—indeed everything—stems from the continual application of the treasures of Jesus Christ and that the Blood of the Savior gives comfort. The soul is fond of saying: “No, I will not fear, because ‘with you is forgiveness . . . [and] plenteous redemption’” [Ps 130: 4, 7]. Behold how the soul is enlivened with another theological virtue, *hope*. “They who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which is immovable, [which stands forever]” [Ps 125: 1]. Seeing Jesus' wounds opened by sins, the soul sighs with compassion; yet from these wounds it draws the mystic waters “welling up [to eternal life]” [Jn 4: 14] in which it hopes to be saved. It knows the dangers, yet full of courage, the soul exclaims: “I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me” [Phil 4: 13]. It makes use, therefore, of the sacraments and sees how in the soul's own sanctification, Jesus has been made our justice.<sup>25</sup> In the word “justice” is understood every good work.

**61. 8. *Factus est justificatio* ‘He has been made justification.’**

In addition to this, the soul sees how the devil, even if not tempting it to leave all good behind, would nevertheless love to see the soul once again in sin, and thus afflicts it. But the soul, fixing its gaze on its beloved Good, sees what it means *to offend God*, and how much Jesus has suffered to make it holy. Therefore, the soul exclaims: “What will separate me from the love of Christ?” [Cf. Rom 8: 35]. For Jesus “was offered because it was his own will” [Is 53: 7] [and] “by his stripes we were healed” [Is 53: 5]. Who wishes to crown him anew with thorns? Who seeks to reopen his wounds? All this compels us to return love for love: his bowed head, outstretched hands, and his opened side.

**62.** 9. *Factus est redemptio* ‘He has been made redemption.’

In order to establish better [the soul’s] attachment to good, it sets itself to thinking, point by point, of the pains suffered by Jesus. It sees him at prayer in the garden, and what pain it feels in seeing him sweat blood! It ponders the scourging, asking who would not pity him? Thinking of Jesus crucified, the soul asks, “What are these wounds?” [Zec 13: 6]. It visits in spirit the holy places and follows the bloody way to Golgotha. Observing the Mother of Sorrows [it thinks], “My heart has become like wax melting away within my bosom” [Ps 22: 15].

**63.** 10. *Factus est redemptio*.

Finally, the soul comes to behold the opened side. Oh ark of salvation! Oh furnace of charity! “Blood and water flowed out” [Jn 19: 4], which recall the gift of the sacraments and at the same time the tender love of Jesus “who loves us and has washed away our sins in his blood” [Rv 1: 5]. Jesus has given us his blood to the last drop. Therefore, the soul begins to taste the way of Love, saying: “My beloved is mine and I am his” [Song 2: 16]. “Man shall come to a deep heart” [Ps 64: 7]. O Heart of

my Lord! “I have come to set fire on the earth” [Lk 12: 49]. How one should speak out against the coldness of our age.

The Unitive Way\*  
*In omnibus divites facti estis in illo*

**64.** The illumined soul, admirably found at the foot of the Cross, seeks the way in which to unite itself in an intimate relationship of love with its beloved Lord who speaks to the Soul saying = “I am faint with love” [Song 2: 5]. = The [soul] loves perfection; it *studies* perfection; it *practices* the way of perfection.

**65.** 1. [*The soul*] loves perfection and sees that God alone brings it happiness and merits fidelity: *My God and my all*. It sees that those who do not love God are unhappy: “Vanity of vanities” [Eccl 1: 2]. It knows that it must repudiate every form of vile mire in order to acquire the love of God: “I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ” [Phil 3: 8]. It concludes: “The world has been crucified to me and I to the world” [Gal 6: 14]. The soul grows in repentance for the past, saying: “*Late have I loved you, Lord.*”<sup>26</sup> It loves God because it sees how he has loved the soul from all eternity: “He first loved us.” [1 Jn 4: 19]. It reconsiders especially the themes concerning redemption and exclaims: “The love of Christ impels us” [2 Cor 5: 14]. It does so especially when, seeing how far that love went when in his capacity as Redeemer, [Christ] shed his blood to the last drop: “He loves us and has washed away our sins in his blood” [Rv 1: 5]. Faint with love, the soul exclaims, “Oh wounds, oh precious blood of my Lord, that I might praise you in eternity!” What a great thing it is that the Blood of Jesus is even our drink in the Eucharist and how, finally, through the merits of the Blood of Jesus Christ we shall arrive in Paradise. “With your blood you purchased for God [those from every tribe and tongue,

people and nation]. You made them a kingdom,” etc. [Rv 5: 9–10].

All of which brings together in the soul such thoughts of love that it concludes: “What will separate me from the love of Christ?” [Cf. Rom 8: 35] Thus does the soul become strong like death = “For strong as death is love” [Song 8: 6].

**66. 2.** [The soul] *studies* perfection, seeking each day the ways in which to draw from the Crucified new motives for growing in perfection and in holiness. It meditates on the image of the pierced Lamb: “a Lamb [as if it were] slain” [Cf. Rv 5: 6]. What ingratitude was shown by the Lord’s own people, so blessed by God, yet who could still demand his crucifixion? And what meekness was shown by Jesus, especially in the scourging, when he gave his persecutors the most glorious proofs of his charity. *He suffers and is silent; is silent and prays; prays and forgives.* What a great example of unsurpassed constancy!

The soul sees what occurs today as well on the part of sinners, and full of love for Jesus seeks to defend him with an opposing zeal, which is the ardor of charity, so that its Lord might be glorified. And if in doing good to others, one encounters pain or even martyrdom, then it is enough to think, “My beloved is white and ruddy” [Song 5: 10]. My beloved, though white as a lily is reddened with blood. How then could I not suffer willingly for the truth? “I am overflowing with joy all the more because of all our affliction” [2 Cor 7: 4].

Jesus is the *shepherd*, “the good shepherd [who] lays down his life for the sheep” [Jn 10: 11]. “Lord,” says the soul in the way of union, “if necessary, behold that I am ready for any sacrifice: My heart is ready” [Ps 108: 2]. Jesus is the *victim*. “Now, my God,” the soul exclaims, “behold, I am ready to be a victim of love too.” Oh, what sentiments are acquired in the study of the Crucified.

**67.** 3. [The soul] *practices* perfection and it is given a delicacy of conscience that seeks gradually to wage war against venial sins and imperfections. These are merely displeasing to Jesus (thus distinguishing grave from light matter). “But, my Lord,” [the soul says], “you merit nothing but love.” Therefore it frequents the Sacraments, gains indulgences, promotes works of piety, purifies its intention and is exacting in patience. It recognizes, however, that all this good is due to the efficacy of the redemption, and sees that in all things the mysteries of the shedding of the Blood of Jesus Christ are being applied to it. In fact, should the soul approach the tribunal of penance: “Behold,” it says, “the merits of this Divine Blood are being applied to me.” If assisting at Mass: “Behold, the Blood of Jesus is being offered.” If [the soul] adores the Blessed Sacrament in the Sacred Ciborium: “Behold,” it says, “my beloved Jesus is offering his blood.”

The soul thus climbs the mountain of perfection and says: “Behold, the ways of Calvary are reddened with blood.” It is willingly trained to travel the paths of virtue, neither abandoning the cross nor wearied by suffering: “In everything, everything, you have been enriched in him” [1 Cor 1: 5].

What virtues, what surges of love are seen resulting from the practice of good, which is nothing but a continual application of the merits of the divine blood.

**68.** 4. [The soul,] therefore, loves the life of prayer. “[The king] brought me into the cellar of wine” [Song 2: 4]. The love of God is symbolized by wine. Just as wine when drunk in moderation takes away sadness, so [with prayer]. But as for this wine cellar, happy the person who becomes inebriated!

[The soul] *ardently* seeks God in moments of conversation pondering the extent of his love in becoming our teacher, father and redeemer. How the soul seeks to please him by extending its own ardent longings. It

hears from the cross: “*Sitio*, I thirst” [Jn 19: 28]. And what it would not do in response. It weeps for those who do not weep, prays for those who do not pray. It seeks in some way to compensate for the many injustices directed at the Lord, and for his despised honor. It knows also that souls have cost him blood and it meditates on the reasons for divine forbearance. The soul prays for those who labor in the Lord's vineyard, hurrying to do what good it can, never ceasing to pray.

“My people,” it hears the Lord say, “what damage has been brought forth in the world due to a lack of prayer.” Meanwhile, to appease the Father the soul offers the Blood of Jesus Christ: “Look upon the face of your anointed” [Ps 84: 10].

**69.** 5. The soul seeks God *continually*, and the more it encounters its Lord the greater its thirst to love Him. “I sought him whom my heart loves . . . I took hold of him and would not let him go” [Song 3: 1, 4]. Temporal things become distasteful. The soul attends only to following the royal way of the Cross in order one day to kiss the radiant wounds of Jesus and sing forever the glories of that Blood which cancels the roster of death: “With your blood you purchased us for God” [Rv 5: 9].

[The soul] proceeds with caution and vigilance, careful not to lose what has been gained or to stray from the Savior's school. It not only finds earthly things repulsive but detaches itself from every other thing as well. The soul is uniquely ready for that exacting obedience to the Lord, who became “obedient to death, even death on a Cross” [Phil 2: 8]. Thus the soul *continually* seeks the Lord so as to possess him forever in heaven. And we, on the contrary, are so fickle and indecisive.

**70.** 6. Having come so far in the ways of love, the soul will find itself subject to disturbances by the enemy, or by weariness, excessive fears, or inexpressible dejection. But one glance directed at the Blood of Jesus Christ

flowing from his wounds encourages the soul not to abandon its good resolve. “My daughter, do you not see,” says Jesus, “how greatly my own spirit was troubled in the Garden even to the point of sweating Blood? When you are sad, have hope. Who does not know that the disciple must conform himself to the Master, and the Bride to the Groom? Do you not remember the three hours of terrible agony I endured for you? Is it not precisely here, my daughter, that you must come to imitate such a great example? A new degree of glory results from every act of patience. Do you not see how I am preparing you for the greatest heights of blessed glory? Look at the interior martyrdom which even my own Mother had to endure.”

Behold, oh listeners, how resigned to suffering we must be in this life. In this way we experience purgatory here, for virtue can only be refined and tested in the crucible of tribulation.

**71.** 8. “My lover is to me a satchet of myrrh” [Song 1: 13].<sup>27</sup> The soul tried by love sees that, just as Jesus was “tested in every way” [Heb 4: 15], so it too must be tested. The soul realizes that, just as Jesus was able to say all was consummated, so it too must have reason one day to repeat in like manner, “It is finished” [Jn 19: 30]. From the grotto of Bethlehem to the consummation of the sacrifice, he was always a victim of suffering. Moreover, since the Cross is the indispensable ladder to Heaven, the soul no longer need fear the word *suffer* but instead suffers *with gladness*. Thus it seeks the God of consolation and not the consolations of God, thereby adoring the divine dispositions. The soul knows that God tries it each time more severely in order to see if there is any obstacle impeding its love: “As gold in the furnace, he proved [the souls of the just]” [Wisdom 3: 6].

At last the soul comes to suffer *with joy*, just as we read of the Savior who “for the sake of the joy that lay before him . . . endured the cross, despising its shame” [Heb 12: 2]. Thus derision, calumnies, adversities—

whatever the disturbance—do not cause [the soul] to falter. It thinks how, despite Jesus' having given sight to the Blind and healing the lame, still "they crucified him" [Lk 23: 33]. "How," it asks, "could they have the heart to pierce those hands which dispensed nothing but heavenly favors, those feet which walked the streets of Jerusalem, 'doing good and healing all' [Acts 10: 38]? How is it that even the Blood which flowed from those same hands and feet did not move them to pity? They even had the courage to insult him on the cross by saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews' [Mt 27: 29]! and 'If you are the Son of God . . . come down from the cross'" [Mt 27: 40].

Oh wounded love of my Lord (*Oh amore del mio Signore addivenuto una piaga*)! How far we are from conforming our lives to yours and how much we must still be trained to follow this generous path!

Now I understand how love empowered by faith worked such marvels in the world. The saints "by faith conquered kingdoms . . . obtained the promises; [they closed the mouths of lions], put out [raging fires] . . ." [Heb 11: 33–34]. Oh champions of religion, what made you so generous? The sight of Jesus shedding his Blood for humanity.

Who Are These?\*

*In omnibus divites facti estis in illo.*

72. 9. "Who are these [wearing white robes] and where did they come from? . . . These are the ones who have [survived the time of great distress]; they have washed their robes [and made them white] in the Blood of the Lamb" [Rv 7: 13–14]. What comfort we will have one day when, in the great valley of Jehosophat, the Elect with palms in hand, will sing the praises of the Divine Blood through which we possess the nuptial garment and the robe of exultation and happiness. "They washed their robes . . . in the Blood of the Lamb" [Rv 7: 14]. We shall

realize then how baptism, Confirmation, Penance, the Eucharist, and prayer had been nothing but the perennial springs which applied this Divine Blood. And what blessings there will be especially at the appearance of the Cross, etc. But what will those poor souls say who trampled this Blood with sacrilege and blasphemies, etc.? Oh God! But I wish to speak instead of the just to you; nor do I wish to sadden you this day; this, my people, is my hope.

**73.** 10. Happy the person who is more and more enriched with the treasures we have in the application of the Blood of Jesus Christ. To the extent that we apply it we shall advance in the ranks of heavenly glory. Observe, then, the industry of the saints in this heavenly commerce. And what of us? We, who perhaps have not yet begun to atone for the past or provide for the future. What shall we resolve? Jesus shows us his precious homeland. "Behold," he says, "at what price I have won it for you: '*You have been bought at a great price*'" [1 Cor 6: 20].

Let it therefore be our duty to make known its glories by offering it continually to the Eternal Father. O balm of our souls! O font of every mercy, grant that my tongue, reddened with this Blood in the daily celebration of Mass, might praise you now and forever. For this purpose I am a Priest: to apply the merits of the Divine Blood. What a great thought this is for me! What a great incentive to propose its veneration to the people, and on divine authority: "You have redeemed us for God [with your blood] . . . and have made us a kingdom and priests" [Rv 5: 9–10].

**DOCUMENTS SENT BY ST. GASPAR  
TO POPE LEO XII**

*[The following are found in the collection of the letters of St. Gaspar, nos. 1214 and 1215. Both letters are dated July 29, 1825.]*

**1214**

**General idea of the Society<sup>a</sup>**

**74.** In these times of upheaval, which it has pleased God to reserve for us, there is a great need for a reform of the people. The Lord, *in misericordia dives* 'rich in mercy,' [Eph 2: 4] wished to provide an effective means for curbing the torrent of iniquity and for restoring order in the hearts of the people by furnishing them with helps that are most suitable for the sanctification of their souls and for their continuous and lasting improvement.

**75.** One such means is the establishing of more Mission and Spiritual Retreat Houses for the secular clergy, to revive in them a sense of dignity, of good example, as well as an eagerness for study and holiness, all of which is in line with the spirit of that ancient discipline in which community living of ecclesiastics was eagerly fostered. St. Augustine, the Doctor of Grace, treated this matter in a special way . . .

**76.** Now, we turn to the question of the title which adorns these foundations, as is evident from various documents, it was the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII who considered it, as a matter of fact, a good idea to take it from the Archconfraternity having the august title of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ, of the most holy Mary, Help of Christians and assigned to it as special

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<sup>a</sup>St. Gaspar's presentation shows evidence of corrections by Cristaldi. This is the original as written by Gaspar.

protector the glorious apostle of the Indies, St. Francis Xavier.

77. This title does not present anything novel, since it flows from what we see in the sacred scriptures: “*Redemisti nos Domine in Sanguine tuo, et fecisti nos Deo nostro regnum et sacerdotes.*” ‘You have redeemed us, O Lord, in your Blood, and made us for our God a kingdom and priests’ [Rv 5: 9–10]. [*Translator’s note:* The Vulgate reads “and made them for our God.”] We priests, therefore, are marked with the sacerdotal character in order to apply the divine Blood to souls. It is his Blood that is offered in the divine Sacrifice; it is his Blood that is applied in the sacraments; it is his Blood that is the price of redemption. This is what we can present to the heavenly Father for the reconciliation of sinners. “*Te ergo quaesumus tuis famulis subveni quos pretioso Sanguine redemisti*” ‘We, therefore, beseech you help your servants whom you have redeemed by your precious Blood.’ Whereas the devil would like all to be the victims of justice, we ministers of the sanctuary must make known the depths of God’s mercy so that “*justificati in Sanguine ipsius salvi simus [sic; should read erimus] ab ira per ipsum*” ‘Justified in his Blood, we will be saved from wrath through it’ [Rm 5: 9]. In this devotion, we have the treasures of wisdom and holiness; in it we find comfort, peace and salvation.

78. Indeed, it is an essential devotion in Christianity, venerated by our mother, the Church “*quam acquisivit sanguine suo*” ‘which he acquired in his blood’ [Acts 20: 28]. The Mass, the Office of the Most Precious Blood are already in practical usage in the church militant. Even from most ancient history, for example, we note that God, indeed, prescribed that the Hebrews in Egypt should taint their doorways with blood so as to be freed from the avenging sword, alluding to that means of eternal salvation by which our souls would be liberated from

the slavery of hell. Add to this, what the apostle states: “*si sanguis hircorum et vitulorum inquinatos . . . sanctificat, quanto magis Sanguis Christi emundabit conscientiam nostram ab operibus mortuis?*” ‘If the blood of goats and bulls sanctifies those who are defiled, how much more will the Blood of Christ cleanse our consciences from dead works? [Heb 9: 13–14]’

**79.** One should read the precious little booklet entitled *Il mese di Giugno* dedicated to the devotion of the mysteries of the Divine Blood. It contains the documents supporting this important devotion. Sufficient for now is to conclude with the words of St. Bernard (Ep. 7): “*Sanguis Christi ut tuba clamat*” ‘The Blood of Christ calls out like a trumpet’ or, the words of St. Thomas (Opusc. 15a): “*Sanguis Christi clavis paradisi*” ‘the Blood of Christ is the key to paradise.’

But, to sum up everything briefly, one must not omit listening to what St. Paul observes in Col 1: “*Pacificans per Sanguinem suum sive quae in terris sive quae in coelis sunt*” ‘making peace through the Blood [of his cross], both as to the things that are on earth, and the things that are in heaven.’ Our times demand that we carry out what is proposed in that quotation. It is, therefore, the divine Blood that will placate the Divine Eternal Father, that will purify our hearts and will inebriate us with love for Jesus who *dilexit nos, et lavit nos in Sanguine suo* ‘loved us and washed us in his own Blood’ [Rv 1: 5].

1215

**Respectful Observations Concerning the  
Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood  
of our Lord Jesus Christ**

**80.** It cannot be denied that the Lord, always rich in mercy, has provided powerful means in every age that are capable of drawing souls to a consideration of the

Crucified Lord and thus seeing in them the application of the redemption through his Divine Blood.

81. Prescinding from the first centuries in the Church, centuries productive of martyrs, in the following epochs which history records for us, we note how one or the other dogma was attacked, how sacred things were subjected to scorn in one or the other part of the Catholic world. In our miserable times, the crisis among the people is a general one, with indescribable perversion of basic principles and of proper living so as to hurl an insult at the redemptive act and, through human malice, to frustrate the application of the merits of Jesus Christ who has redeemed us by the price of his Blood. Now, Blessed Father, is it not necessary to rekindle apostolic zeal and follow the inspirations of the Soul that are so favored by God so that we can revive in the memories of these people the inestimable price of our redemption and attempt to stir them to repentance and to tears?

82. Is it not also a fact that Sacred Scripture itself gives us the steps to take for a reform? *Pacificans per Sanguinem Crucis eius sive quae in coelis sive quae in terris sunt?* 'making peace through the Blood of his Cross, both as to the things that are on earth, and the things that are in heaven' [Col 1: 20].

Do we ourselves not know that *Christus dilexit ecclesiam tradidit semetipsum pro ea . . . acquisivit sanguine suo?* 'Christ loved the Church . . . he gave himself up for it' [Eph 5: 25] 'he purchased [it] with his own blood' [Acts 20: 28].

Does not Divine Wisdom tell us that *justificati in Sanguine salvi erimus ab ira per ipsum?* 'Justified in Blood, we will be saved from wrath through it' [Rm 5: 9]. It is not sufficient simply to utter the name of the Lord to be saved: *Non qui dixerit Domine Domine hic salvus erit* 'Not the one who says "Lord, Lord" shall be saved,' but *qui fecerit voluntatem Patris mei hic salvus erit* 'He

who will do the will of my Father will be saved' [cf. Mt 7: 21]. [*Translator's note*: This is something of a paraphrase.] Therefore, there are two things that must necessarily be done nowadays. The first is to find a way of placating the Divine Eternal Father; and that we have in the merits of the Divine Blood: *Calicem salutaris accipiam* 'I will take the chalice of salvation' [Ps 116: 13]. The other is to try to find a way of effectively applying those merits to souls, and this can be done particularly through holy Missions and Spiritual Retreats, as well as other pious programs that are proportionately salubrious for our times.

**83.** In fact, these are the very same reasons that motivated the holy Pontiff Pius VII to erect the Archconfraternity, bearing this most august title of the Divine Blood. Sinners continue to be horrendously abusive and the Lord, in the transports of his love, keeps crying out: *Quae utilitas in Sanguine meo?* 'What profit is there in my Blood?' [Ps 30: 10]. So, is there not anyone who will, through this sacred, solemn cult, procure adoration in compensation, and preach to the people its glories, bringing to their attention that in this devotion we have a compendium of faith itself; that is why, in the consecration of the chalice, we say: "*mysterium fidei*" 'the mystery of faith' and consequently therein lies the salvation of souls.

**84.** In fact, it is to this that the prophetic oracles, the predictions, the symbols, the figures, the sacrifices of the old covenant have their focus. As we read in Genesis: *Lavabit in vino stolam suam et in sanguine uvae pallium suum* 'He will wash his robe in wine and his mantle in the blood of the grape' [Gn 49: 11]. The Hebrews were ordered to taint their doorposts with the blood of the lamb in order to be freed from their chastisements in Egypt, a symbol of the liberation of our souls from diabolical servitude . . . Without saying too much further,

what did Moses do for his people? *Accipiens librum aspersit Sanguine dicens . . . hic sanguis testamenti quod mandavit ad vos Deus . . . Omnia in sanguine mundantur, et sine sanguinis effusione non fit remissio* 'Taking the book he sprinkled it with blood saying . . . this is the blood of the testament that God mandated for you . . . All things are purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission' [Heb 9: 19–22]. Hear, now, what the apostle says: *Si sanguis hircorum et vitulorum inquinatos . . . sanctificat, quanto magis Sanguis Jesu [sic] Christi emundabit conscientias nostras* 'If the blood of goats and bulls sanctifies those who are defiled, how much more will the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanse our consciences' [Heb 9: 13–14].

Without saying everything that could be said, the divine Scriptures are loaded with sacred citations . . . *Quare rubrum est indumentum tuum . . . Vestitus erat veste aspersa sanguine* 'Why is your apparel red? You were clothed in a garment sprinkled with blood.' [Rv 19: 13–14]. One should add only that by means of this devotion the remembrance of our baptism, through which our souls were purged, is revived; we are reminded of penance and the other sacraments. When asked why, we conclude that it was because: *redemisti in Sanguine fecisti nos Deo nostrum regnum et sacerdotes* 'You have been redeemed with blood; you have made us for our God a kingdom and priests' [Rv 5: 9–10].

**85.** Other devotions are all means for facilitating Catholic piety, but this devotion is the basis, the sustenance, the essence of all. Other devotions, coming forth at various times, signal a period of time, ever holy, ever praiseworthy, but this devotion of ours is so antique that it goes back to the very moment when Adam sinned; that is why Jesus was called the *agnus occisus a constitutione mundi* 'the lamb slain from the foundation of the world' [Cf. Rv 13: 8]. And it was because of this that we were given the means of reproducing, through the public

press, the glories of this inestimable treasure of our souls, along with the noble compositions of the Fathers of the Church for the understanding of the sacred text; and especially so, since, in our days, generally speaking, this is not sufficiently known. However, the Lord will regenerate them in the hearts of people! Indeed, St. Thomas says: *Sanguis Christi clavis paradisi* 'The Blood of Christ is the key to paradise . . .' St. John Chrysostom: . . . *Sanguis Christi salus animarum . . . bonum aurum Sanguis Christi* ' . . . The Blood of Christ is the salvation of souls . . . the Blood of Christ is fine gold.'

86. One should read the small work composed by the outstanding member of the Missionaries of the Archconfraternity, that is to say, the now-deceased bishop Monsignor Strambi who, in giving his final retreats to all the Roman clergy, had them meditate on this very devotion. One could consult with the present bishop of Assisi, well-known for his theological knowledge, or also the bishop of Nocera, not to mention others, and one will discover the interest that everyone should have in diffusing and spreading the glories of the Archconfraternity of the Divine Blood, glories that already are evident in the establishment of the Mission and Spiritual Retreat Houses under the direction of its Missionaries; they make available those means for fulfilling its objective . . . the glories that are evident in the many, many confraternities erected everywhere in the Catholic world, etc., etc., etc.

How could it ever have been possible for the very respectable bishops, among whom we include his Eminence Severoli, to give their consent to the diffusion of this good work if there had been the least disagreement with the principles or the practices of the Church? How could it be that the now-deceased Pontiff Pius VII should issue a number of briefs for the erection of that Archconfraternity, and the Congregation of Rites should recognize its title by the granting of privileges, in

particular, to the Mission and Spiritual Retreat Houses where the clergy have been reclaimed for the apostolate, for pursuing studies, for attaining holiness?

**87.** Even your Holiness himself, with the revision of the Chaplet for use by that same Archconfraternity, has increased its privileges through the organ of that same Congregation of Rites, and, at the time when you were Cardinal Vicar of Rome, established the women of charity (under the direction of Butirroni) who had this same most august title.

In these miserable times in which we live, one must point this out, how can the procedure of the Roman Curia be subjected to such derision? In fact, it is because of this that evildoers are led to criticize other titles, thus multiplying the number of enemies, while supposing that they are doing something good by suppressing a title which is the glory of redemption. This is the language of truth, and it is a well-known fact that hell itself trembles at the very mention of "Divine Blood." Furthermore, because of this confusion of mind, one is led to erroneously judge the good people, who then disturb the peace of your Holiness' magnanimous heart.

**88.** So, in view of the fact that there is nothing involved here which is contrary to good Catholic interpretation, why, then, now change something that has been canonically established? The Pontiffs Paul III and Paul IV, the Pontiff Gregory XIII and Pope Sixtus V (who confirmed it with a brief of May 8, 1586), were these not all men who, in Santa Maria in Vado, erected and promoted the same good work which is now being done by the confraternity erected there under the title of the Divine Blood and which presently has the most intimate connection with the Archconfraternity?

**89.** Most blessed Father, these are the intrinsic reasons as well as arguments from the history of the Church . . .

But using such a title would be a case of becoming overly familiar! This was the same difficulty proposed when the Company of Jesus, in particular, emerged. Was it to be given that name, the name of Jesus before which *omne genuflectatur* 'every knee is bent' so that it would be on the lips of everyone and adored by all? And what was the answer given? The religious titles are all very praiseworthy. Any abuse of it would be due to the person who, through his own malice, would beget it, but the Church's intention is a holy one (so says Fr. Suarez in: *De mysteriis vitae Jesu Christi*) insofar as a distinct veneration is shown toward the sacrosanct mysteries of the Savior.

Nor would it be a valid argument for one to say: There will be someone who will abuse this title, so let us get rid of it. . . . Well, there will also be someone who, as a matter of fact, will do the same thing with the name of religion, so therefore. . . . Oh my, to what consequences would this not lead? In keeping with the bases and principles explained, we have the establishment of Confraternities of the most holy Trinity, of the most Blessed Sacrament, etc. Finally, it would be good to point out that there is a mandatory that says: Alms for the Confraternity of the most Blessed Sacrament, and so in ours, too, there should accordingly be a similar provision.

**90.** But, *transeat*, 'let it pass,' with regard to this last remark which was produced only to relax the mind of your Beatitude.

We conclude by saying that the adherence to basic principles, the observance of fundamentals, the welfare of our times, the glory given to the Redemption as well as the scorn that hell itself will receive, all demand that your Holiness, rather than derogating and removing this most august title, should be exultant with it and promote it throughout the entire Catholic World with a solemn decree, extending the use of the Mass and the

Office of the Price of our Redemption. May what happened to Blessed Giacomo di Bevagna, with regard to the Divine Blood, encourage your soul to do what, in all humility, has been proposed to you for the pure glory of God.

**DOCUMENT SENT BY GASPAR TO  
POPE PIUS VIII**

*[This is an excerpt from Letter 1946, dated June 1829.]*

91. Once his deportation had been brought to an end in the year 1814, the Supreme Pontiff Pius VII, of happy memory, occupied himself immediately in sending out evangelical preachers for the sanctification of souls and the reform of the people. Already beforehand he had erected the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood of Jesus Christ in order to promote this sacred cult in compensation for the abuses made by sinners, particularly in our times; likewise, through it, to animate the faithful to offer up this inestimable price of our redemption to the Divine Eternal Father. In view of the fact that one of the purposes of the Archconfraternity was that of having our brother priests dedicate themselves to the apostolic ministry of giving holy Missions and Retreats, that beloved Pontiff wished to make use of them for this project for God's greater glory, and through their services to promote also that most important devotion to the Divine Blood.

**DOCUMENT SENT BY ST. GASPAR TO  
POPE GREGORY XVI**

*[This letter, number 2140, does not have an exact date but Conti tentatively places it in March 1831. This is a rough draft of the memorandum presented to the pope; the memorandum as finally presented has not been found.]*

*92. Justificati in Sanguine ipsius salvi  
erimus ab ira per ipsum*  
‘Justified in his Blood we shall be saved  
from the wrath by it’

### SUMMARY

of everything that pertains to the pious Institute of Mission and Retreat Houses under the direction of the Missionaries enrolled in the Venerable Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, canonically erected by Pope Pius VII.

### PREFACE

**93.** In the upheaval of our times, times which God has been pleased to reserve for us, and in the need for reform of the people, the Lord, rich in mercy, has willed to bring forth a powerful means to be used in setting up a rampart against the torrent of iniquities and to provide us, at the same time, with means that are salutary for attaining eternal salvation through the sanctification and the spiritual cultivation of souls. Therefore, in his Providence, he presented to the Roman Pontiff, Pius VII, of holy memory, the plan for instituting Mission and Retreat Houses in order that through these two weapons of apostolic ministry, a war could be waged against sin, as well as to lead back to the Heart of Jesus all those who had strayed.

The Holy Father then selected as his norm the one set down by Benedict XIV for promoting the Archconfraternity of Christian Doctrine which served then, as it still does, to encourage the clergy and the people to a revival of giving instructions, something most necessary for knowledge and observance of the holy laws of God.

**94.** We are, presently, living in times in which there is urgent need for stimulating the clergy and the people to the yearned-for reform. The freethinkers, not at all in

love with the Catholic religion, are waging a most decisive type of warfare against the Crucifix [or Crucified One]; and, they would like to see everyone become victims of justice through a multiplication of vices and sins. Consequently, it is urgent that zeal for the glory of God, like a spreading fire, must burn in a holy fashion within every soul, and, by calling attention to the glories of the Crucified One, to open the fountains of mercy, thanks to the application of the merits of the Divine Blood which is the thing that will fully placate the justice of the divine, eternal Father: *Pacificans per Sanguinem Crucis ejus, sive quae in caelis sive quae in terris sunt . . . Ipsi vicerunt draconem propter Sanguinem Agni* 'Making peace through the Blood of his Cross whether for what is in heaven or on earth . . . They overcame the dragon by the Blood of the Lamb' [Cf. Rv 12: 11].

**95.** Having these basic principles in mind, his Holiness was pleased to erect the Archconfraternity under the august title of the Divine Blood, together with the invocation to most holy Mary, Help of Christians; and, as its special protector, he selected the apostle of the Indies, St. Francis Xavier, so as to provide an exemplar who would stir one from any feelings of languor, who would urge one to the doing of good work, who would encourage one in the face of difficulties and point out, furthermore, the quickest way of promoting the greater glory of God and the sanctification of souls.

Therefore, one can easily note what his plans for the future were and how very well directed they were for the verification of the apostle's words: *Justificati in Sanguine ipsius salvi erimus ab ira per ipsum . . .* 'Justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him' [Rm 5: 9].

**96.** Finally, adding just a few more things in this preface, it is to be noted that in carrying out these apostolic works of the ministry, we seek to give a cult of

compensation to the mysteries of our redemption, so greatly abused by sinners. We wish to awaken in their souls the great idea of the inestimable price of our eternal salvation. . . . *Redemisti in Sanguine . . . Empti enim estis praetio magno* 'You have redeemed [us] in [your] Blood [Rv 5: 9–10] . . . 'You were bought at a great price' [1 Cor 6: 20]. Those who have gone astray are encouraged to have hope or the pardon of the faults that they have committed, since *Christus dilexit nos, et lavit nos in Sanguine suo . . . Quae utilitas in Sanguine meo?* 'Christ loved us and washed us in his Blood.' . . . 'What profit is there in my Blood?' [Ps 30: 10] and, finally, this is an opportunity for helping them take notice of the motives which caused St. Bernard (Ep. 7) to exclaim: *Sanguis Christi ut tuba clamat* 'the Blood of Christ calls out like a trumpet'; and St. Thomas (Opusc. 158) to say: *Sanguis Christi Clavis Paradisi* 'the Blood of Christ is the Key to Paradise.'

**97.** St. Catherine of Siena, during the schism of her time, received the inspiration from the Lord that on this devotion depended peace within the Church.

**98.** Though overlooking many other things . . . there are the documents pertinent to the Office and the Mass of the Divine Blood which urge us to cherish it deeply within our hearts, but at the same time indicate how much our holy Mother Church is concerned about the special cult addressed to the price of our redemption: *Christus dilexit ecclesiam, tradidit semetipsum pro ea, acquisivit Sanguine Suo* 'Christ loved the church, he gave himself up for it and acquired it with his Blood.' [*Translator's note*: There are two quotations from the New Testament that are joined here: cf. Eph 5: 25 and Acts 20: 28.] One should read the little work written by the now-deceased Monsignor Strambi, outstanding supporter of our Institute and our devotion, so humbly presented in these pages. Likewise, one should check the catalog of

indulgences granted by Pope Gregory XIII, confirmed and augmented by Pope Sixtus V on behalf of the Confraternity of the Most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, erected in the church of the Canons Regular of S. Maria del Vado in Ferrara . . .

**99.** Then, Pope Leo XII, in addition to what he expresses in his Brief (v. f. n. 2) on the occasion of the installation of the Jesuit Fathers in Spoleto, speaking incidentally of our House in San Felice in Giano, and aware of the various confraternities erected under our title, granted through the Sacred Congregation of Rites the faculty of a solemn Mass of the Divine Blood on the first Sunday in July. Already when he was the Cardinal Vicar he had canonically erected in the church of *Beata Vergine Maria del Buon Consiglio* in Rome, the pious union of sisters visitators of the sick under the title of the Divine Blood.

**100.** As a final reflection, note how Vincenzo IV, Duke of Mantova, erected as an equestrian order in the year 1608, the union of Knights under the title of the Divine Blood. That order was later approved by Paul V, as can be seen in the work *Catalogus ordinum equestrium in imaginibus expositus a P. Philippo Bonanni Societatis Jesu oblatus Clementi XI.*

## NOTES

### Introduction

<sup>1</sup>AGCPPS, Box 6, fasc. 2, 4.

<sup>2</sup>Specifically we cite the decree *Plurima Inter Argumenta* (March 19, 1891), which affirmed the heroic virtue of Gaspar. Because this decree speaks of Gaspar only as the founder of a Congregation of priests with the title of “Most Precious Blood,” we are not going to examine it further. (Cf. ASS, vol. XXIV, 6 ff.).

<sup>3</sup>ASS, vol. XXXVI, 741 ff.

<sup>4</sup>ASS, vol. XXXVII, 112.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 634 ff. The text of interest reads: “. . . *ac perpetuo studio adductus provehendi cultus prestiosissimi Sanguinis Redemptoris Nostri Iesu Christi eo tamquam vexillo munitus vim omnem suae charitatis exercuit, animum adiiciens omni prope vitae conditioni ad sanctitatem revocandae.*” This repeats thoughts and words of the decree *Almae Huius Urbis*.

<sup>6</sup>All who share in devotion to Gaspar know that his feast is celebrated on October 21, but not everyone knows that it was not always celebrated on this date. Many ask why this date was chosen. In this note we make a bit of an excursus on the various dates on which the feast was celebrated and on what prompted the selection of October 21.

The feast of a saint is usually celebrated on a date of significance in his or her life, e.g., the date of birth, death, canonization, etc. Gaspar’s feast could not be celebrated on his birthday, January 6, because it is (in many places, at least) the Solemnity of the Epiphany. For the same reason it was not judged opportune to celebrate it on the date of his death, December 28, since the Feast of the Holy Innocents occurs on that date. By a decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites of April 12, 1905, the feast of Blessed Gaspar del Bufalo was assigned to July 15 for the Missionaries of the Precious Blood and for the Adorers of the Precious Blood. The diocese of Rome, on the other hand, chose the date of June 23 for its own calendar. In order to maintain uniformity with the diocese of Rome, the Missionaries and the Adorers sought the faculty of celebrating the feast on June 23 as well. The Congregation granted this request on November 28, 1906.

But since the Feast of the Sacred Heart sometimes fell on June 23, impeding the celebration of the feast of Blessed Gaspar, the Missionaries and Adorers obtained permission to celebrate the feast on December 30 (decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, September 27, 1913) and then on December 29 (decree of July 23, 1914). The Diocese of Rome, however, fixed the feast of Blessed Gaspar on January 4. These dates remained in force even after the canonization of Gaspar on June 12, 1954. That explains why Blessed John XXIII went to venerate St. Gaspar on January 4, 1963, in the Church of Santa Maria in Trivio: the Diocese of Rome was celebrating his feast on that day.

Following the publication of the new Code of Liturgical Rubrics in 1960, the feast of St. Gaspar had to be transferred out of the octave of Christmas and consequently became *moveable*, that is, in some years it would be celebrated on January 2 and in others on January 3. To eliminate the inconvenience caused by this "mobility," the Missionaries of the Precious Blood obtained from the Sacred Congregation of Rites, by decree of May 14, 1962, the right to celebrate the feast of St. Gaspar on October 21. Thus the Missionaries and the Adorers have celebrated the feast of Gaspar on October 21 and in 1973 the Diocese of Rome also adopted this date. It is also possible that in certain places and for particular reasons to celebrate the feast of St. Gaspar on another date.

What were the reasons for choosing October 21? They were above all pastoral reasons. The feast was set for October 21, wrote Don Giuseppe Quattrino, then provincial of the Italian Province, ". . . for the convenience of all the churches of the Institute in Italy and abroad. At this time of the year one avoids the harsh weather of winter and the students of the colleges and schools directed by the Missionaries can participate." Added to these reasons were others linked to Gaspar's life: his mother, Annunziata Quartieron, died on October 20, 1811, and his father, Antonio del Bufalo, died on October 31, 1831. (Since 1937 his remains have been entombed in the Church of Santa Maria in Trivio, near the tomb of St. Gaspar, in the tomb of the Sbordoni family.) In addition, since October is the month of the missions, what could be more suitable for celebrating the feast of a great missionary and founder of a missionary Congregation, whose members are currently involved in missions *ad gentes*?

<sup>7</sup>AAS, XXXXII (1950), 199 ff.

<sup>8</sup>AAS, XXXXVI (1954), 330 ff.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 357 ff.

<sup>10</sup>AAS, XXXXVII (1955), 175 ff.

<sup>11</sup>*L'Osservatore Romano*, March 21–22, 1960.

<sup>12</sup>Letter of May 12, 1960 to the Commission of the Roman Synod, published by the *Rivista Diocesana di Roma*, June 1963.

<sup>13</sup>AAS, LII (1960), 306 ff.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., (1960), 545 ff.

<sup>15</sup>The first edition was published in 1970 with the *imprimatur* of the Vicariate of Rome; the second edition in 1978 bore the same *imprimatur*.

## Chapter One: Precious Blood Themes in the Preaching of Saint Gaspar

<sup>1</sup>At the time this volume was written, the following had been published in Italian: the 12 volumes of the *Letters* (1985–2000), four volumes of the *Spiritual Writings* (*Scritti spirituali*, 1995–1996), three volumes of the *Rules* (*Regolamenti*, 1998–1999), and a volume of *Miscellaneous Writings* (*Scritti vari*, 1999). Only the four volumes of Gaspar’s scholastic manuscripts remain to be published. The *Letters* have been translated into English by Fr. Raymond Cera, C.P.P.S., and are available in digital format and in photocopied form. Only a few sections of the *Spiritual Writings* have been translated into English and the other volumes have not yet been translated.

<sup>2</sup>Amilcare Rey, *Il Divin Sangue negli scritti del Romano Beato Gaspare Del Bufalo*, Albano Laziale, 1981. It is the intention of the author to prepare another collection of texts of St. Gaspar on the Precious Blood. This will be larger than the work of Rey and will include selections from the letters, from sermons and from the rules, arranged in chronological order where possible. [*Translator’s note*: This volume has been published as *Testi sul Sangue di Cristo negli scritti di San Gaspare Del Bufalo*. Rome: 2006.]

<sup>3</sup>L. Contegiacomo, “*San Gaspare Del Bufalo apostolo del Preziosissimo Sangue*,” in *Il Sangue Prezioso della Redenzione*, 12 (1958), pp. 3–18. This article was republished by the Pious Union of the Precious Blood in the collection, “*Il Sangue dell’Alleanza*,” with the title: *Il Sangue di Cristo in San Gaspare Del Bufalo*, Rome, 1968. Since the publication of the present study (first edition, 1970), little has been written about St. Gaspar and the Blood of Christ.

<sup>4</sup>A. Rey, op. cit., II, p. 577.

<sup>5</sup>These writings have been published by Conti in four volumes: Gaspar del Bufalo, *Scritti spirituali*, I–IV, Roma, 1995–1996.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. G. Del Bufalo, *Regolamenti*, I–III, Roma, 1998–1999.

<sup>7</sup>*Letter 1810*.

<sup>8</sup>*Letter 1644*.

<sup>9</sup>Appendix, no. 1.

<sup>10</sup>See, for example, *Letter 1479* and *Letter 2159*.

<sup>11</sup>*Letter 1214*. See Appendix par. 74.

<sup>12</sup>*Letter 2487*, March 6, 1833.

<sup>13</sup>*Regolamenti*, III, 125.

<sup>14</sup>St. Pier Giuliano Eymard (1811–1868), founder of the Priests of the Most Blessed Sacrament, testifies clearly in one of his letters

that “so beautiful and salutary a devotion . . . was unknown and dormant” in France (*Lettre adressé à Mademoiselle Modave de Bruxelles, Belgique*. Autograph A-3, 517: Archive of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers in Rome). Don Ferdinando Angelici in his testimony for the canonical processes for the canonization of St. Gaspar, says, speaking of the situation in the Marches: “I know . . . that . . . the infinite price of our redemption was venerated and invoked in generic fashion in our parts, but . . . after the preaching of the Venerable [Gaspar] it was venerated and invoked in a very special way” (*Positio super virtutibus*, § 169, 248).

<sup>15</sup>See especially St. Gaspar’s defense of the Congregation before Popes Pius VIII, Leo XII, and Gregory XVI, in Appendix, pars. 74–100.

## **Chapter Two: An Opportune Devotion: The Precious Blood as the “Mystical Weapon” of the Times**

<sup>1</sup>*Letter 1770*, July 11, 1828.

<sup>2</sup>*Letter 1165*.

<sup>3</sup>*Letter 1167*.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup>*Letter 876*.

<sup>6</sup>*Letter 1168*.

<sup>7</sup>*Metodo Missioni*, 3. Cf. *Regolamenti*, III, 59.

<sup>8</sup>*Letter 1270*.

<sup>9</sup>*Metodo Missioni*, 3. Cf. *Regolamenti*, III, 59.

<sup>10</sup>Appendix, par. 81, *Letter 1215*.

<sup>11</sup>*Letter 1171*.

<sup>12</sup>*Metodo Missioni*, 3. Cf. *Regolamenti*, III, 59.

<sup>13</sup>*Metodo Missioni*, 3–4. Cf. *Regolamenti*, III, 59.

<sup>14</sup>*Letter 1167*.

<sup>15</sup>*Letter 299*.

<sup>16</sup>*Letter 1880*.

<sup>17</sup>*Letter 1240*.

<sup>18</sup>*Letter 9*.

<sup>19</sup>*Metodo Missioni*, 3–4. Cf. *Regolamenti*, III, 59.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 44. Cf. *Regolamenti*, III, 84.

<sup>21</sup>*Letter 307*.

<sup>22</sup>*Letter 1214*.

<sup>23</sup>*Letter 105*, March 1, 1815.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 17.

<sup>25</sup>*Letter 2285*, January 18, 1832.

<sup>26</sup>*Letter 1639*, November 29, 1833.

<sup>27</sup>*Letter 2196*, August 8, 1831.

<sup>28</sup>*Letter 1748*, May 21, 1828.

<sup>29</sup>*Letter 1624*, June 29, 1827. The emphasis is St. Gaspar's.

<sup>30</sup>*Letter 1215*; cf. Appendix, par. 79.

<sup>31</sup>*Letter 2140*; cf. Appendix, par. 97.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Appendix pars. 3, 12, 20, 29, 37, 71, 81, 94, 95.

<sup>33</sup>Appendix, par. 71.

<sup>34</sup>Appendix, pars. 13, 14.

<sup>35</sup>Appendix, par. 81.

<sup>36</sup>Appendix, par. 82.

<sup>37</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 74, 80, 93.

<sup>38</sup>*Letter 2196*, August 8, 1831.

### Chapter Three: The Aims of Devotion to the Precious Blood

<sup>1</sup>*Letter 2487*, April 6, 1833.

<sup>2</sup>*Letter 2325*, April 29, 1832.

<sup>3</sup>*Letter 2325*.

<sup>4</sup>*Letter 2487*.

<sup>5</sup>*Letter 2760*: "The cult of the Divine Blood makes compensation for the abuse offered to it by so many in our days. May it be an offering to the Eternal Divine Father for the much longed-for reconciliation. Through its application, may the consciences of people be made clean: '*Pacificans per Sanguinem . . . justificati in Sanguine salvierimus ab ira per ipsum*'" 'Making peace through [his] Blood [Col 1: 20] . . . justified by [his] Blood we shall be saved from wrath through him' [Rom 5: 9].

<sup>6</sup>Cf. *Letters 1214 and 1215*.

<sup>7</sup>*Letter 1946*.

<sup>8</sup>*Letter 1214*.

<sup>9</sup>*Letter 1419*.

<sup>10</sup>*Letter 105*.

<sup>11</sup>*Metodo Missioni*, 3–4. Cf. *Regolamenti*, III, 59.

<sup>12</sup>*Letter 1133*.

<sup>13</sup>Appendix par. 2.

<sup>14</sup>Appendix, pars. 22–34.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 23. cf. also Appendix pars. 78, 84.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 41.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 14, 30–31, 39, 43–73 *passim*.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 4–7.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 20, 41, 42, 72, 73.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. *Letter 724*; *Letter 3785*.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 24–25.

<sup>22</sup>*Letter 57*, April 14, 1813.

<sup>23</sup>Appendix, par. 11; cf. Appendix, par. 18.

<sup>24</sup>*Letter 1215.*

<sup>25</sup>*Scritti spirituali*, I, 92.

<sup>26</sup>Appendix, par. 26.

<sup>27</sup>Appendix, pars. 26–27.

<sup>28</sup>Appendix, pars. 26–28.

<sup>29</sup>Appendix, pars. 26, 29; cf. Appendix, pars 12, 37, 71.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 30, 31, 73, 77. St. Gaspar writes thus to Leo XII: “Herein lies the glory of the priesthood, instituted for applying the price of redemption to souls, so that the Divine Blood will not have been shed in vain, due to our own fault, as we note in the Holy Scriptures: ‘*Quae utilitas in Sanguine meo?*’ ‘*What profit is there in my Blood?*’ [Ps 30: 10]. ‘. . . *Sanguis Jesu Christi emundabit conscientias nostras ab operibus mortuis*’ ‘The Blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse our consciences of dead works’” [Cf. Heb 9: 14].

<sup>31</sup>*Letter 1583*, March 6, 1827.

<sup>32</sup>This work, on the month of the Precious Blood, which at that time was in June rather than in July, was published anonymously in 1820. After the death of St. Gaspar’s friend, the Passionist Bishop Vincenzo Strambi in 1824, it was published with his name. Gaetano Bonanni also had a hand in the composition of the work even if his name did not appear in print.

<sup>33</sup>*Scritti spirituali*, I, 503. Conti notes that this selection was erroneously attributed to St. Gaspar, but in fact, it is part of the meditation of the seventh day of the month of June contained in the work just cited.

<sup>34</sup>*Letter 1215.*

<sup>35</sup>*Metodo Missioni*, 3; cf. *Regolamenti*, III, 59.

<sup>36</sup>*Letter 2487.*

<sup>37</sup>A. Santelli, *Vita del Canonico Don Gaspare Del Bufalo Missionario Apostolico*, Rome, 1992, p. 92.

<sup>38</sup>The reference is to the evils of the Napoleonic domination: the deportation of Pius VII and the priests who did not swear the oath of allegiance to Napoleon.

<sup>39</sup>Santelli, op. cit., 727.

<sup>40</sup>V. Strambi, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>41</sup>Cf. *Letter 1215*; cf. Appendix pars. 81–82; 94.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. *Letter 3533*, September 19, 1837.

<sup>43</sup>Appendix, par. 82.

<sup>44</sup>*Letter 1263.*

<sup>45</sup>*Letter 1583.*

<sup>46</sup>*Letter 1644.*

<sup>47</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 73, 91.

<sup>48</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 19.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. *Letter 105.*

<sup>50</sup>Appendix, par. 78; cf. Appendix, pars. 2, 48, 84.

<sup>51</sup>Appendix pars. 78, 84; cf. *Letter 1171.*

<sup>52</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 3, 14, 18, 38, 77, 79, 82, 94, 95.

<sup>53</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 77, 78.

<sup>54</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 38, 41, 59, 77, 79, 82, 87, 94, 95.

<sup>55</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 25, 38, 59.

<sup>56</sup>*Letter 52*.

<sup>57</sup>Appendix, pars. 79, 96.

<sup>58</sup>Del Bufalo, L. and P., *Gaspare Del Bufalo il venerabile mio zio*, Rome, 1991, p. 82.

<sup>59</sup>Appendix, par. 44.

<sup>60</sup>*Letter 1215*.

<sup>61</sup>Appendix, pars. 43–73.

<sup>62</sup>This threefold division of the spiritual life occurs more than one time in the writings of St. Gaspar even if he uses different terminology in relation to the Blood of Jesus. Cf. Appendix paragraphs 3, 12, 18–20, 24.

<sup>63</sup>In order better to comprehend St. Gaspar's doctrine on the perfection of souls it is useful to study this little ascetical work. It is found in *Scritti spirituali*, I, pp. 357–403.

<sup>64</sup>"*Est quidam animae status, in quo sunt gradatim removenda obstacula, ut si colendis christianis virtutibus idonea ad sui perfectionem consequendam.*" *Direttore diretto*, op. cit., p. 8; cf. *Scritti spirituali*, pp. 361–362.

<sup>65</sup>Appendix, par. 44.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*; cf. Appendix, par. 38.

<sup>67</sup>Appendix, pars. 45–46.

<sup>68</sup>Appendix, par. 47.

<sup>69</sup>Appendix, par. 48.

<sup>70</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup>Appendix, par. 49.

<sup>72</sup>Appendix, par. 50.

<sup>73</sup>Appendix, pars. 51–52.

<sup>74</sup>Appendix, par. 52.

<sup>75</sup>"*Est quidam animae status in quo, ob remota obstacula, christianis virtutibus colendis iam idonea, per repetitos actus ad eorum habitus ducitur, ut magis purgetur et ad sui perfectionem consequendam proxime disponatur.*" *Direttore diretto*, pp. 8–9; cf. *Scritti spirituali*, I, p. 362.

<sup>76</sup>Appendix, par. 54.

<sup>77</sup>*Positio super virtutibus*, §110, 232.

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 1–3, 14, 19, 32–34, 41, 77, 83, 85.

<sup>79</sup>Appendix, par. 54.

<sup>80</sup>Appendix, par. 84.

<sup>81</sup>Appendix, par. 54.

<sup>82</sup>Appendix, par. 84.

<sup>83</sup>Appendix, par. 54.

<sup>84</sup>Appendix, par. 55.

<sup>85</sup>Appendix, par. 2; cf. pars. 84, 20.

<sup>86</sup>Appendix, par. 56.

<sup>87</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 3, 20, 37, 41, 56, 71.

<sup>88</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 3, 10, 18, 23–29, 39.

<sup>89</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 41, 82, 98.

<sup>90</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 3, 14, 19, 39, 41, 46, 50, 56, 60, 65, 67, 72,

84.

<sup>91</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 4–6, 25, 67.

<sup>92</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 30–31, 73, 77.

<sup>93</sup>Appendix, par. 55; cf. also par. 19.

<sup>94</sup>Appendix, par. 57.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Appendix, par. 58.

<sup>97</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 59.

<sup>98</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 60.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 61.

<sup>101</sup>Appendix, par. 62.

<sup>102</sup>Appendix, par. 63.

<sup>103</sup>*Direttore diretto*, p. 9; cf. *Scritti spirituali*, I, p. 362.

<sup>104</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 3, 12, 24.

<sup>105</sup>Appendix, par. 64.

<sup>106</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 64.

<sup>107</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 65.

<sup>108</sup>Appendix, par. 66.

<sup>109</sup>Appendix, par. 36; cf. also Gaspar del Bufalo, *Circular Letter 8 (1834)*. There are also a number of similar references in his other letters.

<sup>110</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 22.

<sup>111</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 66.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 67.

<sup>115</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 68.

<sup>116</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 69.

<sup>117</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 70.

<sup>118</sup>Appendix, par. 71.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid.

<sup>120</sup>Appendix, par. 72.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid.

<sup>122</sup>Appendix, par. 73.

## Chapter Four: Devotional Practices in Honor of the Blood of Jesus

<sup>1</sup>Appendix, par. 83.

<sup>2</sup>*Letter 1644*, June 29, 1827.

<sup>3</sup>Appendix, par. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 7, 8, 9, 10, 16, 21, 22, 42, 73, 83, 91, 96.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 8.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 7, 9, 21, 42, 73.

<sup>7</sup>*Letter 1419*, May 22, 1826.

<sup>8</sup>Appendix, par. 14.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. *Letter 1133*, May 1825.

<sup>10</sup>Appendix, par. 50; cf. Appendix, pars. 19, 56.

<sup>11</sup>Appendix, par. 7.

<sup>12</sup>*Letter 486*.

<sup>13</sup>Appendix, par. 39.

<sup>14</sup>Appendix, par. 41; cf. also pars. 14, 46, 63, 72.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 50, 72.

<sup>16</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 1, 19, 54–56, 83.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 5.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 32–34; 83.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 19, 67, 77.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 14, 57.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 58.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 6, 14, 25, 39.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 59.

<sup>24</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 59, 67.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 14.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 65, 73.

<sup>27</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 50, 57–59, 67, 73.

<sup>28</sup>Cf. A. P. Frutaz, “Sangue Preziosissimo di N. S. Gesù Cristo,” in *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, X, Vatican City, coll. 1778–1780.

<sup>29</sup>*Letter 1425*, cf. L. Contegiacomo, *Lettere di S. Gaspare Del Bufalo*, I, Rome, 1968, p. 126, note.

<sup>30</sup>*Letter 2193*, July 28, 1831.

<sup>31</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 90.

<sup>32</sup>*Letter 1776*, July 15, 1828.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. *Letters 1190, 2701, 656*.

<sup>34</sup>Appendix, par. 98; cf. also par. 18.

<sup>35</sup>*Letter 1188*, July 3, 1825.

<sup>36</sup>Cf. B. Conti, “Il mese del Preziosissimo Sangue,” in A.M. Triacca, editor, *Il mistero del Sangue di Cristo nella Liturgia e nella pietà popolare*, II, Rome, 1989, pp. 289–312.

<sup>37</sup>*Letter 1883*.

<sup>38</sup>*Regolamenti*, I, p. 363.

<sup>39</sup>V. Pallotti, *Gaspare Del Bufalo come l'ho conosciuto 'Gaspar del Bufalo as I Knew Him'*, Rome, 1989, p. 21. The English translation, by Raymond Cera, C.P.P.S., is available in photocopied and digital formats. The reference here may be found in chapter two of the English translation.

<sup>40</sup>Toward the end of the nineteenth century, when the practice of honoring the Sacred Heart of Jesus during the month of June became more widespread, the month of the Precious Blood came to be celebrated in July. Cf. B. Conti, “*Il mese del Preziosissimo Sangue,*” op. cit., pp. 293–295.

<sup>41</sup>*Letter 2180*, July 9, 1831.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. *Letter 1937*, June 5, 1829.

<sup>43</sup>*Letter 1449*.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>*Letter 1846*, November 17, 1828. Nevertheless, this practice of the *Settenario* or *Ottavario* after the feast of the Precious Blood did not enter into the various rules of the Congregation of Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

<sup>46</sup>*Metodo Missioni*, p. 27; cf. *Regolamenti*, III, 74.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>48</sup>*Letter 2426*, October 16, 1832.

<sup>49</sup>Cf. *Letter 1955*. Cf. also a collection of “Spiritual Hymns of Praise for the Holy Missions” (*Laudi spirituali per le Sante Missioni*) in *Regolamenti*, III, pp. 135–182. For a collection of hymns to the Precious Blood from the beginning of the C.P.P.S. Congregation until 1989, cf. T. Veglianti, “*I canti al Sangue di Cristo,*” in A. M. Triacca, editor, *Il mistero del Sangue di Cristo nella liturgia e nella pietà popolare* (Rome, 1989), pp. 139–287.

<sup>50</sup>*Letter 2770*, August 15, 1834.

<sup>51</sup>*Metodo Missioni*, p. 21.

<sup>52</sup>*Letter 1896*, February 13, 1829.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup>Cf. *Letters 630, 751, 1308, 1612, 1760*, etc. In a letter of April 6, 1834 he asserts the same thing, confirming it with the “elucidation” of Mons. Gregorio Muccioli (cf. *Letter 2701*).

<sup>55</sup>*Letter 2426*, October 16, 1832.

<sup>56</sup>Cf. *Positio super virtutibus*, Pedini, § 5, 285.

<sup>57</sup>*Letter 677*, January 27, 1823.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. also *Letter 641*.

<sup>59</sup>*Letter 2861*, February 20, 1835.

<sup>60</sup>Cf. *Letter 1399*.

<sup>61</sup>*Letter 630*, September 2, 1822.

<sup>62</sup>*Letter 1473*, July 22, 1826.

<sup>63</sup>*Letter 630*, September 2, 1822.

<sup>64</sup>*Letter 286*. Cf. also *Letters 2196* and *2417*.

<sup>65</sup>Cf. B. Conti, *Il metodo delle missioni al popolo secondo S. Gaspare Del Bufalo*, Rome, 1971, p. 70.

<sup>66</sup>*Metodo Missioni*, p. 51.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 51–52.

<sup>69</sup>*Letter 2755*, July 20, 1834.

<sup>70</sup>*Regolamenti*, I, p. 363.

<sup>71</sup>For example, cf. *Letter 677*.

<sup>72</sup>Cf. *Regolamenti*, II, p. 281. Cf. Conti, *Il metodo delle missioni*, pp. 26; 63–64.

<sup>73</sup>Cf. L. Contegiacomo, *Lettere di S. Gaspare del Bufalo*, II/I, Rome, 1970, pp. 202–203.

<sup>74</sup>M.A. De Angelis, “*Fiorir sul caro viso veggo la rosa*,” “*La Madonna del Preziosissimo Sangue di Pompeo Batoni*,” Rome, 1984.

<sup>75</sup>*Translator’s note*: The Italian text uses the word *rame*, meaning “copper.” It appears that the term may be used for a painting on copper, but it may also mean an engraving or print made from an engraved copper plate. Given the fact that Merlini also speaks of this image of the Madonna as being “of paper” (*di carta*), the latter probably the meaning in this context.

<sup>76</sup>G. Merlini, *Gaspare Del Bufalo. Un santo scruta un santo*. Rome, 1984, p. 46. The English translation, by Raymond Cera, C.P.P.S., is available in photocopied and digital formats. The reference here may be found in chapter 3.

<sup>77</sup>De Angelis, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup>*Letter 1207*, July 20, 1825.

<sup>79</sup>*Letter 362*, November 22, 1980.

<sup>80</sup>B. Valentini, *Gaspare Del Bufalo, quasi un oracolo divino*. Rome, 1990, pp. 105, 119, 124, 139. This is the deposition given by Valentini during the process for the beatification and canonization of St. Gaspar. The English translation is available in digital form but not in print.

<sup>81</sup>*Letter 366*.

<sup>82</sup>Santelli, *op. cit.*, pp. 457–458.

<sup>83</sup>*Letter 326*.

<sup>84</sup>The italics are St. Gaspar’s.

<sup>85</sup>*Letter 340*.

<sup>86</sup>We do not know if Bonanni left the painting of the Madonna del Soccorso at San Felice di Giano. It is certain that in 1832 there was an altar in the church in this ancient abbey with the painting of his Madonna del Soccorso (cf. *Regolamenti*, I, Rome, 1998, 153; 144), painted by Francesco Melanzio (Montefalco circa 1465–1530) and restored in 1961 by Professor Giovanni Bartoloni. This painting, which was subsequently moved to the Sanctuary of Fosco, now preserved at San Felice, measures two meters in height and one and a half meters in width. It depicts the Madonna standing up, with her left hand holding a baby who is about to be taken away by the devil and with her right holding a club to strike the demon. Next to the Madonna, kneels the mother of the child, interceding for her son, and a group of Augustinian monks who are also praying.

<sup>87</sup>*Letter 453*. St. Gaspar used the expression “my Madonna” for the first time in the negotiations for opening a mission house in

Offida. He writes in this letter of August 10, 1821, to Sig. Giovanni Francesco Palmucci: "Once the house has been opened make a copy of my Madonna." Even later in his letters St. Gaspar speaks of "my Madonna" as the Madonna of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood (July 1, 1825; November 13, 1825; July 18, 1836, etc.).

<sup>88</sup>Cf. Santelli, op. cit., p. 414.

<sup>89</sup>Letter 1271.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid. St. Gaspar probably refers to Andrea Pozzi, a painter esteemed in Rome at that time and an academic of San Luca (De Angelis, op. cit., p. 4). De Angelis thinks that the painter modified the index finger and possibly part of the thumb to adapt them for grasping the chalice (Ibid.).

<sup>91</sup>Cf. De Angelis, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>93</sup>Cf. ibid., pp. 12–13; 20–21.

<sup>94</sup>Letter 3159.

<sup>95</sup>Letter 3411.

<sup>96</sup>V. Pallotti, op. cit., pp. 27–28.

<sup>97</sup>Cf. De Angelis, op. cit., pp. 12–13. Also see the study of W. Wermter, *La Madonna in S. Gaspare del Bufalo*. Rome, 1988, pp. 42–46.

<sup>98</sup>V. Strambi, op. cit.

<sup>99</sup>*Scritti spirituali*, I, p. 503: This selection, copied by Missionary D. Pietro Torsani, is found among many outlines for preaching sent to him by St. Gaspar (cf. Ibid., 491–506). *Translator's note*: Conti, in his editing of this volume of the *Scritti spirituali* considers the selection to be erroneously attributed to St. Gaspar, since it is a quotation which belongs to the meditation of the seventh day of the book, *Il mese santificato* of Strambi–Bonanni.

<sup>100</sup>*Scritti spirituali*, p. 190. *Translator's note*: This paragraph and the preceding do not appear in the original text but were included in a presentation on this topic given to formators of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in July 2003.

<sup>101</sup>Letter 1214.

<sup>102</sup>*Translator's note*: This paragraph is not in the original but was part of the presentation given by Don Beniamino in July 2003 as noted above in no. 101.

<sup>103</sup>Cf. *Regolamenti*, III, p. 40.

<sup>104</sup>Cf. B. Conti, *Il metodo delle missioni*, op. cit., pp. 62–64.

<sup>105</sup>For example, cf. *Letters 757, 775*.

<sup>106</sup>B. Panzini, op. cit., 178.

<sup>107</sup>*Positio super virtutibus*, *Silvestri*, § 163, 246.

<sup>108</sup>Cf. G. Quattrino, "Itinerario spirituale," in *Il Sangue Prezioso della nostra Redenzione*, 3 (1965), pp. 54–61.

## Chapter Five: An Excellent and Legitimate Devotion

<sup>1</sup>*Letter 2055*, July 6, 1830.

<sup>2</sup>*Letter 1160*, June 17, 1825.

<sup>3</sup>*Letter 1120*, May 12, 1825.

<sup>4</sup>*Letter 509*, December 12, 1821.

<sup>5</sup>*Letter 3537*, September 20, 1837.

<sup>6</sup>*Letter 1644*, June 29, 1827.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 6, 54, 55, 73.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 89.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. E. Agostini, *Il cuore di Gesù*, Bologna, 1950, p. 8.

<sup>10</sup>Appendix, par. 89.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 4, 7, 10, 12, 16, 39, 40, etc.

<sup>12</sup>Appendix, par. 72.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 24, 25, 38, 44.

<sup>14</sup>*Letter 1215*.

<sup>15</sup>Appendix, par. 83.

<sup>16</sup>Appendix, par. 77.

<sup>17</sup>Appendix, pars. 14, 12.

<sup>18</sup>Appendix, par. 19.

<sup>19</sup>Appendix, par. 14.

<sup>20</sup>*Letter 1644*, June 29, 1827.

<sup>21</sup>Appendix, par. 19.

<sup>22</sup>Appendix, par. 85.

<sup>23</sup>*Letter 106*, March 1, 1815.

<sup>24</sup>Appendix, par. 85.

<sup>25</sup>Appendix, par. 78; *Letter 1214*.

<sup>26</sup>Appendix, par. 98; *Letter 2140*.

<sup>27</sup>Appendix, par. 85; *Letter 1215*.

<sup>28</sup>Appendix, pars. 79, 85, 96; *Letters 1214, 1215, 2140*.

<sup>29</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 78, 86, 98, 99.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Appendix, pars. 76, 83, 86, 87, 88, 91, 95, 98, 100.

<sup>31</sup>Appendix, par. 86.

<sup>32</sup>Appendix, par. 79.

<sup>33</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 86.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>Appendix, par. 97.

<sup>36</sup>*Letters 1559, 1734, 1905*.

<sup>37</sup>Cf. V. Strambi, op. cit., p. 86.

<sup>38</sup>Appendix, par. 89.

<sup>39</sup>Cf. Appendix, par. 88.

<sup>40</sup>Appendix, par. 90.

## Appendix

<sup>1</sup>I Cor 6: 20.

<sup>2</sup>St. Vincent Strambi (1745–1824), Passionist and bishop of Macerata and Tolentino.

<sup>3</sup>Bishop Francesco Albertini (1770–1819), founder of the Archconfraternity of the Most Precious Blood and spiritual director of St. Gaspar.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Rv 7: 14; 22: 14.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Heb 12: 4.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Rv 12: 11.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Rv 5: 13.

<sup>8</sup>This text consists of eight biblical themes (seven in preparation for the feast and one for the feast of the Most Precious Blood). We have given them the title, “The Seven-Day Devotion (*Settenario*) to the Divine Blood” because this terminology occurs frequently in the letters of St. Gaspar when he refers to devotional practices to the Blood of Jesus.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. Phil 2: 8.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. Heb 11: 33–34.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. Heb 12: 4.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 1: 5.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. Rv 13: 8.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Eph 2: 13.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Rv 5: 13.

<sup>16</sup>*Scritti spirituali*, III, pp. 423–442. This document, whose title is taken from 1 Cor 1: 5, is the most important writing on the Precious Blood by St. Gaspar. It was sent by St. Gaspar in 1822 to Don Luigi Mosconi (1778–1858), director of the missions in the house of Albano. The address bears the postmark of Terracina. In 1822 St. Gaspar was in Terracina during the first half of June, waiting to depart for the second mission in Benevento. Thus, the document dates from this time. It is divided into four parts, each of which begins with the words: *In omnibus divites facti estis in illo* ‘In him you have been made rich in all things.’

<sup>17</sup>This and other subheadings with an asterisk are not in the original manuscript and are editorial.

<sup>18</sup>“He is an offering for our sins.” 1 Jn 2: 22.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Rm 8: 26.

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Jn 10: 11.

<sup>21</sup>Cf. Jn 18: 11.

<sup>22</sup>Cf. Mt 27: 42.

<sup>23</sup>In the manuscript of St. Gaspar the enumeration from 1 to 10 in this section is by another hand. We place the numbering here to conform with the other sections.

<sup>24</sup>Giampetro Pinamonti (1632–1703), Jesuit, was a companion of Paolo Segneri Senior in the popular missions, in which he carried out the role of catechist and confessor.

<sup>25</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 1: 30.

<sup>26</sup>Cf. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 10

<sup>27</sup>No. 7 does not exist in the manuscript of St. Gaspar.

