

Page 1

(January 2nd, 1918, to Antonietta Vona)

I strongly recommend that you focus on making your poor hearts every day more pleasing to our divine Teacher and to act in a way that this current year will be more productive than last year in terms of good deeds. The reason being is that as time passes and the end approaches, it is necessary to double our enthusiasm and to raise our spirit in God, serving him with greatest diligence in everything that both our vocation and Christian devotion demand of us. Only this can be pleasing to God. Only this can liberate us from the enormous world that is not of God and can free us from our enemies. Only this, therefore, can lead us to the threshold of eternal salvation. We should also face the tests of our current life to which the divine providence will be delivering, but we should not discourage or anguish. We must bravely fight, and we will receive the reward that God has kept for strong souls. Remember, daughters, the world that our divine Teacher said one day to his disciples and that today he says to you: "Let your heart not be troubled". Yes, daughters, do not let your hearts be discouraged at the moment of the test because Jesus has promised his undoubted help to those who follow him. (...)

Page 2

(November 15th, 1917, to Antonietta Vona)

To be able to continuously live a life of devotion, you only need to accept in your heart some great and generous precepts: The first one that I would like you to consider is the one of Saint Paul: "Everything reverts in goodness to those who love God". And, let me mention, since God can and knows how to bring goodness even from evil: with whom would he do such but with those who, without hesitation whatsoever, give themselves to Him? Even sins, from which God with his infinite goodness keep us far from, are commanded by his divine providence for the sake of those who believe and serve him. Had the saint King David not sinned, he would have never gained such profound humility. Magdalene would have not loved Jesus so devotedly had he not forgave her many sins. And Jesus would have not been able to forgive those sins had Magdalene not committed them. Please consider, dear daughter, this great work of divine mercy: He transforms our miseries in favors and, with the venom of our actions, he performs healthy changes in our souls. Tell me then, what would he not do with his grace to our afflictions, our suffering and the troubles that anguish us? And, therefore, even if you do not experience any affliction of any type, believe that, if you believe in God with all your heart, everything will be transformed into good; and even if you do not understand what this goodness will come from, be certain that it will arrive. If God puts in front of your eyes the mud of a disgrace, it's only to provide you with a clearer view and to make you more admirable to the eyes of his angels, like a magnificent and generous spectacle. And, if God makes you fall, it is to achieve in you what he achieved in Saint Paul when he fell from his horse. profound humility. To lose heart and to become impatient after making a mistake is the plan of the enemy, is to grant him the weapons, is to surrender. Therefore, you should not do that because the grace of God is always ready to rescue you.

Page 3

(November 1th , 1917, to Antonietta Vona)

The third precept that I would like that you to engrave forever in your spirit is that God is our father: and what could you fear if you are the daughter of the father, without whose providence even a hair from your hair would not fall off? Isn't it actual ly very odd that, being us the children of the father, we would have other thoughts rather than to love him and serve him? Take care and be in control of your soul and of your family the way he wants and do not be concerned. If you do so, you will see how Jesus takes care of you. Jesus once said to Saint Catherine of Sienna 'Think of me and I will think of you'. A wise person would say 'Eternal father, your providence rules over everything'.

Page 4

(November 15th, 1917 to Antonietta Vona)

The third precept is that you should observe what the divine Teacher taught his disciples: "What have you lacked?". Carefully consider, my good little daughter, this passage. Jesus sent the disciples throughout the world, without money, without a cane, without sandals, without saddles, clothes, just with a tunic. And he later told them: "When I sent you on that journey, were you in lack of anything?". And they replied that they had lacked nothing. Today, I tell you, little daughter: when you were tormented, even in times when, unfortunately, you didn't trust much in God, tell me "Did you ever find yourself oppressed by suffering?" You will tell me in the negative. And why -and I will add -, not having trust in overcoming all the rest of adversities? If God has not abandoned you in the past, how would he abandon you in the future when now, more than in the past, you want to belong to him from now onwards? Do not fear that something bad could happen you, God will give you the strength to overcome it. The divine Teacher sent Saint Peter to walk over water. When the wind blew and facing the danger of the storm, Saint Peter was afraid and that made him almost drown. He asked the Teacher for help, and he replied to him saying: "Man of little faith, why have you doubted?", and extending his hand he held Peter. If God makes you walk over the tempest waters of a diversity, do not doubt, my little daughter, God is with you, be brave and you will be saved.

Page 5

(November 15th, 1917, to Antonietta Vona)

The fourth precept is that of eternity. Little should be of importance to God's children to live these most brief moments that pass by as long as they can live in eternal glory with God. Little daughter, consider that you are already on the path to eternity, that you have already set foot on it. As long as eternity is a happy one as a consequence of your deeds, should it be important that these transitory moments are of suffering? The fifth precept that I plead that you keep fixed in your mind is that of the apostle St. Paul: "Keep in mind that I do not focus on anything else but in the cross of my Jesus". Keep in your heart, little daughter, our crucified Jesus and every cross of the world will seem like roses. Those who have felt the pain of the crown of thorns of our Savior, who is our Head, will not feel any other wounds whatsoever.

Page 6

(March 8th, 1916, to O. Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I constantly have my eyes set on the east, in the middle of the night, to distinguish that miraculous star that guided our parents to the grotto in Bethlehem. But it is in vain that I fix my eyes to capture the emergence of such a luminous phenomenon. The more I look for it, the less I see, the more I try and the more fervently I look for it, the more I see myself covered by darkness. I'm alone in the day, I'm alone during the night and no ray of light comes to shine on me, never a drop of freshness comes to put off the flame that engulfs me continuously without ever consuming me. Only once have I felt, in the most intimate and secret part of my spirit, something very delicate that I don't know how to explain. The soul started to feel his presence without being able to see it, and, right away, let me explain it that way, he came so intimately to my soul that it clearly perceived his touch. This was exactly -to paint a vague idea - as it usually happens when our body touches very closely another body. I don't know what else to say about this. I can only confess that, at first, I was controlled by panic but this panic, little by little, transformed into a celestial euphoria. I felt as if I were no longer in a worldly state and I wouldn't be able to say i f, at the moment this was occurring, I felt or not as part of my own body, only God knows. I wouldn't be able to tell further to better explain this event.

Page 7

(December 30th, 1918, to Maria Gargani)

Our Lord loves you, little daughter, and he loves you tenderly. And if he sometimes doesn't let you feel the sweetness of this love, he does it to bring you to a greatest humility and so that you realize how unworthy you are. But do not stop asking for his holy kindness with all your trust, particularly during the time that we represent him as a little child in Bethlehem. Because, why, little daughter, would He maintain that tender and kind condition if not to lead us to love him trustingly and to give ourselves to Him? Stay close to the cradle of this gracious child, especially during the holy days of his birth. If you love richness, you will find here the gold that the Magi Kings brought to him; if you love the smoke of the honorable, here you will find that incense; and if you love the refinement of the senses, you will sense the aromatic myrrh that perfumes the entire grotto. Be rich in the love of this celestial child, be respectful to the familiarity you will have with him through prayer and be delicate in the happiness you will feel in holy inspirations and in the feeling that you are only his. Maintain a good spirit regarding your little resentments and your failures, they will without doubt pass. And if they don't pass, they will be an exercise of humility and a way to pay for your sins. Live without concern, little daughter, and do not fear, because Jesus is with you. Continue in the path that you have started and never slow down your pace.

Page 8

(November 26th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Continue always in your faith and keep vigilant; that way all bad attempts of the enemy will be driven away. This is precisely the exhortation that gives us the prince of the apostles, Saint Peter: "Be awake and stay vigilant. Your enemy, the devil, paces like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Persist against him firmly in your faith". Peter, to stimulate us further also adds: "Do this knowing that your brothers that are in this world have to endure the same things". Yes, beloved daughter of Jesus, especially in the hours of fight renew your faith in the truth of the Christian doctrine, and, in a particular manner, renew the faith in the promises of eternal life that our most sweet Lord makes to those who fight with strength and courage. To provide encouragement and to console you, know that you are not alone in your suffering, that all the followers of the Nazarene spread throughout the world suffer the same things, they are also still exposed to all tribulations.

Page 9

(January 9th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

The knowledge of divine acts should serve on one side, for your soul to learn gratitude towards the good Father, teaching your soul to be grateful to the celestial benefactor, having, for this cause, blessings from the most Holy Immaculate Mary, those of the angels and of all the blessed ones residing in celestial Jerusalem. On the other hand, it should serve you as motivation, in order for you not to fear and so that you don't stop in the middle of the journey due to pain and suffering that are necessary to endure to arrive at the end of this long path. The Lord has allowed me to tell you all these things, especially for you not to feel intimidated in your path. Run, therefore, and do not tire. The Lord guides you and he leads your steps so that you don't fall on the way. Run, I tell you, because the path is long, and time is very brief. Run, we should all run, in order so that at the end of our journey, we should be able to say with the Saint Apostle: "Because I am about to be sacrificed, and the moment of my departure is imminent. I have fought my fight, I have run my race, I have kept my faith".

(December 7th, 1916, to the Ventrella sister s)

The darkness that surrounds the sky of your souls is indeed light. And you are correct when you claim not to see anything and that you find yourself in the middle of a burning fire. The blaze is burning, the air is full of dense clouds, and the spirit doesn't see or understand anything. But God speaks and is present in the soul that feels, understands, loves, and shivers. Little daughters, be happy, don't expect to go to Mount Tabor to see God. You can see him at Mount Sinai. I believe yours is not the interior and upset stomach that is not capable of loving goodness. Your stomach can only like the highest goodness itself and not just its virtues. That is the reason why your stomach cannot be satisfied with what is not God. The knowledge of your interior indignity and deformity is the purest light that comes from the divine. This light allows you to consider your being divine as well as your capacity to commit any crime without its grace. This light is a great mercy of God, and it was granted to the greatest saints, because it allows the soul to stay away from any feeling of vanity and pride, making humility greater, which is the foundation of true virtue and of Christian perfection. Saint Teresa also had this knowledge and she expressed that, at certain times, it is so painful and horrible that it could cause death if the Lord wouldn't support one's heart.

(December 7th, 1916, to the Ventrella sisters)

The knowledge of potential indignity, which consists in knowing what we would be or what we would do without the help of grace, of which we have been talking, should not be confused with actual indignity. The first one makes the creature acceptable and pleasing to the eyes of the Most High. The second one makes it disgusting because it is the reflection of inequity present in the soul, in the conscience. Daughters, in the darkness in which you are most of the time, you confuse one indignity with the other one. And, just by knowing what you could be, you become afraid thinking that you are already what is only possible among you. Ignoring if to the eyes of God, you are worthy of love or hatred means suffering and not punishment because no one is afraid of being unworthy when one really wants to be or actually is unworthy. Such doubt is allowed by God among all human beings for them not to be arrogant and so that they can walk cautiously towards achieving eternal salvation.

(December 7th, 1916, to the Ventrella sisters)

Remember this: If the devil makes noise, it is a sign that it is still outside and not inside. What should terrify us is its peace and its tuning with the human soul. Believe me, because I speak to you as a brother and with the authority of a priest and in my capacity as your director: throw away those vain fears, throw away those clouds that the devil puts in your souls to torment you and to keep you away, if possible, of daily communion. I know that the Lord allows those attacks from the devil so that divine mercy could make you more pleasing to God. He wants you to be more like him in the suffering times he lived in the desert, in the garden and on the cross. But you should defend yourselves keeping the devil away, refusing his malignant temptations.

(December 17th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Stay alert so that you don't lose view of the divine presence due to the activities you have. Do not start any task or any other action without bringing first your mind to God, offering to Him, with holy intention, the actions that you are about to take. You should do the same with your thanksgiving when finalizing all your activities, examining if everything you have done was following the straight intention that you wished at the start. And if you find yourself flawed, humbly ask forgiveness from the Lord, with the strong determination of correcting your mistakes. You should not lose hope or become sad if your actions don't result in the perfection that you intended. What do you expect! We are fragile, we are earth, and not everything worldly produces the same fruits according to the intentions of the sower. But in front of our miseries, let us become humble always, acknowledging that we are nothing without divine help.

(December 17th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

To become concerned after an action because it did not turn out according to the exact intention is not humility, it is a clear sign that the soul had not applied the perfection of its work asking for divine help, and that it has rather trusted too much on its own strength. Dear Raffaelina, you should keep away from this secret philosophy of Satan, discarding his suggestions as even if mildly, by this malignant spirit. It is never of little importance for a soul that has not the Son of God in its heart, to have fallen, even if on small things, in the malicious trickery of this terrible monster.

(December 17th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

You should never give your spirit to your work or to other actions so intensely that you end up losing the presence of God. For this reason, I ask that you constantly renew the straight intention you had from the beginning. You should pray once in a while the ejaculatory prayers which are like many spears that will wound the heart of God and will force him and let me give you this expression which is not at all exaggerated in our case, to grant us the grace and his help in everything. Do not sit at the table without having prayed before and having asked for divine help so that the food that we are going to grudgingly have, to alleviate your body, should not harm your spirit. Later, sit at the table trying to think devotedly, realizing that the divine Teacher is present with his holy apostles at the last supper they had, when he instituted the sacrament of the altar. In conclusion, we should try hard so that the physical supper serves us as preparation for the absolutely divine one of the most holy Eucharist.

(December 17th, 1914, to Raffaeline Cerase)

Do not stand up from the table without having properly thanked the Lord. Doing this, we will have nothing to fear from the terrible gluttony. When eating, be careful with the fastidious selection of food, knowing that little or nothing is necessary to satisfy the stomach. Do not ever take more food than necessary, and try to be moderate in everything, trying to be inclined with interest more towards moderation than to excess. I don't intend, however, that you leave the table without eating. No, that is not my intention. Act in everything with prudence, a rule for all human actions. Do not go to sleep without first having examined your conscience, especially on how your day was, and not before having focused all your thoughts on God, after having offered and devoted yourself to him and even the life of all Christians, especially my humble persona, because I do the same for you. In addition, offer to the glory of his divine majesty the resting time that you are going to have, and never forget the angel of God, who is always with you, who never leaves your side, not even due to the offenses you might commit upon him.

(February 9th, 1916, to P. Basilio da Mirabello Sannitico)

I understand that the soul in which God lives is always fearful, in each step it takes, of offending him. And this sacred fear is almost unbearable if it focuses on the fulfillment of one's duty. But this soul should rejoice because it is precisely this fear that will not allow it to fall into offenses if one decides to keep going. Dear brother, if staying on our feet depended on us, most certainly, at the first wind we could fall into the hands of our salvation's enemies. We should always trust in divine mercy, and we should experience every time more the goodness of the Lord. (...) In the meantime, I would fervently ask you not to waste time thinking about the past. If it was well lived, we should give glory to God. If it wasn't, we should dislike it and trust in the goodness of our celestial Father. Moreover, I would encourage you to put your heart in the peace of this consoling thought: our life, in any aspect of it that has not been well lived, has already been forgiven by our most sweet God. Keep away from all interest any anguish and concerns from your heart. Otherwise, all your efforts will achieve little or no benefit. We should rest assured that, if our spirit is troubled, the attacks of the devil, who usually takes advantage of our natural weakness to achieve his objectives, will be frequent and more direct. We should be very attentive to this point, which is not of little importance to us. As soon as we realize that we are down, we should renew our faith and we should give ourselves into the arms of our God in heaven who is ready to welcome us if we sincerely ask for his embrace.

(May 21st, 1918, to Antonietta Vona)

Dear little daughter, do not fear the storms of hard winters because, the harder they are, the richer in flowers and in abundant harvest the Spring will be. No matter what the tempting one does or says, God has achieved in you his admirable objective which is to complete your transfiguration in Him. Do not pay attention, dear little daughter, to the whispering and to the adverse shadows of the enemy. And believe in the truth that this affirmation encapsulates, which I make with the authority as your director and with complete trust of conscience. The fear of getting lost in the arms of divine goodness is more appealing than the fear a little child feels while being in the arms, in the hug of his mother. Keep away from any doubt or concern which, in any case, is allowed by divine goodness with the same objective already indicated. The diastolic and systolic movements you feel in your heart are caused by the love that rejects and the love that attracts. Therefore, live in peace, extend your soul towards the eternal sun, and don't fear its burning and scorching rays. Extend, I say, your soul, dear little daughter, beloved of my heart, towards this sun of eternal beauty, if you long for the cocoon to open to let out the most beautiful butterfly.

(May 21st, 1918, to Antonietta Vona)

Be patient, dear little daughter, when facing your imperfections if you indeed wish for perfection. Remember that this is a very important point if we want to walk through the paths that lead us to Him. When you are not able to walk big steps on this path, consider small steps, patiently waiting to have bigger legs to run, or even more, wings to fly. Be content, dear little daughter, with being for the time being a small bee of the honeycomb which very soon will become a mature bee, capable of making honey. Lovingly humble yourself in front of God and men because God talks to those who keep their ears low. "Listen -he says to the wife of the Song of Solomon -, meditate and keep your ears low, forget your people and your paternal home". Do this like the loving little son who lays face down when the Father in heaven speaks and who awaits the answer of the divine oracle. God will pour your cup with its balm when he will see it empty of the world's perfumes. And the more you humble yourself, the more he will lift you.

Page 20

(January 12th, 1919, to P. Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I find it almost absolutely impossible to express the work of the beloved. The infinite love, with the immensity of his power, has finally conquered the toughness of my soul. And I find myself annulled and reduced to frustration. He is every time and finally totally poured into the small cup of this creature who suffers an indescribable torture and who is not capable of carrying the weight of this immense love. Who would come to help me? What will I do to keep the infinite in my small heart? What would I do to forever keep it in the tight cell of my heart?

(January 12th, 1919, to P. Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

My soul is melting with sorrow and love, of bitterness and sweetness at the same time. What should I do to sustain such an incredible action of the Most High? I have it in me and it's the cause of such joy that it takes me, without my control, to say with Virgin Mary: "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior". I feel him in me, and I feel the imminent need to say with the wife of the Song of Solomon: "I found he who loves my soul...I have hugged him and I will not let him go". But it's then that I find myself incapable of sustaining the weight of this infinite love, of keeping it intact in the smallness of my existence. And panic takes over me because I might have to leave him due to the inability of being able to contain it in the tight space of my heart. This thought that, on the other hand, has no foundation (I measure my strength which is most limited, incapable and not efficient to keep always tightly embraced this divine love), torments me, it anguishes me, and I feel my heart leaping out of my chest.

Page 22

(January 12th, 1919, to P. Benedetto of San Marco in Lamis)

Dear Father, I cannot overcome this pain because of the effort it requires of me. I feel annihilated, I feel faint and I would not be able to express if I live or not in those moments. I am outside of myself. Torment and sweetness confront themselves in me and they reduce my soul to a sweet and bitter fainting. The arms of the beloved, which in such moment appear with great love, and whose, I would say, without pause and without end, are capable of extinguishing in such love the severe torture of the feeling of not being able to sustain the weight of an infinite love.

(February 23rd, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Then, why do we live? After having consecrated ourselves to him in baptism we are all of Jesus Christ. Therefore, a Christian should profess the precept of this holy Apostle: "To me, Christ is life". I live for Jesus Christ, I live for his glory, I live to serve him, I live to love him. And when God would like to take our life away, the feeling, the affection that we should have should be precisely that of one who, after an exhausting time will be rewarded, that of the one who, after a battle, will receive a crown. Let us love, yes, oh dear Raffaelina, let us taste this exquisite soul disposition of such a great apostle! Yes, it is true that all the souls that love God are ready for everything for the love of God himself, having complete conviction that everything will turn out to be for their own goodness. We should always be ready to recognize in all aspects of our life the wise order of divine providence. We should venerate and devote our will to follow it always and that of God because in that manner we will glorify our celestial Father, and everything will be for the goodness of our eternal life.

(February 23rd, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

The apostle rejoices when thinking that by no means he will be confused and by no means he will neglect his duty as apostle of Jesus Christ. He is also delighted that in his body, even in the middle of all the chains to which he is tied to, Jesus will always be glorified. If he survives, he will exalt Jesus Christ through his own life and his preaching, also being in jail, as he had already been doing until then, preaching the word of Jesus Christ to those of the praetorium. If, instead, he is martyred, he will glorify Jesus Christ by offering him the highest testimony of his love. Therefore, he openly declares that his life is Christ, that for him is his soul and the center of all his existence, the motor of all his actions, the goal of all his aspirations. And, after having said that his life is Jesus Christ, he also adds that his death would be an accomplishment for him because with his martyrdom he will give Jesus solemn testimony of his love, he will obtain that his union with Jesus be more unbreakable and the glory that awaits him will also be greater. What do you think, Raffaelina, of this way of talking? Worldly souls, not having any knowledge of supernatural and celestial choices, when listening to such language, would laugh and would be right to do so! Because the worldly being, says the Holy Spirit, does not perceive things that are of God. They, poor them, have no other choices that are not of mud and dust, they cannot conceive the idea of happiness that spiritual souls say to experience when suffering or dying for Jesus Christ. How much better for them if, instead of laughing or being surprised, they would recognize their guilt and they would admire, at least in respectful silence, the affectionate devotion of such souls whose hearts are full of divine love!

(February 23rd, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

For Saint Paul these two feelings originated from perfect charity. Being free to follow Jesus in perfect union in the glory, which was great for him, because he felt happier than living on this earth. And this desire was uniquely motivated by perfect charity he felt for his God. On the other hand, the other feeling or desire also originated from a perfect virtue, but which had as immediate objective the neighbor's salvation. In other words, this vocation was motivated by the main objective, God, but it was achieved as the result of the salvation of souls. Regarding the first wish, the one of being freed from his body, Saint Paul finds it more useful for him and he wants it with the fire that a just soul can wish to be one with its God. On the other hand, the second wish, the one of continuing to live in the middle of tasks and work to achieve the salvation of souls, he, full of the spirit of Jesus Christ, sees it as more necessary for others. After having had a revelation (as one can conclude from what he expresses afterwards, and the event confirms my interpretation because he was not martyred because he was freed) that he was not going to die, Saint Paul accepts and assumes his love to God by working for the salvation of souls. As a son who tenderly loves the father, he accepts, for the love he has for him, to be subject to all humiliation and he also accepts some extremely low services that his father would ask of him. This loving son does everything, not to go against the wishes of his father but rather to make sure he would please him completely.

(January 29th, 1915, to Annita Rodote)

Keep your spirits high, abandon yourself in the divine heart of Jesus. Leave all your concerns to him. Put yourself always in the last place of the group that loves the Lord, considering everyone better than you. Be truly humble with others because God rejects the arrogant and gives grace to the humble one. The more the grace and favors of Jesus grow in your heart, the more you should be humble, imitating always the humility of our Mother in heaven who, the moment she became the Mother of God, she declares herself servant and slave of God himself. When good and bad things happen to you, humble yourself always under the powerful hand of God, accepting with humility and patience not only those things that are of your pleasing, but also, and with humility and patience, all tribulations that He sends you to make you more pleasing to Him and more deserving of the celestial home. Being tempted is an evident sign that the soul is very pleasing to the Lord. Accept, then, everything with a grateful attitude. Don't believe that this is only my opinion, no, it was the Lord himself who gave his divine word: "And because you are pleasing to God -says the angel to Tobias (and to Tobias in representation of all souls pleasing to God) - it was necessary that you were tested by temptation". Be happy, then, dear daughter in Jesus. Be also happy, also, even in the middle of temptations and tribulations, knowing well that all of this is a unique gift that the goodness of the Father in heaven gives to your soul. And be grateful always, for everything, to such a good Father, through his most beloved Son Jesus Christ.

Page 27

(November 16th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

If Providence has allowed us to neglect the soul for us to take better care of our body, the infinite wisdom of God has provided us with all means to make our soul beautiful, even after it was deformed with guilt. It's only enough the wish of the soul to collaborate with divine mercy for its beauty to reach such splendor, such beauty, such prettiness. This beauty will allow it to attract, by love or by admiration, not only the eyes of the angels but also of God himself, according to the testimony of the holy scriptures themselves: "The king [in other words, God] will be captivated by your beauty".

(February 12th, 1917, to Maria Gargani)

Dear daughter, let's convince ourselves and accept this great and terrible truth: self -love never dies before we die. This sad truth certainly pains us, which we have inherited as punishment for the original sin, but it is necessary to accept it and to be patient with ourselves. And, with such patience, according to divine teaching, we will possess our soul. A possession is more stable when it's less mixed with concerns and problems, also related to our imperfections. The attacks of the senses and secret actions of self -love will always be felt if we are on this earth. In order not to offend God and not to stain the soul, it's enough not to give our permission with deliberate will. This virtue of indifference is of such excellence that not even the old man, nor the most sensitive side, nor human nature with its natural faculties have been able to achieve it. Even the divine Teacher, as son of Adam, even though exempt of all sin, and even if it seemed to the contrary, was not able to be indifferent to his sensitive side and according to his natural faculties. On the contrary, he did not wish to die on the cross because such indifference was reserved to the fruit of the cross itself, in other words, the spirit, the superior side, the faculties given by grace. Therefore, dear little daughter, be at peace. When it happens that you break the requirements of indifference in circumstances that require indifference, due to impulse of self -love and of this earth feelings, kneel, as soon as possible, with your heart in front of God and ask him with trust and humility: "Lord, I ask for your mercy because I am a poor sick one". Afterwards, stand up in peace and, with calm and serene demeanor, and with holy indifference, continue with your activities.

(December 6th, 1917, to Antonietta Vona)

Keep this always engraved in your mind: the children of Israel were in the desert for forty years before arriving in the promised land. It is true that six weeks would have been more than enough for this journey, and they wouldn't know why God would lead them towards treacherous and difficult paths. And everyone who revolted died before getting to the promised land. Even Moses, who was the greatest friend of God, died at the border with the promised land and was only able to see it from afar without being able to enjoy it. Do not get fixated on the path you step on, keep your eyes on who guides you and on the celestial home to which He leads you. Why worry about if it will be by deserts or by fields that you will reach your goal, if God is always with you and that you achieve the possession of the blessed eternity? Believe me, my dear little daughter, wish also for what you have expressed to me but do everything calmly and be patient to wait for the mercy of the Lord.

(January 30th, 1919, to Fr Marcellino Diconsole)

Dear little son, why is your spirit anguished? Why are you full of misery and weaknesses? For there is one more reason to find goodness for your soul. There is one more source of merit for you. Humble yourself in front of the good God. Ask continuously of him the grace to be able to leave the state of sickness and of weaknesses, wish it fervently and don't stop doing what is needed for you to get better. In the meantime, if you wish to be perfect, be patient when facing your imperfections. This is a very important point for the soul that has professed to seek perfection. "In your patience -says the divine Teacher - you will possess your soul". Therefore, be patient when facing yourself and facing your own illnesses. In the meantime, be creative when putting into practice the means you are familiar with and that you have learned from me and from others. Your misery and your weaknesses should not scare you because Jesus has seen you under worse circumstances and he still didn't reject you due to them. And he would not reject you now even more that you are trying to get better by all means. Divine mercy has never rejected this kind of misery. On the contrary, it grants its grace allowing the throne of its glory over ambition and meanness.

(January 30th, 1919, to Fr Marcellino Diconsole)

I have told you many times that, in spiritual life, it is necessary to walk in good faith, without prejudice and without pride. Do this way: apply yourself, as much as your capacity and your weakness allow you to, to always want to do good. If you achieve this, praise and thank the Lord for that. If, despite all your attention and good will you do not achieve to do it totally or partially, humble yourself profoundly in front of God but without losing hope. Intend to be more attentive in the future, ask for divine help and continue trying. I am certain that you don't want to do bad things intentionally. And other offenses that the Lord allows and that you make without intention should serve to humble you, to keep you away from arrogance. Therefore, do not fear and do not anguish in advance due to the doubts of your conscience because you know well that, after you try hard and do everything under your control, there is no reason to fear and anguish.

(April 20th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Be always humble to the mercy of our God and offer him always thanksgiving for all the favors he has granted you. This will be the best disposition to receive new favors that our celestial Father will grant you in the abyss of his love for you. It is logical that he who does not respond with gratitude and constant and tireless thanksgiving to the graces received does not deserve new graces. Yes, trust in God and be grateful for everything, this way you will challenge and conquer all wreaths of hell.

(August 26th, 1916, to Maria Gargani)

The painting of life, if conformed by representations of committed offenses, is wrong and, as a consequence, it comes from the devil. You are loved by Jesus, and Jesus has already forgiven your sins, therefore, there could not be room for the torment of the spirit. Trying to persuade you of the contrary would be a waste of time, it's an offense that we commit against the Heart of our most sweet Lover. If, on the contrary, the painting of life is the representation of what you would be able to be or what you were able to be, then this comes from God. The desire to be in the peace of a monastery is holy, but it is necessary to control it. It is better to do God's will, waiting even outside one's home in order not to fail to do charity, than to rejoice in the fresh shade of the holy monastery. Suffering and not dying was Saint Teresa's saying. And Saint Francis de Sales used to say: "Always live to suffer". Purgatory is sweet when one suffers for God's love.

(August 26th, 1916, to Maria Gargani)

The tests by which you feel your soul being wounded, rest assured, are signs of divine love and jewels for the soul. Everything that happens in you is the work of Jesus and you should believe that it is that way. Is not for you to judge the work of the Lord, but what you should do is to humbly submit yourself to these divine acts. Allow complete freedom to the grace that acts in you and remember that you should never be concerned in front of adverse situations that would happen to you, convinced that being concerned would hinder the action of the divine Spirit. Therefore, as soon as you feel that any feeling of concern arising in you, resort to God and abandon yourself to God with complete and filial trust, because it is written that he who trusts in Him will never be disappointed. Be always brave and keep going. Winter will pass and the endless Spring will come with even more beautiful things than the tough things brought by the storm. The drought of spirit in which you feel submerged and lost is most painful yet most kind because of the fruit that this brings to the spirit. This is what God wants to put an end in you to a superficial devotion which does not make the soul holy, and which is and could end up being harmful. This is also loved by God because it allows the soul to acquire true devotion which consists of a will determined to put into practice what leads to the service of God without personal satisfaction. In conclusion, do good because it is good and because it gives glory to God and pleases him. The soul that finds itself in this stage should not under any circumstance lose hope, it should not stop doing anything that it used to do in times of spiritual consolation. On the contrary, it should try to multiply its practices of devotion and to be always alert and vigilant about itself.

(October 10th, 1915, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

You know very well how much I suffer seeing so many poor blind people who run away, more than of the fire, of the most sweet invitation by the divine Teacher: "Come to me all who are thirsty and I will give you to drink". My spirit feels extremely sad when encountering all these blind people who don't even have mercy for themselves, whose passions have deprived them of the common sense that they don't even dream of coming to drink this true water of paradise. A moment of reflection, father, and later let me know if I'm correct to suffer for the madness of these blind people. See how the enemies of the cross are more successful every day. My good Lord! They burn continuously in a live fire, in the middle of thou sands of desires for worldly satisfaction. Jesus invites them to go satiate their thirst in the water of life. Jesus knows very well the great need they have to drink of this new water until they are satisfied, of this water he has destined for those who truly are thirsty, those who don't want to d ie in the flames they are being devoured. Jesus sends them this most tender invitation: "Come to me all those who are thirsty, and I will give you to drink". But, God Almighty! What reply does he receive for these tortured ones? These terrible ones seem not to understand, they walk away and, what is worse, accustomed for many years to live in this fire of worldly desires, having aged in these flames, they do not listen anymore to such loving invitations and don't even realize in which serious and horrible danger they are.

(October 10th, 1915, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

What measure should be used to save these terrible Jude followers to make them reconsider? What could be applied so that these truly dead could be revived? Dear father, my soul breaks in pain. Jesus also gave a message to these people, a hug, a kiss. But for these terrible ones this has been a message that was not sanctified, a hug that was not converted, a kiss, I'm almost about to say that he has not saved them and that he will most likely never save them. Divine mercy doesn't soften them, they are not attracted by the benefits, they don't correct themselves when punished. They become insolent in the face of sweetness, they become perverted when times are difficult, in prosperity they become angry, in adversity they despair, and they are deaf, blind and insensitive to the sweet invitations and to the harsh reprimanding of the divine mercy which could shake them and convert them, they do nothing but to confirm their cold heart and to make their darkness even more dense. But, Father, what a fool I am! Who could assure me that I am also among these terrible ones? I also feel thirst for this water of paradise but who knows if it's not precisely such other water the one my soul so vividly wants? And this torture intensifies more and more, in the measure that this water doesn't satiate our thirst but that it rather, on the contrary, increases every day. Wouldn't perhaps be, Father, this a most powerful reason to think that the water my poor soul desires might be precisely the one that our most sweet Savior invites us to drink in great amounts?

(August 10th, 1915 to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

I hope that the Lord, source of all life, will not deny me this water so sweet and so precious which Him, in the abundance of his love for humanity promised to those who are thirsty for it. I, dear Father, fervently desire this water. I ask Jesus with continuous pleads and sighs. Please ask him too for him not to hide it from me. Tell him, Father, that he knows the great need I have for this water, the only one that can cure a soul ill by love. Should the most tender husband of the Song of Solomon console the soul that is thirsty for Him. Should it console the soul with that same kiss that the holy wife asked for. Tell him that, until a soul has not received such a kiss, it will never be able to sign with Him a pact in these terms: "I am everything for my loving husband and he is everything for me". I hope that the Lord will not abandon he who has all his trust only in Him! I hope that this hope never disappoints me and that I will always be loyal to him...

(August 19th, 1918, to Fr Gerardo da Deliceto)

Intend, therefore, to generously correspond (to God's preference love towards you) becoming deserving of him. In other words, be deserving of the loving perfections already indicated in the Scriptures and in the Gospel that you have learned. But dear brother: for this to happen, it is necessary to have continuous reflection and meditation on His life. From the reflection and the meditation is born the love for his acts, and from the love comes the desire and the insistence of imitation. All of this comes to us as provided by our laws. Let us keep constant in the precise observance of these laws and we will be perfect. You should above all insist on what is the foundation of the Christian sanctity and the foundation of kindness: on the virtue from which our divine Teacher and our angelic Father are proposed to us as models: I am talking about humility. Internal and external humility, more internal than external, more by living it than shown, more profound than visible.

(August 19th, 1918, to Fr Gerardo da Deliceto)

Let us consider ourselves for what we really are: nothing, misery, weakness, a source of perversity without limits and without any mitigation, capable of transforming good into evil, of abandoning good for evil, of attributing to ourselves good that we don't possess or to attribute ourselves that good that we have received as a gift, to justify ourselves in evil, and for the love of the same evil, we could reject the Highest Good. With this confirmation present in your mind, you: 1. Should not take pride in yourself for any good that you could enjoy because everything comes from God and to Him should be given all honor and glory. 2. Should never complain of the offenses no matter where they come from. 3. Should forgive everything with Christian mercy, having much consideration of the example of the Redeemer who even excused in front of his Father those who crucified him. 4. Will cry always as a poor one in front of God. 5. Will not be amazed by any means of your weaknesses and imperfections, but recognizing yourself as who you are, you will be ashamed of your lack of persistence and of your lack of loyalty to God; and, offering your intentions to him and trusting in Him, you will calmly abandon yourself in the arms of the Father in heaven, as a tender child in the arms of his mother.

(March 3rd, 1917, to Erminia Gargani)

Be wary, dear little daughter, of any desire that according to any common sense of those who possess the spirit of the Lord, cannot achieve its objective. Such are, in effect, those desires of some Christian perfections which can be admired and imagined but not practiced, and those perfections of which many speak without materializing them. Be assured, dear daughter, that what guarantees with certainty our perfection is virtue and patience. And if this virtue should be practiced with others, it is convenient to exercise it most of all with ourselves. Those who aspire for God's pure love do not need patience with others but with oneself. It is necessary to resign oneself, dear little daughter, to living with our imperfection to achieve perfection. I mean to stand our imperfection with patience, I don't say to love it, pamper it, because humbly strengthens in such suffering.

(March 3rd, 1917, to Erminia Gargani)

It's already time to confess we are miserable because of the little good we could do. But God, in his kindness, feels sorry for us, he feels even pleased also by this little good and accepts the preparation of our hearts. But what is this preparation of our hearts? According to the divine word, God is infinitely bigger than our heart and this overcomes all other realities when, not worrying about himself, the heart is prepared for the service it should offer to God. In other words, the heart accepts the compromise of serving God, of loving him, of loving the other, of observing the mortification of the external and internal senses and other good intentions. During this time, our heart prepares and devotes its works to the eminent level of Christian perfection. All of this, dear daughter, is not in any way proportionate to the greatness of God, which is infinitely greater than the entire universe, than our capabilities, than our external actions. An intelligence that considers this greatness of God, his kindness, and his immense dignity, will incessantly offer him great preparation. This preparation should offer a tortured body without any rebellion, the attention to praying without voluntary distractions, the greatest sweetness when talking without bitterness, humility without any feeling of vanity. Here there are, dear daughter, some good preparations. It is true that some might not deem much greater preparations necessary in order to serve God, but it is also necessary to find someone who could perform such preparations because, when we are ready to put them into practice, it is easy to stop seeing that in us these perfections cannot be neither that high nor that absolute. One can torture the flesh although not all the way because there will always be some rebellion. Our attention will often be interrupted by distractions. But, in the face of all this, should we be concerned, be troubled, worried, and afflicted? No, by no means.

(March 3rd, 1917, to Erminia Gargani)

Do we want to walk in goodness? Let us walk with persistence the path that is closer to us. Memorize well in your mind what I'm going to say: frequently, we wish to be good angels and we neglect to be good people. Our limitations will accompany us to our coffin, we cannot achieve anything on earth. We should not be relaxed or get distracted because we are like little chicks but without wings. In physical life, we die little by little and this is an ordinary law loved by providence. And in the same manner, we should die to our imperfections, also day by day. Blessed imperfections, we could say, allow us to know our great misery and which make us see with humility the disgrace of ourselves, with patience and with diligence. But despite these imperfections, God observes the preparation of our heart, which is perfect.

(January 11th, 1917, to Lucia Fiorentino)

What a glorious feeling it is to serve Jesus in the desert, without mana, without water and any other in our hearts to grant us with her blessings. During this state of infertility and desolation of the spirit, do not worry about not being able to serve God according to your will, because, adapting yourself to his wishes you serve him according to his will, which is much better than yours. We shall not be worried or anguished about being of God in one or in another way. Because we seek nothing but Him, and we do not find less of Him when we walk in barren land and in deserts than when we walk in waters of sensitive consolation. Consequently, it is necessary to live happily either on one path or on another.

(January 12th, 1917, to Erminia Gargani)

Allow yourself to be lovingly guided by divine providence, either if it wishes you to walk by dirt or by deserts, or by the waters of sensitive and spiritual consolation. Hold in your hand your "bouquet", but, if any other delightful fragrance is present, make sure to smell it, giving thanks, because the "bouquet" is not there to stay for long without providing some spiritual consolation. Continue to be strong in all situations to which Jesus wishes to take you for your heart to belong only to him. There is nothing better than this. Get rid, then, of everything that enslaves you, in small and continuous renounce to your worldly affections, and be convinced that the king of the heavens will offer you his gifts to bring you to his love. I see in your heart a profound resolution to want to serve God and this confirms to me that you will be loyal in the practices of holy devotion and in the constant effort of acquiring virtues. But let me remind you of one thing that you certainly ignore, when you fail for reasons of illness, you should never be puzzled but rather, rejecting on one hand the offense that God receives, you should, on the other hand, achieve a certain joyous humility when seeing and meeting with our misery.

(August 18th, 1918, to Antonietta Vona)

Do not think, my dearest daughter, of the barren land, the desolation and demotivating darkness which often take over your spirit, because these are loved by God for your sake. One day Magdalene was talking to the Divine Teacher and having been so far from him, she was crying. She was looking for him and felt anxious to meet him, so much that looking at him, she couldn't see him, and she thought the man was a nobody. This is what is happening to you. Keep going! My good daughter, do not be worried about a thing. You are in the company of the divine Teacher; you are not apart from him. This is the truth and the only truth. What do you fear? What do you lament? Keep up! You can no longer be a little girl, not even a woman, one needs to have a masculine heart, until we possess a soul strong in the will of living and dying in the service and the love to God. Do not worry about the limitations or any other obstacle. Magdalene wanted to hug our Lord and this sweet Teacher, who had allowed it to her on other occasions, but this time he didn't allow it saying: "No, do not touch me, because I have not yet ascended to my Father".

(April 25th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Temptations and storms that go around in your head are clear signs of divine predilection. The fear you have of offending God is the most certain proof that you do not offend him. Trust with limitless confidence in divine mercy and, the more the enemy intensifies his attacks, the more you should trustingly abandon yourself in the heart of the most sweet celestial husband, who would never allow that you be defeated. God himself has solemnly proclaimed it in the Holy Scripture: "God is loyal, he shall not allow you to be tempted against your own strength. Moreover, with temptation, he will give you enough strength to overcome it". Paul also worried and asked to be freed from the hard test of the flesh: he was very afraid to succumb, but was he not guaranteed that the help of grace would always be enough? Our enemy, sworn to hurt us, wishes to persuade you of completely the opposite, but you should reject him in the name of Jesus, and laugh hard at him. This is the best way to make him walk away in withdrawal. He feels strong with those who are weak, but with those who confront him with the weapon in hand, he becomes a coward. Fear nevertheless but with holy fear. I mean, with the fear that is never separated from love. When both fear and love are united, they give each other a hand, as two sisters, who help each other to stand to walk confidently by the path of the Lord.

(April 25th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Love makes us run very fast. Fear, instead, makes us look with prudence where we set foot, making sure not to fall in the path that takes us to heaven. I know that the cross, my dearest sister, is painful, and for lovers, this seems almost unbearable, which puts us in danger of offending the one we love and adore. But Jesus, tempted in the desert and hung on the cross, is the clearest proof, a very shiny and a very consoling proof of what I can assure you in the name of the most tender Husband of the souls. It is a life full of storms for a soul that seeks God in everything, wishing to possess him above all things, wanting Him in its heart, sighing to make him reign in as king in the center of its spirit, and burningly wishing to be entirely possessed by him. In this, the soul is more jealous than what usually happens between two lovers lost in their devoted love. I say that this is the clearest sign of the unique love and exceptional mercy of the lovingly providence of God, not granted to all souls, even to the most privileged ones.

(April 25th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Keep going. God is with you. And hell, the world, and the flesh, one day, to add confusion, will have to surrender arms and confess once more that they cannot do anything against the soul that possesses and is possessed by God. (...) The war against yourself, my dear, is declared and it is necessary to be vigilant at all hours, offer strong resistance, always keeping the face of faith oriented at the God of the armies, who fights with you and in your favor. It is also needed to have limitless trust in the mercy of God, because victory is most guaranteed. And how to be convinced of the contrary? Isn't our God more interested than us ourselves in our salvation? Isn't He stronger than hell? Who could resist and be ever victorious against the king of heavens? What is the world, the devil, the flesh, all our enemies, in front of the Lord?...

(April 25th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

You say not being able to distinguish whether rays of light which sometimes are formed at the bottom of your spirit are of God or are of others, being afraid to be tricked in everything because of your subtle self-love. Very well, here are the signs to know if such rays come from the Father. These signs are just three -fold. The first one is that such lights produce a knowledge every time more admirable of God, who, as he reveals himself to us, allows us to have an idea every time higher of his incomprehensible greatness. In conclusion, this light leads us to love every time more God our Father and to sacrifice ourselves every day more for his honor and for his glory. The second sign is knowledge every time more of ourselves, a feeling every time more profound of humility in the face of the thought that such a mean being had had the audacity of offending him, and that such being could even attempt to look at him, to observe him. The third one is that these celestial beams produce in the soul a rejection to worldly realities, which is every time worst, except for only those that could be useful for the service to God. Therefore, if such rays of light produce these three effects in the soul, keep them as coming from God. These effects cannot at all be produced by the soul nor by the enemy and less by our fantasy and our imagination.

(August 4th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Strengthen yourself with the eucharistic sacrament. Amid so many troubles, your soul should not stop singing frequently to God the hymn of adoration and praise. Live always away from the corruption of the worldly Jerusalem, of profane gatherings, of corrupt spectacles and of corrupt people, away from all societies of the impure ones. Prepare your lips, as the divine Redeemer did, and continue drinking from him from the black waters of the Kidron Valley, accepting suffering and penance with pious resignation. Cross with Jesus this river, with suffering with persistence and courage the rejection by the world because of your love to Jesus. Live in prayer and have your life hidden in Jesus and be with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, that is, in the silence of meditation and prayer. Do not fear neither the darkness nor the night of humiliation and of loneliness, nor the increase of mortifications. Keep going, always, Raffaelina. The bitterness of the river of mortification should not stop you. The persecution by the mundane ones and by all who do not live of the spirit of Jesus Christ should not keep you away from the path that the saints have walked. Always run by the edge of the mount of sanctity and do not despair when walking on the dangerous path. Continue to walk next to Jesus and yes, following him you are safe from everything. It is also very true that you will triumph, as always, in everything.

(February 1st, 1913, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Jesus, the man of sufferings, would have liked that all Christian imitated him. And Jesus offered that cup also to me and I accepted it. That is the reason why he does not leave me. My poor suffering is good for nothing, but Jesus is pleased by it because I love him so intensely here on earth. That is why, on certain special days, on which he suffered more intensely on this earth, he makes me feel this suffering with even more intensity. Wouldn't that be enough for me to feel humiliated and to seek to live hiding from the eyes of men because I have made myself worthy of suffering with Jesus and like Jesus? Oh, dear father, I feel that my lack of gratitude to the majesty of God is too great.

(January 30th, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Do meditate on Jesus' fiat (acceptance of God's will) in the garden. How burdened he might have been to sweat tears of blood! Do pronounce this fiat like him, both during good and prosperous times as in times of adversity. And do not feel anxious nor break your head thinking of the cross. However, this does not mean that the soul has not been submitted to God's will, when we see it putting into practice such God's will, even when feeling the powerful force that it must fight against. Would you like to have concrete proof of how the will pronounces its fiat? Virtue is known by its opposite. Delivered by God in the form of a test, being this a difficult or a simple one, tell me: "do you feel moved to rebel against God? Or, better, let's think as an example the most impossible one: you try to rebel. Or tell me , 'don't you tremendously fear even thinking such blasphemous words? Let me tell you that, between the yes and the no, there is, and it cannot happen, anything in between. If your will runs away from rebellion, be assured that it is subject, tacitly, or expressly, to God's will and, consequently, your will also pronounces, in a way, its fiat.

(October 23rd, 1914 to Raffaelina Cerase)

Saint Paul warns us that “those who are good Christians have crucified their flesh with vices and lustfulness”. From this saint Apostle one can conclude that he who wishes to be a true Christian, in other words, lives with the spirit of Jesus Christ, should mortify his flesh, not for other objective, but as devotion to Jesus, who for the love for us wanted to mortify all his limbs on the cross. That mortification should be stable, sturdy, and constant and it should be sustained for a lifetime. Moreover, the perfect Christian should not be content by a mortification harsh only in appearance, but this should also be a painful one. That is the way in which the mortification of the flesh should be conducted, because the Apostle, for that reason called it crucifixion. But someone could contradict us: why so much harshness against the flesh? Foolish you, if you were to carefully reflect on what you say, you would understand that every pain that your soul suffers comes from not having known or having wanted to mortify the flesh in the way it should be done. If one wishes to be cured in depth, at the root, it is necessary to control, to crucify the flesh because it is such the cause of every malaise. The Apostle also adds that to the crucifixion of the flesh should be joined the crucifixion of vices and lustfulness. It should be known that vices are all sinful habits. Lustfulness is our feelings of passion. It is necessary to constantly mortify and crucify both of them, so they don't make the flesh sin. He who only mortifies the flesh is like the fool who builds without a foundation.

(August 2nd, 1913, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Vanity is an enemy that lurks around all souls that have consecrated themselves to the Lord and that have given themselves to spiritual life. Therefore, it could be called, with much reason, the stain of the soul that tries to be perfect. It has been called in an accurate manner by saints the woodworm of sanctity. Our Lord, with the intention to show us how much vanity could be contrary to perfection, reprimands us the same way that he reprimanded the apostles when he saw them full of self-complacency and vanity, when demons were obeying the orders, they were giving them: "However, you should not be happy because demons obey you". And in order to eradicate completely from their minds the sad effects of this evil vice, which tends to insinuate itself in the hearts of people, Jesus scared the apostles by showing them the example of Lucifer, fallen from the heights of heaven due to the vain complacency in which he fell after receiving the great praise by God: "I could see Satan falling from heaven like lightning". This vice should be feared even more because there is no virtue contrary to it to fight it. Indeed, every vice has its remedy and a virtue contrary to it. Anger is fought by gentleness, envy by charity, arrogance by humility, etc. Only vanity does not have a virtue contrary to it. Vanity insinuates itself in most holy acts. And, even within humility if one is not attentive, it plants its roots with arrogance.

(August 2nd, 1913, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Saint Chrysostom, talking about vanity, says: "The more work you do, seeking to destroy vanity, the more you stimulate it". And what is the reason for this? Let the saint doctor tell us himself: "Because everything evil comes from evil, only vanity comes from good, therefore, it doesn't die when you fight it with good, it becomes bigger". The devil, dear father, knows very well that a lustful person, a thief, a miser, a sinner has more reasons to feel ashamed and to blush than to feel vain, proud of himself. Therefore, the devil is very careful not to tempt them on that side, saving them from that fight. But he doesn't save that fight to good people, especially those who devote themselves to perfection. All other vices attach themselves to those who have been conquered and controlled by such vices, but vanity lifts its head precisely in those people who try to fight it and conquer it. Vanity feels brave when assaulting its enemies, using the same victories that have been achieved against it. This is an enemy that never stops. It is an enemy that enters battle in all our works and that, if one is not vigilant, makes us his victims. Indeed, to run from the praises of others, we prefer hidden and secret fasting rather than visible ones, silence rather than eloquent speeches, being hated instead of being considered by others, insults rather than honors. Oh, my Lord, even on this, vanity wishes, as it usually is said, to put its nose, insinuating to us with vain complacencies.

(August 2nd, 1913, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Saint Jerome was very right when he compared vanity with shadow. In fact, the shadow follows the body everywhere and it even measures every step. The body runs away, the shadow runs away as well, the body slows down, the shadow does the same, the body sits and then the shadow also assumes the same position. The same happens with vanity, it follows virtue everywhere. In vain the body would try to run away from the shadow. It is always there and everywhere; it follows the body, and it walks by its side. The same happens to someone who has devoted himself to virtue, to perfection. The more one runs from vanity, the more it is praised by it. We should all fear, dear father, this great enemy of ours. It should be even more feared by those chosen souls because this enemy is in a way something unobliterable. Be always alert, this powerful enemy should not be allowed to enter the mind and the heart because, if it finds its way in, it will deflower all virtues, it corrodes sanctity, it spoils everything that is beautiful and kind. Try to ask continuously to God for the grace of finding yourself protected from this rancid vice because "Every perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of lights". Open your hearts to the trust in God. Remember always that everything that is good in your heart is only a gift of the highest goodness from the celestial Husband.

(August 2nd, 1913, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Keep deep in your mind, engrave strongly in your hearts, and convince yourselves that no one is good "but only God", and that we possess nothing but the nothing itself. Keep meditating continuously on what Saint Paul writes to the believers from Corinth: "What do you have that you have not received" and, "if you did receive it, why do you glorify yourself as if you hadn't received it?". "We are not able -he adds - to think anything on our own, as if it was our own thing, our capabilities come from God". When you feel tempted to vanity, repeat with Saint Bernard: "Neither because of you I started this, neither because of you I will stop doing it". Didn't I start my journey by the path of the Lord? Therefore, I wish to continue on them, on that path I will continue walking. If the enemy attacks you because of the sanctity of your life, let others scream to your face and reply: My sanctity is not the fruit of my spirit but it is the fruit of God who sanctifies me, it is a gift from God, it is a talent that my Husband has lent me for me to negotiate with Him to later give him strict account of the profit achieved.

(August 2nd, 1913, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Virtues are like someone who has a treasure which, if he doesn't keep it hidden to the eyes of envious ones, it will get stolen. The devil is always vigilant, and he, the worst of all envious ones, seeks to take away this treasure, which are the virtues, as soon as it finds it, and he achieves this by attacking us with that very powerful enemy that is vanity. Our Lord, always looking after our good, to keep us safe from this great enemy, warns us in several passages of the gospel. Doesn't he tell us that, if we wish to pray, we should go to our room, we should shut the door and we should pray one-on-one to God so that our prayer is not heard by others?, that, when fasting, we should wash our face so that we do not reveal our fasting to others by the dirtiness and the paleness of our face?, that, when giving alms, our right hand does not know what the left one does?

(August 2nd, 1913, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Be careful not to ever speak with others, with the exception of your director and your confessor, of those things with which the good God is favoring you. Direct all your actions always to the glory of God, exactly as the Apostle wishes: "Either when you eat, drink, or when you do anything else, do it all for the glory of God". Keep renewing this holy intention every once in a while. Examine yourself at the end of every action, and, if you discover any imperfection, do not be troubled by it but be ashamed of it and humble yourself to the mercy of God, ask the Lord for forgiveness and ask him to keep you safe from doing it again in the future. Renounce to all vanity in your clothes because God allows the fall of souls in such vanities. Women who seek vanity in dresses will never be able to dress with the life of Jesus Christ. And they lose the ornaments of the soul as soon as this idol enters their hearts. Your dress should be, as Saint Paul wishes, decent and modestly adorned, but without fur details, without gold, without pearls, and without precious items that give the idea of wealth and luxury.

(February 23rd, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

To those worldly ones it seems incredible that there are souls that suffer when providence lets them live long lives. However, such is the story of the saints, which is and will be humanity's teaching. From the horrible suffering of the just souls when seeing themselves far from their center we can have a vague idea, dear Raffaelina, of how those souls suffer, even when having to satisfy their most vital life needs, such as eating, drinking, and sleeping . The mercy of God comes to help them, especially in certain moments and in certain days, with some kind of miracle, not allowing them to reflect properly when they perform such necessary acts of life. The poor souls experience such torture when performing such actions that they can't avoid. I am certain, although I wouldn't be able to find the proper comparison, they experienced something similar to what the martyrs experienced when they were burned alive, giving that way their lives to Jesus as testimony of their faith. Someone could easily say that this comparison is a beautiful and empty exaggeration, but I, dear Raffaelina, know what I tell myself. On the day of the last judgment, we will certainly see those souls who, without having offered their blood for their faith , will be crowned, just like the martyrs, with the palm of martyrdom.

(July 7th, 1913, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Every offense, even the smallest one, that I commit, is for the soul like a sword that pierces its heart. On certain moments I feel wanting to scream like the Apostle did, "poor me!", not with the same perfection: "It's no longer me who lives", because I feel as if there were someone else living in me. Another effect of this grace is that my life is becoming cruel torture, and I only find consolation when I resign myself to living for the love of Jesus. Although, poor me!, because, dear father, in this consolation, at certain moments, I also feel unbearable pain, because the soul would like for life to be always made of crosses and persecution. The very natural acts, like eating, drinking, sleeping are for me very painful. The soul, in such a state, cries because hours pass too slowly. At the end of every day, it feels lighter and relieved from a heavy burden. At the same time, it falls again into profound sadness thinking of its many days of exile. And it's precisely on such moments when the soul wishes to scream "Oh life, how cruel you are to me!, how long you are!" Oh life, you are no longer life to me but torture! Oh death, I don't know who can fear you because thanks to you our life opens!" Before the Lord honored me with this grace, the pain of my sins, the pain that I felt when seeing the Lord being offended, the plenty of affection I felt for God were not as intense as to make me get out of myself and, sometimes, I felt this pain was unbearable, and I would give vent by screaming loudly, without being able to control myself. But after receiving this grace, the pain has become even greater, making me feel as if my heart would jump from one side to another. I now seem to understand how difficult the martyrdom of our most dear Mother was, something I was not able to understand before. If only men could understand this suffering! Who could stand to suffer along with our loved co-redeemer? Who would deny her the most beautiful title of "Queen of the martyrs"?

(December 3rd, 1912, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

My most beloved father, I wish that I could, for a moment, open my interior to show you the wound that the sweetest Jesus has so lovingly opened in my heart. It has, finally, found a lover who has fallen in love with him in such a manner that doesn't know how to intensify this love. You already know such a lover. This is a lover who doesn't ever become upset with anyone who offends him. Countless is the number of his forgiveness, which my heart keeps within. This heart recognizes that it does not possess anything to be proud in front of him. He has loved me; he has preferred me over so many beings. And when I ask him what I have done to deserve so many consolations, he smiles at me and repeats that nothing can be denied to such a great intercessor. As a reward he only asks me for love, but don't I owe him gratitude? Oh, dear father, how I wish I could bring him a little happiness, the same way that he makes me happy! He has in such a way fallen in love with my heart that he makes me burn by his divine fire, by his fire of love. What is this fire that overtakes me totally? Dear father, if Jesus makes us so very happy on earth, how would it be in heaven?

(December 3rd, 1912, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Sometimes I ask myself whether there are souls that do not feel the burning of the divine fire in their chest, especially when they are in front of him, in the sacrament. This seems impossible to me, especially when it is the case of a priest, a religious person. Perhaps the souls who say not to feel this fire do not feel it because, perhaps, their heart is larger. Only by this benign interpretation I am able not to call them by the shameful adjective of liars. There are moments in which it comes to my mind the severity of Jesus, and it's then when I suffer bitterly. I try to remember his pleasantries, and this fills me with joy. I cannot abandon myself to this sweetness, to this happiness...What is it, dear father, that I feel? I have such trust in Jesus that, even if I looked at hell open in front of me and I would be on the edge of an abyss, I would not doubt, I would not despair, I would trust in him. Such is the trust that his kindness inspires in me. When I think about the great battles against the devil which, with divine help, I have overcome, there are so many that I would not be able to count them. Who knows how many times my faith would have doubted and me and my hope and my kindness would have been weakened, had he not stretched his hand to me. And my intellect would have been darkened if Jesus, the eternal sun, would have not shine on it! I also realize that I am completely the work of his infinite love. He has denied nothing to me. Moreover, I must state that he has granted me more than I have asked for.

(March 12th, 1913, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Hear, dear father, the crying of our most sweet Jesus: "With how much ungratefulness he is paid for the love he gave to men!" He would be less offended by them had he loved them as much. My Father does not want to stand them anymore. I would like to stop loving them but...[and here Jesus keeps silent and sighs, and then he continues] but, what would be of me!, my heart has been made for loving! Mean and lazy men make no effort to fight temptations, and what is more serious, they enjoy their vices. The most favored souls to me, put to the test, fail me. Those who are weak are overtaken by hopelessness and despair. The strong ones relax little by little. I am left in these churches alone during the night, alone during the day. They no longer worry about the sacrament of the altar. The sacrament of love is never mentioned and even those who speak of it, how indifferent, how cold they are when they do it. What will be of me! My heart is forgotten, no one is concerned with my love any longer. I am always sad. My house has transformed many into a fun place, even for my ministers, which I have always admired with predilection, which I have loved as the apple of my eye. They should be comforting my heart which is filled with sadness. They should help me with the redemption of souls. Instead, who would have believed this? From them I receive ungratefulness and callousness. I can see, my dear son, many of these ...[here he keeps silent, his crying did not let him speak, he cried in secret] who, under hypocritical appearances, betray me with unholy communions, rejecting the light and the strength that I continuously grant them..." Jesus continued with his crying. Father, how I suffer when I see Jesus cry! Have you also experienced this? "Dear son -Jesus continued -, I need victims to quiet the just and divine wrath of my Father. Renew to me the offer of your entire being and do it without any reservation". I have renewed to him the sacrifice of my life, dear father. And if I feel in me any feeling of sadness, such happens when contemplating the God of sufferings. If possible, try to find souls who offer themselves to God as victims for the sinners. Jesus will help you with that.

(August 17th, 1913, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

I would wish to tell you so many beautiful things, all about Jesus but I realize that this should remain only as a pious wish because I feel, for the last few days, that my strength is becoming weaker, and it would Temper, dear father, I beg of you, your anxieties in what refers to your spirit, because I believe this to be a waste of time towards our journey to heaven. And what is worse is that due to all these concerns, which in themselves could be holy, and because of our fragility and for the persistent temptation of the devil, all our beautiful actions -allow me to call them that way -, remain stained because of a little lack of trust in the kindness of God. It is just a most subtle thread that keeps the spirit trapped, but which stops it, and in a significant manner, from ascending on its path to perfection and from acting with holy freedom. It is a serious offense which the soul commits against our celestial Husband, and, therefore, the sweetest Lord has deprived us of so many favors only because the door of our heart is not open to him with holy trust. The soul, if it doesn't decide to leave such a state, brings on itself many punishments. Dear father, do not think that what I tell you is an exaggeration. Let us remember the largely numerous people of God in the desert. Because of their lack of trust, very few ended up setting foot in the promised land. Their own leader, Moses, because of his doubts when hitting that stone from where water should pour, for him to satiate the thirst of the people, was severely punished and did not set foot in the promised land.

(March 6th, 1917, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I have the strongest desire, without intentionally thinking about it, to spend every moment of my life loving my Lord. I wish to be closely tied to Him by one of his hands and to be able to happily walk with him on the way of the cross on which he has placed me. And I say this also with sadness in my heart, with confusion in my soul and with a blushed face, thinking that my desires are not exactly reciprocated in real life. Anything is enough to get me out of control. Forgetting all the conversations you and I have is enough to throw me into the most dense night of the soul which makes me suffer day and night. Oh, my Lord! Oh, Father of mine! What great punishment my past infidelity has brought onto me! I would like for my mind to think only of Jesus. I wish that my heart would beat only and always for him, and I promise this to Jesus repeatedly. Poor me! I am perfectly aware that the mind forgets, or once can say, that it remains tested just like the spirit, and the heart just dries out in such pain.

(March 6th, 1917, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

It is true that I have consecrated everything to Jesus and that I intend to stand all suffering for him. But it is difficult for me to be convinced of this. I find myself deprived of such light and this is enough for me to fall into complete fear and desperation and to make me believe that I am under the rigorous power of divine justice. And, to my way of seeing things, what reaffirms all this is to see that God is every day more sublime to my spirit's eyes, to see him every day more distant, to even see that this God is every time more surrounded by dense clouds. My spirit is always fixated on this objective which never leaves my mind. And the more I focus my mind on him, the more I realize that he goes to hide behind that cloud which is like the steam that rises when the ground is wet at sunrise. On the other hand, our celestial Father does not cease to make me part of the pain of his only Son, also physically. This pain is so sharp that it is not possible to describe it nor imagine it. Additionally, I don't know if it is due to the lack of strength or if it is my fault that, when in such a situation, and without intention, I cry like a child. It is for me the most difficult test not to know whether in what I endure, I please God or I offend him. Many argumentations have been given to me in relation to all this but, one cannot know or see with the eyes! Also, the enemy always wants to put his tail in the middle to ruin everything. He goes around insinuating that such explanations do not cover all my actions or that they would last forever.

(February 20th, 1922, to Fr San Marco in Lamis)

My God, my God, no, I do not wish to despair. No, I do not wish to offend your infinite mercy, but despite all efforts to trust, I feel within myself, vividly and clearly, the dark scene of your abandonment and of your rejection. My Lord, I trust but this trust is full of fears, and this is what makes my suffering more bitter. Oh, my Lord, if I could only be convinced, even if to a minimum, that this state is not a rejection on your part and that I do not offend you, I would be willing to suffer this torture a hundred times fold. My God, my God, have mercy on me! Dear father, please help me with your prayers and with others' prayers. How I wish I didn't feel this terrible suffering! I have left everything to please God, and I would have given my life a thousand times to seal my love for Him. And now, how difficult it is for me to experience in the depth of my heart that He is upset with me. I cannot find peace in my misfortune. My heart follows its Lord without resistance and with all force. But an iron hand rejects me all the time...Imagine a poor shipwreck survivor, holding on to a piece of wood for dear life, to whom every wave and every wind can drown him away. Or better, imagine my current state to be like a prisoner sentenced to death, who has palpitations continuously because he awaits to be taken to his execution anytime. This state makes me suffer the darkest of nights when I intend with my most effort to find my God.

(January 20th, 1918, to Friar Emmanuele da San Marco La Catola)

Lift your spirit, my most beloved son, if you do not possess enough gold or incense to offer to Jesus, you will at least have the myrrh of suffering. And I feel relief in thinking that he accepts it with complacency, as he wished to link this fruit of life to the myrrh of suffering, so much at birth than at death. Jesus glorified is beautiful, but I believe he is even more beautiful crucified. Therefore, dear little son of mine, do choose to be on the cross rather than at the feet of the cross, choose to agonize with Jesus in the garden rather than to feel sorry for him because this makes you much more like the divine Prototype. In which circumstances can you perform acts of unbreakable unity of your heart and your spirit following God's will, the mortification of the ego and of love in your own crucifixion, but in the dull and difficult attacks of your enemies? My most beloved son, have I not taught you so many times to leave anything that is not of God and to dress yourself with our crucified Lord? Listen, it is God who allows that your heart remains in darkness and on infertile land. It is, then, not a punishment but a gift. Do not lose hope on the path you are walking because everything pleases God. And because your heart always wishes to be loyal to him, He will not put on your shoulders more weight than you can carry, and he will carry that weight with you until he sees that your back is breaking (...) Perform a specific exercise of kindness and submission to the will of God, not only in extraordinary things, but also in those small ones each day. Do these acts not only in the morning, but also during the day and at night, with a calm and joyful spirit. And, if it happens that you are not in such a spirit, humble yourself and continue. Rest assured that this is your most important task of passion.

(January 20th, 1918, to Friar Emmanuele da San Marco La Carola)

It is great to hope to obtain the highest Christian perfection, but one should not think excessively about it, but rather about one's conversion and one's progress towards such perfection in our daily events, leaving the success of our wish to God's providence. And we should abandon ourselves in the arms of our father, the way a little child would do when he grows up. He eats every day what his father makes, trusting that he will not lack food according to his hunger and his needs. (...) Keep away from hesitations and concerns of the conscience. And keep absolute calm on what I told you with honesty, because I told you in the name of our Lord. Remain in the presence of God by the means that I have indicated to you and that you know. Stay away from sadness and concerns because these are what prevent most from walking towards perfection. Dear son, place your heart sweetly in the wounds of our Lord, not forcefully. Trust with great strength in the mercy and kindness of God, he will never abandon you, but not because of this you should stop embracing his holy cross very hard.

(March 11th, 1915, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Would I receive the grace of Jesus to at least die in the place where he called me with such a paternal kindness? Such sweet hope sustains me and encourages me to continue living. Until then, since Jesus hasn't wished that I consecrate my life to my beloved province, I have offered myself to the Lord as a victim for all the spiritual needs of it. This offer I have repeatedly and continuously been offering to the Lord. I am content to see that, at least partially, my offer has been accepted. I hope the good Jesus will accept it completely. What could I tell you about the current state of my spirit? The terrible crisis to which I referred in my last letter grows every day. Currently, the soul is closed within an iron wall. On one hand, it fears to offend God with everything it does, and this causes great fear that can only be compared to the suffering of the condemned. Father, do not think that my statements are exaggerated? Reality is exactly such. One of these nights I thought I was dying. The Lord made me taste all the suffering that those condemned feel there in hell. But, on the other hand, what torments me the most is that, in such moments I feel in my heart how the desire to love God grows like a giant, and the wish to deserve his mercy.

(October 23rd, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

The Apostle warns us: "If we live by the Spirit, we should walk by the Spirit", almost as if he wished to tell us for our own growth: "Do we wish to live spiritually, in other words, moved and guided by the Holy Spirit? We should be concerned about mortifying our own spirit, which makes us swell, it makes us become angry, it drains us. In other words, we should abandon ourselves to avoid vanity, ire, and envy: three malignant spirits which hold most men as slaves. These three evil spirits are in absolute contradiction to the Lord's spirit.

(January 12th, 1917, to Erminia Gargani)

Allow yourself to be lovingly guided by the divine providence, whether it wishes to make you walk at the level of the ground across deserts, or by the waters of sensitive and spiritual consolations. Hold your perfume in your hand, but if any other exquisite aroma presents itself, do not stop yourself from smelling it, giving thanks, because perfumes are supposed to remain around for a short time without consolation or spiritual joy. Keep strong at any state in which Jesus wishes to place you so that your heart belongs to him completely, because there is nothing better than that. Therefore, leave behind, by continuously renouncing, all your earthly affections, everything that holds you prisoner, and rest assured that the king of heavens will give you gifts to attract you to his holy love. I see in your heart a profound resolution to wanting to serve God and this assures me that you will be loyal to the practice of mercy and to the constant exercises that lead to the achievement of virtues. But I should warn you of something that you most certainly know when offenses happen due to illness, you should not be surprised by it but rather, after repenting to the offense against God, it is necessary to seek joyful humility to find and to be aware of our misery.

(April 9th, 1918, to Maria Gargani)

Trust and love, dear little daughter; trust and love in the goodness of our God. You suffer but should lift your spirit because your suffering is with Jesus and for Jesus, and it is not a punishment but rather a test for your salvation. Therefore, be convinced and I can assure you that on the part of the Lord: Jesus is found in your pain and in the center of your heart. You are not far or apart from the love of such a good God. You experience in yourself the delight of the thought of God but still suffer because you are not close to possessing him completely and because you see the offenses committed against him by ungrateful beings. But it cannot be any other way, dear little daughter of mine. Who loves suffers. This is the constant way of the soul that walks this earth; the love not completely fulfilled is torture, but it is the sweetest torture. You have experienced it. Continue, without fear, dear little daughter, being part of this mystery of love and suffering at the same time, if it is the wish of Jesus. This state is always temporary, divine consolation will come, completely and irresistibly. In this state of affliction, continue, my good little daughter, praying for everyone, especially for sinners, to repair so many offenses committed against the sacred Heart. I believe that you offered yourself once as a victim for sinners. Jesus heard your prayer; he accepted your offer. Jesus has granted you with the gift of enduring such sacrifice. Then, continue for a little longer! Your reward is not far.

(November 26th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

We should remind ourselves that the fate of the chosen souls is to suffer. The suffering endured in a Christian way is God's condition. He is the author of all the grace and gifts that lead us to salvation and that he has granted us for our glory. We shall , therefore, raise our hearts, filled with trust in God only. We shall humble ourselves under his powerful hand and accept with gratitude the tribulations to which the mercy of the celestial Father submits us so that we can be honored when we visit him. Our only concern should be to "love and to please God", without worrying about anything else, knowing that God will take care of us always, more than anyone can tell or imagine.

(November 26th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

How sublime and soft is the sweet invitation of the divine Teacher: "If anyone wishes to be with me, he should deny himself, take his cross and follow me"! This was the invitation that made Saint Teresa say the prayer of the divine Husband: "Suffering or dying". It was also this invitation that would make Saint Mary Magdalene of Pazzi say: "Suffering always and not dying". It was also due to this invitation that our angelic father Saint Francis, overtaken by ecstasy, would say: "Is so great the goodness that I hope to have that I delight in every moment of suffering". Rather than lamenting ourselves in these afflictions and illnesses that Jesus wishes to send us, we should follow the divine Teacher through the path of the Calvary, carrying our own cross and, when he would wish to put us on the cross, in other words, to have us sick in bed, we should give him thanks and feel blessed for the great honor that he grants us, knowing that to be on the cross with Jesus is an act much more perfect than to merely contemplate him on the cross.

(May 19th, 1914, to Raffaella Cerase)

Ask Jesus with endless trust, with the wife of the Song of Solomon, to drag you behind him and to allow you to feel the fragrance of the perfumes of his ointments, so that you could run easily behind him, with all the power of the soul and faculties of the body, anywhere he would go. I motivate you once again to stay convinced of what I have declared to you so far: the guide that should lead you to the port of salvation, the divine weapon to achieve to claim victory, is complete and blind renounce of our judgment for the law of who is in charge of guiding us among the shadows, the tribulations and the battles of life. The Holy Scriptures themselves confirm this to us with their unmistakable authority: "The obedient man will claim victory". If Jesus manifests himself, be grateful to him. And if he hides, be grateful to him as well. Everything is a game of love. I wish that, when your time comes to leave this world with Jesus on the cross, you would be able to sweetly say with Jesus: "Everythi ng has been accomplished".

(March 18th, 1915, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Father, allow me to vent at least with you: I am crucified because of love! I can't stand this any longer. This is a very delicate food for someone who is used to ordinary food. It is precisely this the cause that I suffer from continuous spiritual indigestion, such that it makes the soul cry because of profound pain and profound love at the same time. The soul does not know how to adapt to this new way in which the Lord treats it. And it is here that the essential kiss and touch -let me put it that way - which the most loving celestial father imprints in the soul still causes extreme pain. I hope that the good Jesus grants you to understand my true situation! And I, in the meantime, would ask you to please treat me with kindness for a little while longer and to talk to me about this. My most loving father, to satisfy the needs of this life like eating, drinking, sleeping, etc., becomes so very painful that I can only find appropriate comparison thinking of the torture experienced by our martyrs during the moment of their ultimate test. Father, do not believe that I exaggerate when I use this comparison, no, it's exactly this way. If the Lord, in his goodness, does not take away my consciousness in the moment of these acts, as he did in the past, I think that I could not stand much time, I feel that I lack the support under my feet. I hope that the Lord helps me and that he frees me of such anguish! I hope that he is kind and that he treats me the way I deserve. I am rebellious and stubborn when facing divine actions and I do not deserve to be treated in such a way at all.

(March 19th, 1911, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

The devil, dear father, continues to attack me. And, unfortunately, he doesn't seem to be giving up. I confess that on the first days that I was tested, I was weak. I was very depressed but little by little the melancholy passed, and I started to feel more motivated. Later, after praying at the feet of Jesus, I don't think that I feel any longer the weight of fatigue that overtakes me when I am tempted, nor the bitterness of such temptations. The temptations that refer to my life in this century are the ones that touch my heart the most, they trouble my mind, they give me a cold sweat and -I dare to say - they make me shiver from head to toe. In those moments the eyes do not serve me more than to cry. To console and motivate myself, I think about what you write to me in your letters. Also, when stepping on to the altar, Oh God! I suffer the same attacks by the devil but I have Jesus with me so what could I fear?

(September 4th, 1916, to Maria Gargani)

Live at peace and do not worry about anything. Jesus is with you, and he loves you. And you reciprocate his inspiration and his grace which works in you. Keep obeying despite internal resistance and without a break, just the way it happens in obedience and in spiritual life. Because it is written that the one who obeys should not have to report on his actions and should only wait for God's reward and not punishment. "The obedient person -says the Spirit - will claim victory". Always remember Jesus' obedience at the Garden and at the Cross. It was with immense resistance and without consolation, but he obeyed even if he lamented himself with the apostles and with his Father. His obedience was perfect, and it was most beautiful when it was most bitter. Therefore, never was your soul more grateful to God as now that you obey and serve God in the aridity and in the darkness. Have I been cleared? Live in peace and happiness and do not doubt by any reason the word of who now guides your soul. From the way the divine mercy acts in you, you have all reasons to motivate yourself and to hope and to trust in God. Because this is the action that God usually has with those souls which He has chosen as his and for his lineage. The prototype, the model in which one needs to look and to model one's life, is Jesus Christ. But Jesus has chosen the cross for a banner and that is the reason why he wishes for all his followers to walk the path of the Calvary arriving at the cross for them to later die laying on it. This is the only path to reach salvation.

(April 21st, 1915, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

I know very well that the cross is the test of love, that the cross is guarantee for forgiveness and that love that is not fueled and nourished by the cross is not true love, such remains just as fireworks. However, even if having this knowledge, this false disciple of the Nazarene feels in his heart that the cross is tremendously heavy for him and that many a times (please don't be scandalized or be come upset, dear father, with what am about to tell you) goes seeking for a merciful Cyrenean to help him and comfort him. What merit can my love have to God's eyes? I fear tremendously that my love for God might not be true love. And this is also one of the spears that, together with many others, pierces me at certain moments making me feel defeated. Nevertheless, dear father, I greatly wish to suffer for Jesus' love. And how could I explain that, after the test, against my own will, relief be sought? I must have much strength and endure much violence in such tests to keep nature quiet which, let's put it this way, demands with much force to be consoled. I wish I didn't feel this battle. Many times, it makes me cry like a child because I feel that is a lack of love and of reciprocity to God. What could you tell me about this? Please write to me, at Jesus' wish, and at length. Your answers to so many problems, doubts and difficulties are awaited by me like a light beam in paradise, like the good morning dew on a thirsty land.

(September 19th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

What should be the symbol of a Christian? Let us listen to the Apostle of the people: "Would you actually ignore -says the saint Apostle, writing to the Romans - that all of us who were baptized in Jesus Christ were baptized in his death?" And don't you remember that all of us who have been baptized in Jesus Christ have been baptized in his death? Therefore, when Saint Paul refers to baptism, through which we all become children of God and heirs of his Kingdom, is a model, participation and copy of the death of Christ. Baptism is a model of the death of Jesus Christ because, just like Jesus suffered on the cross, the same way we are given baptism under the sign of the cross. The same way that Jesus was buried on earth, the same way we are submerged in the waters of holy baptism. Baptism is also participation in the death of Jesus because baptism applies the mysteries that it represents and, therefore, it produces the effects of the death of our Redeemer. The death of Christ is applied to us in our baptism in the same way as if it were our own death and as if we were being crucified with him. And it is in virtue of this death that our sins are being taken away, and the same for the guilt and punishment for such sins. Finally, it has been said that baptism is the copy of the death of Jesus. We, as Saint Paul would say, are baptized " in morte ipsius ", in his death, in other words, to imitate the death of our Redeemer. Therefore, what the cross was for Jesus Christ, that is baptism for us. Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross for him to die according to the flesh. We are baptized to die to sin, to die in ourselves. On the cross, Jesus Christ suffered in all his senses. The same way, through baptism we must carry the mortification of Jesus in all our limbs. This is precisely what Saint Paul writes in his second letter sent to the people of Corinth: "We always carry in our bodies the sufferings of Jesus so that the life of Jesus can also be present in our bodies".

(November 16th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

We possess a double life: a natural one which was given to us because of Adam and a carnal generation, and, consequently, it is a worldly life, corruptible, a life that is our lover and that is full of low passions. The other life, a supernatural one, which we obtain from Jesus through baptism and, therefore, it is a spiritual, a celestial life, a creator of virtue. Because of baptism a real transformation happens in us: we die to sin, and we attach ourselves to Jesus Christ in such a way that we live from his very life. Because of baptism we receive the grace that sanctifies us and gives us a life, a celestial one. We become children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus, heir of heavens. Thus, if a Christian dies in his first life through baptism and comes back to his second life, it is every Christian's duty to seek heavenly things without worrying about anything related to things of this earth. The same is subtly said by the apostle Saint Paul to the Colossians: "Therefore -says the great saint - since you have raised to death with Christ, seek matters of above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God". If at baptism a Christian rises from the death in Jesus, he is elevated to a supernatural life, he acquires the wonderful hope of one day sitting at the glory of the celestial throne. What an honor! His vocation demands of him to continuously wish to reach the land of the blessed ones, to be considered a pilgrim in the land of the exiled. The vocation of a Christian requires not to put his heart on things of this world. All concerns, all efforts of a good Christian who lives by his vocation, are focused on seeking eternal good. He should judge things from below to appreciate only those that will help him reach eternal good and should judge as evil, all those that do not serve him for this goal.

(November 16th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

A Christian should free himself of all these vices if he wishes to live according to the spirit of Jesus. Thus, all these vices and all these sins are part of the old man, the worldly man, the carnal man. It is precisely of this man that the Apostle wishes that a Christian would get rid of: "Get rid of the old man by your acts". Therefore, a Christian, dead and now risen with Jesus by baptism, should always try hard to renew and perfect himself, abiding by eternal truths and God's will. In conclusion, a Christian should work hard to be like the Lord who created him. Christian perfection forces us to lead to that, and the Apostle urges us to do the same with the wisest saying: "Dress yourself with a new man who renews himself by the knowledge of the truth, according to the image of his Creator". But who is this new man of which the Apostle talks about in this saying? It is the man sanctified by baptism, who, according to the principles of sanctification, should live "in sanctity and in true justice". We Christians are, therefore, the image reflection of God due to two reasons: by nature, because we are gifted with intelligence, memory and will; and by grace, because we have been sanctified in baptism, which imprints in our soul the precious image of God. Yes, my dear, the sanctifying grace imprints the image of God in us in such a way that we become almost a God by participation. And using the beautiful expression of Saint Peter: "In order for us to be part of divine nature". See, dear sister, how great our dignity is. But we are great under the condition that we maintain the sanctifying grace. And how impure one becomes when that grace is lost. Our impurity is worse, I could say, to that of the beasts in the field. Everything disappears, everything is lost to sin.

(March 26th, 1914, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

As soon as I start to pray, I feel my heart as if it were invaded by a flame of living love. This flame has no comparison to any other flame in this lower world. It is a delicate flame so sweet that it consumes and doesn't cause suffering whatsoever. It is so sweet and so delightful that the spirit finds such complacency and it feels satisfied in such a way that it cannot stop wishing for it. And, Oh God! It is something so wonderful for me that I might never get to understand it until, perhaps, when I get to heaven. This desire, rather than depriving the soul of this greatness, reinforces it more every time. The joy the soul feels there, in its center, rather than diminishing because of the desire, grows more and more. The same could be said about the desire to permanently enjoy this living flame, because such a wish does not get canceled by joy, but it rather remains much more alive because of the desire itself. From this you could conclude that, every time, there are fewer occasions in which it is possible for me to understand with the mind and to enjoy with the senses.

(March 26th, 1914, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

The soul that is put into such a state by the Lord, enriched by so much knowledge, should be more eloquent. However, this is not the case as it remains almost mute. I wouldn't know if this is a phenomenon that occurs only to me. With extremely generic words, and almost always illogical ones, the soul achieves to manifest a minimum part of what her husband is performing in her. Understand also, dear father, that all this is not a small torture for the soul. At this state, the soul experiences what a poor shepherd would live if he were taken to a royal venue where there are countless and invaluable objects, which he has never seen in his life. The little shepherd, leaving the royal premises, would hold in his mind all those diverse, precious, and beautiful objects but he would also be unaware of how many there were, what their names were. He would like to tell everyone what he saw. He would use all his intellectual and scientific means to do so but, after seeing that all his efforts are not letting him be understood, he would choose to keep silent.

(March 26th, 1914, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I feel that all experiences of ecstasy have increased in intensity, and they usually arrive at such impetuousness that all efforts to avoid them do not work at all. The Lord has taken the soul to a major detachment from things of this lower world. And I feel that he strengthens the soul every time more in the holy freedom of the spirit. I believe that, at the bottom of this soul, God has poured many graces that lead to compassion for the suffering of others, especially of the needy and the poor. The greatest compassion that my soul feels when it sees a poor person causes, in its very core , an imminent desire to help him. And, if I were to follow my will, I would get rid of even my undergarments to dress him. And, knowing that a person is suffering, being in the soul or on the body, what would I not do in front of the Lord to see this person free of his pain? If I could see him free, I would happily carry all his afflictions, granting in his favor the fruit of such suffering, if the Lord would allow me. Thanks to the grace with which the Lord always enriches me, I am much closer to God's trust. In other times, I would frequently need the help of others, not anymore. I know from my own experience that the true remedy for not falling is to rest on the cross of Jesus, trusting only in him, who wished to remain crucified for our salvation.

(April 7th, 1913, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Friday morning, I was still in bed when Jesus appeared to me. He was very sad and disfigured. He showed me a great crowd of priests, religious and secular people, among them were a few ecclesiastical dignitaries. Some were celebrating, some dressing themselves, some removing their holy accessories. Seeing Jesus mortified made me feel very sad. Therefore, I wanted to ask him why he was suffering so much. I obtained no answer. But he looked at those priests and a bit later, almost fearful, and as if he were tired of looking, he stopped. When he looked at me, I was horrified to see two tears running down his cheeks. He walked away from that crowd of priests with an obvious expression of disappointment on his face, expressing: "Butchers!" and looking at me, he said: "Dear son, do not think that my agony was of three hours, no, I will be in agony until the end of the world because of the souls that benefit the most from me. During the time of my agony, dear son, one cannot sleep. My soul seeks a drop of human compassion. Poor me! I'm left alone under the weight of indifference. The ungratefulness and indifference of my ministers make my agony heavier. Poor me! How poorly they reciprocate my love! What hurts me the most is that to their indifference they add hatred, disbelief. How many times would I have been about to strike them down immediately had I not been stopped by the angels and by the souls that are in love with me... Write to your father and tell him what you have seen and what I have told you this morning. Tell him to show your letter to the provincial Father..." Jesus continued talking but what he said I would never be able to reveal to any being of this world. This apparition produced such suffering in my body and even greater pain on my soul that I spent all day feeling defeated. And I would have felt like dying if the most sweet Jesus would have not already revealed... Unfortunately, Jesus has all the reasons to lament our ungratefulness! How many ungrateful brothers of ours do not correspond to Jesus' love when throwing themselves with open arms to the infamous sect of the Freemasonry! We must pray for them so that God enlightens their minds and touches their hearts. Please motivate our provincial father and the Lord will grant him with celestial graces. The wellbeing of our province should be our continuous concern. All his efforts should be focused on that goal. All our prayers should aim at that objective, we are all obligated to this.

(March 29th, 1918, to Friar Emmanuele da San Marco la Catola)

You ask me to judge your love for God. But my most beloved son, how is it possible that you do not feel this love yourself in your spirit? What other is that burning desire that you explain to me in your letter? Who has put in your heart that burning desire to love the Lord? Isn't it true that holy desires come from Him? If in a soul there would be nothing besides the burning desire to love its God, everything is already there. God is there because God is only absent where there is no desire for his love. Therefore, stay at peace regarding the existence of divine love in your heart. And if this hope of yours is not satisfied, if you feel as if you desire every time more, without being in possession of the perfect love, don't take it as a proof that you are not loved by God, rather, remember that you should never say: enough! This means that you cannot and should not stop on the path to divine love and holy perfection. You know well that perfect love will be attained when the object of this love is possessed, which, in our case, is God himself. Therefore, why have so many concerns and useless disappointments? Do desire always and desire with greater trust, and do not fear. How is it possible for a soul that has consecrated itself totally to the celestial Love, who seeks to please it, with divine help, who desires and hopes each day more for the purest water of his divine love, how is it possible, I repeat, that it could leave this world, as a barren, cold soul, without the desire for God? How is it possible that this soul leaves this world with the sign of eternal failure? Doesn't this seem like a contradiction? And believing all this, wouldn't it be an offense to divine mercy which, not only doesn't reject repented souls but always goes looking for stubborn souls?

(March 29th, 1918, to Friar Emmanuele da San Marco la Catola)

Beloved son, be convinced of this: God can reject everything in a creature conceived in sin and who carries the indelible imprint inherited from Adam, but he cannot reject in any way the sincere desire to love him. Therefore, if by other reasons you cannot be sure of his celestial predilection, and if the advice of who is talking to you in the name of God himself doesn't make you feel better and comforts you, you should at least believe it by this sincere desire that you have for his love. I ask you, then, in the name of God, that you not feel defeated by this fear that you expressed in your letters. In other words, the fear of not loving and not fearing God, because I believe that the enemy wishes to trick you. I know, dear son, that no one can love God in a dignifying way. But when a soul puts everything on its part, and it does everything with righteous intention, and it trusts in divine mercy, why would Jesus reject it? Isn't he who mandated us to love God with all our strength? Therefore , if you have given all and consecrated all to God, if, consequently you seek to fill your heart only with God, and with a sincere and tireless reflection you are finding out the best way to serve him and love him, what reasons do you have to fear? Perhaps because you cannot do more? But Jesus has not asked you yet for it and, therefore, he will not be able to condemn you. The Spirit of God blows when, where, and how it pleases. On the other hand, you should ask our good God to do for you what you cannot do . Tell Jesus: "Do you wish for a greater love from me? I have no more! Grant it to me then, give it to me and I will offer it to you! Do not doubt that Jesus will accept the offer and you can feel at peace.

(March 31st, 1912, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

My most beloved father, remembering the many attentions you have offered me, I believe that it is my holy obligation, now that Holy Easter is approaching, not to let it pass without wishing you to have an Easter full of the graces which could make you happy on earth and blessed in heaven. This, dear father, is the wish that I could make for you, and I believe that it will be greatly received by you. Also, in such solemnity I will not forget, in my indignity, to pray to the risen Jesus for your beautiful soul. And would say that I will never forget to pray for you. On these holy days, more than usual, I am severely tormented by the devil. I ask you, thus, that you pray fervently to the Lord so that I don't remain prisoner of this common enemy. But God is with me and the graces that he grants me constantly are so sweet that I would not be able to describe them.

(March 21st, 1916, to Fr Paolino da Casacalenda)

The Lord is with you, fights with you and for you, and with such a strong warrior, we are not allowed to doubt the complete victory over the disloyal, infamous and impure. Lament yourself in a humble manner in front of Jesus, call often his sacred heart even until becoming inconvenient, but remember also that the answer he will give you through me, is not different from the one that he gave to the Apostle of the people: "Be satisfied with my grace". Yes, remain vigilant over yourself, escape from laziness and from every vicious conversation, and, as much as possible, avoid frequenting people of the opposite sex, having always in mind the saying of the Apostle: your virtues are contained in a most fragile glass. Go often to your inner world and persist in prayer, in meditation of celestial things and try to fill your mind with healthy readings of holy books. Regarding this last point, I ask you with insistence, to be constant and not to stop practicing this. And in everything, live in peace with yourself, because the enemy, who always fishes in turbulent rivers, takes advantage of our natural disappointment to better achieve his objectives. In conclusion, try to conduct yourself in everything in a way that the grace that the Lord has poured into your spirit would not remain without a fruit.

(November 4th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

I hope that the humiliations of the Son of God and the glory he received from them be the object of your daily meditations. We should think of the renounce of the divine Verb, which -according to Saint Paul - "being of divine condition", "living in complete divinity", did not consider a bad thing to lower himself to our level, in order to elevate us to the knowledge of God. This divine Verb, by its complete and free will, wished to lower itself until it became like one of us, hiding the divine nature under the veil of human flesh. Saint Paul says that in such a way the Verb of God humiliated itself, it was like annihilated: " It destroyed itself taking the condition of a servant". Yes, dear sister, he wished to hide in such a way his divine nature that he acquired in everything the similarities with man, submitting himself even to hunger, thirst, fatigue, and, to use the same expression of the Apostle of the gentiles: "Similar to us, he was tested on everything like us, except by the sin". But later on, the extreme humiliation was manifested during his passion and on his death, which, accepting with human will the will of his Father, he stood many offenses, up to receiving the most infamous of deaths, and death on the cross. "He humiliated himself -according to Saint Paul -, obeying even until death and death on the cross". This obedience was such for the dignity to whom he obeyed, because of the difficulty of the commandment and of the spontaneity to obey his Father in heaven. He was not motivated to do this because of fear of punishment, because he is the Only Son of the Father, and neither because of having been seduced because he was interested to achieve a reward, because he is God in everything just like the Father. This pleased the eternal Creator so very much that he exalted him "giving him a name -tells the Apostle -, which is higher than any other name".

(November 4th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

It is only by virtue of such name that we can hope for salvation, just as the apostles declared before the jews: "There is no other name under the sky given to men through which we will be saved". The eternal Father wished to submit all creatures to him: "Every knee will be bent in heaven, on earth and in the abyss to the name of Jesus". According to the Apostle, Jesus is adored in heaven: to this holy name, the blessed ones in heaven, motivated by gratitude and love, do not cease to repeat what John the evangelist saw in one of his visions: "They sing -he said - a new song saying: You dese rve, oh Lord, to take the book and open its seals because you were killed and you bought us for God with your blood". This most holy name is venerated on earth, because all the graces we ask in the name of Jesus are completely granted by the eternal Father: "And everything that you ask -tells us the divine Teacher - in my name to the Father, he will give to you". This divine name is venerated, who would believe it, also in hell: because this name is the terror of demons by whom they find themselves defeated and destroyed: "In my name demons will be expelled".

(November 4th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Because of Jesus' obedience, the Father of heaven wished that this most holy name be proclaimed and obeyed by all creatures: "Every tongue -says the Apostle - should proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Lord for the glory of God the Father". And isn't precisely this what is confirmed at present time, when the cross is adored everywhere? Even on the last day, the condemned and the demons, facing the immense glory of Jesus and experiencing his infinite power, will have to be part of this proclamation. We too, if we imitate Jesus Christ facing all battles of life, we will be part of his victories. Yes, I coincide with Saint John Chrysostom, that we should strongly believe that the divine redeemer is adorned by such sublime glory and, therefore, we should live in his glory, imitating his examples and following his wishes. Otherwise, it would not serve us at all to believe if our actions do not correspond to him.

(December 14th 1916, to Erminia Gargani)

I motivate you to trust more in divine mercy. Humble yourself before the mercy of our God and give him thanks for all the favors that he wishes to grant you. Acting this way, you will challenge and conquer all the wrath from hell. Do not fear, my most beloved little daughter. He, who has helped you until now, will continue his work of salvation. Without divine mercy would you have overcome so many crises and so many wars to which your spirit has been submitted? Therefore, the same grace will do the rest. You will be saved and the enemy will consume itself in its anger. In the meantime, continue praying and enduring suffering according to divine intentions and according to divine will, the reward is not far. You are sad because of the love you feel for God, which you feel is insignificant...But, how is it, my brave daughter, that you do not recognize this love in your spirit? What is this doubt, or better, what is this burning desire that you describe to me? You should know, my dear daughter, that, in divine language, the desire of love is already love. Who has put in your heart this burning desire to love God? Isn't it that holy desires come from above? Or is it that we are capable of producing in ourselves such desire without the grace of God who sweetly acts in us? If in a soul there would be nothing but profound desire to love God, everything would already be in it: God is there, because God cannot be where there is no desire for his love.

(December 14th, 1916, to Erminia Gargani)

Remain at peace regarding the existence of the divine mercy in your heart. And if this burning desire is not satisfied, if you feel like you always desire the perfect love without getting to possess it, all of this is a sign that you should never say: enough!, it means that we cannot and should not stop on our path to divine love and holy perfection. You know well that perfect love will be achieved when the object of that love is possessed. Therefore, why so many concerns and so useless discouragement? Do wish always, very fervently and with greater trust, and do not fear (...). My dear daughter, we shall not offend divine mercy! I ask you, in the name of the most sweet Jesus, not to let yourself be defeated by this fear that makes you think that you don't love God, because in this way, the enemy will lead you towards a serious mistake. I am aware that in this world no soul can properly love its God, but when this soul does everything in its part and trusts in divine mercy, why would Jesus reject it? Hasn't he commanded us to love God with all our strength? If you have given and consecrated all to God, why fear? Because you can't do more? But Jesus is not asking for more. And, on the other hand, you should tell our good God to do what you cannot do. Say to Jesus: "Do you wish for more love from me? I have no more! Grant it to me and I will offer it to you!". Do not doubt, Jesus will accept your offering, and you shall be at peace.

(December 12th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Should we start braiding the wreath, setting it with pearls, making it bloom? Spring has already passed, it's no more the time for that. My soul was deaf to the voice of the Husband when he lovingly invited it to follow him, when bad weather had already passed and winter had already finished. My soul was asleep during all Spring time, it was the sleep of the ungrateful, and it woke up too late. It looked for its lover in everything and, thanks to the kindness of God, it found him seated in the middle of many chosen souls who, having their hands full of flowers, offered him their perfumes. My soul realized the mistake it made, it followed him, occupying the last place. And even now it doesn't know what to offer him, not possessing anything of its own. Despite all this, observe how kind this divine lover is, who doesn't reject it, who brings it closer to him with loving gestures. But, dear God, how could my soul reciprocate so many love gestures? With ungratefulness, that is. While lamenting itself, it would like to end its infidelities, but it is always surrounded by endless dangers of being disloyal to him.

(September 25th, 1917, to Rachelina Russo)

Do not lose hope by small imperfections. Try to be always vigilant over each other in order not to fail, but if you realize that you have lost track, do not waste time in useless complaining, kneel before God. Be ashamed of your little loyalty, ask for forgiveness from our Lord, renew the purpose of being more alert in the future, and, later, stand up right away and continue on the path that I have placed you. Be convinced, my most beloved daughters, that the falls and small movements of passions are unavoidable as long as we are in this world, because in regard to this, the great apostle Saint Paul said to heavens: Poor me, how unhappy I am! There are in me two men, the old one and the new one, two laws, the law of the senses and the law of the spirit, two actions, the one of nature and the one of grace. Who would free my body of this death?

(September 25th, 1917, to Rachelina Russo)

Dear daughters, it is necessary to resign yourselves to what we have inherited from our parents, Adam and Eve. Self -love never dies before we die, it rather accompanies us to our grave. My Lord! How sad this is, dear daughters, for us, poor children of Eve . It is necessary to permanently suffer its sensitive attacks and its secret practices while we are in this terrible exile. But, for what? Perhaps to lose hope and to be discouraged and to renounce the path to heaven? No, my most beloved daughters, we shall be strong, it is enough for us not to give up, using our loving will, deliberate, firm, and permanent. And this virtue of indifference is so sublime that not even our old man, nor the emotional human nature -as per natural faculties - have been capable of achieving such virtue. Not even our Lord could do it, who, as the son of Adam, even if exempt from all sins and everything belonging to himself, in this sensitive part, and according to human faculties, was not indifferent. On the contrary, he did not wish to die on the cross, because this indifference is reserved, when facing this kind of death of the spirit , to the faculties inflamed by grace. Therefore, he received it to help him, because he is a man of grace, the new man.

(December 10th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Keep vigilant and never submit yourself in vanity nor trust too much in yourself. Try to walk every time more on the way of perfection and advance always regarding charity which is the link to Christian perfection. Abandon yourself in the arms of God the Father with a child's trust and enlarge your heart to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which awaits a sign from you to enrich you with such gifts. Yes, indeed, we should do good. It is now the time of harvest. If we wish to collect much, it is necessary, not so much to sow, but especially to throw the seeds in good soil. We have already sown a lot, but for us it is little if we want to be happy at harvest time. We should not feel sad because of this. We should make sure that this seed falls in good soil and, when heat manages to open this seed making it a plant, we should be vigilant and take good care so that weed will not suffocate it.

(December 6th, 1917, to Antonietta Vona, Ep)

Think of the immense abandonment our Lord suffered at the Garden of Olives, observe this beloved Son, who asks from the Father for some relief. But, knowing that the Father would not wish to grant it to him, he doesn't think of it nor decides to ask for it. And, if he had never wished for such relief, he reassumes with courage and bravery the work of our redemption. In moments of extreme demoralization, you should also ask the Father in heavens to comfort you, to console you. And, if he doesn't wish to grant it to you, do not think of it anymore, arm yourself with courage and restart the work of your salvation on the cross, as if you were never going to come down from it and as if you were never going to see a calm horizon anymore. What do you wish for, dear daughter of mine? It is necessary to see and to talk to God amid lightning and hurricane winds. It is good to see him among the flames and the fire between thorns. And to continue, dear daughter, it is necessary to remove our shoes and to renounce completely to our will and whims.

(February 9th, 1916, to Fr Basilio da Mirabello Sannitico)

The concern that fills your spirit is devilish regarding the obedience you have promised due to your position and to the countless consequences that, due to such a position, come along the way. Continue to obey, and you will assure the best reward that can be promised to a soul that loves Jesus. You should not admit any trouble in your spirit by any means, and even worse for the one " I am referring to". I understand that the soul in which God lives is always afraid to offend God in each step it takes. And this fear becomes unbearable when it comes to the accomplishment of one's own obligations. But such a soul should feel consoled because it is precisely such fear which will not allow it to be at fault if it decides to keep going. Dear brother, if standing depended on us, no doubt that at the first wind we would fall in the hands of the enemies of our salvation. We should always trust in divine mercy, and we will experience how good our Lord is every time more. Try to eliminate those practices, although good in themselves, even though everything has been good in the past, according to the heart of God, we cannot think the same for the future. It is true that a priest, now more than ever, should be of easy access to all, but, dear brother, to make this possible one would need a virtue of great gathering and understanding. Furthermore, we know well that the world is always malignant, and we should not give any reason for mean judgements.

(February 9th, 1916, to Fr Basilio da Mirabello Sannitico)

I cordially ask you not to waste your time thinking of the past. If it was well managed, we should give glory to God. If it was not well managed, we should detest it and trust in the goodness of our Father in heavens. Furthermore, I exhort you to calm your heart with the consoling thought that your life, in that part not well lived, has already been for given by our most sweet God. Keep away from your heart with all your strength all trouble and questions, otherwise all your practices of mercy will be little or not at all productive. Let us be convinced that, if our spirit is troubled, there are more frequent and direct assaults from the enemy, who often takes advantage of our natural weakness to achieve his objectives. We should be very alert to this point, which is very important to us all. As soon as we realize that we are falling into despair, we should renew our faith and abandon ourselves in the arms of our divine Father, always ready to receive us if we go to Him with sincerity.

(July 14th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

You give anything to be freed from the enemies that surround you, because all of them, as sent by Satan, intend to make you fail to do your duty. The anguish you still feel when seeing yourself often surrounded by occasions in which you could offend God, I declare to you that all that is the effect of divine mercy which the most merciful God has abundantly poured onto your heart. All of this is a sure sign that the mercy that the Holy Spirit has taught in your spirit is not dead, but vigilant. Such hopes, with the humility which comes from low self -esteem, cannot in any way be a devilish trick, because the wish of being freed of enemies that attempt to make us fail to our duties and offend God, the sighing hoping to be free of occasions which put to test your loyalty excludes by all means the arts of the enemy, which cannot and does not know how to cause such feelings.

(July 28th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Has not the Lord assured that he is loyal and that he would not ever allow that we be defeated? "God is loyal, and he will not allow you to be tempted over your strengths. Moreover, in the face of temptation, he will give you enough strength to conquer it". And how, dear sister, would one be able to accept the contrary? Isn't God good, even more than what we could ever think? Isn't he much more interested than us in our salvation? How many times has he given us proof of that? How many victories have you achieved against your very powerful enemies and against yourself, thanks to divine help, and without such you would have been without doubt defeated? Let us think of the love that Jesus has for us and of his interest for our happiness. And let us feel at peace and not doubt that he will always help us with fatherly care against all our enemies.

(April 18th, 1912, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

How will I be able to tell the new victories of Jesus in my soul these days? I will limit myself to tell you what happened last Tuesday. What a great live fire I felt in my heart that day! But I also felt that this fire was started by a friendly hand, by a divinely jealous hand. (...) Once mass had ended, I got distracted giving thanks to Jesus. Oh, how soft was the conversation with paradise that I had that morning! It was such that, even if I tried to tell you all, I would not be able to. There were things that cannot be translated in to human language without them losing profound and celestial meaning. The heart of Jesus and mine, allow me the expression, were in fusion. There were no longer two hearts that beat but one. My heart had disappeared like a water drop that dissolves in the ocean. Jesus was paradise, the king. Happiness in me was so intense and so profound that I was not able to contain myself anymore. The most delightful tears filled my face. Yes, dear father, man cannot understand that, when paradise is poured into one's heart, this tortured, exiled, weak, mortal heart, it cannot stand it without crying. Yes, I repeat to you, the happiness that filled my heart was such that it made me cry for a very long time. This visit, believe me, comforted me completely.

(February 6th, 1915, to Annita Rodote)

Spend your life in the acceptance of the will of the Lord, in praying, in work, in humility, in giving thanks to the good God. If you again feel that impatience lives in you, resort immediately to prayer. Remember that we are always in the presence of God, to whom we must account for all our actions, good or bad ones. Above all, keep in your thoughts the humiliations that the Son of God suffered for our love. I wish that they be the everyday object of your meditations be the thoughts of the sufferings and the humiliations of Jesus. If you practice such, as I am certain you do, in a short time you will experience its healthy rewards. A meditation, well done, will serve you as a shield to defend yourself from the lack of patience, even when the most sweet Jesus will send you work, will put you in frustration, or wish to make you a point of contradiction.

(November 4th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

There are three things that you should keep away from, the first one that you should be careful with is to argue, to fight. If you do not avoid such, good -bye peace, good -bye mercy! Wishing to arrogantly keep one's opinion is always a source and beginning of discord. In the face of such terrible vice, Saint Paul exhorts us to maintain united in one same love. Beware, also, of the love of arrogance, a vice typical of the faithful. It pushes us, without us noticing it, to be noticed more than others, to gain everyone's esteem. Saint Paul also warned his dear Philippians when he said: "Do nothing for arrogance". This great saint, filled with the Holy Spirit, could see in all its size the evil that this terrible vice could bring upon these holy Christians, if it achieved to get in their spirit, and therefore, he wanted to warn them: "Do nothing for arrogance". You should oppose this terrible vice, true disease, true termite, of a fervent soul. Do not wish to hear many things about yourself: low self-esteem, considering everyone better, is the only remedy to keep away from such vice. Finally, it is necessary to be careful with another thing not less dangerous than this vice, because it keeps inside the horrible seed of division. This last thing that one has to be careful against is to put one's interest in front of others, because putting one's interest in front of others will always and necessarily break the beautiful link that is charity, link that should always unite Christian souls, because charity is, according to Saint Paul, the 'link of perfection'.

(January 9th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Let us think slowly about the virtue of the love to God. What is this love about? Before providing an answer to this question, it is necessary to consider that one is the substantial love to God and the other is the accidental love and that the latter is separated in sensitive accidental love and in spiritual accidental love. After making this distinction, we can go back to answer the posed question. The substantial love to God is the simple and plain act of preference, with which the will places God in front of all and every other reality, due to his infinite mercy. The one who loves God in this way, loves him with love of substantial mercy. But, if this substantial love to God is paired with softness, if this softness is contained and it remains in its entirety within the will, we will then have spiritual accidental love. If such softness descends to the heart and it is strongly felt, with sweetness, we will then have sensitive accidental love.

(January 9th, 1915, to Raffaeline Cerase)

God wishes to conquer our hearts for us to try the most abundantly sweetness and consolations in all our devotions, both in our will and in our hearts. But who doesn't discover the serious dangers that menace such love to God? It is easy for the poor soul to cling to the accidentality of devotion and to the love to God, without worrying at all about such devotion and about substantial love, which are the only ones that make the soul loving and pleasing to God. In the face of such most serious danger, our most sweet Lord rapidly resorts with caring readiness. When he sees that the soul has solidified its foundation in his love, and that it has fallen in love and has become part of him, seeing that it is no longer part of worldly things and of opportunities of sinning, and that it has reached enough virtue to keep in his holy service without the rewards and the sweetness of the senses, wanting to take it to a sanctity of a better life, the Lord removes such sweetness of affections, which until then the soul had experienced in all its meditations, prayers and other devotions it performs. And what is most painful for the soul in this situation is to lose the ease of praying and meditating and of being left in the dark in a totally and painfully deserted place (...). Dear God, how easy it has been to lie to oneself! What the poor soul calls abandonment is nothing but a unique and most special care of the celestial Father for her. This step of the soul is nothing but the beginning of contemplation, deserted at the beginning, but that soon, if the soul is loyal, it will experience a soft and pleasant experience, because it will be taken from the meditative state to the contemplative one.

(April 21st, 1915, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

How could it be, dear father, that when I am with Jesus, not everything that I attempt to ask him with determined will comes to mind? Moreover, I feel the most vivid pain for this lack of memory. How to explain it? No one, until now, has been able to give me an explanation. Let me tell you an even more strange thing. When I am with Jesus, it also occurs to me to ask him things that had never crossed my mind before, and to introduce him to people that have never been in my thoughts but what leaves me even more astonished, these are people that I have never met or have heard of before. And I also want to say that when this happens to me, Jesus has never failed to grant what I asked for these people.

(March 3rd, 1917, to Erminia Gargani)

We should be satisfied with walking on the surface of the earth because being on the sea makes us dizzy and causes us to vomit. Let us remain at the feet of our divine Teacher with the Magdalene. Do practice the small virtues according to our smallness: patience, tolerance towards our neighbor, humility, sweetness, kindness, the suffering in front of our imperfections, and other many virtues. I recommend holy simplicity as a virtue that I appreciate very much. Pay attention to what is in front of you without breaking your head thinking of the dangers that you see far away. They might look like powerful military units and are not other than willows with many branches. Do not pay attention to them, otherwise you might take the wrong steps. Maintain always the steady and general intention to serve God with all your heart and in every moment of your life. Do not worry about tomorrow, think only of doing good today, and when tomorrow arrives, it will be called 'today' and you will then think about it. To practice holy simplicity, it is also necessary to have great trust in divine providence. It is necessary, dear daughter, to imitate the people of God who, when they were in the desert, were not allowed to pick up the manna in greater amounts than necessary for the day. We should also have the provision of manna for only one day, and we should not doubt, dear daughter, that God will provide for the next day and for all the days of our pilgrimage.

(January 7th, 1919, to the seminarists)

Have the intention, dear little children, of always being generously consistent with your vocation, making yourselves worthy of Jesus, like him, in the loving perfections already indicated in the holy scriptures and in the holy gospel, and already learned by you. But, little children of mine, for the imitation to happen, daily meditation and reflection on one's life are necessary. From meditation and reflection is born the value of your actions and from it is born the desire and the power of imitation. Yes, dear children, do like Jesus regarding prompt obedience and without argument. Imitate Jesus when it comes to patience because with patience you will possess your souls. Imitate Jesus in humility, both internally and externally but more internally than externally, more felt than shown, more profound than visible.

(January 7th, 1919, to the seminarists)

Imitate Jesus in charity because he recognizes as his only those who jealousy keep this precious daisy flower. And always remember that, when we will be in front of his divine presence, his every judgment will be based on charity. Make yours the saying of the great Bishop of Hippo: "My weight is my love". Yes, weigh all your actions with the scale of love and you will be knitting a crown of merits for heaven. The boredom that you might experience when practicing this virtue and prayer should not scare you and neither should this make you give back on the practice of one or the other. Keep working on it and this should not seem a waste of time because this time is spent and lived in practicing obedience. Temptations should not scare you: they are the test to which God wishes the soul to be submitted when he sees it has the necessary strengths to sustain a combat that will allow it to obtain glory with its own hands. Divine grace will serve you as protection and support in everything.

(February 1st, 1913, to Fr. Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Jesus tells me that, in love, he is who makes me happy. In pain, on the other hand, it is I who makes him happy. Therefore, wishing for good health would mean to look for happiness for myself and not looking for relief for Jesus. Yes, I love the cross, only the cross. I love it because I see it always on the shoulders of Jesus. Moreover, Jesus sees very well that all my life and my entire heart are totally devoted to him and to his suffering. Oh, dear father, forgive me for using this language. Only Jesus can understand how great my pain is when the sorrowful scene of the Calvary is in front of me. It is equally incomprehensible the relief that is given to Jesus, not only when sharing his pain, but when he finds a soul who, for the love of him, doesn't ask him for consolation but rather asks him to be part of the same suffering. When Jesus wishes to let me know that he loves me, he lets me taste his painful passion, the wounds, the thorns, the anguish... When he wishes to make me happy, he fills my heart with that spirit which is all fire, he talks to me about his delights. But, when he is the one who wishes to be loved, he talks to me about pain, he invites me, with a pleading voice and of command at the same time, to offer my body to alleviate his pain. Who would resist him? I realize how much I have made him suffer with my misery, that I have made him cry greatly with my lack of gratitude. I realize that I have offended him enormously. I don't want any other but only Jesus. I don't wish for anything (which is the desire itself of Jesus) than his suffering.

(May 13th, 1915, to Raffaeline Cerase)

Smile, because your suffering is according to God. If nature complains and asks for its rights, it is because of the condition of man who lives in it. If, secretly or quietly, it experiences the pain of the sufferings and it naturally wishes to run away from them, it is because man was created for happiness and crosses were a consequence of sin. As long as we live in this world, we will always feel the natural rejection of pain. This is a chain that will be with us no matter where we go. Rest assured that, if with our spirit at the highest level we wish for the cross and in the end, we embrace it and we submit ourselves to it because of our love to God, not because of this we are free of feeling in our interior the complaint of nature which does not wish to suffer. In such regard, who loved the cross more than the divine Teacher? However, even his most holy human, in his agony voluntarily accepted, asked for the cup to be kept away from him, if that were possible.

(April 26th, 1919, to Margherita Tresca)

Our conversation continues, either always in heaven or, at least, on the side of Jesus. Keep then screaming with the apostle: "I keep, in my spirit and in my body, the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" because, at this time, this is the most coherent relief with whom your spirit lives. Or: "I am spiritually nailed with Christ on the cross", until the time comes in which you will have to scream: "Into your hands I commend my spirit". I know, unfortunately, that you would like to rush to the moment in which you could say the last sentence but, dear little daughter, could you say that "Everything has been done?". You might think that way, but I don't agree. Your mission has not been accomplished yet and more than being absorbed by God you should be thirsty for the salvation of others and for that cause you should say "I'm thirsty". It is indeed true that it is also possible to achieve the work of mediation up there in heaven but, according to the human way in which we understand each other, it seems that the saints worry more about miseries of others when they are still on this earth .

(April 26th, 1919, to Margherita Tresca)

Dear little daughter, do not fear anything related to your spirit. Everything is the work of the Lord, and for that reason, what would you fear? Consequently, let him do it, even when you feel that you should act. In other words, accept with resignation God's will, even when he would not allow you to have sweet resignation. Dear little daughter, you suffer and have reasons to complain. Do complain then and do it loudly but do not fear. The victim of love who seeks God's will should scream, expressing that she cannot stand it anymore, that it is impossible to overcome the demands of the loved one, who loves her and leaves her, and leaves her although he loves her. Ask God to grant you what I have been asking for a long time with persistence. Ask him to make me understand with intimate light and with clarity what the authority tells me. And, as a reward, you will be granted the same grace. From your suffering, subtract mine which is much worse than yours and learn to help me. You tell me that it is enough for someone to assure me that they will pray for me, so why is this not enough for when it happens to you?

(December 6th, 1917, to Antonietta Vona)

I beg you, therefore, to console yourself with this divine thought: your spiritual and physical sufferings are the test of divine love, which wishes this way for you to be more part of the divine prototype, of Jesus Christ. (...) For those who hope in the Lord, feeling at peace in their conscience cannot come more than from God himself. This should serve you as an answer to your other question. Not having any attraction for any place in this worldly world cannot come from another author but God who wishes to separate the soul from everything that is not Him.

(November 16th, 1914, to Raffaelina Ceras)

The path the apostle left for the Christian is that of getting rid of vices of the old man, in other words, the worldly man, and to dress himself with the virtues taught by Jesus Christ. Regarding getting rid of vices, he says: "Mortify your worldly limbs". The Christian sanctified by baptism is not free from the temptations of the senses and of passions. Thus, the important need to mortify our passions for as long as we are in this life. The Holy Apostle himself experienced such a rebellion of the senses and passions, and that is why he, lamenting said: "I myself with the mind serve God and with the flesh serve the law of sin (he referred to the law of lustfulness)". One could think he wanted to say: I am a servant of the law of God with the mind, but with the flesh I am submitted to the law of sin. All this was said for spiritual consolation of so many poor souls who, assaulted by anger or by lustfulness, experience a painful contradiction : they wish not to feel or to have such movements, such resentments, or such vivid imaginations, such sensual feelings. Poor souls, without them wanting such, in them appear and are contradictory, experiencing a tendency towards violently turning into evil when they want to do good. Among such poor souls there are some that believe to offend God when they feel such a tendency to evil. Console yourselves, chosen souls, there is no sin in this, because even the Holy Apostle himself, source of election, experienced in himself this horrible contradiction: "I find in myself -he said - in the act of wanting to do good, a power that throws me to evil". Feeling the stimuli of the flesh, even in a violent form, cannot constitute a sin when the soul does not choose about it with the consent of the will.

(May 19th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

The soul called to eternal glory could easily be considered a stone destined to be the foundation for eternal fortification. A stonemason wishing to build a house should start by polishing the stones that will form the house, and all this he achieves with the hammer and the chisel. In this same way works the Father of heavens in regard to chosen souls, who from eternity were chosen because of their extreme wisdom and providence to be part of the eternal fortification. Therefore, the soul destined to reign with Jesus Christ in eternal glory should be polished by hammer and chisel. But the hits of the hammer and the chisel, by which the divine artist uses to prepare his stones, in other words, the chosen soul. Which hits are they? Dear sister, such hits of the chisel are the darkness, the fears, temptations, afflictions of the spirit, spiritual shivers with some aroma of desolation and of physical illness. Give thanks, therefore, to the infinite mercy of the eternal Father, who is this way preparing your soul, because it is destined for salvation.

(January 27th, 1918, to Erminia Gargani)

The most beloved apostle, Saint John, mentions in his Apocalypses to the Lamb of God, that Jesus was surrounded by a great crowd of souls who followed him everywhere he went. And these souls, he said, were virgin souls: “ Et sequuntur Agnum quocum ierat ”. Therefore, only virgin souls possess the happy condition of surrounding the Lamb and only souls that are virgin will follow him wherever he goes. But the souls that do not love their virginity are only virgin in appearance because their hearts are taken. These are not the souls that are mentioned when saying: “The woman who is not married and the virgin think in the matters of the Lord so that they can be holy in body and in spirit”. But how can anyone care for the matters of the Lord when not even loving one’s own virginity? Oh, dear daughter, I tell you this now, not to trick you but for your own good. I am telling you this because this is honest and because it makes it possible to serve the Lord without any obstacle. Praise be to God who has granted you this caring and holy love. Make it grow every day more and you will also grow in consolation, and, because the edification of your happiness is based on these two columns. Look, at least twice a day, with some meditation or some thought, whether one or the other has been weakened. And if you like to repeat this same meditation or reflection of devotion more times a day, it will not be of use to you. And I said, “if you like”, because I wish that, in everything and for everything, you should have the holy freedom of spirit ready as your sources of perfection for these two columns to be solid and stable, no matter how.

(August 4th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Remember the kindness with which the Lord has treated you until now. He will continue his work of perfection for your sake. He will continue pouring abundantly into you the oil, not only of mercy, which will make you happy, but also the oil of his virtue, which will make you strong to fight successfully, because it is known that warriors cover their bodies in oil to be more agile, more flexible, and stronger. Live at peace because divine mercy will not fail and even more, it will not fail you if you show softness to its divine actions. Raffaelina, do not be greedy with this celestial doctor. Please do not make him wait even longer. He has also been repeating to you: “ Praebe cor tuum ”, give me your heart, dear daughter, to pour into it my oil. I beg that such an invitation from the most tender father does not fall to oblivion! Open the door of your heart with trusting abandonment. Do not renounce to the most precious source of oil so that you don't end up looking for this oil of his mercy in the moment of your death, like the foolish virgins of the Gospel, because you will not find anyone to give it to you then.

(August 4th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Yes, do live a life always united in Jesus Christ who dies and suffers in the Garden of Olives, and continue to participate this way of his grace and of the relief of his strength, and you will find yourself in that same garden of the olives the day of your death, to participate with joy of his ascension and of the glory. (...) Learn to suffer everything in a Christian way and do not fear, because no suffering, even being caused by the lowest of the causes, will be rewarded by eternal life. Trust and wait for the merits of Jesus, and in this way the humble clay will be transformed into the most refined gold, which will glow in the reign of the celestial king.

(December 12th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

The Immaculate Virgin has already enjoyed the spiritual flower that you have offered her through me. Our good Mother has found it, and, to tell you the truth, a bit withered, due to the very cold dew that fell over it, but it is a very small thing, and you should make sure that it recovers all its freshness with the warmth of charity. Yes, my dear, nothing should ever seem to be too much in this virtue and, even though I see you very ahead in it, I never fail to add my encouragement for you to increase everyday more in charity, because it is the preferred virtue and very recommended by the Divine Teacher. Of this virtue he wanted to make a command of all his followers, a command of his own and a new one, unknown to most of our old fathers of the old alliance.

(April 15th, 1918, to Girolama Longo)

Dear daughter, how bitter is the thought of having to respond to God for the sins we have made others commit due to a wrong direction, as well as for the greatest good not granted to souls because of my ignorance. And God forbid that it will not be due to my negligence or, even worse, due to my malice, even if not intended. Dear daughter, pray and pray much for this objective, together with other souls tied to us in one same spirit in front of the Lord. You cannot imagine the suffering that is for me this fear, which is always nailed there, at the highest top of the spirit, and which makes me agonize every moment. A thousand deaths, the most painful ones, would be for me little facing this new cross that God sends to me and which -I don't make myself ideas - will be with me until my death. I also know that this thorn is the one that will consume me slowly, because I realize that this is not temptation in itself but an expressed wish of God (...). All my efforts are not enough to keep away or to diminish this most sharp thorn, which does not let me be free, not even for an instant. With this thorn in the soul, any consolation means nothing to me, every act of kindness represents torture, occupations are boring, distractions are for me terrible martyrdom, life itself is heavy and bitter. I think of this thorn without even trying because I feel it continuously during the day and I have it present in my soul in my dreams at night. It is my first anguish and the first thought when I wake up, it is the last reality with which and about which I fall asleep.

(February 6th, 1915, to Annita Rodote)

The Lord is so good with everyone! But he shows more kindness to someone who has true and sincere feelings of pleasing him in everything and who wishes that every divine wish happens according to God. Learn, in a special way, to discover and to love the divine will in every human happening. Repeat frequently the holy words of our most beloved Teacher: "Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven". Yes, let this beautiful exclamation be always in your heart and in your lips every moment of your life. Repeat it during your afflictions, repeat it during temptations and during tests to which Jesus wishes to submit you, repeat it also when you feel submerged in the ocean of the love of Jesus. This exclamation will be your anchor and your salvation. Do not fear the enemy, he will not attempt anything against the tiny vessel of your spirit, because the captain is Jesus, and the guiding star is Mary.

(August 17th, 1910, to San Marco in Lamis)

My heart is full of joy , and it feels every time stronger to accept any suffering, as long as it means to please Jesus. But it is also true that the devil cannot take a break when taking my peace away and making me weak in the enormous trust I have in divine mercy. He makes every effort to achieve this, especially through continuous temptations against holy purity, which he keeps building in my imagination, and sometimes also in simple things, not holy, but in irrelevant things. Following your advice, I laugh at all this as being things that one should not worry about. But what at certain times makes me suffer is not being sure of myself, at the first attempt of the enemy, although I have been ready to resist. It is true that, when examining myself, I would rather prefer death before having to deliberately offend my beloved Jesus with a single sin, even a slight one.

(August 4th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Mary, mother of Jesus and our mother, grant you understanding of everything that concerns the great the Calvary, carrying your own cross. It is true that, to follow this path, much strength is needed. But be courageous, the Savior will never decrease his help for you. Therefore, let us hurry to unify, to mingle, with all pious and loyal souls who are by the side of the divine Teacher. I say to hurry so that we do not fall too far behind in this group. We shall keep always united with this group, and never lose sight of it, because we might not be able to catch it and we will be deprived of such secret treasures of goodness that are found only there, and we will be excluded from eternal joy that can only be possessed in this and for this group.

(December 30th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Sanctity means to be higher than ourselves, it means perfect victory over all our passions, it means to despise ourselves truly and constantly and to despise the things of this world, until we prefer poverty over wealth, humiliation over glory, pain over pleasure. Sanctity is to love others like we love ourselves and for the love of God. Sanctity, at this point, is also to love those who curse at us, those who hate us and persecute us, even until we do good to them. Sanctity is to live in humility, without an agenda, with prudence, with justice, with patience, with charity, in chastity, in softness, working hard, observing our own duties, for the only objective of pleasing God, and to receive from Him the deserved reward. In conclusion, according to the language of the holy scriptures, sanctity, dear Raffaelina, has in itself the virtue of transforming a man into God.

(October 23rd, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

It is essential to pray to the Paraclete Spirit around three great truths so that it brings its light to us. These truths are: for us to know every time more about the excellence of our Christian vocation. We are the preferred ones, the chosen ones among a crowd, and we want to know about such predilection, being that this selection has been made by God, without any merit of ours, from eternity, “ ante mundi constitutionem ”, with the only objective that we become his in time and in eternity, which is a great mystery and at the same time so sweet that the soul, even if merely absorbing it, can only melt completely in love. Secondly, let us ask for the Paraclete Spirit to enlighten us every time more about the immensity of the eternal reward to which the mercy of the celestial Father has designed for us. The anointing of our spirit in this mystery takes the soul away from worldly goods and it makes us more desiring of arriving at the celestial land. Let us, finally, pray to the Father of the lights so that he makes us understand every time more the mystery of our justification, which takes us, miserable sinners , into salvation. Our justification is an immensely great miracle which the holy scriptures compare to the resurrection of the divine Teacher.

(October 23rd, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

The justification of our impiety is such that one could say that God has shown his power more in our conversion than when creating the heavens and the earth from nothing, because there is greater opposition between a sinner and grace, than between the nothing and the being. The nothing is less far from God than a sinner. Indeed, the nothing, being the deprivation of the being, has no capability at all to resist the will of God, but a sinner, a free being, can oppose every divine wish. Besides, during creation it is all about the natural order. On the other hand, in the justification of the impious, it is about the supernatural and divine order. We cannot understand how the most powerful hand of God has taken us from extreme misery, we cannot understand what leaves astonished even those celestial spirits, in other words, the state in which God has elevated grace so that we could be his children, destined to reign with his Son for eternity! When the human soul is granted understanding of this reality, it will not be able to live anything other than a complete celestial life. What a sad condition of human nature it is! How many times has the Father in heaven wished to reveal his secrets and he is not able to because of our malice. We have made ourselves unable to receive them. We hope that the Lord puts an end to such weakness and such misery. We hope that the reign of Satan ends once and for all and that justice prevails everywhere. We shall turn frequently in our meditations to the truths here mentioned, for us to find ourselves stronger in virtue and in our thoughts.

(November 25th, 1917, to Luigi Bozuto)

The first and the main precept that you should engrave in your mind is: obedience and always obedience, and you should submit to it completely. Therefore, in your actions you should not reason, and when facing any doubt, keep going without anguishing, and stay away from everything, supporting yourself only on holy obedience. Jesus will always be happy with any work of yours. Avoid only what you clearly know is a sin. Only this does not fall under obedience. And remember well that I have told you that Jesus will always be happy with any of your actions because when your will is usually that of pleasing God -and I have assured you and continue to assure you that this is the kind of will you have -, every action will please him, and you should not doubt whether you understand this with your intellect. Jesus sees your will, which is such that wishes to please him always. Therefore, dear son, do not worry about having doubts or fears. It should be enough to know, by the word of the authority, that Jesus is pleased with your actions. One of the two: either the authority is wrong, or you are wrong! What is the conclusion?... There is no doubt that you, wishing to persuade yourself to the contrary, will always be wrong. The truth is not on your side but on the side of the one talking to you now in the name of God. What else do you wish, my dear son, from a God that lowers himself to innocently and holy joking with you? There is no place for fear in your relationship with God, have resignation and patience and one day you will be able to see the total and unfailing light.

(November 25th, 1917, to Luigi Bozzuto)

Be suspicious of every wish that does not allow prudent and pious souls achieve their goals. Among them we can mention wishes of Christian perfection which can be perfectly imagined but never practiced, and about which many give great lectures, but no one puts into practice. And, in this same regard, do abandon the doubt that you mentioned to have read in books. Do reflect seriously on the vanity of the human spirit, which tends to make mistakes and to get confused about himself. I assure you that from this reflection you will easily conclude what I have told you many times: the internal work that you have endured and that still remains inside of you have been caused within you due to many thoughts and wishes produced by the great anxiety of wanting to achieve such imagined perfection as soon as possible, an idea that you wrongly had. Your imagination had formed in your spirit an idea of absolute perfection to which your will wished to arrive. And what happened? You know it well, the will, scared of such great difficulty and impossibility, became pregnant but without being able to give birth. That is the reason why your will started multiplying futile wishes which, like flies, ate the honey and the honeycomb. Good and true wishes remained hungry for consolation. It was wonderful for you that the good God had compassion for your soul and freed you of such wishes in good time and through the guide he assigned to you.

(December 25th, 1917, to Luigi Bozzuto)

The virtue of patience is the one that assures us perfection more than any other. And yes, if we should practice it with others, we should as well be patient with ourselves. If we wish to obtain the pure love of God, one doesn't need so much to have patience with others but rather and more to have patience with oneself. To conquer perfection, it is necessary to tolerate one's own imperfections. I say to tolerate them with patience and not to love them or to cherish them. With this suffering humility grows. To be able to walk well, it is necessary, my most beloved son, to walk diligently through the path that is closer, finish the first journey, and not waste time wishing to walk the last path when one has not yet covered the first one. Many times, we think so much about being angels of paradise that we neglect being good Christians. I do not mean by this that the soul should not aim very high, but I mean that we should not wish or expect to reach such a goal in one day, because such expectation and this wish will get us exhausted and for nothing. Our imperfections, dear son, will accompany us until death. It is true that we cannot walk without touching the ground, it is also true that we should not lay down or just waste time looking sideways, but we should not think about flying, because in the path of the spirit we are like small chicks which have not grown their wings yet.

(November 25th, 1917, to Luigi Bozzuto)

Our worldly life dies little by little. At the same time, it is necessary that our imperfections die as well. Imperfections, which, for pious souls who suffer such, could also represent sources of merit and powerful reasons for them to acquire their virtues, because through such imperfections we can get to know and learn every time more about the abyss of misery that we are. These imperfections motivate us to conduct ourselves with humility, with disdain for ourselves, with patience and with effort. Beloved son, I do not know what impression this insignificant letter will cause in your soul, but I wrote everything under the crucifix. I felt very hard in my heart the impulse of writing what I wrote to you, because I thought that a great part of your failed past has been motivated by great projects, seeing later that the results were very small and that the efforts were not enough to put such wishes into practice, those plans and those ideas, and I realized that you were tormented by anguish and impatience, concerns and troubles of the mind and of the heart. From that were born such distrust, weakness, lowness, and fault. And if all this is true, and unfortunately it is, be more careful from now on, walk grounding your foot, because the open ocean gives you vertigo and it makes you dizzy.

(November 25th, 1917, to Luigi Bozzuto)

Dear son, stay close, very close to the feet of Jesus together with Magdalene. Be satisfied with those small virtues that are most appropriate for your age and your spirit, just like a retail merchant is not entrusted with a big basket but rather with a small one. I recommend, because it's usual of your age, to assume holy humility, with which one can conquer Jesus' heart. Do not fear the dangers you see from afar, as you tell me, and do not fear the ones we have talked about at length on several occasions. You see them as armies, but they are nothing but willows with many branches and which can seem otherwise until you have them in front of you. Dear son, have a strong and general goal of wanting to serve and love God with all your heart. Besides this, don't let any other thought trouble you in the future. Think about your work of the day and, when the following day arrives, then it will be called 'today', and then it will be time to think about it. Have great trust and resignation in divine providence, do not intend to prepare more than supplies than what is needed for the day, do not doubt that God will make it rain the following day, and do the same way every single day of your life.

(November 16th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

What the holy apostle [Paul] considers the most important is mercy, and therefore, he recommends it greatly, more than any other virtue, and he wants it to be present in all actions, because it is the only and the one virtue that constitutes Christian perfection: "And above all this -he says - keep the virtue of mercy, which is the link to perfection". Observe: he doesn't think it is enough to recommend patience, to tolerate each other, which are also noble virtues. He asks for mercy and rightly so because it could well be that one patiently tolerates the faults of others, one can even forgive received offenses, but all this can have no merit when it has been done without mercy, which is the queen of the virtues, and which encompasses all of them. Therefore, dear sister, we shall have great appreciation for this virtue, if we want to obtain the mercy of our Father in heaven. We shall love mercy and should put it into practice. It is the virtue that makes us children of the same Father that is in heaven. We shall love and practice mercy, this being the commandment of the divine Teacher: loving and practicing mercy separates us from other people, let's love mercy and let's run even from the shadow of anything that could outshine it. Yes, let's love mercy and let's keep always present the great teaching of the Apostle: "We are all members of Jesus Christ", let's remember that only Jesus is "the Head of all of us, his members". Let us be kind to each other and let us remember that we have all been called to be part of one body, and that if we are merciful, the beautiful peace of Jesus will always be triumphant in our hearts.

(November 16th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Regarding the appropriate ways to achieve Christian perfection, the apostle [Paul] proposes two most powerful ones: the continuous study of God and to do everything for his glory. About the first way, he writes in Colossians: "Let the word of Christ live in you all with all its richness. Educate and learn with much wisdom, sing grateful hymns and inspired songs". The teachings of this Apostle are clear, there is no need for comments. If a Christian fills himself with the law of God, which warns and teaches him to despise the world and its flattery, its richness, the honors and all that prevents to love God, he will never be defeated, no matter what happens, he will stand everything with perseverance and with holy decidedness, and he will easily forgive all offenses, and he will give thanks to God for everything. Even more, the Apostle wishes that the law of God, the teachings of Jesus, be among us, abundantly living in us. But all this cannot be achieved without fervently reading the holy scriptures and those books that talk about things of God, or by listening to the holy teachers, confessors, etc. Finally, the Apostle wishes for the Christian not to be simply satisfied with knowing the divine law, but he wishes that the Christian would sharpen his senses, for him to find his way properly. All of this cannot be achieved without a frequent meditation of the law of God, through which the Christian, full of joy, bursts in his heart with sweet songs of psalms and hymns to God. From all this, the Christian who tends to perfection, concludes on how important it is the need for meditation. In regard to the second way, about doing everything for the glory of God, the Apostle says: "Everything that you do -he says - either by word or by action, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks through him to God the Father". By this simple way, fervently practiced, we don't only keep away from every sin, but we will also feel always motivated to greater perfection.

(April 15th, 1918, to Girolama Longo)

I have neither appropriate words nor appropriate feelings to thank the Lord's mercy with which so lovingly treats you and protects you. I see clearly, my dear daughter, that He has chosen you for you to be close to Him, even though you have no merit for that. Rest assured, however, that He wishes to completely possess your heart, and he wishes your heart to be filled with pain and love like his. Illness, heart troubles, caresses, bliss, temptations, barrenness, and desolations are tests of his indescribable mercy. When the enemy wishes to convince you that you are a victim of his assaults or of the abandonment of God, do not believe him, because what he tells you is a lie, and he wants to trick you. It is not true that you sin, it is not true that the Lord despises you, therefore it is not true that the Lord has not forgiven your sins and your faults of the past. Divine mercy is with you, and you are very loved by the Lord. Therefore, the shadows, the fears, any persuasion contrary to what I have told you are tricks of the devil which you should reject in the name of holy obedience.

(April 15th, 1918 , to Girolama Longo)

Do cry freely because this is the work of God, and do not anguish for what people can imagine. The trouble you feel in your heart is also loved by God, and He wants them for his mercy to make you more pleasing to Him, he wishes you to be like his beloved Son was anguished in the desert, in the garden and on the cross. (...) The only advice I can give you is to abide in a strict way to what I have told you in the Lord, and not to do anything besides what the Holy Spirit wishes to do in you. Abandon yourself to your actions and do not fear. He is so discreet, wise, and soft that he would not do anything but good. Internal joys, especially accompanied by the sweet and profound feeling of humility, should not make you suspicious at all, and you need to make your heart bigger and receive such joys.

(July 14th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Tie your heart to the heart of Jesus and be always humble of heart, as he wishes. Try hard to imitate the humility of Jesus, keeping your heart away from worldly concerns and tricks of the flesh. Try to always keep a mind pure of thoughts, always righteous in ideas and always with holy intentions, and a will that would only seek God, his pleasing, his glory, and his honor. My dearest, we should always be a reflection of Jesus, who lives a hidden life. His infinite majesty is hidden among the shadows and the silence of that humble workshop in Nazareth. Therefore, we too should try to have a deep interior life, hidden in God.

(July 14th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Do not fear the cross. The most truthful test of love consists in suffering because of the loved one and, if God suffered so much pain for love, the pain that one suffers for him seems as kind as love. When the Lord gives you afflictions, be patient and be satisfied by the Sacred Heart with joy, knowing that all is a continuous prank of the Loved one. Tribulations, crosses have always been the inheritance and the share of the chosen souls. The more Jesus wishes to elevate a soul to perfection, the more he increases the tribulation cross. Be glad, I tell you, when you find yourself so privileged without any merit on your part. The more anguished you feel, the more you should rejoice because the soul that is in the fire of tribulations will turn into fine gold, deserving to shine in the palace of heavens.

(March 29th, 1911, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

These days, the devil plays on me more and more kinds of tricks. This despicable one would double his efforts to try to harm me. But I fear nothing, I only fear offending God. I think that this despicable one is more against you than against me, because he wishes to deprive me of your guidance. Who knows what difficult time I must endure to communicate my things to you. I suffer terrible headaches, to the point of not being able to see where I write. All horrible ghosts that the devil puts in my mind disappear when I trustingly abandon myself in the arms of Jesus. And if I am with Jesus on the cross, I mean, if I meditate on his suffering, I suffer immensely, but it is a pain that does good to me. I experience great peace and calm that are impossible to explain.

(March 29th, 1911, to San Marco in Lamis)

What hurts me the most, beloved father, is the thought of sacramental Jesus. My heart, before joining him in the sacrament, in the morning, feels attracted by a higher power. I could feel such hunger and thirst before receiving it that I could almost die of anxiety. And it is precisely because I cannot do anything other than uniting myself in him. Sometimes, feverish, I feel the obligation of going to feed myself of his body and his blood. And this hunger and this thirst, instead of being satiated after having received them in the sacrament, increase every time even more. And when I have in me this highest good, complete sweetness is so great that I could almost tell Jesus: enough, I can hardly do this anymore. I almost forget that I am in this world, my mind and my heart do not wish for anything more, and, frequently, and for a long time, also in a spontaneous manner, I cannot wish for anything else. But sometimes, the sweet love is also joined by the feeling of being oppressed in such a way by the pain of my sins which make me feel that I will die of sorrow. Here too the devil often seeks to make my heart bitter with the usual thoughts of great pain.

(May 19th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

In these sad times in which so many souls fall out of God, I cannot persuade myself that life is possible without the food of the strong ones. In these times in which we are continuously surrounded by people who have hatred for God in their heart and blasphemy in their lips, the safest way to keep ourselves far from the pestilent contagion that surrounds us is to strengthen ourselves with the eucharistic food. Therefore, remaining without sin and improving in the life of perfection would not be achieved by someone who lives for many months without satiating himself with the immaculate flesh of the divine Lamb. I don't know what others believe about this. To me, given the particular circumstances in which we live, it is always an illusion to convince ourselves that the one who limits himself to have communion one or twice a year is walking towards perfection.

(March 27th, 1915, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

For some days now I have suffered from the most terrible headaches which make it impossible for me to do anything. The horrors of war churn my brain, my soul finds itself in extreme desolation. Although I had been preparing myself, I have not been able to avoid the horror of desolation, of which my soul is captive. This blessed war will represent for our Italy and for the Church of God, a healthy purge: faith will be renewed in the Italian heart, faith that was somehow hidden in a far corner, numb and dead by bad wishes. Faith will make flowers blossom in God's Church, in an almost barren and dry land. But, before this happens, we will have to endure a difficult test. We must spend an entire night of darkness, so dark that our nation has never seen such until today. But, if for many this is an extreme test, like the stone that will make them trip over, for most people it will be a healthy medicine to regain health. Blessed are the eyes of those who will see this new day! In the midst of this test that we have started to take, and which for us is especially difficult, we should focus our eyes farther than this terrible darkness, we should concentrate on the day that will arise and this should be enough for us to find consolation in the most sweet Lord.

(May 28th, 1917, to Annita Rodote)

You know, dear daughter, that the remedy that I gladly propose is the peace of the spirit, and that I always forbid vain concern. You should try hard to achieve peace and calmness for your spirit, which is agitated by the evil one, you should seek the spiritual rest that our hearts should always find in the will of God, no matter where it takes us. Live, dear daughter, in this valley of misery until God wishes, with complete submission to his holy will. This is the debt we have with our God's mercy, which has allowed us to wish, with great hope, to live and to die in his love. Let us wait, dear daughter, until this great Savior, who gives us the will of living and dying in his predilection, grants us the grace of achieving such a wish.

(April 23rd, 1918, to Erminia Gargani)

Keep your eyes always on this eloquent lesson which should be well understood: our present life has been given to us with the only purpose of achieving eternal life, and due to the lack of such a thought, we base our affection in what belongs to this world, which we are just visiting, and we focus on when we must live this world, we become scared and we worry. Believe me, dear teacher, to live happily in peregrination, it is necessary to have in front of our eyes the hope of our arrival to our land, where we will stay eternally. Until then, believe firmly, because it is true that God, who calls us to Him, watches how we walk, and he will never allow anything to happen that is not for our greatest good. He knows who we are and will extend his fatherly hand in difficult steps, making sure that nothing will stop us from running fast towards Him. But to enjoy such grace well, it is necessary to have complete trust in Him. Do not try to avoid this life's accidents by being anxious. Avoid them with the perfect hope that, as we experience them, God, to whom you belong, will free you from them. He has protected you until now, it is enough for you to keep holding his providence hand and He will help you in every moment. And, when you cannot walk, He will guide you, do not fear. What do you fear, my dearest daughter? Being of God, he has so firmly assured us: "Those who love God receive only goodness". Do not think of what will happen tomorrow, because even the Father in heaven, who protects us today, will have the same care for us tomorrow and always. He will never hurt you, but, if he sends you a test, he will also send you invincible courage to stand it.

(March 4th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Tell me: Is shining and discovering objects true of the sun or of the darkness? I will let you draw the correct conclusion. God is only grace, God is the supreme sun, and others are nothing, or, if they are, they are such because of Him. God by his grace can give light to the soul and show it what this is. The more the soul knows its misery and its indignity in front of God, the greatest is the grace that makes it glow when learning about itself. I understand that the discovery of one's own misery due to this holy sun at the beginning is a reason for sadness and affliction, of suffering and horror, for the poor soul who is enlightened in such a way. But do find consolation in the sweet Lord, because when this holy sun has warmed the land of your spirit with its burning beams, it will make new plants grow, which in turn will produce exquisite fruits, apples never seen before.

(August 15th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Jesus is always with you, also when you cannot feel him. And he is always near you, the same way he is there during spiritual battles. He is always there, near you, encouraging you to remain courageous in the battles, he is there to stop the hits of the enemy so that you don't end up hurt. I beg you for what is most holy to you not to offend him by doubting, even if slightly, believing that you have been abandoned by Him even if just by an instant. This is precisely one of the most satanic temptations, and you should keep away from it as soon as you perceive it. Find comfort, dearest, knowing that the joy of eternity will be more profound and more special when you suffer more days of humiliation and years of unhappiness in your present life. This is not the way I see or think, it is the holy scriptures that provide us with their unfailing testimony. Here is what the psalmist says about this: "Give us joy in return for the days of humiliation, and for the years in which we knew sadness". And the apostle Saint Paul left us the letter he sent to Corinthians saying that a moment of our momentary tribulations can make us deserving of glory in eternity, the greatest we could ever imagine. Here are his exact words: "Truly, the short tribulation that a moment can provoke in us, can be an immeasurable source of glory in eternal life".

(June 15th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

How sweet it is to always live in the shadow of the Lord, there, in the holy cloister! Perhaps I have become overly unworthy of resting in this very holy place, where he called me with such love. It is the reason His will be done, because everything He commands is just! He wishes to test the loyalty of his servant to extremes. The Lord, through my test, wishes to hear the prayers of this entire loyal nation, and, by his actions, he wishes to keep me by every means necessary amid such people, so that they pray vigorously in front of the heart of God in order to achieve this deep wish of his. (...) I am moved to tears! But I become horrified and shaken when I think about this, my dearest, because I fear that the Lord wishes to pay me in this life for anything I have done for his love. Pray to Jesus, pray so that he waits to give me such a reward until I am on the other life.

(June 8th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Let us pray to the Lord so that he will never again allow us to close the ears of our heart to his voice which speaks to us this way today. Let us also pray to the Celestial Father so that he never keeps quiet in things related to our beautiful Italy. We pray that he keeps a striking beam on his right hand, screaming his wishes always loudly, in the most intimate corner of our Italian hearts, when we face, on the outside, all kinds of situations. We ask that he also scare us, worry us, and crush us under the power of his holy right hand. We ask that he humble us, that he punishes us, that he torments us as much as he wishes. Such punishments, as extreme as they might be, will always be the punishment of a most tender father who raises his voice, who punishes to correct and to save his child. We pray that he keeps us away, by his infinite mercy, from the terrible punishment of his silence, which is a horrible sign, the nefarious prelude of his abandonment. We ask that he save us from this terrible punishment for the love of he who 'did not know sin' and who for our own salvation, 'for us he became sin'. able to pass the test we have all been given, for the goodness of our souls, of our nation, in the worst and most solemn hour that we are living.

(End of January 1916, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

My soul has been submerged for some time, day, and night, in the most profound night of the soul. Spiritual darkness stays with me for the longest hours and the most long days and, often, entire weeks. (...) When one finds himself at the deepest of this suffering, I believe that the soul seeks consolation in the thought that, in the end, it will necessarily succumb to the power of such a pain, because it seems impossible to stand it any longer. Praise to God!, When the thought of immortality, which even applies to hell, presents itself suddenly to my troubled soul who is ready to fall out, makes it realize that it continues to have a body and, when it is about to ask for help, it seems to suffocate in its own scream...; and here my tongue becomes mute and I cannot explain what happens to me. These are, indeed, new things, and there is no language that could describe them. I can only say that at that moment I find myself in the extreme of suffering, and I don't know whether I please the Lord or not. On my part, I try to love him, I desire him, but, in such a night of complete darkness, my blind spirit wanders in adventure, my heart is dry, the strength is gone, the feelings are no more. I struggle in darkness: I sigh, cry, lament, but all is in vain, until, defeated by pain and deprived of strength, my poor soul submits to the Lord saying: "Oh most sweet Jesus, let not my will be done but yours".

(June 4th, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Dear God, I am confused, and I have lost you, but, will I find you? Or have I lost you forever? Have you sentenced me to live eternally far from your face?... Dear father, I go deeper, as I can, in this dark prison. It is difficult to walk in the thick clouds of darkness, among storms and agitation of the attacks from the enemy who takes advantage of the storm to make me sin and to defeat me. I seek God, but can I find him? Even the idea itself of a Lord God, a Master, a Creator, the Love, and the Life has faded. All this has vanished, and I, poor me, I am lost in the thick darkness of the most dense clouds, coming and going in vain among blurred memories, a lost love and the impossibility of loving. Oh, my God, where could I find you? I have lost you, I am defeated, seeking your footprints. You pleasingly accepted the offer I made you; you have taken it all and you remain in your sovereign authority. I abandon myself to you, and I hope for protection from you for all that concerns me, so that I can abandon myself in the most painful offer of love.

(June 4th, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Maro in Lamis)

I live no longer, and, with this suffocating death of the soul, there is nothing that motivates me to live, and no news helps me to diminish my mortal dream. I adhere, or better, I think that I adhere, and I wouldn't know how, to the diligent aid that up until now I have received from you. I vow and I try to joyfully vow my head to all blows by divine justice, justly outraged with me. But there is nothing that could help me go back to eternal life, nothing that would help my deadly wounded spirit...I fall asleep, and I agonize... Sometimes, my spirit is violently shaken trying to be loyal, pretending to be brave, giving up later, seeking in vain to find its lost treasure again. Moreover, dear Father, prayer is the prick of moral suffering and pain, horrible to remember. I no longer understand anything. I don't know if my prayers are prayers or rather strong resentment of the heart towards God, amid its pain. I find myself in complete abandonment, terrible to remember such when one is living it. Nothing, absolutely nothing, besides the rare lighting, fast and with uncertain light, among the dense darkness, in which one is immersed, tells the spirit: God is in all that is good. But God is always hidden from the spirit, which, vigilant, is consumed in, always necessary, efforts of searching. The poor spirit consumes itself having great fear of offending God. Due to its great loneliness in desolation, it finds itself alone in its devotion, suffering internal and external attacks, alone with natural corruption, alone against the fights of the enemy.

(June 4th 1928, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Beloved, where are you? I don't know you anymore, I can't find you. But it is necessary to look for you because you are the life of the soul that dies. My God, and God of mine!... I no longer know other than to say: "Why have you abandoned me?". Further than this abandonment, I ignore, I ignore everything, even life which I ignore if I live it. My most beloved father, do not abandon me in this painful agony. I am about to get lost. I am going to be crushed under the heavy hand of a God who is justly outraged with me. Please remember that the Lord entrusted you as my guide, consolation, and salvation. Please remember that, from the moment the Lord put me under your guidance, I have taken you as the father of my soul, and I have promised to the heavens to show you all my kindness of son, which I feel and cultivate until now, and I have fervently followed your orders and your teachings. Beloved father, please help me! I would like to, if it were possible, to pour my soul onto this letter, which is being consumed. But you very well understand that is not possible to do: I find myself in painful frustration...I can only scream, and from that you could understand my lack and my vileness, my misery, and my indigence. Please ask the heavens to help me, ask for perfect conformity with wishes of pure, hidden, divine and holy nature, pray for my firm docility, always loyal to obedience, which would be the only law to which I could hold in the difficult times of the storm, the only law to which I could hold in the wreckage of the spirit.

(June 4th, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I declare, renouncing my will and to my duty, to my wishes and to my knowledge, most obedient son of my guide as commanded by the highest. What else? My God, this is much. I ask you for strength in my suffering, deprived of all consolation from you. I also ask you to transform my purpose into a constant, firm, and fruitful purpose, in a way that it could be enough to take away your indignation. Do offer them as your own to your outraged majesty, my most great one. But first do assess them with your divine virtue. I will do my best to find a pause to my unbearable suffering in this bed of sharp and cruel thorns, accepting to receive as food from your hands your rejection and your abandonment. Beloved father, do not believe that I have not tried very hard to leave this terrible prison. I have uselessly tried. Worse, it has been to my detriment because I should have resigned myself to seeing my soul descend into the darkness and to go little by little amid the battle. My screams were in vain.

(June 4th, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I am lost, yes, lost in the unknown and I am deprived of everything. But I am determined, although I find no consolation, to follow only the voice of who represents God. I am hungry, beloved father, of the return of my God to my soul, please give him to me , and satisfy me with him, my life and my everything. The current conditions of my spirit do not present other reality than complete ruin, some sinister lights, that are good only to shine on putrefaction and to torment the victim, prey to this unknown fate. My God! It is necessary, beloved father, this cry. This is all I can do when it comes to my pain. I don't understand anything anymore, I am afraid to have abandoned myself forever, and, in the face of this fear, I cling or risk clinging to obedience which, not knowing how, I feel it's also leaving me. I see the need to finish because the intensity of the pain that I feel deprives my mind of needed lucidity. Please bless me always and I, in return, will continue to immolate myself for you to this God that I have lost.

(October 8th, 1920, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I find myself in extreme desolation. I am alone to carry the weight of everyone. And the thought of not being able to provide relief to the spirit of those who Jesus sends to me, the thought of seeing so many souls who dizzily wish to justify evil in detriment of the great good, torments me, tortures me, anguishes me, it consumes my brain little by little and it breaks my heart into pieces. My God, I feel a thorn stuck in my heart! The two forces that apparently seem totally contrary, one wanting to live to be useful to those in exile and the one wanting to die to unite to the Husband. These times, I feel them grow greatly on the top of my spirit, they break my soul, and they take my peace away, although not the most profound peace. Although they interrupt my peace, it is only on the surface, because I admit that all this is needed so that I can act with more kindness and more compassion. Beloved father, my father, do not leave me alone, help me with your prayers and with your advice. Let me tell you how I find myself in loneliness that takes away my quietness and my rest and even my hunger. If this continues, I believe I will be at the door of a crisis because I realize that the body is also suffering the actions of the spirit, and I feel more for the former than for the latter, not for me, but I worry exclusively for others.

(June 4th, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

How could I explain to you the great and tormenting pain that punishes my soul? Since Thursday I have been feeling, more than ever, that my soul is full of tremendous trouble. I feel that the hand of the Lord has become heavier on me, that He is showing all His power to punish me and that, like a leaf blown by the wind, He rejects me and persecutes me. I can no longer continue! I cannot stand the power of His justice anymore. I feel crushed under His powerful hand. Tears are the daily bread. I worry, I seek Him, but can't find Him but I only find the anger of His justice. Beloved father, I can agree with the prophet: I have come to the high seas and the storm has wrecked my ship, I have screamed and tried in vain, my throat is hoarse and without success. Fear and shivers have taken over me, and darkness has covered me everywhere. I find myself lying on the bed of my suffering, full of anxiety, seeking my God. But where can I find Him? From the bed of my suffering and from my dying prison I try in vain to go back to life.

(June 11th, 1918, to Erminia Gargani)

There are some physical conditions whose treatment depends on a very specific way of living. Self-love, self-esteem, and the false freedom of the spirit are the roots that cannot be easily thrown out of the human heart. Only the production of their fruits can be avoided, which are the sins, because their first sprouts and their branches, in other words, their first shakes and their first movements are inevitable while we are part of this mortal life, although they can be restrained, and their quality and strength can be diminished by practicing the opposite virtues, particularly that of loving God. It is necessary, therefore, to be patient when eliminating bad habits, taming dislikes and overcoming one's mood inclinations and changes, because, my dear daughter, this life is a continuous fight and there is no one who could say: "I have not been tempted". Peace is reserved to heaven, where the palm of victory awaits us. Here on earth, we must always fight between hope and fear, but with the purpose of hope being always stronger, and having in mind the omnipotence of he who comes to our rescue. Do not tire of working constantly, with trust and resignation, for your conversion and your perfection.

(June 11th, 1918 , to Erminia Gargani)

You should know, dear daughter, that mercy has three elements: love to God, affection for oneself, and mercy towards others. And my humble teachings put you on the path of practicing all of that. a) During the day, constantly do give all your heart, your spirit, and your mind to God with great trust and tell him along with the royal prophet: "Lord, I am yours, save me". Don't stop to consider what type of prayer God gives you, but rather follow with humility and simplicity his grace with the affection that you should have for yourself. b) Although without stopping with arrogance, keep your eyes very open regarding your bad inclinations to eliminate them. Don't ever become afraid when seeing how miserable and full of bad moods you are, focus your heart and have a great desire to perfect it. When your heart stumbles, try to straighten it in a sweet and merciful way. In a particular manner, try hard to strengthen the upper part of your soul, without getting distracted with feelings and consolations, but rather with decisions, goals and objectives inspired by faith, the Guide and reason.

(June 11th, 1918, to Erminia Gargani)

Dear daughter, do not be accommodating with yourself: tender mothers spoil their children. Don't be easy on lamenting and on crying. Don't be astonished by the difficulties and situations which you mention with much suffering. No, dear daughter, don't be surprised. God allows them to make you humble with true humility when such situations seem so horrible and evil to your eyes. This should be overcome only by desiring God, making that the holy spirit goes from the beings to the Creator, and with continuous hope of holy humility and simplicity of the heart. c) Be good to others and don't let your impulses of anger control you. In such moments, repeat these words of the Teacher: "I love others, eternal Father, because You love them", and you have given them to me as my brothers and sisters, and your wish that, because you love them, I should also love them. And love even more those little girls, your students, with whom the hand of divine mercy has accompanied you and united with you in a celestial union. And don't be alarmed by the bouts of impatience that you usually have, there will be no guilt when coming from a conscious will, a warning that intends to control such bouts. Try to bear with those poor little girls, caress them, keep them in your heart, my most beloved daughter, the way I have you in mine, praying that you cultivate greatly and particularly a desire for spiritual perfection, because God himself has forced me to all this.

(December 17th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

The first virtue that the soul in need of perfection seeks is mercy. In every natural aspect of life, the first movement of things, their first inclination, their first impulse is to move towards the center: this is physical law. The same happens with supernatural things: the first movement in our heart is to go towards God, which is nothing but to love his own and true good. It is indeed not surprising that the holy scriptures call mercy the link to perfection. The virtue of mercy has as twin sisters joy and peace. Joy is born from the wish to possess what one loves. From the moment that a soul meets God, it naturally feels an impulse to love him. If the soul follows this natural impulse, motivated in turn by the Holy Spirit, it is already loving the supreme Good. Therefore, this blessed soul is already in possession of the beautiful virtue of mercy. By loving God, a soul already possesses the virtue of mercy, because here it's not like it often and unfortunately happens to those who love money, great honors, and health, one doesn't always possess what one loves. Those who love God immediately possess this virtue. This is not something I created in my mind, it's the Holy Scriptures that say: "Those who remain in love, remain in God and God in them". What does this phrase of the scriptures want to tell us? Doesn't it mean that the soul guided by God belongs to God because of that love, and that by the same token, God because of such reciprocation belongs to that soul?

(October 23rd, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Joy is an offspring of mercy, but to be perfect and true, this joy needs to have as a companion invisible peace, which happens in us when the good we possess is the greatest and true good. And isn't God the greatest good that the soul loves and by loving him it possesses him? It is necessary, therefore, that this good, besides being the greatest, should also be true. The divine Teacher assures us that "No one would be able to take away your joy". What is better testimony than this one? The soul, when thinking about this, cannot feel but completely happy. This is the reason why a soul can face with joyful encouragement the most bitter tribulations. However, one should point out that, while the soul is in a state of searching, it will never be able to achieve perfect mercy, and its peace will never be able to be perfect either. Contradictions, tribulations are so many, the contrasts with which the poor soul is mistreated are countless, making it agonize in certain times of its life, to the point of making it feel that life is unbearable, and this is caused by the feeling it has of losing its perfection. To resist such difficult tests, the soul needs to have patience, a virtue that makes us withstand adversities without giving up. The soul that seeks perfection as a profession should bear this virtue in mind, if it is concerned with uselessly working, because it is thanks to this virtue that it will remain internally under control.

(October 23rd, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Let us consider now what the soul should practice for the Holy Spirit to truly live in it. Everything is about the mortification of the flesh because of vices and lustfulness, and about taking care of one's spirit. Regarding the mortification of the flesh, Saint Paul warns us that "those who are of Jesus Christ, have crucified the flesh of its passions and its hunger". From the teachings of this saint Apostle one can conclude that those who want to be true Christians , those who live with the spirit of Jesus Christ, need to mortify the flesh, not for any other objective than for the devotion to Jesus, who for the love to us wanted to mortify all his limbs on the cross. Such mortification should be stable, firm, and not only for a moment, but it should also last the entire life. Moreover, the perfect Christian should not be happy with a strict mortification only of appearance, but it should also be a painful one. That is how the mortification of the flesh should take place, because the Apostle, and with reason, calls it crucifixion. But someone could contradict us: why such severity against the flesh? Foolish! If you would think carefully about what you say, you would realize that all evil that your soul suffers comes from not knowing and not wanting to mortify your flesh as you should. If you wish to heal at the bottom, at the root, it is necessary to dominate, to crucify the flesh, because it is the cause of all evils.

(October 23rd, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Mercy, joy, and peace are virtues that transform the perfect soul around what it already possesses. Patience, instead, makes the soul perfect around what it withstands. What I have said so far is what is needed for the perfection of the soul. Virtues are needed for the exterior perfection of the soul, some of which have to do with the way in which the soul that tries to achieve perfection should behave regarding other people, other virtues have to do with regards to the senses. Among the virtues that the soul needs regarding others we find, in the first place, kindness with which a devoted soul, by its amicable, courteous, civic conduct, not vulgar, captivates those with whom it deals and how it attracts others to imitate its devoted life. But all this is yet too small. One needs to go into detail: and here is how kindness makes itself manifest immediately, a virtue that pushes the soul to be of service to others. And here it is good to mention two very important things for the soul who tends to perfection. One of them is to see that others don't appreciate the benefit received from the goodness one provided. The other one is, not only to see that others don't benefit from the goodness that one provided them but worse, to see sometimes that the goodness is corresponded by offenses and violations. The untrained soul experiences this situation often. and to see us run without our reward. Therefore, it is necessary that, at the slightest ambush, we arm ourselves with the beautiful virtue of magnanimity, which is a virtue that doesn't allow our soul to ever back up when trying to achieve good for others, even when it sees that the other doesn't feel the benefit received. Against the second one, it is necessary to arm oneself with gentleness, which allows us to control anger, even when the soul feels to be corresponded with ungratefulness, with violations and with offenses. But all these beautiful virtues are still not enough if not joined by the virtue of fidelity, through which the devout soul acquires prestige, and which allows it not to fail in any action.

(October 23rd, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

The virtues that make a devout person perfect regarding the senses are three: modesty, restraint, and chastity. With the virtue of modesty, the devoted soul manages to regulate every external movement. That is why Saint Paul recommends this virtue to every one and declares it necessary, and, as if it weren't enough, he also wishes that this virtue be had by everyone. About restraint, the soul achieves to put aside all senses: sight, tact, taste, smell, and hearing, away from excessive pleasures, although legal pleasures. With chastity, a virtue that elevates our nature to that of angels, the soul suppresses sensuality, and it takes it away from the pleasures that are forbidden. This is the most noble picture of Christian perfection. Blessed is the soul who possesses all these beautiful virtues, all products of the Holy Spirit who lives in it. It should fear nothing, it will shine in the world like the sun in the middle of the sky .

(June 19th, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Where should I find my God? Where could I rest this poor heart that I feel is tearing apart in my chest? I seek for him constantly, but I can't find him, I call on the heart of the holy prisoner and he doesn't reply to me. What is this then? Has my infidelity made him this inflexible? Could I hope for mercy and that He, finally, hears my cry, or should I give up on this hope? Oh, God, I ask that the ugliness of my stubbornness be finally defeated. My good Lord, I ask that I can love you until the limit of this love that you ask of me, that I finally find you in this ambitious and agonizing search. Good father, naked and hopeless is my spirit, barren and dry for its God is this heart. My spirit and my heart hardly move for He who created them by his kindness. I have almost no more faith, I'm not able to get up with the blessed wings of hope, necessarily virtue to abandon oneself in God when the crucial moment of the storm hits and when the crushing power of misery smashes the soul. I have no mercy. Loving my God is the consequence of complete knowledge, of a faith expressed by actions, and of promises in which the soul submerges, enjoys and it abandons itself, and even rests in sweet hope. I have no mercy for others, because this is the consequence of the other mercy, and when the first one lacks, which descends to the branches of the sap of life, all branches become withered.

(June 19th, 1918, to P. Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Yes, beloved father, I am deprived of everything, even of any apparent virtue, to the point of feeling that this is a state of fatal warmth, by which God is justly rejecting me from his heart more every day. And I feel that my collapse is irreparable because I cannot find a way out of this. Poor me! I have lost my path, means, support, rules. And, if I try to awaken my memory that is asleep, a mysterious confusion becomes present, and I find myself even more lost than before, more incapable of getting up, and the mysterious darkness becomes denser. Dear God, why do you shake, attack, shake again and bewilder with such violence this troubled soul, this soul that is destroyed for a long time and whose destruction I would say is motivated, caused and wished by your own commandment and your own permission?

(June 19th, 1918, to P. Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Beloved father, you who know Him, I beg of you not to reproach my confusion, my anxiety, my failing in my seeking Him. Do not reproach the lack of abandonment of this spirit, which also fervently wishes its most blind and humble rest in divine approval. Tell me, by your mercy, where is my God? Where could I find him? What could I do to start my search? Tell me please, will I find him? Let me know, where could I rest my heart, which is becoming deadly ill and which I instinctively feel is ambitiously and agonizingly seeking Him? Oh, dear God, dear God, I cannot say other than: why have you abandoned me? This spirit, justly hit by your divine justice, remains in a vehement contradiction, without any resort or knowledge, besides some rare lighting, sent to make the suffering more painful. I feel that I am dying, I embrace the piercing feeling, I agonize with hunger, oh father, and I don't think the hunger is now less because of my will of uniting myself with the divine will and with His wishes.

(October 22nd, 1916, to Assunta di Tomaso)

Be more patient withstanding the state of spiritual desolation, be patient overcoming the love tests to which Jesus subjects you, with admirable providence, for you to be like him, and you will see that the Lord one day will hear all your wishes, which are also mine. Do not lose hope if the night becomes darker and more sinister. Do not fear if you don't see, with material eyes, calmness in the sky that surrounds your soul. Set your eyes up above, rising above yourself, and you will see a light shining which is part of the light of the eternal sun. The living faith, the blind trust, and the complete adhesion to the authority of God, is the light that shone above the people of God in the desert, this is the light that shines always on the highest corners of the spirits that please the Father. This is the light that guided the magi looking to adore the Messias after his birth, this is the star prophesied by Balaam, this is the torch that guides the steps of desolated spirits. And this light, this star and this torch are also the ones that shine in your soul, guide your steps so that you don't doubt, they fortify your spirit in divine love, and, without the soul realizing, it always walks towards eternal fate. You do not see this and do not understand it, but this is necessary. You will only see darkness, but it does not surround the eternal sun. Remain firm and believe that this sun shines in your soul, and that this sun is precisely the one about which the prophet of God said: "And in your light I will see the light".

(October 22nd, 1916, to Assunta di Tomaso)

Do not despair if the intensity of the test increases, put your faith and your heart in heaven, and rest assured that there is no danger of failure. The test is difficult and, who cannot see that? Then, what can one conclude of this? Is not God who commands everything and decides everything for our highest good? Therefore, cheer up at the moment of the test and expect little, the good God will hear our prayers. Aren't there many to whom he has heard until now? Therefore, he will hear the last one, the crown of all other wishes. Resist just a bit more! Just a bit more. Do we know for how long? It should not matter to us, my dearest daughter! This will last until the holy Husband wishes and when we have all been transformed into Him. But with all certainty we will reach what he said: "You will see me". Remain loyal and consider enough the affirmations of authority. There is no other anchor, there is no other pilot to navigate the little vessel of the soul in the tempestuous sea of this world. Jesus wants your present state. The one who has been called by God to guide your spirit has promised that to you and you should try your best to believe him. What does it matter if you see the light in this? You are not meant to see it because that is the best for you.

(May 25th, 1918, to the Campanile sisters)

Moments of anguish and moments of calm which alternate, and which you feel in the highest of your spirit, are born of the love that motivates and the love that attracts. Therefore, remain calm, and this same alternating of diverse feelings in the spirit, caused by the non -complete possession of an object and which causes interior suffering, and which hurts the soul, makes possible that it could be withstood in peace, until one could say with the prophet: "In peace is my most bitter pain". Do open your soul to the eternal sun, and do not fear its burning and scorching rays. I repeat, my dearest daughter, do open your soul to this sun of infinite beauty, you who so fervently wishes to open the cocoon and let out this beautiful butterfly of such terrible and dark prison.

(November 16th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

A Christian of the great world loves honors, wealth, vanity, comfort, and everything that this most mean world can offer. Oh fool, think again, remember that by baptism you renounced this world, that you are dead to it. The Holy Spirit which speaks through Saint Paul's mouth says: "...You are dead to the world, and your life is hidden with Christ in God". Remember, oh foolish, that the life of who lives in the spirit of Jesus will not always remain hidden and unknown. Remember what is to come on the day of the Lord: "When Christ appears, your life, then you as well, will be glorious with him". "Dearest -wrote the favorite apostle Saint John comforting the faithful -, we are now children of God, and it hasn't been manifested yet what we will be. We know that, when this is manifested, we will be like Him, because we will see him as he is". The certainty of such immense glory, oh foolish, would not be enough to think over and to correct your path until the end of your days, according to your vocation?

(May 31st, 1918, to the Campanile sisters)

The most tormented souls are the favorite ones of the sacred Heart, and you should rest assured that Jesus has chosen your soul to be the Benjamin of his adorable Heart. In this Heart you should hide, in this Heart you should relieve your wishes, in this Heart you should also live the days that the providence grants you, in this Heart you should die, when the Lord so wishes. In this Heart, I have placed you again, in this Heart, then, you should live, remain and move around.

(July 23rd, 1917, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

The internal kingdom rejoices when holy love reigns there! The powers of our soul rejoice when they obey such a wise king! No, my dearest father, under his obedience and under his Kingdom, He does not allow neither great sins nor any disorderly action in us, not even a slight one. It is true that He allows us to arrive at the border, with the objective of practicing our internal virtues for combat, to make them stronger. It is also true that He allows spies, which are minor sins and imperfections, to run around in his Kingdom, but He allows this so that we could know that, without his help, we would be prey of our enemies. We should humble ourselves very much, my dear father, and we should confess as well that, if God were not our shield and our protection, we would be wounded immediately by all kinds of sins. And this is the reason why we should always find refuge in God, persevering in our practices and learning to serve God with our own power.

(May 31st, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Time devoted to the glory of God and to the salvation of souls should never be lamented, it is never time wasted. Therefore, do not be concerned for taking my time, because the time well spent, as I just said, is the one devoted for the salvation and the sanctification of the souls of others. I don't know how to give thanks to the mercy of the Father in heaven when it presents me with souls, to which I can help in any way. I would have loved for the heavens to allow me to spend all my time in this life in this holy ministry, which would make me look better to the eyes of the Highest!

(June 18th, 1917, to Maria Gargani)

How miserable I am! -cried the great favorite, the Apostle of gentiles -. Who will free me from this body of death?". One cannot doubt that this Apostle has been one of the greatest saints and almost a star of greatest magnitude for the holy Church. How many persecutions, how much suffering, how much effort suffered for Jesus Christ ! What burning mercy, what flaming love, what burning devotion for his honor! How many revelations, how many visions, how many ecstasies and abductions to the third heavens! However, the holy Apostle, filled with so many great virtues and of such extraordinary talents, breaks in cry when quoted. The Saint confesses to have been stoned, whipped, many times, he has been in danger of sinking in the ocean, was taken day and night by the waves from one side to another: "Three times I have been whipped with sticks, once I was stoned, three times my vessel was wrecked, I have spent one day and one night drifting in high seas". He confesses his many nights without sleep, his many fasting, hunger, thirst, the nakedness, and the punishment by the cold, all tolerated by the love for Jesus: "Often nights without sleeping, hunger and thirst, many days without eating, cold and naked". He claims to have been abducted to paradise having still been in mortal flesh: "He was abducted to paradise, and he heard unspeakable words that man cannot express". He even claims not to live in himself any longer, that he only lives in Jesus, transformed in him by love: "I live, and I don't live, but it is Christ who lives in me". Now tell me, dear daughter, what does this great apostle and doctor of the gentiles lack to declare him perfect? He experienced an army in himself, formed by his mood states, dislikes, habits and natural inclinations, which conspired for his destruction and his spiritual death. But because he fears all of that, he shows to hate it, and, because he hates it, he cannot stand the pain that makes him cry expressing an answer to his own question: that the grace God, through Jesus Christ, will protect him, not from fear, not from terror, not from the struggle (all things you feel, my beloved daughter), but rather from destruction, and that it will not let him be defeated.

(January 16th, 1918, to Antonietta Vona)

Remain always in the presence of God by the means that you have been taught and that you will continue to be taught. Beware of anxieties and concerns, because there is nothing worse to stop us from walking towards perfection. Place your heart sweetly in the wounds of our Lord, but not in a forceful manner. Have great trust in his mercy and his kindness, and He will never abandon you, and don't stop to firmly embrace his holy cross. After loving our Lord, I recommend that you love his Church, his spouse, and our loving mother. Love this lovely and sweet dove which can only lay eggs and give birth to little chicks for the Husband. Give thanks to God a hundred times a day, being the daughter that you are of the Church. Look at the Husband and at the Wife and tell the Husband: "You are the Husband of a beautiful Wife", and to the Wife: "You are the Wife of a holy Husband". Have great compassion for all shepherds and preachers of the Church, as well as for all shepherds of souls, and meditate, dear daughter, on how they are dispersed all around the world, because they are everywhere, in all provinces of the world. Pray to God for them so that they, after saving themselves, could with such fruit save the souls. And, while at this, I beg that you never forget to pray for me, when you are in front of Jesus, and because he grants me much will to never forget about your soul.

(May 17th, 1918, to Margherita Tresca)

The crown is won in battle, and the more the soul fights, the more the rewards are multiplied. Knowing that every victory achieved corresponds to a degree of eternal glory, how could we not be happy, my most beloved daughter, when seeing ourselves devoted to achieving many rewards throughout our life? Be consoled by this thought and do feel motivated as well by the example of our divine Teacher, "tempted like us in many ways but without falling into sin" and tempted until not being able to resist and crying: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?". From now on, do not pay attention and do not believe what the enemy suggests: that God has rejected you, or that God, due to any infidelity that you do not know about, punishes you and wishes to punish you until you take that away from your soul, because this is absolutely not true, because when the soul cries and fears to offend God, it does not offend him and it's too far from offending him.

(July 14th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Satan is who tortures you and makes you anxious, God is who shines his light on you and who consoles you. A soul that feels every time more motivated to lower and humble itself before its Lord, and at the same time feels the need to endure every pain, to withstand all, in order to deserve the approval of its celestial Spouse, cannot but recognize that all of this comes from God. The strong hopes of love that the soul has towards its Lord are not, and cannot be, hallucinations or illusions. Therefore, I guarantee you, once again, that it is the grace of Jesus the author of everything that is of beauty that happens in you. For that reason, let your divine Spouse act in you and take you by the paths through He wishes to take you. Everything you experience inside you when you are surrounded by pious souls, all of them devoted to loving and serving the Lord, is a sign of your soul trustingly and fervently seeking its creator.

(March 25th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Do not be fearful by the attacks of Satan, your trust should always remain in God. You should grow in that trust every day and should show it in a special way on the test you are enduring at this moment, which will result in the glory of God and in a great victory for your soul. Do not anguish more than it is necessary, rejoice, because the end of the battle is not far from now. It will not take long for the negotiations to start, and the expenditures of war will be attributed to the enemy of God, to the enemy of souls. After the purge, God will make a great sunshine and it will be a beautiful day! Be encouraged then, by this sweet thought so that you can bravely fight this good battle. your spirit!

(June 4th, 1918, to Antonietta Vona)

During this state of affliction, do continue to pray for all, especially for the exaltation of our holy Mother the Church, and for poor sinners, to repair for the many offenses received by this holy Heart. I know that you immolated yourself and that you continue to do it for the Lord. Jesus accepted your immolation; Jesus has granted you the grace of receiving your offer. Therefore, be brave for a bit longer! The reward is not far from now. Do not be afraid, then, if you find yourself in the darkness and dryness of the spirit, because there is no reason to fear. There is no cause, due to a current or a past infidelity, to be concerned. Believe me because I do not lie to you. I encourage you not to be concerned by this situation, live your suffering in peace, because all of this is a pleasantry of the love of Jesus. Facing this situation, do not stop doing what you usually do, and rest assured that Jesus is pleased and knowing that your soul improves even without knowing and understanding it.

(December 29th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

You are not correct, and you are not at all correct if you wish to measure the love of a soul for its creator by the sensorial sweetness that it experiences when loving God. That love belongs to the souls that are still in the simplicity of spiritual infancy: a love that could be lethal for the soul that seeks it in excess. On the contrary, the love of the souls that have outgrown that spiritual infancy is the love that doesn't receive goodness or sweetness in the part that we call the sensorial soul. A sure sign for knowing whether such souls really love God is to find them always ready to observe the holy law of God, to see them ready and vigilant not to fall in sin, it's the usual desire of seeing the Father in heaven being glorified, making sure not to stop, in any way they can, to propagate the kingdom of God. It is seeing these souls continuously praying to the Father in heaven with the same words by the divine Teacher: "Our father...thy Kingdom come".

(October 18th, 1917, to the Campanile sisters)

We need to cultivate these two virtues with much enthusiasm: sweetness with others and holy humility with God. I trust that you will do this, because our great God, who has taken you by the hand to attract you towards Him, will not abandon you until he places you in his eternal temple. It would be good, my dearest daughter, whether you eliminate all pretension and thoughts of superiority, because the best way to achieve honor is rejecting it, but it, nevertheless, tempts the soul and it pushes it to commit mistakes against sweetness and humility.

(July 7th, 1913, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

This morning, after church, when I felt afflicted by the reason I mentioned to you, I was suddenly affected by a terrible headache, which, just as it started, made me feel as if I could no longer continue my thanksgiving activities. This situation increased the pain I felt. I was also overtaken by a great dryness of the spirit, and I don't know what would have happened if the one who I will mention had not come. The Lord appeared to me, speaking this way: "Dear son, do not stop writing what you hear from my mouth, so that you don't forget it later. I am loyal, no creature will be lost without knowing that. The light and the shadows are very different. I attract towards me the soul to whom I am used to talking. On the other hand, the tricks of the devil seek to keep it away from me. I never cause fear in the soul to keep it away from me, the devil never causes fear in the soul so that it can come close to me. To know whether I am the author of the fears that the soul feels at certain times of its life about its eternal salvation, this can be known because of the peace and serenity felt in the soul...". This vision and these words of our Lord have submerged my soul in great peace and great joy that all the sweetness in the world, compared to a single drop of such happiness, seems tasteless.

(July 7th, 1913, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I believe that Jesus is continuously looking at me. If it happens that sometimes I lose the presence of God, he calls me again to do my duty. I don't know how to describe his voice when he reprimands me, but I do know that it is a very piercing voice for the soul that hears it and that it is almost impossible to reject it. Do not ask me, dear father, how I know that it is our Lord who shows himself in such a vision, when I see nothing neither with my eyes of the body, nor with those of the spirit, because I don't know, and I can't tell more than what I have told. I can only say: that the one on my right is our Lord and no other, and that, even before He told me, I already knew profoundly in my mind that it was Him. This grace has left a great good in me. The soul remains in great peace. I feel completely consumed by a most intense desire to please God. Ever since the Lord has favored me with this gift, He makes me look with great disdain everything that keeps me away from God. I feel an indescribable confusion not knowing where so much goodness comes to me. My soul is motivated by the most vibrant gratitude to tell the Lord that He grants this grace to it without any merit whatsoever, and rather than from feeling superior to other souls, my soul, on the contrary, thinks that, from all the people in the world, it is the least useful for the Lord. Furthermore, through this gift, the Lord has enlightened the soul in such a way that it cannot but recognize to be much more obligated than all the other souls to serve and to love the creator.

(May 19th, 1914, to Raffaelina Ceras)

Open your heart to this celestial doctor of souls and abandon yourself with complete trust among his most holy arms. He treats you like a chosen one to follow Jesus closely by the path of Calvary. I see with joy and with the most vibrant commotion of my spirit, the way in which grace acts in you. Rest assured that everything that is happening to you in your soul has been planned by the Lord, and, therefore, do not fear to find evil, to offend God. It should be enough for you to know that in all this you are not, by any means, offending the Lord, on the contrary, He is being more glorified each time.

(June 24th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

If it is the will of God to add corporal aromas to the spiritual ones, is not that enough for you to be the happiest person in this valley of exile? And what else could one wish rather than the will of God? What other thing can the soul consecrated to Him wish? What other thing could you wish than that the plans of God happen through you? Be brave then, and continue on the path of divine love, remaining convinced that, the more one will unite and identify with the will of God, the more one grows in sanctity. Let us always remember that the earth is a place of struggle and that the rewards will be received in paradise. Let us remember that this is a place of testing and that the crown will be received in heavens. Let us remember that we are here in exile and that our true place is above and that we should always aspire to get there. We shall live then, dear Raffaelina, with vibrant faith, with strong hope and with fervent desire to go to heavens, with the most vibrant desire of such heavens, as long as we walk this earth, in order to be able to reside there one day.

(June 24th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Let us keep our thoughts continuously guided towards heaven, our true home, of which the earth is nothing but a reflection. We shall keep serene and calm facing any events, being happy or sad, as it corresponds to a christian, and more to a soul formed with special care by the school of suffering. In all this, be always motivated by faith and christian hope, and, by conducting yourself that way, the Father in heavens will make the bitterness of the test sweeter with the comfort of his kindness and of his mercy. And it is to this kindness and to this mercy by the celestial Father to which the pious and good angel of faith invites us and motivates us to go with an insisting and humble prayer, having strong hope of being heard, because we trust on the promise made by the divine Teacher: "Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, call and the door will be opened...Because everything you will ask to the Father in my name will be given to you". Yes, let us always pray in the serenity of our faith, in the tranquility of the soul, because cordial and fervent prayer penetrates the heavens, and it embodies divine reassurance in itself.

Page 194

I know how saddened you are by not being able to correct your imperfections, but lift your spirits, my beloved children, and remember what I have told you so many times about this: that you have to abandon yourself with the same intensity to both the practice of fidelity to God and to the practice of humility. Fidelity, to renew your promises of serving God with the same frequency with which you break such promises, so that, bearing that in mind, you will not break them in the future. Humility, when you realize that you have broken your promises, so that you can recognize your misery and your wretchedness. Keep your heart in great care so that they are purified according to the number and the motivations you receive. Raise your soul frequently to God, read good books as often as possible, but with much devotion. Be good in prayer, meditation and in examining your conscience several times per day. (Not dated, to the seminarists)

(September 7th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

No matter how big the test is to which the Lord submits you, no matter how unbearable the desolation of the spirit is in certain times of your life, never lose hope. Resort with the most filial abandonment to Jesus, who will not remain without granting you a drop of food and consolation. Seek Him always, even when the devil, to make the days of your life bitter, will remind you of your sins. Raise your voice to Him loudly, the voice of humility of the spirit, the voice of the contrition of the heart and the voice of the prayer of the lips. During these situations, Raffaelina, it is impossible for God not to look at you pleased, for him not to provide, for him to give up. The power of God, and this is true, conquers it all, but humble prayer that comes from suffering conquers even God, it stops His arm, it calms His wrath, it unarms Him, it defeats Him, it satiates Him, and it turns him, one could say, in one who is dependent and in a friend. If all men could experience in themselves this great secret of Christian life, taught by Jesus with facts and with words, what a blossom of sanctity they would experience in themselves, the way Zacchaeus, the publican of the temple, Magdalene, Saint Peter, many illustrious remorseful, and many pious Christians experienced! They would learn right away about this secret. By this means they would arrive very soon to the defeat of the God's justice, to satiate it even if it were very firm against them, they could change that justice of God into loving mercy, they could obtain everything they needed: the forgiveness of sins, grace, sanctity, eternal salvation, and the strength to fight and to defeat themselves and all their enemies.

(April 10th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Do not doubt the divine providence, trust in God, abandon yourself in Him, let Him care for you entirely, and rest assured that you will not be confused. I understand and I know that the test is difficult and that the battle is rough, but I also understand that the fruit, which you will receive in due time, is very abundant. The crown that awaits you in heaven is much larger than anything we could ever imagine. (...) Judge me as you wish, but what I require of you is that, as the tests increase, your abandonment and your trust in God grow bigger as well. Become every time more anchored in humility and in praising the Lord, who gifts you, by his mercy, with his visits in a manner that you become part of the construction of the celestial Zion.

(April 10th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Let me repeat to you that you should always trust, the soul cannot fear anything if it trusts in its Lord and if it has hope in Him. The enemy of our salvation is always circling around us to tear from our heart the anchor that should lead us to salvation, which is the trust in God our Father. We should hold, and very tightly, such an anchor. We should never allow it to abandon us even if for an instant, because otherwise everything would be lost. Repeat always, and especially during the most troubled moments, the most beautiful words of Job: "Lord, even if you must kill me, I will hope in you". Remain always vigilant and don't be arrogant thinking that you can do something good, or being better or even like others, but rather believe that others are better than you. The enemy, Raffaelina, defeats those who are arrogant but does not defeat those who are humble of heart.

(July 16th, 1917, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lams)

How could I convey to you what I feel? Trust me when I tell you that this is precisely the highest point of my internal martyrdom. I live in a continuous night where the darkness is most dense. I wish for light, but this light never comes. And, if there is ever a faint beam of light, which is very rare, it makes the soul desperately wish for sunshine. And such wishes are so strong and intense that, very frequently, they make me agonize and melt of love for God, finding myself about to faint. All of this I experience without intention and without me doing anything to wanting it. Most of the time, all of this happens to me when I am not praying and when I am busy with other irrelevant activities. I wish I did not feel this, because I realize that, when these are so intense, the physical part of me suffers tremendously and, due to this, I am very afraid that it might not be good for me. At every moment I feel like I am dying, and I would like to die in order not to feel the hand of God which gravitates over my spirit. What is this? How should I behave to leave such a deplorable state? Is it God who acts over me or is it someone else who acts over me? I ask that you please speak to me with clarity, as always, and to please explain how all this is possible.

(July 16th, 1917, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

There are moments in which I am attacked by severe temptations against my faith. I am certain that the will does not accept them, but fantasy is so awake and temptation, which circles around the mind, presents itself with such clear colors, displaying sin as something not only indifferent but pleasant. From such moments also emerge all those thoughts of discouragement, distrust, despair and even -do not fear, father, I beg of you - a thought of blasphemy. I am horrified in front of so much struggle, I shake and always try hard, and I am sure that it is due to the grace of God that I do not fail. Add to all this, the dark scene of my past life, in which I see nothing but misery and my ungratefulness towards God. I feel that my spirit breaks in pain, and the greatest confusion invades me completely. For this reason, I feel as if I were under the heaviest pressure and all my bones were broken and separated from each other. And this terrible operation, I feel it not only in the deepest part of my spirit, but also in my body. It is also during this time that I fear that perhaps it is not God the author of such an odd phenomenon, because, if it were Him, how would the physical chaos be explained? I don't know if this is possible.

(July 16th, 1917, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

The doubt that invades me always and follows me everywhere is that of not knowing if what I do pleases God or not. It is true that about this topic, you have talked to me many times, but what should I do if, when I am submitted to this difficult test, I forget everything, and even if I remember, I don't remember anything with precision, and everything is confusing? I beg you to please tell me once again in writing. Besides, God becomes more agitated in my mind, and I see him in the heavens of my soul, which becomes covered by dense clouds. I see him nearby and I also see him very far. And when such instances increase , God becomes more intimate and I feel him, but these experiences also make me feel him every time more far. Oh God of mine! What a very strange thing this is!

(February 28th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

What produces such desolation in your spirit is a most special grace, which God grants only to the souls he wishes to elevate to the mystic union. It is exactly that, dear Raffaolina. If I am not mistaken, the poor soul that experiences this grace, feels fear and horror. Such a grace is a very simple, splendid, and clear light which, when penetrating the poor soul, finding it without warning and not ready to receive it, produces in it exactly what you are feeling at this moment. To give you proof or better, a comparison, although it has nothing to do with the topic, think of an individual who suffers from an illness of the eyes. Such an individual, when looking at the light, suffers and he could accuse the sun of being an enemy of the eyes. Now, look at the sun, in general terms everyone prefers it to darkness, everyone says that the sun is good, is ideal, however, someone who is ill of the eyes prefers darkness to light, to the sun, and he would feel tempted to accuse the sun of being his greatest enemy. (...) I could conclude that the same happens to the soul, which is penetrated by such a light, it finds itself almost ill and unable to receive such supernatural light and, as a consequence, the poor soul, attacked by the light, is fearful, is terrorized in itself, its power, memory, intelligence and will. And, even if in an indirect way, such fears are also experienced by the interior senses of the body. But later, when the soul, little by little, heals itself of its inability, it starts to soon feel the health effects of this new grace.

(April 25th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

The most sweet Jesus would love to grant peace to all afflicted hearts. I sincerely confess, without a doubt, dearest daughter of Jesus, that my soul can say, along with the apostle Paul, that, unfortunately, I do not possess even a thousandth of the spirit of charity that burned in the heart of this holy apostle: "How I wish I could be myself sacrificed, dedicated as anathema to Christ, for my brothers and sisters". How I wish that our most sweet Lord could excommunicate me, separate me from him, so that I could see myself abandoned and in the arms of rejections, suffering, and the pains of my brothers and sisters. I wish that He could erase me even from the book of life, if I could save my brothers and sisters, my companions in exile, and I wish that he would not deny me his mercy and his grace, from which nothing will ever take me apart. Do pray to the Lord so that he will quiet down such desires of mine that burn my insides and that make me die continuously.

(April 25th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

You anguish due to the ungratefulness of men towards God, and you do well when crying for their misery. Do offer to God as reparation your blessings and all your actions and try to be good. But, after crying in secret for the misery of those who were stubborn in their perdition, it would be convenient to imitate our Lord and the apostles, maintaining your spirit away from such misery and guiding it towards other purposes and other activities that are more useful to the glory of God and to the salvation of souls. "It was necessary -say the apostles when talking to the Jews - to first talk about the word of God to you, but because you reject it and you yourselves do not believe to be worthy of eternal life, we have to talk to the gentile". "It will be taken away from you -said the divine Teacher in the Holy Gospel - to give it to a nation that will produce fruits". Therefore, stopping to reflect for too long to condemn those who have stubbornly remained in sin would be a waste of time, time that is essential to seek the salvation of other brothers and sisters and to work for the glory of God.

(March 4th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

sincerely and purely in their hearts, his three times fold most lovingly invitation: "My yoke is soft, and my better, in this growth within you of divine mercy. And one could easily say that this new state of yours is a most special gift from the Lord, a gift that He does not grant often but to those strong souls, whose kindness makes them more pleasing to God. Rejoice, thus, also with me, for such illustrious kindness of our good God. Oh, Raffaelina, how sweet and how inspiring it is for a soul to know that, without its own merit, it is elevated by our most sweet Father to such dignity. Open your heart to this Father, the most loving of all fathers, and let him work freely. Let us not be greedy with He who enriches us in excess and who allows us to use our will, never sets boundaries, neither goals, nor limits.

(March 4th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

mercy, which is the link to Christian perfection. In every event of life do recognize God's will, venerate it and bless it. Do this especially in things that are more difficult to achieve, and do not anxiously try to be freed from such things. Therefore, more than ever, try to focus your thoughts on God in heaven and tell him: "Both my life and my death are in your hands, do with me as you please". During spiritual tribulations repeat: "Lord, God of my heart, only you know and read well the heart of your creatures, only you know all my suffering, only you know that all my pain comes from my fear of losing you, of offending you, of the fear that I have of not loving you as you deserve, and I should and I desire to love you. You, for whom everything is present and who is the only one who foresees the future, if you know what is best for your glory and for my salvation, if I am in this state, let it be this way, I do not wish to be freed, grant me the strength to fight and to achieve the rewards of the souls that are strong".

(July 24th, 1917, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

In my prayers and at holy mass I continuously ask for many favors for your soul, and I ask especially to the holy and divine love. This love is all for us, it is our honey, my dear father, honey in and with which all our affections, actions and sufferings should be sweetened. My good Lord! My good father, how much happiness there is in our interior kingdom, when this holy love reigns there! How joyful are the faculties of our soul when they obey such a wise king! Under his obedience and in his Kingdom, He will not allow serious sins or any affection towards venial ones. It is true that He often allows souls to get close to the border so that they become familiar with the battle of internal virtues and to make such souls more courageous. He also allows spies, which are venial sins and imperfections, to run around his Kingdom, but this is only to let us know that, without his help, we would become prey for our enemies.

(July 24th, 1917, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Let us humble ourselves profoundly, my good father, and confess that, if God were not our armor and our shield, we would immediately be wounded by all kinds of sins. And this is the reason why we should always remain in God, persevering in our practice of mercy, this should be our constant concern. The flame of mercy should remain always lit in our heart, and we should never become discouraged. And if we ever become weak or shaken in our spirit, let us run under the feet of Jesus at the cross, let us offer ourselves among celestial perfumes, and, without a doubt, we will be strengthened. At the holy mass I always present your heart to the Father in heavens and to the celestial Son. He, due to this union in which I present the offerings, cannot reject that heart. I do not doubt, my dear father, that you, on your part, do the same. (...) The tests in my spirit continue to be more intense. But praise be to God! who, even in the midst of such tests, does not allow the soul to become lost. One suffers but I am certain that, in the middle of suffering and in the complete darkness that my spirit is continuously submerged, my hope does not decrease.

(May 13th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Let us be vigilant so that the enemy does not find a way to slip into our spirit and thus contaminate the temple of the Holy Spirit. Let us not forget, not even for an instant, this great truth, let us keep in mind that, by baptism, we are the temple of the living God, and that every time that our spirit gives up to the world, the devil, and the flesh, to which by baptism we have renounced, we desecrate this holy temple of God. Let your soul escape all shadows of imperfection that would allow these three capital enemies to penetrate your heart: ever resist their attacks, always maintaining a fervent faith which should be strengthened by a living and generous mercy.

(May 13th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

It is clear to me that our enemies are strong, very strong, but the soul that fights along Jesus, cannot doubt that it will achieve victory! Is not our God the strongest of all? Who could offer him resistance? Who could oppose his rules, his wishes? Has he not promised to all that no one will ever be tempted above his or her own strength? Is he not someone who fulfills his promises? Could there ever be a soul that could think such? Yes, there is one, and do you want to know who that is? It is the soul of the stupid, of the fool: "The fool says to himself: there is no God (the true God)". Raffaelina, it is also an idiot, the man who sins because of his disbelief, because of his lack of trust. And you, more than anyone, have had, not one, but infinite confirmations of such divine promise. These confirmations are as many as the victories over the enemies that your soul has. Without divine mercy, would you have been able to overcome so many crises and so many battles, to which your spirit was subjected? Therefore, open your spirit every time more to divine hope, trust more in divine mercy, which is the sole refuge of the soul that is exposed to gusts in a tempest sea, humble yourself to the mercy of our God, who is always ready to rescue and shelter the soul which, in the sincerity of its heart, confesses his nullity to Him.

(November 4th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Had the mercy of God not shined on you and had it not attracted you towards Him, you would have been like the fool who, after an entire night walking by the bank of a river without being aware of it, due to dense darkness around him, when seeing the light that alerts him of the danger in which he was, despising the light, continues on the same path, defying danger. Fool! The shore could disappear anytime under his feet, and he would fall and drown. You too walked, for a good part of the night, on the path of the abyss, but the mercy of Jesus was so powerful that it did not only shine on you and alerted you of the real danger in which you had been until that moment, but it also wanted to do more for you: to attract you towards Him, without depriving you of your free will, by the power of love. You felt this powerful love and you could not do anything but give up. Jesus could have behaved just like the light did with that foolish one: but no, his mercy wanted you for him. Carefully watch the loving ways in which this good Father works: ever since , with admirable affection, he has not left you even for an instant. He is always by your side, he governs in you, he cares for you, he holds you, for your will not to succumb to enemies that attack you from all sides.

(June 8th, 1915, to Raffaeline Cerase)

Do correspond in the most possible way to the voice of Jesus which makes you hear: "Suffer", and do not despair if you feel like frequently seeking for a Cyrene to help you carry the cross, if nature screams asking for consolation and if you feel, because of that reason, that your love towards God is neither sincere nor perfect. There is a trick here. Even the humanity of Jesus, in its agony voluntarily accepted, prayed to be taken away from the cup, and of that, would you conclude, without bearing the stigma of desolation, that the love of Jesus for his Father of heavens was less perfect and less sincere? I will let you get to the answer. Sometimes the spirit is ready, but the flesh is weak, but God wants the spirit above anything. Cling to it, thus, every time with a stronger will, with the highest of your spirit, and let nature feel hurt, let it burn, let it claim its rights, because there is nothing for it that is more natural than that. And if today nature is also subjected to suffering, such does not correspond to it by itself or naturally, because nature was made for happiness, but suffering belongs to it as punishment because of its guilt.

(June 8th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Which prisoner, when being tortured, although knowing to deserve it, would not feel the pain and torture and would not ask to be freed from such? Do remember this always, which is a general and sure rule: that God, while testing us with his crosses and with sufferings, always leaves in our spirit a beam of light, through which we can always maintain great trust in Him, and which makes us see His immense mercy. I therefore encourage you to totally fall in front of the cross that heaven presents to you, and to maintain unlimited trust in divine mercy. Raffaelina, God loves you and he loves you very much, and you correspond this love in the best way you can. He does not wish for anything more, and you should trust, wait, humble yourself to divine actions, and love.

(March 8th, 1918, to the Ventrella sisters)

Keep at your goals, stay in the ship in which the Lord has placed you, even when the storm comes. Praise be to Jesus! You all will not succumb. He will sleep but, in the precise moment, he will wake up to grant you calm again. Our Saint Peter, the scripture says, looking at the terrible storm, was so scared and, shaking, exclaimed: "Lord, save me". And our Lord, taking him by the hand, said to him: "Man of little faith, why are you scared?". Take note, dear daughters, about this holy apostle: he walks frail over the water, the waves and the winds would not know how to drown him, but the fear of the winds and waves discourage him. Fear is an evil greater than fear itself. Daughters of little faith, what do you fear? Do not be afraid, walk over the sea among the winds and the waves, and do remember that you are with Jesus. What reasons do you have to be afraid? But if fear takes over you, scream with all your strength: Lord, save us! He will extend his hand, hold it tightly and walk with joy. In conclusion, do not over think about your faults, do not disobey, move forward with sincerity. No, God would not know how to forget about you, when you, in order not to lose him, persist in your goals. Let the world burn, be in darkness, in smoke, in commotion, but God is with you all. What, then, could we fear? If God is among darkness and on Mount Sinai, among lightning and thunder, should we not be happy knowing that we are near Him?

(January 2nd, 1918, to Antonietta Vona)

Dear daughters, live in peace, follow the path which God has set for us, and try with all diligence to maintain Jesus holy satisfied and pleased. He suffers for our love the abandonment of the Father, and by whom He, the Father of heaven, has wanted you to be accompanied. And the same way in which the bee carefully makes the honey of divine devotion, do work on the wax of household tasks. Because if one of these elements brings sweetness that pleases Christ, who while living in the world, as the scriptures say, survived on lard and honey, wax signifies most glory because it is good for the candles lit for the edification of others. God, who, with special care has taken you by the hand, shall guide you to the harbor of eternal salvation, let us trust in Him without fear.

(March 25th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

There are moments when I feel that I am dying, and it is truly a miracle of divine mercy that I continue to live. I die every instant: I feel crucified by love. It should be delightful -despite myself - but, what do you expect? My spirit is still hungry for ordinary nourishment. I spend, especially during the night, moments of extreme anguish, seeing the test that put me at risk of losing absolutely everything. This period of most severe mortification and test, added to the already regular mortifications and tests, believe me, dear Raffaelina, often oppresses me and I feel crushed under such a tremendous weight. Sometimes I believe it is divine punishment for my countless infidelities to the divine kindness of the divine Majesty, and thus any prayers seem useless. Unfortunately, I deserve to be punished, but is it possible that the mercy of the Father of heavens be defeated by my malignity? No, this will never happen. Praise be Jesus! He is with us, and we shall not fear anything.

(August 21st, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I become desperate at everything, but never at He who is life, truth, and path. And I ask Him everything and I abandon myself to Him, because He was and is everything to me. What would be of me, my Goodness! I would be yours forever had I known how to give in to your appealing compliments, but it is good that I finally gave in to what I did not want to subject. It is good that I gave in to this sad but always true truth, which is the one and only that is offered to me: that I could lose you forever. Dear father, do not scream at me, I am out of control, and I am convinced by what I see and feel. My hopeless efforts to hold on to what my guide tells me and to obedience lead me to a situation of complete fear and despair, although I reject them and struggle them at their first attack.

(August 21st, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I will not cease to scream for help, but, oh God, has this paternal help been in vain once again for this blind man who forever suffers from death and blindness? I feel like asking to please keep such help to someone who knows how to make good use of it. I feel very strongly the weight of the responsibility due to its value. Perhaps the help is not useless because my case is truly a desperate one? It overly confuses me to confirm that there exists every time more contradiction between the hostile light that my spirit projects and that soft light that you, my guide, offer me. I verify this truth in me: that I almost do not have any strength to keep at the fight, I die of hunger before a table abundantly served, I burn from thirst under a fountain filled with pure water...what else? The light blinds me before shining on me. How is this possible? I am tired of making the guide tired. The advice and the sole obedience serve me as support so that I don't let myself to complete abandonment. In virtue of such obedience, I decide to manifest to you what occurred to me since the Fifth in the afternoon and during the entire Sixth of this month.

(August 21st, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I am not able to describe what took place during this period of such intense martyrdom. I was giving confession to our young men in the afternoon of the Fifth, when I was terrorized by the view of a celestial being, which was presented to me before the eyes of the intellect. It was holding some kind of harness, like a very long sheet of iron with a very sharp end from where fire was coming out. To see all of this and to observe how this character was violently throwing such a harness to the soul was indescribable. I could hardly cry, I felt like dying. I told a young man to leave because I was not feeling well, and I had no strength to continue. This suffering continued, without interruption, until the morning of the Seventh. I would not be able to express what I experienced during this painful period. I could see that even my insides were torn and stretched by that harness and that everything was pierced by iron and fire. Since that day I have been fatally wounded. I feel, in the most profound of my soul, a wound that is always open and that makes me feel continuously anxious. Is this not a new punishment given to me by divine justice? Assess for yourself how much truth there is in this affirmation and whether I have all reason to fear and live in extreme anguish.

(October 17th, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

My goodness, where are you? Where are you hiding? Where could I find you again? Where could I look for you? Don't you see, dear Jesus, that my soul, be as it be, wishes to feel you? It looks for you everywhere, but you only let it find you in the intensity of your fire, filling the soul with the greatest disturbance and bitterness when it understands what it gives you and what it is that you deserve. Who could express the severity of my situation?! What I understand from the reflection of your light I cannot express in human words, and when I intend to say anything while stuttering, the soul realizes that it has been wrong and that what had been said does not correspond at all to the truth of the facts. My goodness, have you deprived me of you forever? I feel like screaming and lamenting with all my voice, but I am too weak, and strength is no longer with me. In the meantime, what else could I do rather than to elevate this cry to your throne: My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?...

(October 17th, 1918, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

My soul is totally devoted to my evident misery! My God, allow me to stand such a sad spectacle, let your beam of light get away from me, because I cannot stand such evident contrast. Dear father, I see all my evil and my ungratefulness in all its magnitude. I see my old man hidden, wounded in himself, who seems to want to give absence to God, denying him all his rights, when giving them to Him is his first obligation. How difficult it is to remove him from there! Oh God, come soon to my rescue, because I am afraid of myself, an evil and ungrateful creature towards its creator, who protects it from all its powerful enemies! I did not know how to benefit from your wonderful favors, and now I see myself condemned to live in my inability, hunched in myself, lost, while your hand crushes me every time harder. Poor me! Who will free me from myself? Who will release me from this body of death? Who will extend a hand so that I don't see myself wrapped and devoured by the immense and deep ocean? Would I have to resign myself to being trapped by the storm that oppresses every time more? Will it be necessary to pronounce the let it be done when facing the mysterious character who left me totally wounded, and who does not give up in its tough, rough, sharp and piercing performance, and who, without letting time for cauterization of earlier wounds, is already opening in them new wounds with infinite tearing of the poor victim? Oh, dear father, come to my rescue, I beg you! My entire inside bleeds, and frequently, the eyes must be resigned to see the bleeding also on the outside. Please cease in me this tearing, this condemnation, this humiliation, this confusion! I have no strength to be able and to know how to resist.

(January 18th, 1918, to the seminarists)

In Rome, I saw a tree that was said to have been planted by the patriarch Saint Domingo. Many go to see it because of their devotion and they caress it because it was planted by the Saint. The same way, having seen in you the tree of the desire for sanctity, which God himself has planted in your souls, I love it tenderly. Thinking of him, I become happier now than when you were here. Therefore, I encourage you wish to protect it from the annoying wind, which throws all fruits to the ground, where uninvited beasts devour them. My most beloved children, this desire should be in you like the oranges on the shore of Genoa which, as those who have seen them tell, remain almost all year full of fruits, flowers, and leaves. Your desires should always bear fruits, should never wish for objects nor advance prematurely in time. Such desires are the flowers of the tree of your efforts, the leaves are the repeated accepting of your weaknesses, which support both good deeds and good intentions.

(August 9th, 1912, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

My soul is wounded of love for Jesus, it is ill of love. I continuously experience the bitter pain of a flame that burns but does not consume. Please tell me, if possible, the remedy for the current state of my soul. Let me provide a short description of how Jesus works on me. Like a mountain stream that carries anything on its path to the depths of the oceans, my soul, which has drowned in the ocean without the shores of the love of Jesus, without merit and without being able to explain, brings behind it all the treasures of Jesus. While I write, dear father, where does my mind fly? To the beautiful day of my ordination. Tomorrow, the feast of Saint Lawrence, is also the day of my own feast. I have already started to experience, once again, the joy of such a holy day for me. Since this morning, I have started to love paradise... And how would it be when we enjoy it eternally? I start to compare the peace of the heart that I felt that day with the peace of the heart that I start to experience on the eve of the anniversary of that holy day and I find no difference at all. The day of Saint Lawrence was the day my heart was burning with love for Jesus. Oh, how happy I was! Oh, how much joy I felt that day!

(May 31st, 1918, to the Campanile sisters)

remain in the Heart of Jesus, but it also feels a burning desire to do charity for others, which makes the soul melt of love. But how is all this possible? Dear daughter, this is not difficult to understand, because the soul, not living anymore from its own life but living from Jesus, who lives in it, should feel, want and live out of the same feelings, wishes and life that He li ves. And you know well, my dearest daughter, although you have learned it late, from which feelings and which wishes, towards God and humanity, the Heart of this divine Teacher is and was motivated. Let your soul also be melted of love for God and for others who do not wish to know anything about Him, because that is where the most joy of God lies. Live in peace and live your suffering in peace.

(December 30th, 1921, to Graziella Pannullo)

I hope that the day on which you enjoy the joy of heaven is not far, walking to Assisi, the Franciscan city, an eloquent symbol of great love and of the infinite charity of Saint Father S. Francis. Yes, I am certain that one day, not far away, I will receive the news that you have kneeled there, at the devout and small temple of Saint Porciuncula, beat up by the pass of time, where, as the good admirer of the Franciscan work tells, Madam Henrion, the kisses of the devout, throughout seven centuries of religious admiration, have polished it, as it happens to rudimentary walls turned into marble and alabaster. Oh, how the heart of the devout pilgrim beats when he diligently stops to pray! Each dark brick gathers the history of thousands and thousands of souls which, in trusting abandonment, have rested their heads and the anguishes of their lives. The pilgrim kneels there instinctively, and, in divine silence, feels that a most soft blessing fly over him. And the infinite and sweet prayer resonates, passes, and will pass, for many centuries: prayers burning for the love of saints, holocausts of the purest victims, tears of the redeemed. How great and sweet it is, in the Church of Jesus, the dogma of the communion of saints! This is no doubt the door to eternal life, as it is written at the frontispiece of the small and devout temple of Porciuncula.

(December 30th, 1921, to Graziella Pannullo)

Remembering the marvels of those days, it comes to my memory the eldest daughter of the Angelic Father, there, in the deep and solemn silence of the frugal kitchen, Saint Clare, with its humble and mortified daughters, who, at the cadence of poverty, sing the short and clear notes of renounce and sacrifice. The sisters walk to their posts, raise their minds to the Lord and await in peace... Then the crystal -clear voice of mother Saint Clare sings the Benedicite . The virginal hand raises, slowly and solemnly, to bless with a serious and miraculous gesture. On one occasion, there was no more than one piece of bread in the monastery, and it was time for dinner. Hunger stung the stomachs of the poor sisters who, even having succeeded in everything, could not permanently forget about the pressing needs of life. Sister Cecilia, the pantry aid, in a dire moment, resorted to go see the saint abbess, who asked her to break the bread in half, send one to the brothers who cared for the monastery, and keep the other half. She asked her to break that half in fifty pieces , as many as sisters there were, and give each her share at the table of poverty. The devout daughter then told her that ancient miracles of Jesus were needed for such small bread to be divided into fifty portions, and the mother replied: dear daughter, do as I tell you with trust. The obedient daughter went on to obediently follow the maternal order and Mother Clare hurried to pray to Jesus in favor of her daughters. And, by divine grace, the small bread grew in the hands of the one who broke it, and every sister received an abundant portion.

(December 30th, 1921, to Graziella Pannullo)

On another occasion, the servant of the Lord (Saint Clare) did not have oil, and she could not prepare dinner for the sisters who were ill. Saint Clare, teacher of humility, took the container, washed it, and placed it in the hole in the wall destined for that purpose, so that the brother who collected donations could pick it up. Later, she called him so that he could go look for oil. Brother Bentivenga hurried to help the poor sisters. But before he arrived, the container was found full of oil, by divine mercy, which had received the prayer of Saint Clare, who was obedient to the orders of the Saint Father (Saint Francis) who was always concerned about the needs of his poor daughters. The good brother, thinking that they had called him in vain, believed that they had called him to mock him, because the container was full. They looked around to see who could have brought the oil, but they could not find anyone around. This way, the Lord miraculously rescued those who had abandoned everything for Him, and obediently followed the will of His wife, who begged with a pure heart and with a faith that can move mountains. We too shall ask our dear Jesus with humility, with the same trust and faith of our dear Saint. Like her, we should pray to Jesus with devotion, abandoning ourselves to him, keeping away from the lying world, where everything is craziness and vanity, and everything happens. Only God remains for the soul if it has known how to love him well.

(December 1919, to the Campanile sisters)

Do not fear when you feel insensitive during meditation, prayer, other practices of charity, if you feel still linked to creatures, if you still experience the fight between the old man and the new man, if you find yourself surrounded by weaknesses, because, having all against your will, not only you are not guilty of such, but all of this represents for you a source for merits. These are the tests of the soul that God loves by choice and which he wants to test when he sees this soul has the necessary strength to maintain the fight and can knit the crown of glory with its own hands.

(August 15th, 1916, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Who could thank you the way you deserve for your tireless advice, always optimal, which you have granted to me until now? I lack appropriate words to do that, but the heart can cover everything. The chosen souls and I accompany you everywhere with fervent and continuous prayer to Jesus. All of us share with you your most bitter situation, each one of us lives our own life, and all of us await with cries the happiest moment in which the most sweet Lord will allow us to hug him once again. Have courage, dear father! That day will arrive soon, and it will be when we least expect it. That beautiful day is near, and blessed are the souls which would scream with joy: "It is the Lord who has said it". We will all unite with them to sing this eternal song of praise to God, such a day will seem "miraculous to our eyes", because of the triumph of justice over evil. Such a beautiful day, which is soon to come, cannot be other than the work of God, and God will make it happen for the resurrection of many and for the triumph of his glory. Let us thank God! All the souls that you well know walk "in sanctity and in justice in the presence of the Lord". Let us praise God for all of this.

(August 15th, 1916, to San Marco in Lamis)

What could I tell you about me? I am a mystery even to myself. And, if I resist, it is because the good God has reserved the last and the safest word to the authority on this earth, in the sense that there is no safest rule than the will and the desire of the highest. I abandon myself to such authority like a child in the arms of his mother, and I hope and trust in God that I will not err, even if my feelings make me believe completely the contrary. Dear father, when will the sunshine on the horizon of my soul? Poor me! I find myself lost in the high and profound night that I experience. I would rather not talk to you about this because this is unimportant to me, and the only thing I wish is for God to come give me a last blow.

(July 29th, 1920, to Girolama Longo)

Is the bitterness of love sweet and its weight soft, because, as you say, you have no way to stand it when feeling such immense passion? Your heart is small, but it is capable of dilating. But do not fear when it can no longer contain the greatness of the Loved One and when it can no longer resist its immense intensity, because He is inside and outside, and, when pouring inside, He will sustain the walls of your heart. Like an open shell in the ocean, you will drink until satiation and will be surrounded by an abundance much higher than your heart's capacity. Soon you will no longer be inexperienced to the new bursts of Love, and its attacks will not seem unsustainable anymore. Trained to the known darts of Love, you will call it to battle, and you will fight, like Jacob with the angel, without ever being defeated.

(November 16th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Blessed be God always, He who only knows to work great wonders in a soul which always opposes Him, a soul that is recipient of infinite filth: He has wished to make of me an example of grace, He wishes to make me a model to the eyes of all sinners, so that no one would become discouraged. Do guide, then, all sinners, your eyes towards me, the worst of all sinners, and do hope in God. Sinners, set your attention on me, the most wicked, be hopeful and do not despair regarding your salvation, because the Lord has not only forgiven my sins, but has also wished to enrich me with the most precious graces. (...) Forgive me, a fool by love for his God speaks, and he deserves your compassion.

(March 8th, 1915, to Annita Rodote)

and call on their hearts so that the devout do not become colder or slow down the pace on their paths still and again, we cry to the divine Teacher: "The harvest is great, and the workers are few".

(January 18th, 1918, to the seminarists)

I encourage you, my most beloved children, to care for your hearts with every effort. Try to maintain peace, controlling your temper. I am not telling you to, and listen carefully, to keep peace, but am saying to try to keep it: make this your important desire. And it should become a reason for concern when you cannot control the diversity of emotions and your temper. Do learn well about the meaning of the cloister so that you are not fooled. The cloister is the academy of needed correction in which the soul should learn and allow to be molded, brushed and polished, so that, after being well polished and straightened, could join and adapt to the will of God. The obvious key for perfection is to wish to be corrected, because this is the main fruit of humility, which leads us to realize that we need correction. The cloister is a hospital of spiritual patients, who wish to be healed, and, to achieve it, they submit to bleeding, scalpel, knife, iron, fire and to all inconveniences of medicine. In the primitive Church, religious people were called by a name that meant doctor. Dear children, be doctors as well, and do not listen to what self-love could suggest to the contrary. And, sweetly, kindly, and lovingly, take this decision: either die or be healed. And, because you do not wish to die spiritually, do choose healing. To heal, you should accept to go through the process and to heal, and you should beg the doctors of souls not to deprive you of any means of healing that they could provide. Always be honest with the one who will heal your spiritual illnesses.

(January 18th, 1918, to the seminarists)

A few days ago, I was thinking about what some say about seagulls, small birds that make their nests on the beaches by the sea. They build their nests in a circular way, and it is known that sea water cannot get inside them. On the top of the nest there is an opening, from where air enters. Seagulls keep their chicks there, which can swim and float safely over the waves without getting flooded or drowning. The air they breathe through the opening works as counterweight and as balance, in a way that small sw irls will never turn the nest over. Most beloved children, how I wish that your hearts be in a way that, on the sides they could be sealed, so that, when blows and storms of this world, of the flesh and of the devil surprise you, they could not get inside! And I wish that no other opening exists but the one on the side of heaven, to breath and to wish for our Lord Jesus. And this nest, dear children, for whom would be made? It is made for the little chicks of the one who has done everything for the love of God and who has been guided by his divine and celestial inclinations. But while seagulls build their nests and their c hicks are still too young to stand the blows of the waves, God takes care and feels compassion for them, making sure that the ocean does not drown them.

(October 18th, 1917, to the Campanile sisters)

Live with humility, with kindness, and in love with our celestial Spouse, and do not worry about not being able to remember all your small mistakes to confess them. No, dear daughter, it is not convenient to be sad about this, because just like you fall frequently without realizing, the same way, without you knowing, you stand up. Do remember that during our journey, about which we have talked many times, it is not said that the just man realizes that he has fallen seven times in a day, but that he falls seven times in a day. The same way that he falls seven times, one stands up without thinking about it. Do not let, therefore, this worry you, express with sincerity and humility what you remember, and give it to the sweet mercy of God, who puts his hand under those who fall without malice, so that they are not hurt. And He makes them stand and encourages them so rapidly that they do not realize that they have fallen, because the divine hand has picked them up when they fell. They do not realize they have stood up either, because they have been picked up so very quickly that they were not able to think about it.

(August 26th, 1912, to Fr Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Last Friday I was at church giving thanks after mass, when I felt pain in my heart as if by a dart of fire, so real and so burning that I felt like dying. I lack the appropriate words to make you understand the intensity of such a flame. I am completely incapable of expressing this. Do you believe me? My soul, victim of such a consolation, becomes mute. I felt like an invisible force submerged me totally in fire. My God, how much fire! How sweet! I have experienced so many of such journeys of love, and many times I have stayed away from our world. Sometimes there was fire, but it was less intense. This time instead, for one more instant, for just another second, my soul would have separated from my body...it would have left with Jesus. How beautiful it is to become a victim of love!

(January 23rd, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Unfortunately, you have all reasons to be afraid if you wish to face the battle with your strengths but knowing that Jesus does not leave you alone even for an instant should serve you as great consolation. God himself tells us that He is with those who suffer and are in tribulation: "With him I am in tribulation", that He lowers himself to dry the tears of the eyes of he who suffers. Be consoled then, thinking that, after such dense darkness, a beautiful midday sun will shine, and you will contemplate with such a light our celestial Spouse with a very simple and pure gaze. Do not imagine, dear sister, that you have been abandoned by the Lord and that there is no salvation for you. Reject that feeling which comes from our common enemy.

(September 28th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Pray constantly, and that way, you will conquer our enemies. Humble yourself under the powerful hand of the celestial doctor and, therefore, at the wedding banquet that will be celebrated, Jesus will seat you at the first place, because it is God's promise that the one who becomes humble will be praised. Always give most thanks to God, for Jesus Christ, and therefore you will be appropriately granted other favors from heaven, because, on the contrary, it is natural that the one who does not remember previously received favors will not deserve new ones.

(August 15th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Your imagination and the devil would like you to believe that you continuously offend God and that you always or almost always reject divine calls. The vigilant mercy of the Father of heaven keeps you very far from falling into such infidelity. Convince yourself of this that I am telling you. I guarantee to you that such feelings only come from your imagination and from the devil. Be careful not to give them importance, they are not looking for anything else than to make your feelings of affection towards the celestial Spouse become colder, to achieve that you become annoyed by Christian perfection because you think that it is difficult or impossible. And what is worse, they intend in a more direct way to cancel and dim in your heart any feeling of devotion.

(March 29th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

My most beloved daughter in Jesus, if it were up to us, we would always fall and would never be able to stand. Therefore, humble yourself before the most sweet thought of being in the divine arms of Jesus, who is the best of all fathers. Like a small child in the maternal arms, rest at peace, convinced that you are being taken where you will find the most benefit. What could one fear when one is certain of being in such soft arms, and when our entire being is consecrated to God?!

(March 29th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

The fear you claim to feel, due to the sins you have committed, is an illusion and true torment caused by the devil. Moreover, have you not confessed to them already? Therefore, why do you fear? Let that sad soldier leave once and for all, open your heart to Jesus, and filled with a holy and an enlightened trust, believe that He is not that cruel judge like that maker of inequity tells you, and believe that he is the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, interceding with indescribable cries for our salvation.

(March 29th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

It is wrong to wish to convince you that, as you say, you have been rejected by Jesus. Trust in Him and do not fear, because you do not have any reason to do that. It is not abandonment, but love what our most sweet Savior shows you, and I do not have the appropriate feelings to thank the kindness of our Lord, who lovingly treats you and protects you. The evil one wishes to convince you that you are a victim of his attacks and of divine abandonment. Do not believe that, because he wishes to trick you. Reject him in the name of Jesus and of the most holy Mother. And never abandon you to yourself, put all your trust only in God, wait to receive all strength from Him and do not proudly wish to be freed from the current situation. Let the Holy Spirit work on you. Abandon yourself to all its actions and do not fear. The Holy Spirit is so wise, soft, and discreet to do nothing but good. Oh, how good the Paraclete Spirit is with everyone, and even more with you who seeks it!

(September 4th, 1910, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

By the will of God, I continue to feel ill. But what makes me suffer the most are sharp and severe pain in the chest. At some moments, this makes me feel so bad that I feel that the pain wants to break my back and my chest. But Jesus, from time to time, makes my pain sweeter: he makes my heart softer. Yes, dear father, how good Jesus is with me! How beautiful these moments are! This is a joy that I would not know how to compare, it is a joy that the Lord lets me taste only during suffering. During such moments, more than at any other time, the entire world bores me and weighs on me. I do not wish for anything more than to love and suffer. Yes, dear father, also during such suffering I am happy, because I can feel my heart beating along with the heart of Jesus. Imagine then, the immense consolation of the heart that knows, in a certain manner, that it possesses Jesus.

(September 4th, 1910, to Fr Benedettto da San Marco in Lamis)

It is true that the temptations to which I see myself submitted are many, but I trust in divine providence and that I will not fall in the traps of the tempting one. It is also true that Jesus frequently hides, but what does it matter! I, helped by you, will always seek to be close to Jesus, because you have assured me that these are not abandonments but rather trickeries of love. How I would wish to have someone to help me to calm the anxiety and the flames that worry my heart in such moments!

(April 10th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Forget what the enemy persistently whispers to your soul, wishing that you believe that you are close to getting lost. Reject such malicious insinuations and live at peace, because the Lord is even more with you during tribulations. The Holy Scriptures also assure us that a soul in tribulation is linked to God: "With it I am, says God, during tribulations". Have courage, then, and do not fear, because it is also true that the soul that fears to get lost does not get lost, and the one that fights looking at God will claim victory, will sing the hymn of triumph. There is no reason to be afraid, my dear Raffaolina, because the Father in heaven has promised us the necessary help to conquer temptations.

(October 8th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Every time the enemy tries to slash your heart, taking it by surprise with that fear of the past, remember that the past has been forgotten in the ocean of kindness of heaven, and, therefore, focus on the present, in which Jesus is with you and loves you. Think about the future, when Jesus will reward your fidelity and resignation or, better, with all those graces that he has continuously granted and continues to grant you, of which you have certainly never maliciously abused. Therefore, I would like to ask you to, as much as possible (because no one is obligated to do what is impossible), forget all fear and always maintain trust, faith and love. Sister Therese of the Child Jesus said: "We will be judged by love!" Therefore... Let us love Jesus. Let Him act in us as he pleases, knowing that his actions are always guided towards his most glory and towards our greatest sanctification.

(April 11th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Jesus wishes to wake you up, shake you and sift you like wheat, so that your spirit obtains the cleanliness and purity that he desires. Could wheat be kept in the barn if it were not clean of all kinds of darnel or straw? Could linen be kept in the owner's drawer before becoming pure and white? Likewise, this should also happen to the soul that is chosen. I understand that temptations would seem to stain rather than purify the spirit, but this is not true in any way. And what the great Saint Francis tells us should be enough for you, that temptations are like soap that, sprinkled over clothes, they seem to dirty them, but in reality, they clean them.

(September 4th, 1916, to Maria Gargani)

September 4th You should not be scared by the countless temptations that continuously take you by assault, because the Holy Spirit alerts the devout soul that, if it decides to walk by the path of God, it should be ready and prepared for temptation. Therefore, take courage! Because the clear and certain test of a soul chosen for its perfection is temptation, to which the poor little soul will be submitted as a sign of contradiction during the storm. When withstanding difficult times, be motivated by the life of all saints, who were not free of such tests. Temptation does not respect the chosen one. It did not respect the Apostle of people, who, after having been taken in life from paradise, such was the test to which he was subjected, that Satan came to slap him on the face. My God! Who could read those pages without feeling the blood freeze in the veins?! How many tears, how many sighs, how many cries, how many prayers did this holy Apostle raise to heavens, asking the Lord to remove this painful test from him! And what was Jesus received? Not other than: "My mercy is enough...", "Virtue becomes more perfect in sickness, when tested ."

(September 4th, 1916, to Maria Gargani)

Remain strong ! Jesus, through the one he has chosen for your guide, talks to you in the same way that he talked to Saint Paul. Fight like the most courageous one and you will obtain the reward promised to strong souls. Never abandon yourself to just you. In moments in which the battle is most difficult and exhaustion is at its worst, resort to prayer, trust in God and you will never succumb to temptation. Rest assured that, if the Lord gives you a test, he will never allow it to be stronger than your strengths. If the world despises you, be glad, because the first hatred was suffered by the creator of life, the divine Teacher. If you live troubled and anguished by all kinds of injustices, temptations and tests by the devil and his accomplices, raise your eyes to the highest, take courage. The Lord is with you and there is no room for fear. The enemy is at war with you but will never be able to bite you. Fight courageously, fight always against the appetite of the flesh, against the vanities of the world, against the seductions of gold and honors, with which the devil continuously tempts you. It is true that the battle is terrible and that the fight is painful but keep the good spirits! Keep your eyes fixed in heaven, let the merit of triumph motivate you, the indescribable consolation, the immortal glory, that we offer God with our effort.

(September 7th, 1946, to Fr . Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

My current state, dear father , gives much to desire, I feel most afflicted. I see crosses adding to other crosses, sufferings adding to sufferings, and I would not be able to stand on my feet if the immediate intervention of the Father in heaven would not sustain me with his omnipotent arm. Difficult struggles of the spirit add to the physical pain. Most dark clouds are every day denser in the sky of my poor soul. Jesus is always with me, is true, but how painful, dear father, is the test that my soul is subjected by the danger of offending the divine spouse! But praise be always to God! The hope of conquering and triumphing and the decision of continuing to fight never become weaker in me.

(September 7th, 1914, to Fr . Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Infinite thanks be given to the merciful Jesus for having wiped the tears of his Church and for having consoled its widowhood when sending his head of the Church, and because everything has happened according to God's heart. We wish for the new Pope to be a deserving successor of the great pope that Pius X was, a truly good and holy soul, a pope which Rome never had before. A man of the people, he never hid his humble condition. He was indeed the most supreme and good shepherd, the extremely peaceful king, the sweet and merciful Jesus on earth. We will remember the good pontiff, more because we have an intercessor to the Most High than to raise our fervent prayers to heaven for the eternal repose of his holy soul. He has been the first, greatest and most innocent victim of the fratricidal war that made us deaf with weapons and soldiers, and which terrorized all of Europe. He could no longer stand the outbreak of the menacing storm, and his heart, which had been all his life a source of a ministry of peace for the entire world, shattered in pain. There is no doubt that he has left this world only as a result of the great love that burned in his chest. Let us pray, dear father, for the cease of hostilities, let us disarm the hand of the divine judge, justly angry with nations, which want nothing to do with the law of love.

(September 8th, 1911, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Yesterday late, something happened to me which I neither can explain, nor can I understand. In the middle of the palm of my hands appeared a little red spot, almost the size of a coin, along with a strong and sharp pain in the middle of that little red spot. This pain was stronger in the middle of the left hand, so much that it still hurts. I also feel a little pain in my feet. This phenomenon has been repeating for almost a year, although it had not happened to me for a while. Please do not become upset with me for telling you only now, because I was overtaken by terrible shame. And I wish you knew the urgency I have felt to tell you now! I could tell you so many things, but I lack the words. I can only tell you that, when I am in the presence of sacramental Jesus, my heartbeats are very strong. Sometimes I feel like my heart wants to get out of my chest. At the altar, I frequently feel such burning all over my body that I cannot describe. I feel that my face especially wants to be on fire. What are these signs, dear father? I do not know.

(August 4th, 1917, to an unknown female recipient)

Live completely in God, and, for the love that this gives you, patiently accept yourself with all your misery. Remember that to be good servants of God does not mean to be always happy, always in a sweet state, without disgust or rejection of what is good. Because, if it were that way, not even Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Teresa, or Saint Paul would have served the Lord well. To be good servants of God means, on the contrary, to be compassionate with others, to hold on the highest part of the spirit an unbreakable purpose to follow God's will, to have profound humility and simplicity to give oneself to God and to get up as many times as one falls, accepting oneself in one's own limitations and falls, and to stand others with peace in their imperfections.

(November 22nd, 1916, to Maria Gargani)

Self-love never dies before we die. As long as we live in this low world, we have to continuously suffer its sensitive attacks and its secret actions. The grace of God should be enough for us to know that we do not consent with deliberate will. The virtue of indifference is so magnificent that not even the old man, in other words, the man who has been subjected to sin, the sensitive part, or human nature with its natural faculties have ever been capable of achieving this. Not even the Son of God, as son of Adam, and even if exempt from sin and from all evident sin, was completely indifferent in his sensitive part and in his natural faculties. He also expressed to the apostles that his soul was full of sorrow, he also sought consolation, he also wished not to die, in one word, he also wanted to experience everything that is part of human nature. He wished, however, to practice indifference, and we can too, following his example, when tests arrive and we must carry the cross, we should try to practice it in our spirit, on the highest part, among the virtues granted by grace. Be brave, dearest daughter, live completely in our Lord and remain at peace. When you happen to have broken the exigencies of indifference regarding, precisely, indifferent things, due to sudden impulses of self-love and of your passions, as soon as you possible can, lay your heart in front of Jesus and tell him with all trust and humility: "Lord, I ask for your mercy, because I am weak ." Afterwards, get up in peace and remain calm, and with holy indifference continue with your activities. In these situations, it is necessary to behave like a violinist. When he realizes he is out of tune, he doesn't break the string or leave the violin, but rather and right away puts his ear closer to the violin to find out the cause of the mistake, and later, patiently, as necessary, slightly stretches or relaxes the string. Therefore, act in the same way. Do not become impatient with the mistakes you made or wish to break the string when you realize that there is something irregular, but be patient, humble yourself in front of God, sweetly stretch or relax the string of your heart to the celestial Musician, so that He could fix what needs fixing.

(July 25th, 1915, to Annita Rodote)

When attending holy mass and holy functions, let your behavior and posture be at its best when you stand, kneel, sit, and follow all religious practices with the most devotion. Be discreet when looking, do not look at one side or the other to see who comes or who leaves, do not laugh, pay respect to the holy venue and also as a sign of respect to whomever is by your side. Try not to talk to anyone unless charity or an important reason demands it. When praying in a group, enunciate properly every word of a sentence, make every pause, and never rush. In conclusion, behave in a way that the attendees become uplifted, and through you, they could feel motivated to glorify and love the Father in heaven. When leaving the church maintain a devout and peaceful attitude. Pay tribute to the sacramental Jesus first, ask him for forgiveness for the faults committed to his divine presence, and do not leave his side without having first prayed and asked for his paternal blessings.

(September 12th, 1968, to Pope Paul VI)

Your Holiness, I take the opportunity of your meeting with the Capitulant fathers to spiritually join my brothers and to humbly lay under your feet the offer of my affectionate and total devotion to Your Holiness, in an act of faith, love and obedience to the dignity of whom you represent on earth. The Order of Capuchin Friars has always been on the front line of love, fidelity, obedience, and devotion to the Apostolic See . I ask the Lord that it remains always this way and that it continues in its tradition of religious seriousness and austerity, evangelical poverty, loyal observance of the rules and constitutions, even when needing to be renewed in the vitality and in the inner spirit, following the guidance of the Second Vatican Council, in order to be every time more prepared to remedy the needs of mother Church, seconding the indications of Your Holiness. I know that your heart suffers very much these days because of the future of the Church, the lack of peace in the world, the needs of the nations, but especially, for the lack of obedience of some, including Catholics, to the high teachings that You, assisted by the Holy Spirit, grant us in the name of God. I offer to you my daily prayer and my suffering, as a simple but sincere reminder of the least of Your children, so that the Lord can console you with his mercy, to continue on the right and tiring path, in defense of eternal truth, which never changes throughout time. I give you thanks, also in the name of the spiritual children and of the "Groups of prayer ," for the clear and definite word that you have pronounced, especially during the last encyclical *Humanae vitae* , and I reaffirm my faith and my unconditional obedience to your enlightened guidance. earth, health, and prosperity to Your Holiness, in a way that, once these clouds pass, the kingdom of God would triumph in all hearts thanks to Your apostolic action as the supreme Shepherd of all Christianity.

(June 3rd, 1917, to an unknown female recipient)

God commands us to love him, not to the extent and the way that He deserves, because who would know how great our capacity would be, and he would never command us or ask us what we cannot achieve, but he orders us to love him according to our possibilities , with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our heart. Therefore, do you not try hard to do so? And, if you do not achieve it, why would you lament yourself? Why would you anguish? God knows our intention very well, which is an honest one, and holy to Him. God knows very well the reason why he allows so many good wishes to come to fruition only after much effort, and why some wishes are never obtained. Not even in such cases there is a reason for useless affliction, because there is always a gain and benefit for the soul, because, even if only the mortification of the souls were achieved, that would already represent a great deal.

(November 1922, to the Campanile sisters)

Pray for this divine Lover, this beloved Spouse of our souls, to complete the work of mercy that he has started in poor me, his poor and despicable creature, to whom, since birth, has shown proof of most special predilection. He has shown to me that He would not only be my savior, my highest benefactor, but also the devoted, sincere, and loyal friend, the friend at heart, the eternal and infinite love, the consolation, the happiness, the relief, my entire treasure. And I, in the meantime, perhaps innocent and unconsciously, guided my heart, always burning of love for the All and everything, to the creatures that I found pleasing and kind. He, who has always watched over me, reprimanded me internally, reproaching me, fatherly, always sweetly, but this was the reproach that my soul heard.

(November 1922, to the Campanile sisters)

A sad but most sweet voice resonated in my poor heart, it was the warning of the loving father who drew in the mind of his son the dangers that were to be found in the struggle of life. This was the voice of the kind father who desired the heart of the son who remained distant from his childhood and innocent love, it was the voice of the loving father who whispered to the ears and heart of the son telling him to stay away completely from clay, mud, a father who jealously asked him to consecrate himself completely to Him. Passionately, with loving sighs, with indescribable cries, with sweet and soft words, He asked the son to be only His. Moreover, almost jealous of the son, He often allowed the creature, daughter of the earth and the mud, to kick and throw undeserved blows to the son that He loved with such tenderness and affection. He allowed this creature to understand how deceitful and misleading had been the love that he so innocently and childishly gave to all creatures... Then I, the ungrateful son, understood everything and could clearly understand the terrible and awful scene that He, in his infinite mercy, was showing me. This was a scene truly discouraging, which would have shaken and scared the most tested souls. After realizing such filth, such misery, I immediately invoked the most holy names of Jesus and Mary, calling the good father in anguish so that He could rescue me. And it was then that, right away, answering my prayer, He would appear to me, and, seeing that I tried hard to stay away from such disastrous scene, He seemed to smile, He seemed to invite me to another life, He would make me understand that the safe harbor, the refuge of peace for me was the army of the ecclesiastical militia.

(November 1922, to the Campanile sisters)

Where, my dear Lord, could I better serve you than at the cloister and under the banner of the Poor of Assisi? And Him, seeing my tribulation, smiled, smiled for a long time, and such a smile left an indescribable sweetness in my heart. Sometimes, I would feel Him truly next to me, I could think to see his shadow, and my flesh, my entire being, was joyful in its Savior, in its God. And I then felt two powers within me, fighting against each other, hurting my heart. The world, which wanted me for itself, and God, who called me to a new life. My goodness! Who could express such an internal suffering that was taking place in me? The mere memory of such a gut struggle that was taking place within me makes the blood in my veins freeze, even though this soon will be twenty years ago. I felt the voice of duty telling me to obey you, my true and good God! But your and my enemies were torturing me, they dislocated my bones, they ridiculed me and twisted my insides! I wanted to obey you, my God, my Spouse. This was always the feeling that reigned in my mind and in my heart. But, from where could I gather the strength that could crush, with firm and decisive foot, first the false flattery and then the tyranny of a world that is not yours?

(November 1922, to the Campanile sisters)

You know well, Lord, the bitter tears that I shed in front of you during those most mournful days ! You know well, dear God of my soul: the cries of my heart, the tears that fell from these eyes. You had uncontested proof of such tears and what they expressed, leaving all pillows soaked. I desired and always wished to obey you, but life had me hostage. I would rather die than not answer your call. But you, Lord, who made your son experience all the effects of true abandonment, finally raised, extended your powerful hand, and took me to the place where you had previously called me. Infinite praise and thanksgiving be given to you, my dear God. You hide me here in the eyes of everyone. Ever since, you have trusted your son with a greatest mission, a mission that is known only by you and me. My dear God, my dear Father, how could I have correspondence to such a mission?! I do not know, but I only know that I could have done more, and this is the reason for the current concern of my heart, a concern that I feel grows tremendously inside me these days of spiritual retreat.

(November 1922, to the Campanile sisters)

Raise up, dear Lord, once again, and free me first from myself, and do not allow that I lose he who you with so much care and urgency have called again and have taken from a world that is not yours. Raise, dear Lord, once again and reaffirm in your grace those you have entrusted me, and do not allow anyone to leave the barn and get lost. Oh God, my God! Do not allow your children to become lost. Oh God! Manifest every time more to my poor heart and complete in me the work that you have already started. I hear in my interior a voice continuously screaming to me: Sanctify yourself and sanctify. Well, my most beloved, I want this, but I do not know where to start. Help me, I know that Jesus loves you very much and you deserve it. Talk to him about me, to grant me the grace to be a son less unworthy of Saint Francis, that I could be an example to my brothers, so that devotion can always continue in me and increase every day more, and to make me a perfect capuchin.

(January 30th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

I feel that the soul, the richest it seems, the more reason it has to humble itself in front of the Lord, because the gifts of the Lord increase in it and it will never be able to fully please the giver of all goodness. Even more, you, in particular, what are you proud of? What do you have that you did not receive? And if everything you possess you have received, why are you proud as if it were yours? Do repeat to yourself when the tempter wishes to make you feel conceited: everything that is good in me I received from God to borrow, to glorify myself of what is not mine would be foolish. Do this way and do not fear.

(October 22nd, 1918, to Fr . Benedetto from San Marco in Lamis)

mass, I felt taken by tiredness like falling in a sweet sleep. All my senses, internal and external, and the soul's faculties, found themselves in an indescribable calmness. Total silence took over me and inside me. Being in such a state, great peace made itself present as well as a complete abandonment to all, to the point of accepting even one's own destruction. All of this was instantaneous, like lightning. And while this was happening, I saw myself in front of a mysterious character, like the one seen on the feet, and side. Its sight terrorized me. What I felt at that moment is impossible for me to tell. I felt like dying, and I would have died had the Lord not intervened to sustain my heart, which I felt was getting out of my chest. The sight of the character disappeared and then I saw my hands, feet and side pierced and with blood pouring from them. Imagine the tearing that I experienced then and that I have been continuously experiencing almost every day. The wound of the heart bleeds continuously, especially from Thursday afternoon until Saturday. Dear father, I die of pain because of the tearing and confusion I feel in the most intimate of my soul. I fear dying of bleeding. If the Lord does not hear the cries of my heart and does not take away from me this surgery, would Jesus grant me this grace, He who is goodness? Would He, at least, take away from me the confusion I experience because of such external signs? I will raise my voice strongly to Him and I will not cease to beg so that through his mercy He will remove from me, not the tearing, not the pain, because I find that impossible and feel that He wants me to intoxicate me in suffering, but to remove these external signs which represent for me confusion and indescribable and unsustainable humiliation.

(March 20th, 1918, to Antonietta Vona)

The knowledge of your outrage and your internal monstrosity represents the purest light of divinity which puts into your consideration your own being and your capacity to commit all kinds of faults if you lack grace. This light is a gift from divine mercy, and it was granted to the most perfect saints because it puts the soul under a shelter from all vanity and pride and it strengthens humility which is the foundation of true Christian virtue and perfection. Saint Teresa also had this knowledge, and she says that it is so painful and horrible and it could cause death if the Lord would not sustain one's heart. The acknowledgement of potential unworthiness should not be confused with the one of true unworthiness. The first one makes a creature acceptable and pleasing to the eyes of the Most High, the second one makes it become despicable, because it is the reflection of the unworthiness present in one's conscience. You, in the darkness in which you find yourself, confuse the first one with the second one and, from the knowledge of what you could become, fear to be already what is in you only a possibility.

(July 10th, 1915, to Fr . Agostino from San Marco in Lamis)

Jesus is pleased to communicate with simple souls. Let us work on acquiring such a beautiful virtue, let us hold it with high affection. Jesus said: "If you do not become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven ." But before teaching us this with words, He had practiced this himself with facts. He became a child and was an example of such simpleness, being far from such. Let us try hard to always have a mind pure in thoughts, righteous in ideas, always holy in intentions. Let us always keep a will that does not seek other than God and its glory. If we try to improve in this beautiful virtue, He who taught it to us will grant us always with new lights and with greater celestial gifts. Let us always keep in front of our eyes of the mind our condition of priests. And, until the day that we will be able to say to everyone with Saint Paul, without lying: "Be my imitators as I am an imitator of Christ ," let us not stop improving continuously in this beautiful virtue of simplicity. But we will not move even a step forward in such a virtue if we do not try to live in holy and unaltered peace . Sweet is the yoke of Jesus, its weight is light. Therefore, we shall not let our heart allow insinuations from the enemy to steal our peace.

(July 10th, 1915, to Fr. Agostino from San Marco in Lamis)

Peace is found in the simplicity of the spirit, the serenity of the mind, the tranquility of the soul, the bond of love. Peace is order, is harmony among all of us, is the continuous joy that is born of the testimony of a good conscience. It is the holy happiness of the heart, in which God reigns. Peace is the path towards perfection, even more, in peace perfection is found. And the devil, who knows all of this very well, resorts to all means to take away our peace. We should remain very alert to the slightest symptom of concern, and, as soon as we are about to fall into despair, we should seek God with filial trust and with complete abandonment in Him. All our discouragements displease Jesus very much because they are always accompanied by some imperfection and always find their root in selfishness and self-love.

(July 10th, 1915, to Fr. Agostino from San Marco in Lamis)

The soul should be saddened only by one thing, the offense to God. And also, on this matter we should be very cautious, we should certainly become saddened by our faults, but with a pain that should not take away our peace, trusting always in divine mercy. We should also stay away from reproach and remorse against ourselves because such reproach almost always comes from the enemy in order to disturb our peace in God. If such reproach and remorse humiliate us and make us conscious to do good, without taking away our trust in God, we should rest assured that they come from God. But if they confuse us and make us become fearful, wary, lazy, and slow to do good, we should be sure that they come from the devil, and, as such, we should reject them, increasing our trust in God. This way, keeping our spirit serene and at peace during difficult times, we will go very far in the path of the Lord. On the contrary, if we lose this peace, our effort to achieve eternal life will bear little or no fruit.

(March 1916, to Margherita Tresca)

The shadow that invaded your spirit is nothing but the effect of the light that reflects when it moves away from your soul. But the Lord has made it possible for that reflection of light to be followed by a light much brighter and more intense. And this light is not different or better, it is the same that one day should unite the creature in celestial marriage with its creator. You should not be surprised if this most high light produces diverse effects and, I am about to say, almost contradictory, because it does not depend on the different dispositions and on the different states of the soul in which this is taking place. At the first moment, this light penetrates the soul, and it leaves it in a state of suffering because it discovers stains that it has never seen before. Only in heaven it would have seen the ones he also sees now. Many are the reasons for the soul to find itself so saddened, but among them, one stands out which is the one that torments this chosen soul of God the most. The soul, as soon as it is penetrated by this most high light, sees God no longer like a loving father, but as the most rigorous judge. And, further from being accused by God, the soul itself, full of terror, blames itself as the one and the only cause of such great misfortune.

(March 1916, to Margherita Tresca)

This soul, so ignited by God, does not recognize itself at all as such. It believes not to love God and, as much as the poor soul tries to love Him, it thinks that the Lord does not accept its love, but that He even rejects it. From all this appears in its heart a complete conviction that it will be rejected by God forever, without any hope for Him to return to the soul. However, despite such a conviction, the soul does not despair, its prayers to heaven are more persistent. Its knocking at the door of the divine guest is continuous, even when convinced that that door will never open, and that heaven will never extend its kingdom over it. Poor soul! How should it act to survive? Who does it sustain the soul? It should convince itself that God, whom the soul considers far, is within it and works in it, working with actions and efficiency equal to His love for all creatures. This is the sum, in honest words, of the current state of your soul. You have nothing but to accept, bless the hand of who leads you by a strange path, but a safe one that gives fruit to your spirit. Rest assured that, although the sky seems completely dark and full of clouds, your spirit is very serene. This serenity you cannot see, and you should not see because God wants it that way and because this is the best for your soul. But, in the meantime, serenity shines and I assure you in the Lord and with the Lord.

(August 23rd, 1918, to the Campanile sisters)

How many courtiers come and go hundreds of times before the king, and not to talk to him or to listen to him, but simply to be seen by him, and in this way, to express their loyalty as servants. This way of being in the presence of God, merely to express with our will that we consider ourselves his servants, is very holy, good, pure and of greatest perfection. He will talk to you, will walk in your company hundreds of times by the paths of His garden of prayer. And if such would never happen -which would be impossible because this most tender father 's heart would not stand seeing His creature be in perpetual fluctuation -, be happy with it, because our obligation is to follow him, considering that to us it is an honor and a great grace for Him to tolerate us in His presence. Therefore, you should not be concerned about talking to him, because the other way of being by his side is as useful, or perhaps even is even more useful, even if we might not like it as much. Thus, when you find yourself next to God in prayer, reflect upon this truth, talk to him if you can, and, if you cannot, stop by Him, make Him see you and reject other concerns.

(February 12th, 1917, to Maria Gargani)

My heart becomes saddened when I see you every day shaken by new and terrible storms. But the joy in my spirit is much greater knowing with certainty that the wrath of the waves is allowed in you, with special providence, by the celestial Father, to make you similar to His most beloved Son, persecuted and beaten to his death, and to death in the cross! The greater are your sufferings, the greater is the love that God offers you. Such, my dear, should serve you as a measure to compare the love that God has for you. You will know the love of God by this sign: the afflictions that he sends to you. The sign is in your hands, and it is at the reach of your intellect. Be happy, thus, when the storm becomes most brutal. Be happy, I tell you, with the children of God, because this is the most special love of the divine Spouse towards you. Humble yourself also to the divine majesty, considering how many other souls there are in the world, more deserving and richer in gifts, intelligence, and virtues, and which are certainly not treated with the special love that God treats you.

(December 19th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Let Satan battle you either in a direct way with his malignant suggestions, or indirectly by means of the world and of our corrupt nature. Let the unhappy fake one make much noise, let him threaten you, and even threaten to eat you. It does not matter! He will not be able to do anything against your soul because Jesus already hugs it close to Him and sustains it silently with his always vigilant mercy. Be calm in Jesus, dear daughter. I tell you the truth: never in the past has your spirit been as good as now. And do not even come to believe that you sustain your sufferings as reparation for sins that you have committed, because this is just the action of the Lord, which afflicts you to adorn with pearls the tiara that he wants for you.

(April 20th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Do not doubt in divine mercy, do not abandon yourself by the multiple afflictions that continuously surround you, because everything will add to the glory of God and for the soul's salvation. Tell me, how could you doubt such statements? Without divine mercy, could you have overcome so many crises and battles to which your spirit was subjected in the past? Trust, thus, always, because this same grace will do in you what is left: you will obtain salvation, and the enemy will be consumed by his anger. In the meantime, continue to pray, giving thanks and suffering for the intentions of God and according to His divine will. You should be encouraged by the thought that the reward is not far. I understand that the test is difficult, that the battle is more painful than one can express, but great is also the merit of triumph, indescribable is consolation, immortal is the glory, eternal is the reward.

(May 18th, 1918, to Maria Gargani)

I can see, my most beloved daughter, that all seasons of the year take place in your soul, because you sometimes feel that you are in the Winter of barrenness, distractions, demotivation, and boredom. times, you perceive the colors of the desire to please God. You only need Autumn, in which, as you know, not many fruits bloom. But it is often when the work starts and grapes are being pressed that one can end up with more abundant harvests than were expected during the mowing and vintage. You, dear daughter, would like that everything happened in Spring or Summer. But no, dear daughter, it is necessary for all these changes to take place in the interior and exterior. Only in heaven everything will be Spring regarding all that is beautiful, Autumn regarding all that is joy, Summer regarding love. Winter will not exist, but Winter is necessary to practice in regard to selflessness and the thousands of little and beautiful virtues that we practice in times of barrenness.

(May 18th, 1918, to Maria Gargani)

Walk always, my good daughter, at the same pace, and do not be concerned if your pace seems slow. If your intention is good and determined, the walk is a good one. No, my dearest daughter, to practice virtues it is not necessary to be always, and in an obvious way, alert to all such virtues. This would certainly entangle and complicate your thoughts and your affection very much. In conclusion, you can and should be at peace, because the Lord is with you, and He is who works in you. Do not fear to find yourself in the ship in which He sleeps, and he allows you in! Abandon yourself totally in the arms of the divine mercy of our Father in heaven and do not fear, because your fear would be ridiculous like the one a child would feel in the maternal embrace.

(December 31st, 1921, to Violante Masone)

to procure to the souls in our country, motivating them to fight under his holy banner. I let you imagine all the happiness and the consolation that my heart has felt when knowing the religious marvels that have been promoted by means of the Third Franciscan Order. I have cried of emotion and consolation, and, in the silence of the night and the retreat of my little cell, I have raised my hand many times to bless all of you and to present you to Jesus and to our common father Saint Francis, so that they could look at you all as their chosen lineage and so that, through all of you, they could call again many other souls which have lost the path to justice and to sanctity. Finding the light of faith extinguished in them, they move stray, like wandering meteors in the sky, through lost shepherd and father of all. Do not tire to propagate the Third Order and to offer true life to all by this means. Let everyone know Saint Francis and his true spirit. The merit that will be reserved for you in heaven will be great, but also remember that great is the responsibility that you take in front of God and in front of your conscience if you do not work hard to second this favorable wind of grace, which strongly blows in you and in our country. Be, therefore, always loyal to God in the obedience of the promises that you have made to Him, and do not worry about the mockery by the fools. You should know that saints are always rejected by the world and its worldly creatures, who have put under their feet the world and its rules.

(January 25th, 1914, to Elena Bandini)

always in everything with His vigilant grace, be your shield in everything, your support and guide, and With these sincere wishes, which I often present to Jesus, I reply to the letter you sent me through Miss Serritelli. I am happy to know that your soul always overflows with good will, and I give the most vibrant thanksgiving to God for that. Try to obtain fruits, every time more, of the talents you have received from God. Work tirelessly for the salvation of our brothers and sisters and make the spirit of Saint Francis of the knowledge of all, which is also the spirit of Jesus Christ. Society must reform, and I do not know of any other way more efficient than everyone being part of the order of service of Saint Francis, living his spirituality. With this in mind and as a condition, I will accept you as one of my beloved children. Asking you to pray for me and for my beloved ones, I bless you with paternal and two -fold affection.

(December 27th, 1917, to an unknown female recipient)

Remain strong in your decisions, stay in the ship in which our Lord has placed you and, even if the storm case, but do you not know that if He sleeps, his heart watches timely for you? Let Him even sleep, because at the appropriate moment He will wake up to offer you tranquility. The most beloved Saint Peter, says the scriptures, became scared and shaking said: "Lord, save me! " And our Lord, taking him by the hand, told him: "Man of little faith, why have you doubted?" Look, dear daughter, at this saint Apostle: he gauntly walks over the water, the waves and the winds would not know how to drown him, but the fear of the wind and waves make him despair, making him become anguished. Fear is worse than evil itself. Daughter of little faith, what could you fear? Does he not care for you? You walk over the ocean, encountering wind and waves, but being with Jesus is not enough? What could you fear? If fear ambushes you, scream loudly: "Lord, save me !" He will extend his hand, hold it hard and walk happily over the sea of the storms of life.

(April 23rd, 1918, to Erminia Gargani)

Live in peace, my most beloved daughter, erase from your imagination everything that could trouble you, and often repeat to our Lord: Dear God, you are my God, I trust in you, you will help me and will be my refuge and I will not fear anything. You are not only with Him, but you are in Him and He is in you. What can the son fear in the arms of such a father? I know, my most beloved Erminia, how children almost never think about their future . They have someone who thinks for them, they are strong, and t hey only know that they are with their father . Do like them, my most beloved daughter, and you will live in peace.

(March 4th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

The soul that does not love God is not concerned with God, it does not experience the fear of not loving God at all, it does not anguish thinking of God with the sincere desire of loving Him. And, if by chance the thought ever crosses its mind, the idea of God, it would right away, or almost right away, keep that idea away from its thoughts. Get consolation, I repeat, because, if you fear not loving God, and fear even offending Him, you already love Him, you already do not offend Him in any way. Oh, how much heaven would love for souls to feel the love that you feel, offenses to the Lord would disappear from the surface of the earth! We would not see so many souls walking deprived of the love for God! Could you believe what would be If this were the case of all souls? We would lose the concept of souls deprived of the love for God, we would even lose the concept of sin in human beings, and we would see such only in those misfortune angelical spirits who fell from goodness and were deprived of their dignity.

(February 23rd, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Overcoming a trial does not depend on the soul in any way, and it would not be possible at all to get directly into such a trial. It depends exclusively on the will of God. What I advise is that you remain at peace and do not worry about what will occur. Everything will end up being to the glory of God and for the sanctification of the soul. Moreover, remain humble to the infinite will of the Lord, always grow your heart, give incessantly thanks to the good God for the favors that He continuously grants you, because one does not deserve to receive new graces if has not given thanks for the one s already received . Let your actions be free to the grace of God, always seeking his glory, your salvation and of all souls, and never forget that celestial favors are granted not only for one's own sanctification but also for the sanctification of others .

(September 7th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Let us rejoice, because the day will arrive when we sing happier hymns to our most beloved, the sweetest repose to all hearts in love with His marvels. Let us rejoice, I tell you, because the day will arrive, and I wait for it, when our heart will no longer suffer from the cruel guilt of not loving the sweet Lord enough. In the meantime, we should prepare for that great day and, if we love Jesus well, we should shake and keep away from us, once and for all, everything that tastes like the world. We should reflect well on the fact that all sufferings in this life are not proportionate at all, according to Saint Paul, to the glory that awaits us . Let us think that the divine Spouse, not pleased with the most generous reward that He reserves in the other life for our love, wishes to make us taste an advance of such a reward already in to make a contract with Him in these terms: "My beloved for me and me for Him ." I am all for my beloved

(May 1st, 1918, to the Ventrella sisters,)

Why do you not know how to mold perfectly to divine will? Why do you think that you remain almost without a shepherd, only because He is far from the body but very close to the spirit? My most beloved daughters, it is already time to leave this spiritual childhood, to elevate the spirit to a higher summit and to breathe purer air there. In what concerns my persona, I am here, where I do not see yet more than a slight movement of the soul towards solid and true Christian devotion and mercy. All of this, in a way that, had I not been smashed by this blessed thorn that not even my efforts nor the voice nor statements of my guide have been able to remove, I would find myself in enviable peace. But I am gladly resigned knowing that I am not suffering in vain. I bless God with all my heart, who has allowed me to know truly good souls. And I have also announced to them that their souls are the Lord's vineyard: faith is the container, hope is the tower, holy charity is the press, the word of God is the fence that separates them from the children of the world.

(May 1st, 1918, to the Ventrella sisters)

I tell you, my most beloved daughters: your good will is your vineyard, the container are the holy inspirations of perfection that God pours from heaven, the tower is holy chastity, which, as it is said of the tower of David, should be made of ivory, the press is obedience, which brings many merits to the actions that it presses, the fence are your commitments and your aspirations. He make the angels be the immortal vineyard workers of this place.

(July 28th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

I am horrified, dear sister, by the harm that deprivation of the reading of holy books can cause to souls. See the way in which the holy fathers express themselves when they motivate the soul to such a reading. Saint Bernard, in his cloistral stairs, mentions that four are the steps or the means by which one climbs to God and to perfection: he says they are reading and meditation, prayer and contemplation. And to make his point, he resorts to words of the divine Teacher: "Seek and you will find, call and you will be heard ." Applying such to the four means or degrees of perfection, he says that by reading the Holy Scriptures and other holy and devotion books, one seeks God. With meditation one finds Him, with prayer one calls His heart and with contemplation one enters the theater of divine marvels, open to the sight of our mind through reading, meditation, and prayer. Reading, continues to say the Saint, on a different reference, is like the spiritual food offered for the soul to taste, meditation chews this food with its speeches, prayer tries its flavor, and contemplation is the true sweetness of this food of the spir it which fully comforts the soul and consoles it. Reading stops at the surface of what is read, meditation penetrates to the core, prayer seeks with its questions, contemplation rejoices in something that it already possesses.

(December 17th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

The value that Saint Jerome gave to reading holy books is incredible. He recommends Salvina to have books of devotion always handy, because they are a strong shield to reject all evil thoughts that attack young people. He advises the same to Saint Paulino: "Always -he says - keep in your hands the holy book that would feed your spirit with devout reading ." To the widow Furia he tells to often read the holy scriptures and the books of those sages whose doctrine is holy and sound so that she would not become tired of choosing between the mud of false documents and the gold of holy and sound teachings. He wrote to Demetria : "Do love reading the holy scriptures if you wish to be loved by divine wisdom if you wish to be guarded and possessed by it. " In the past, you used to beautify yourself in different ways - your jewelry and ornaments be the holy scriptures, with which you will beautify your spirit with holy thoughts and devout affections ."

(July 28th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

I would like to ask you to stop and observe the power that holy reading has, even for the mundane, to achieve a change of path and to enter the path of perfection. It is enough to reflect upon the conversion of Saint Augustine. Who was the person who conquered this great man to the ranks of God? It was neither the mother with her tears, nor the great Saint Ambrose with his divine eloquence, but precisely the reading of a book. Whoever reads the book of his confessions will not be able to contain the tears. What a terrible battle, what furious confrontations he sustained in his poor heart because of the greatest rejection he experienced when he abandoned the obscene pleasures of the senses. He says that he felt forced to cry, tied by his will almost like by a tough chain, and that the hellish enemy had his will subjected between the traps of a bitter necessity. He mentions having experienced fatal agony when leaving his despicable habits. (...) But while the Saint was being battled by such tumultuous desires, he heard a voice telling him: hold this and read it. He obeyed this voice immediately and, after reading a chapter of Saint Paul, soon the dense clouds dissipated from his mind, his heart's severity became softer, and his spirit felt complete serenity and delightful calmness. From that moment, breaking away from the world, from the devil and the flesh, he devoted himself completely to divine service, becoming later this great saint that is now venerated in altars. (...) Therefore, if the reading of holy books has such a power to convert the mundane into spiritual ones, how great the power of these readings must be to induce spiritual people to greater perfection!

(October 17th, 1915, to Fr . Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

You tell me that the most venerated Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus used to say: "I do not wish to choose neither death nor life, let Jesus do with me what he desires!" Unfortunately, I can see clearly that this is the scene of all souls empty of themselves and full of God. But how far is my soul from an abandonment like this one! I cannot stop the impulses of the heart. However, father, I try hard to come closer to what the most venerated Saint Teresa said, which, on the other hand, probably is the saying of all souls burning with the love of God. But being honest, I must confess that I do not follow this, as I must remain a prisoner of a body of death. I said this because in me there is no love to God because, if it were the case, being the spirit itself that makes this love greater, the effect would be the same. To understand ourselves better, if the spirit acting in me were the same acting in Saint Teresa, the same saying would happen in me, just as it did in her holy soul. Tell me then, do I not have reasons to doubt? Who will free me from this cruel tear of the heart?

(October 17th, 1915, to Fr . Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

I accept all the sufferings of this earth, together in a bundle, dear God. I accept them as my share, but I will never be able to accept being separated from you because of the lack of love. I beg you not to allow this poor soul to wander. Do not ever allow my hope to become frustrated. Do not ever allow me to be apart from you. And, if I walk away, without being conscious of such, attract me towards you at that very instant. Comfort my mind, dear God, so that I can know myself well and know the great love that you have shown me, so that I can enjoy eternally the sovereign marvels of your divine face. my God, so alive is in my soul that indescribable sweetness that pours from your eyes, and with which, my goodness, have granted this poor and mean soul with the gaze of your loving eyes. How could the tear of my heart be less, knowing that I am far from you? My soul knows very well how terrible the battle was when you, my beloved, hid from me! How vividly was carved in my soul, my most beloved, such a terrible and deadly image!

(October 17th, 1915, to Fr . Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Who would make it possible that I keep away or turn off the fire that burns in my chest, where the flames are so very lit for you? Lord, do not get accustomed to enjoying hiding from me. You understand the trouble and agitation that take over all the faculties of the soul and even of the emotions! You can see how my poor soul cannot survive in front of such a cruel tear of this abandonment, because you have completely conquered my soul, you, infinite marvel. You know that my soul anxiously seeks you. This anxiety is not lower than the one your spouse of the Song of Solomon felt. The same way that her, this holy spouse, walks out of control the streets and squares, and it begs and asks the daughters of Jerusalem to tell where her beloved is: "I beg of you, daughters of Jerusalem, if you have seen my beloved, tell me, because I am dying of love ."

(October 17th, 1915, to Fr . Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

In this situation, how well does my soul understand what is said in the psalms: "My spirit despairs! " "The hope of your salvation consumes me ." Only you, my Lord, know how great the suffering is for the soul that seeks you . However, for your love, my soul would sustain this suffering peacefully, if it knew that it is not abandoned by you in this situation, you, source of eternal happiness!... You understand well the cruel torture that represents for this soul to see the serious offenses that in these most sad times the children of man commit, and the terrible ungratefulness with which they correspond to your loving offer, and the small or lack of importance that the blind give to the fact of losing you. My God, my God! One could also say that they do not trust you anymore, because they so rudely denied you the payment of their love. My God, when will the moment arrive in which this soul will see the reinstatement of your kingdom of love? ...When would you put an end to my suffering?...

(October 17th, 1915, to Fr . Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Dear holy souls which, free of concerns, are already in heaven enjoying the stream of sovereign sweetness, how I envy your happiness! Have mercy on me. You that are so close to the source of life, you that see me dying of thirst in this low world, be kind to me giving me some of that most fresh water. Blessed souls, I have badly spent, I confess, my share, I have badly kept a precious stone, but praise be to God, because I still feel that there is remedy for this offense! Blessed souls, be kind and offer me a little help. Since I cannot find in the day or in the night what my soul needs, I will rise, like did the spouse of the Song of Solomon, and I will seek the one my soul loves: "I will rise and seek the one my soul loves ," and I will look for Him always, I will look for Him in all things, and will not stop until I find Him in the throne of His kingdom...

(October 17th, 1915, to Fr . Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Dear God! Where does my mind fly? What would happen to your misfortune children, who are my brothers, who perhaps already deserve your wrath? You, my sweet redeemer, know how many times the memory of your divine face, outraged at my misfortune brothers, has made my blood freeze in fear, more than the thought of eternal suffering and the torments of hell. Shaking, I have always begged you, as I beg you again now, by your mercy, to remove from these misfortune brothers such a lighting gaze. My sweet Lord, you have said that "love is strong like death and tough like hell ." Therefore, I beg to look at these dead brothers with eyes of indescribable sweetness, chaining them to you with a strong love chain. Let these true dead come back to life, dear Lord. Dear Jesus, Lazarus was not who asked you to resurrect him, the pleas of a sinful woman were the ones that saved him. My divine Lord, you have here another soul, also a sinful one and by no comparison a more guilty one, which begs you for so many dead who are not concerned at all to ask you to bring them back to life.

(November 1st, 1913, to P. Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

The way my usual prayer goes is this, as soon as I start to pray, I immediately feel that my soul starts to retreat to a place of peace and tranquility that cannot be expressed in words. The senses remain suspended, except by the hearing which sometimes remains active. But this usually does not bother me. And I must confess that, even if much noise were made around me, I would not be disturbed at all. From this you could conclude that rare are the occasions in which I can use my mind to reason. And it happens to me often that, in moments in which my continuous thought of God, always present in me, moves away from my mind, I feel like the Lord, from time to time, hits me in the middle of my soul in a way so penetrating and so soft that, almost always, I cannot but cry of pain for my infidelity and for the tenderness of having a father so good and so attentive to call me again to His presence .

(November 1st, 1913, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Other times, on the other hand, I find myself in a great infertility of the spirit. I feel like my body is in great boredom due to its many illnesses. I feel that it is impossible for me to retreat and pray, even if I try very hard. This state intensifies so much that, if I do not die, it is a miracle of the Lord. Later, when the celestial spouse of the souls wishes to end such a martyrdom, He sends me suddenly such a devotion of spirit that it is impossible for me to resist . In just an instant, I am completely transformed, full of spiritual favors and so strong as to defy the entire kingdom of Satan. What I can say about this prayer is that the soul gets completely lost in God, and that it benefits more in such moments than what it could achieve in many years of trying with all its might.

(November 1st, 1913, to Fr Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Many other times, I feel motivated by a vehement impulse. I feel like God is completely smashing me, I feel like being at the threshold of death. All of this is born, not as the fruit of some reflection, but of an internal call and of a love so unimaginable that, if God would not come to my rescue, in just a few seconds I would be consumed. In the past, with my efforts, sometimes I was able to calm such impulses. Nowadays, I cannot control them at all. All I can say about this, without risking being wrong, is that I do nothing on my own. In such moments, I feel like the soul has the most burning desire to leave life and, because it seems like these desires do not find a response, it suffers the harshest pain, which is delightful at the same time, a pain the soul wishes never to end. The soul believes that everyone finds consolation and relief in their own suffering, while it is the only one that remains in the suffering. The pain that has been penetrating the soul, exactly in its core, is so much superior to its nature that it would be impossible for it to experience if the pious Lord would not come Himself to tame His power with which the poor little butterfly is able to calm down and become more at peace. And this happens, either because the Lord has granted the soul something that it desires, or even because of the secrets that He sometimes reveals to it.

(November 1st, 1913, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I feel a great desire to serve God with perfection. In such moments, there is no instant when the soul does not suffer out of joy. This also happens to me without a thought on my part and it is sudden. The soul does not comprehend where it gets such great courage. Such desires consume the soul inside because it understands, through a most vibrant light granted by God, that it is not capable to offer God the service it would like. Later, everything ends with the delights which God presents to the soul.

(November 1st, 1913, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Most of the time, it is very painful for me to deal with others, except those to whom we speak of God and of the treasure of the soul. That is precisely why I love to live in solitude. Frequently, it is most difficult for me to satisfy the needs of life, like eating, drinking, sleeping, and I submit to them, like a prisoner, only because it is God's wish. I feel like time passes very quickly and I don't have enough time to pray . I feel very attracted to good readings, but I read very little because I am limited by this illness and also because, once I open a book, after a brief read, I find myself in profound retreat, in a way that reading becomes a prayer. Ever since the Lord has granted me such things, I feel to have changed, to the point of not recognizing myself from who I used to be.

(November 1st, 1913, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I can clearly see that, if there is anything good in me, all has come to me from these supernatural goods. Therefore, I can attest that it is from them that has come such a firm determination of suffering all with resignation and readiness, without ever becoming tired of the pain, although -poor me - with so many imperfections. I have the firmest decision of not offending God even by venial sins, and I would suffer death by fire even a thousand times rather than deliberately committing any sin. I believe to have improved much in what pertains to obedience to my confessor and to the one who guides my soul, so much that I would consider myself almost a sentenced prisoner if I contradicted them in anything. During conversations, if they take time, as leisure, I suffer much to remain engaged, and when I cannot walk away, this causes much sadness in me.

(November 1st, 1913, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Supernatural things never stopped producing a special fruit in me. Such celestial favors granted me three main effects -besides the effects of each favor. They granted me an admirable knowledge of God and of His indescribable greatness; great knowledge of myself and a profound feeling of humility when finding myself so daring to offend such a holy father; and a great rejection to all things of this earth and great love to God and love to virtue. I can also recognize that, from these celestial favors, I have felt the greatest desire to deal with those who have moved up on the path of perfection. I love them so much because I believe that they help me to love the author of all marvels, God . I also feel very motivated to abandon myself completely to providence, and I am no longer worried if things are favorable or adverse, and I feel all of this without anxiety or concern.

(November 1st, 1913, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I used to be afraid that others would know how the Lord was working on me, but for some time now, I do not feel such a confusion anymore, because I can see that I am not better because I have received these gifts. I even see myself worse than others and I feel that I do not do enough to utilize all such graces. Such is the idea I have of myself that I do not believe that there is anyone worse than me. And when I see in others things that seem to be sin, I cannot believe that they had offended God, even when I see clearly that this is the case. I only worry about collective sin, which often makes me suffer greatly. This is what my soul usually experiences, but sometimes, although rarely, for some time, and even for a few days, I find myself deprived of such favors, and as such they become erased from my mind, and I forget about them, as if they had not worked on me at all. I feel like my soul is completely surrounded by darkness and is not able to remember anything.

(November 1st, 1913, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

All physical and spiritual ailments agree to torment me. I feel troubled in the spirit. I would like to have only one thought about God, I would not say pray which would be too much. But in this situation, everything seems impossible. I see myself full of imperfections, all the courage I felt earlier leaves me completely. I see myself most weak to practice virtue, to resist the attacks by enemies. Now, more than ever, I convince myself that I am not good at all. Profound sadness takes over me, and a terrible thought crosses my mind: to be a fool without realizing it. Only God knows what torment this is for me! Perhaps the Lord, I think, could allow as punishment for my infidelities, that I, without knowing it, might fool myself and my spiritual guides? And what should I do to overcome such a doubt when, by the light that I carry in my soul, I perfectly know my many faults to which I have always fallen, despite the many treasures of the Lord that I possess in me?! What I discover with truth and clarity is that my heart, also then, loves very much, much more than what my understanding could discover. About this I have no doubt, and I am so sure about my love that, after the truths of faith, I am not sure of anything else more than I am sure of this. In this situation, what I can say with certainty is that I do not offend God more than usual because, thanks to heaven, I never lose trust in Him. As soon as the Lord comes to visit me, all of this passes, the understanding becomes full of light, strength and all good desires become more alive in me, and I even feel alleviated of physical illnesses.

(November 26th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Do not leave a place in your soul for sadness because it hinders free action by the Holy Spirit. But, if we wish to be sad, yes, let us be sad but let us do it in a way that shows that our sadness is holy, and it should be caused by seeing that evil is expanding in our current society every time more. How many poor souls doubt our God daily, our supreme goodness! Not wanting to submit our own judgment to the judgment of others, especially to one who is an expert on a relevant matter, is a sign of a lack of obedience, and is a very clear proof of secret pride. You yourself know this and you share this point of view with me. Therefore, I encourage you to avoid falling again, remain attentive to such bad vice, knowing how much it displeases Jesus, because it is written that "God rejects the proud and grants His grace to the humble ."

(December 20th, 1910, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Dear father, if it were not for the often attacks by the devil, I would almost be in paradise. I am in the hands of the devil who works hard to take me away from the arms of Jesus. How many battles, my God, this one gives me! At some moments, I almost lose my mind because of the continuous battles I face. Dear father, how many tears, how many sighs I raise to heaven asking to be freed from this situation! But it does not matter, I will not be tired of praying to Jesus. It is true that my prayers are more deserving of punishment than reward because I have made Jesus upset many times with my countless sins, but in the end, Jesus will feel sorry for me, or remove me from the earth, call me to it, or free me. And, if He does not wish to grant me any of those two graces, I hope that He will at least wish to continue to grant me the grace of not giving in to temptations. Jesus, who did not measure His blood when He poured it for the salvation of man, would He wish to measure my sins so that I go stray as a consequence of them? I do not think so. He will take revenge, soon and in a holy way, with His holy love to the most ungrateful of His creatures. And what do you say about this? Please tell Jesus that I promise not to make him upset anymore, that I will even try hard to love Him always.

(October 10th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

To give us strength to willingly endure the tribulations that the divine mercy presents to us, we should maintain our eyes fixated on the celestial home which is reserved for us. Let us contemplate it, let us look at it often with special attention . Consequently, we should take our eyes away from the goods that are visible, I mean worldly goods, because the sight of such enchants and distracts the soul and it corrupts our hearts, and they make us look away from our celestial home. We should listen to what the Lord tells us regarding this through his holy apostle Paul: "We do not look at things that one can see, but we look at the ones that one cannot see ." And we should just contemplate celestial goods, not worrying about worldly ones, because the former are eternal, and the latter are temporary. What would we say if we stopped in front of a poor peasant, who contemplates, almost frozen, a river that flows at a great speed? We would most likely laugh at him, and we would be right to do so. Is it not madness to stop to look at something that passes rapidly in front of us? That is the situation of someone who stops to look at visible goods. What are they in reality? Are they different from a fast river, whose waters, even before we had looked at them, run away from our sight and we will never see them again? Let us leave that, dear daughter, for someone who, to his misfortune, is deprived of faith, someone who, to his misfortune, does not know how to distinguish between valuable and insignificant, someone who focuses on the desire, the love for worldly and sensible goods. But we, by the mercy of the highest God, have been called to reign with the divine Spouse, we for whom the true light of God shines clear and glowing before our minds, should always have our eyes set on the splendors of the celestial Jerusalem. The knowledge of the many goods that we will possess there should be the sweet food of our thoughts. Our mind, in love with such eternal delights, will grow in our hearts the most burning and vibrant affections for them.

(October 31st, 1916, to Assunta di Tomaso and other sisters)

Let us tirelessly climb up to the celestial vision of our Savior, my dear daughters, let us walk away, step by step, from worldly ties, let us rid of the old man and dress up with the new man, and let us aspire to happiness, which awaits us. Before finishing this letter, I beg you to please pray fervently to Jesus for me, so that He would grant me the strength to submit to His will, expressed by my superior, and so that I could serve Him with fidelity and sincerity. I wish, and you know well, to die and love God, either death or love, because life without such a love is worse than death. Help me, dear daughters! I die and agonize every moment. Everything seems like a dream, and I do not know where I am. Oh my dear God! I wait for the moment in which I could sing: "This is, oh God, my repose forever ."

(March 8th, 1918, to the Ventrella sisters)

My most beloved daughters, how heavy it is to the children of God the burden of this mortal life! And, on the contrary, how much more desirable is the life of the other side, the life that the mercy of our Lord will most kindly grant us! Despite our misery, we should never doubt that we will one day possess such a life, and, if our misery is greater, it is because God is merciful to those who have put their trust in Him. When holy cardinal Borromeo was at the end of his worldly life, he asked for a crucifix for his departure from this world to be sweeter to the eyes of our Lord. The best medicine for when you find yourselves in any kind of trial, physical or moral, of the flesh or spiritual, is, therefore, to think about who represents our life, and never think about the first life without adding the thought of our second life. My dear God! My beloved daughters do not question, I beg you, if what you do or what you wish to do was, is or will be much or less, if what you did was well done or not. Just stay away from sin and from actions in which you discover with certainty signs of sin. Act every time with good intention and with the willingness to please God.

(March 8th, 1918, to the Ventrella sisters)

Dear daughters, try, without proud anxiety, to do with perfection what you need or wish to do, but, once you have concluded your task, do not think about it any longer, worry only about what you need to do next and what you are currently doing. Walk with simplicity by the paths of the Lord and do not torment your spirit. It is necessary, indeed, to hate your faults, but with a peaceful hatred and not with an annoyed or anxious hatred. One needs to be patient with one's faults and benefit from them through holy acceptance. Without such patience, my beloved daughters, your imperfections, instead of decreasing, would grow more every time, because there is nothing that feeds our faults more than the anxiety and concern of trying to keep them away. Remember, dear daughters, that I do not like useless desires, as well as dangerous and evil desires, because, even if what is wished is good, that wish is, however, always bad in relation to ourselves, especially when it mixes with a proud concern, because God does not demand such kind of goods but rather other ones, which He wishes us to practice. God wishes to talk to us among thorns, burning bushes, clouds, and lighting, like he did with Moses. And we wish Him to talk to us in the sweet and fresh whisper like He did with Elias. But what is that you fear, beloved daughters? Listen to our Lord when He speaks to Abraham and you: "Do not fear, I am your protector ." Because, what else do you seek in this world rather than God?

(April 9th, 1918, to Maria Gargani)

How tormenting it is to think that I need to account to God for the sins that others have committed because of spiritual guidance that was not rightly imparted or the good that others did not practice due to my ignorance, and, God forbid, because of my negligence!... It is true that I have always entrusted myself to God in this most important ministry, but who could guarantee to me that I have done everything that I needed to do? My dear God! This, my beloved daughter, is a thorn that, even if always embedded there, in the most profound of my soul, I feel continuously prickling me! Dear daughter, please pray fervently for the fruitful delivery of my ministry and, if God allows it, let me know of any reassurance you receive from Him.

(June 3rd, 1917, to an unknown female recipient, O. Benedetto)

Place yourself in the presence of God often and offer Him all your intentions, not only your sufferings. I do not oppose that, during your suffering, you abstain from lamenting yourself, but I wish that you would do that with the Lord, with a filial feeling, like a tender child would do with his mother. And, if it is done in a loving way, it is not wrong to lament oneself nor to ask to be freed from all suffering. Do this with love and in resignation to God's will. Do not worry if you do not achieve the acts of virtue the way you had wished, because, as I have told you, they continue to be good and pleasing to the divine Majesty, even if they are done, without fault on your part, in a cold, heavy and almost grudgingly way.

(November 8th, 1916, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

Dear God, what has been my life to your eyes these past days in which I have been surrounded by the densest darkness! And what will my future be? I am completely clueless. In the meantime, I will not cease to raise, day and night, my hands from this holy place, and I will bless you always, as long as I have a breath of air in me. I beg of you, my dear God, to be my life, my vessel, and my harbor. You have made me climb to the cross of your Son and I try hard to adapt the best way that I can: I am convinced that I will never go down and that I will never be able to see a clear horizon. I know that I should talk to you among thunder and storms, and that I should see you in the burning bush, among the fire of thorns. But to be able to do that, it is clear that I need to remove my shoes and to renounce completely my own will and to personal enjoyment. I am ready for everything, but will you allow me to see you one day at Mount Tabor, at the holy sunset? Will I have the strength, without ever getting tired, to climb to the vision of my Savior in heaven?

(November 8th, 1916, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I feel the ground under my feet move. Who will guide my steps? Who, if not you? You, who supports my weakness? Dear God, have mercy on me, do not make me feel my weakness once again! feels tormented by the fear of offending you at the hour of trial! My God, do not make me long for you anymore! I am not able to reason anymore!... Forgive me, my dear father! I cannot organize my ideas anymore. Had I not been interrupted at this point, who knows where I would be right now. Without realizing, I would have abused your patience. Please be kind enough to listen to what I must tell you about my current situation which I promise to tell in a short manner. The battle has been resumed with much more cruelty. Since many days ago my spirit has been immersed in the densest clouds. I must acknowledge that I find myself in the most absolute inability to practice goodness. I am in complete abandonment: there are many illnesses of the spiritual stomach, the bitterness I feel in the interior mouth is great, making even the sweetest wine of this world taste bitter to me.

(July 14th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

The crisis I am experiencing is terrible, and I am not aware of what is ahead of me. The crisis is more spiritual than physical, but the body feels everything, and it participates in an extraordinary way of all sufferings of the spiritual world, and both worlds get together making sure that I am withered by pain. Poor me! Who will save me from this dark prison? Who will free me from this body of death? But praise God in the highest! He is my strength, He is the salvation of my soul, He is my serving of eternity. I wait in Him; I trust in Him and I will not fear anything.

(July 14th, 1915, to Raffaeline Cerase)

Do not say that you are climbing Calvary alone and that you are struggling and crying alone, because Jesus is with you. He does not ever abandon you. You would like to see him, you would like to feel him, but believe me, this would be the worst that could happen to you, and you would suffer terribly if Jesus would reveal to you. For the love of heavens, I beg that you calm your anxiety and your concerns about all this. Live in peace and always move forward. Do not let the statement that I tell you about the Lord stop you in this path: that you are halfway on your path to the summit of Calvary. You are in the darkest night, it is true, but the thought of a bright dawn and a radiant midday shall sustain you, motivate you and inspire you to always move forward. He who has been sustaining you so far, no doubt, will continue to sustain you, every time with more patience and in a more pleasing and divine way in what remains of this rough and difficult journey.

(December 7th, 1916, to the Ventrella sisters)

Trust in God and hope in His paternal mercy, trust that the light will arrive. Raise, with great faith, your those who have gone to heaven, who did not go there any other way but through the path of suffering. Such is our true home. What does it matter if we get to it only through the dangerous paths of tribulations and sacrifice?! heaven we will not have any other task than to do God's will. Let us work hard in blessing the Lord during humiliations and offenses that have been committ ed against us. Let us bless Him during tribulations of our spirit and tearing of our heart, because all has been decided by God with accurate precision. And this blessed always in all our miseries and in all our suffering. Bless Him in everything that makes you suffer in this world and be glad because every victory achieved corresponds to a new crown in paradise. Do not stop or be scared by your own questioning because the Lord is loyal and will not allow you to be defeated by temptation.

(August 15th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

To achieve our final goal, it is necessary to follow the divine Master who usually does not guide the chosen soul by a path different from the one He walked. The path of, let me tell you, sacrifice and the cross: "If anyone wishes to follow me, resign to y ourself, carry your cross and follow me". And should you not feel fortunate to see yourself treated this way by Jesus? A fool is such who does not know how to access the secret of the cross. To arrive to the harbor of salvation, the Holy Spirit tells us, the chosen souls might walk and get purified in the fire of painful humiliation, like gold and silver in the melting pot, and this way redemptions for the other life are gained: "During suffer ing, remain firm, and in the difficulty of your humiliation be patient. Because it is in fire that gold and silver are purified, and men and women who accept God do this in the paths of humiliation". God wants to make us holy at all costs, but He especially wishes to sanctity you. He is continuously expressing it to you. It seems that He has no other concern than to sanctify your soul. How good is Jesus! The continuous crosses He sends you, granting yo u the strength not only necessary but also abundantly, to withstand with merit, are sure and most particular signs of His immense love for you. The strength He gives you, believe me, is not wasted in you. I say this from God, and you should humbly listen t o me, staying away from any thought that tells you on the contrary.

(July 25th, 1915, to Annita Rodote)

Keep always in the eyes of the mind, as a prototype and an example, the humility of the divine Teacher, the humility of Jesus Christ that the Apostle, in the words of Corinthians puts it at the same level as gentleness, which was one of His most beloved virtues and almost His characteristic virtue: "I, Paul, motivate you to cultivate the gentleness and the humility of Christ". And, following such a perfect example, do reform all your external actions, which are the loyal mirror that represents the inclinations of your interior. Do not ever forget, dear Annita, this holy example, imagine that you contemplate a kind majesty in His presence: a kind and pleasant authority when talking, a certain pleasing pose when walking, when looking, when conversing, a certain sweet serenity on the face. Imagine the look of such a face so serene and so sweet that attracted multitudes towards Him, took them out of the cities and of towns, taking them to the hills, forests, solitary places, and deserted beaches, forgetting even about eating, drinking and their household obligations. Indeed, we should try to copy, as much as possible, such humble actions, so decent, and we should try hard, as much as possible, to be like Him with time, to be more perfect later on and more similar to Him for eternity in celestial Jerusalem.

(July 14th, 1914, to Raffaeline Cerase)

What you should do now that Jesus, by his mercy, wishes to test your loyalty is to be always ready to perform your obligations and never neglect anything that you usually practice in times of consolation and prosperity, without stopping to think about the physical feeling that you are not experiencing, because this is accidental and can often be very harmful to the soul. Serving God without considering the sensible part and consolation is what constitutes true and substantial devotion. This is the meaning of serving God and love Him for love in Him. Until the soul does not reach such a substantial devotion, its situation is rather dangerous, and it is necessary to proceed with great caution and discerning.

(July 14th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

During such a time, ask for help, especially regarding reading holy books. And I wish for you to fervently read such books because these readings are good nourishment for the soul and good help to advance in the path of perfection. Praying and holy meditation are good as well, because in prayer and meditation it is us who speak to the Lord, while during holy reading it is God who speaks to us. Seek as much as you can the treasure of such holy readings and you will very soon experience the renewal of your spirit. Before starting to read these books, raise your mind to the Lord and ask him to be He himself who guides your mind, to be kind to talk to your heart, and to move your will. But this is not enough, you also need to kneel in front of the Lord before starting to read, and to do it again occasionally during the course of reading, because you do not read to study or to satisfy your curiosity but solely to please Him.

(March 30th, 1917, to Maria Gargani)

Rest assured that your current situation is not sent by God as punishment but for the purification of your spirit, to prepare it for more elevated communication. Believe me when I tell you that your situation is not at all disgraceful, but it is rather a situation that many would envy. Let this divine doctor work freely, and rest assured that everything will work for the glory of God and for your sanctification. And, regarding your fear of offending God and not knowing how to act to please him, I beg and ask you to calm your anxiety. Believe in the statements made by the authority telling you on behalf of God that, no matter how you act, as long as you don't find out with complete clarity that your acts are contrary to the law of God and to the commandments of legitimate authority, Jesus is always pleased by you, as long as those actions are aimed at the glory of God. With this sure code of conduct you should act without arguing, you should continue to act without listening to the voices of your fears. Pay attention, my good daughter, that I use the word 'listen', which means, to obey, to pay attention, etc. I don't say to 'hear' the voices, because it is impossible not to hear them, but one should not pay attention to them. Continue with this way of being, just like one does not pay attention to the barking of a little dog one finds on the street. Those small, empty and inappropriate barking are obviously heard, but, rather than paying attention to them, one just laughs at them.

(March 30th, 1917, to Maria Gargani)

I know that you will not be convinced, that you will not see it clearly, that you will not feel consoled by this great truth while this test endures. However, do obey the instructions of who loves your soul as much as loves his own before God, and that should be enough. "I would like - and I repeat the words that God said one day to virgin Gertrudis -, that my chosen ones would be convinced of this truth: that I am very pleased by their prayers and their good deeds when they serve me despite their own suffering. Serving despite one's own suffering means that, not being happy at all of the delightful satisfaction, they continue to loyally pray and act piously in the best possible way, and they trust that I will accept all in good grace because of my mercy". Later, the Lord added these meaningful words: "You should know, Gertrudis, that most pious people are such that, if I gave them spiritual satisfactions and consolations, these would not help them in their salvation and, further from increasing their merits, they would work against them". And such is, unfortunately, this way, I can show it due to the long experience that a soul has of being close to me. Therefore, my daughter, live at peace, because the day will come in which the Lord will also grant you to know the truth of what is told, or better said, He will allow you to be convinced of such. You know that one tells you the truth because no one wishes to lie to you, but you are not able to be convinced of it.

(October 21st, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Tell me: is it possible for Jesus to stay away while you call him, pray to him, seek him and let's say as well, you possess him? Is it possible for a soul that is with him on the cross, is it possible, for God not to be in this soul, when He has lent his infallible word promising to remain with this soul during tribulation: "I am next to you in sorrow?" How is it possible that the source of living water, which pours from the Sacred Heart, stays away from the soul that runs towards it like a thirsty deer? It is true that such a soul might not believe us because it feels devoured by an inextinguishable thirst, insatiable. But what does this mean? Is this perhaps a proof that the soul does not possess God? It is completely the opposite. This happens because the soul has not arrived at the end of its journey, it is not completely submerged in the eternal source of its divine love, something that will occur in the kingdom of glory. Therefore, we wish to satiate the thirst with this source of living water, and we should always go by the path of divine love. But, dear daughter, we should convince ourselves that our souls will never feel satiated on earth. Furthermore, poor of us if one day, while we are on this journey, we might think to be satiated! because such will be a sign that we think we have achieved our destiny, and we would be fooling ourselves.

(October 21st, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

I ask you to try to calm your anxiety with the grace of Chris, drinking from the source of divine love. You should calm your anxiety with faith, trust, humility and with submission to divine desires. The venerated of me what he wishes". Here, daughter, you find the prototype of a soul completely empty of itself and full of God! This is exactly what you should also try to achieve with effort and with divine help. Do not lose trust in it, because Jesus is in your soul and, if you show softness to his actions, you will certainly find him. I also understand that the desires of a soul completely in love with the divine lover often are hard to control. But do not be concerned by this, feel free to hope and wish for Jesus and let yourself be guided by his love.

(November 20th, 1921, to P. Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

I start by confessing that it is terrible for me not being able to express and let out this volcano, which is always lit and that burns me, which Jesus has placed in this small heart. It all comes to this: I am being devoured by the love of God and by the love of others. To me, God is always in the mind and engraved in the heart. I never lose sight of it: I admire its beauty, smiles and bewilderment, its kindness, its retaliations, or, better, the severity of its justice. Imagine what feelings devoured this poor soul with such deprivation of its own freedom, with all this bonding, both at the level of spiritual and physical faculties. Believe me, as well, father, that the rage, to which I have sometimes fallen, are precisely caused by this severe prison, one might actually call it a fortunate prison.

(November 20th, 1921, to P. Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

How is it possible to see God saddened by evil and one not become sad at the same time? Seeing God about to send his thunder and, to stop him, there is no other remedy than to raise a hand, stop his arm and then to raise the other hand. We wave to our brothers because of a double cause: so that they abandon evil and walk away and fast, from the place they are, because the hand of the judge is ready to strike over them? Believe me also that, at that moment, my inside is not at all oppressed or overwhelmed. I feel nothing but the need to have and to wish what God wishes. I always feel peace in Him, at least in my interior, on the outside I often feel uncomfortable. How about our brothers? How many times, or I could say always, I have to say to God together with Moses: either you forgive these peoples or erase me from the book of life. How difficult it is to live from affection! One must die every moment from a death that does not kill but that lives by dying and dies by living. Who could free me of this devouring fire? Pray, dear father, so that a downpour of water refreshes me a bit from these devouring flames which, without stopping, burn in my heart.

(April 20th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Raffaelina, what a consolation it is to know that we are in the custody of a celestial spirit, which does not abandon us not even (how admirable!) when we displease God! How sweet this truth is for the faithful soul! Who could then fear this devout soul which worries about loving Jesus, when it always finds by its side such insigne warrior? Or was it not one of the many that, together with Angel Saint Michael, in heaven, in paradise, defended the honor of God against Satan and against all other rebellious spirits and, finally, fought them to perdition and confine to hell? Therefore, you should know that he is still powerful against Satan and his allies, that his grace has not diminished, and he will never stop defending us. Become accustomed to always thinking of him, because that celestial spirit is always near us, who from the cradle until the grave, does not leave our side even for an instant, guiding us, protecting us like a friend, like a brother. He should always be a source of consolation for us, especially in our sad hours.

(April 20th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

You should know, Raffaolina , that this good angel prays for you: offer to God all the good deeds you do, your holy and pure desires. In the hours that you believe to be alone and abandoned, do not complain about not having a friendly soul to whom you could open up and share your pains. I beg that you do not forget this invisible companion, always present to listen to you, always ready to console you. Oh, delightful intimacy! Oh, wonderful company! Oh, if all men without exemption would understand and appreciate this great gift of God, who, in the excess of his great love for men, assigned this celestial spirit to us! Always remember his presence: it is necessary to contemplate him with the eye of the soul, thank him, pray to him. He is so delicate, so sensitive. Respect him, and always beware of offending the purity of his sight.

(April 20th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Pray often to this guardian angel, to this angel of goodness, repeat frequently this beautiful prayer: "Angel of God, custodian of mine: to me, who I have been assigned to you by the kindness of the Father in heaven, enlighten me, protect me, guide me today and always". How great, my dear Raffaelina, the consolation will be when, at the moment of death, your soul will see this good angel who accompanied you and make you every time more affectionate towards the cross of Jesus, because it is precisely that in you the charity that will push you to leave this body soon. Oh, holy and healthy thought of wishing to see our good angel! And the same is the wish to leave soon this gloomy prison in which we are exiled. Raffaelina, where is my thought flying now? How many times I have made this good angel cry! How many times I have lived without fearing offending the purity of his sight! He is so delicate, so sensitive! My Lord, how many times have I corresponded to such maternal care by this angel without giving him a sign of respect, of affection, of gratitude!

(December 19th, 1913, to Fr. Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

God wishes to marry the soul in faith. And the soul who should celebrate such a celestial wedding should walk in pure faith, the only appropriate and unique means for this love union. The soul, to elevate to divine contemplation, should be purified from all imperfections, not only current ones, something that is achieved not only by the purification of the senses, but also of all routine imperfections, such as certain affections, certain imperfect attitudes which the purification of the senses has not been able to eliminate and that remain in the soul as roots, and which is achieved by purifying the spirit. This is done when God, with the most high light invades the soul, pierces it intimately and renews it completely. This most high light, which God causes in such souls, places the spirit of these souls in a situation of suffering and desolation, capable of taking them to extreme pain and to interior suffering compared to death. In such a situation, these souls are not capable of understanding this divine action, this most high light. This happens to them due to two reasons: the first one, due to the light itself, which is so sublime and so marvelous that it completely overwhelms the capacity of the souls which makes them feel rather darkness and torment than light. The second reason is due to the evil and impurity of the souls, and that is why the most high light does not only seem dark but also painful and harmful. Therefore, instead of feeling consoled, they feel tormented by the light, feeling full of great suffering by the senses and full of great anguish and horrible pain at the spiritual level. All of this happens at the beginning because the divine light finds the souls not prepared for divine union, and, therefore, it brings them to a purification state. And later, when this light has already purified them, it takes them to the enlightened state, elevating them to the vision and perfect union with God. Therefore, the souls should be glad in the Lord for such a high reward to which He has elevated them, and they should trust completely in the Lord, like Saint Job did, as he too, in such a situation, trusting in God, hoped to see the light after experiencing darkness.

(April 11th, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Not everyone of us is called by God to save souls and to propagate his glory through the elevated apostolate of preaching. And you should know that this is not the only way to achieve such two great objectives. The soul can propagate the glory of God and work for the salvation of souls through a truly Christian life, praying incessantly to the Lord so that "his Kingdom will come", that his most holy name "be sanctified", that "He shall not lead us into temptation", that he "deliver us from evil". This is also what you should do, offering yourself completely and continuously to the Lord for this purpose. Pray for evil ones, pray for the lukewarm ones, pray also for the faithful, and pray especially for His Holiness the Pope, for all spiritual and temporary needs of the holy Church, our tenderly mother. And offer a special prayer for all those who work for the salvation of souls and for the glory of God in the missions, among so many unfaithful and non-believers.

(September 19th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

You tell me that due to your sleepy, distracted, unpredictable, most awful spirit, to which physical annoyance many times accompanies, you are not able to remain in the church for more than an hour and a half. Do not suffer because of this, it is enough that you avoid the opportunity for such feeling and do not try to overcome such annoyance and boredom. Do not make your spirit tired by proud, continuous, and long prayers when the mind and the spirit are not prepared for them. In the meantime, try throughout the day to remain alone, as much as possible and, in the silence of your heart and of solitude, offer your prayers to the Father in heaven, your blessings, your guilty and humble heart and all your being. In such a way, while most creatures, creatures made in His image, forget the kindness of the divine Spouse, we, with such retreats and practices, have Him always close to us.

(October 14th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

During the attacks of the enemy, in the test of life, we shall stand up and pray to the Lord asking Him to remove and keep always away from us the kingdom of the enemy and to grant us the grace of being brought to His kingdom when He desires and hoping that this should be very soon. Let us not walk astray, my dear Raffaelina, during the times of the test. By perseverance in doing good deeds, by patience in fighting the good battle, we will win against the audacity of all our enemies and, as the divine Teacher said, by patience we will save our souls, because "tribulation gives birth to patience, patience creates test and test brings about hope". Let us follow Jesus on the path of suffering: let us always keep our eyes fixated on the celestial Jerusalem and we shall happily overcome all adversities that hinder our journey to get to it.

(October 14th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Let us revive most of all our faith and let us bear in mind the incredible victory spoken by the holy letters about what the people of Israel achieved over the Midianites. The letters say that, in the middle of the night, the enemy forces were camping on the steppes and, without anyone suspecting it, the enemy was surrounded by only three hundred warriors of Gideon, each with a trumpet on one hand and on the other a vase that had a torch inside. At the signal by the captain, they loudly broke the vases, played the trumpets and, after each note, they loudly screamed: "For God and for Gideon!". Facing such loud screams, the noise of the trumpets, the shining of the torches, immense fear took over the enemy camp and everyone started to run, even half asleep, while the trumpets were still playing their gloomy sound. Amid indescribable confusion of such sudden flee, many men of the enemy forces killed each other, leaving scores of dead bodies in the field. This victory was achieved by the Israelite people, as we can see, not by weapons, but by a particular strategy of war. In this same way, we too, while we live, shall sustain a very difficult battle. Let us win this war with such a singular strategy used by Gideon. Let us make that this fight has in front the light of good deeds, the virtue of the science of God, the fervent desire of the word of God . After that, let us also fight with spiritual hymns, psalms, and songs, singing and raising with strength our voice to the Lord, and this way we will make ourselves deserving of achieving victory in our Lord Jesus to whom is forever the glory and the power.

(October 10th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Remember that the peace of the spirit can also be maintained amid many storms of life. You know well that this is possible essentially by keeping on good terms with others, wishing them good. You know also that this is also possible in the friendship with God, through sanctifying grace, and the proof of being united to God is the moral certainty we have of not having committed a mortal sin that would weigh heavy on our soul. Anyhow, peace is based on having achieved victory over the world, over the devil and over other passions. Therefore, tell me, is it not true that this peace brought by Jesus can be maintained well, not only when our spirit is abundant in consolation, but also when the heart is submerged in bitterness caused by the growls and screams of the enemy?

(June 28th, 1918, To Antonietta Vona)

Do not fear! Jesus is with you; you are with Him. Who can assure you of that? The authority that God has given you as your guide, the authority who loves you who does not wish and cannot lie to you, the authority who speaks to you in the name of God. You have reasons to lament, my most beloved daughter, because I have almost seen you in the dark, you seek God, you wish for Him, and you cannot find His footsteps. It seems that God is hiding, that He abandons you! But let me repeat, do not fear. Jesus is with you also in this time and you are in Him and with Him. He hides, He keeps away to revive the love. In darkness, in tribulations, in shadows, in anguish of the spirit, Jesus is with you. You, my good daughter, only see darkness in your spirit, and I assure you on behalf of God that the light of the Lord invades and surrounds your spirit completely. You see yourself in darkness and God repeats to you by the mouth of the authority: "I am with you in tribulation!".

(June 28th, 1918, to Antonietta Vona)

You see yourself abandoned, and I guarantee you that Jesus has you closer than ever to his divine Heart. Our Lord also lamented himself on the cross of abandonment by the Father, but the Father ever abandoned or could abandon His son? These are the most difficult tests of the spirit. Jesus desires such: They must be done! Do pronounce in resignation this "they have to be done" when you find yourself in such tests and do not be afraid. Do not stop lamenting in front of Jesus in any way you wish or please, ask him as you desire, but do believe what assures you he who speaks in his name. Write to me often about the state of your soul and do not fear anything. I will be compassionate with you with the charity of a father. I -even though not deserving - pray and ask for prayers for you. Remain happy that Jesus treats you as he wishes, he is always a father and a good one!

(April 20th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Saint Augustine tells us very well: "Our heart is never at peace until it rests on the object of its love". But you know very well that perfect love will be achieved when the object of this love will be possessed, but the object of this love will only be possessed when, not through veils, but face to face, like Saint Paul says, the soul will see it, when it will meet him the way we meet each other, and all of this will not be possible until the doors of our prisons are open. You can conclude from this the great suffering that must signify for the soul to which God has revealed some of his celestial treasures, seeing itself on the way, on the land of exile.

(December 6th, 1916, to Erminia Gargani)

December 4th With the repeated hits of a sharp chisel and with diligent work when polishing them, the divine artist usually prepares the stones that should be part of the construction of the eternal building. The Church sings that way the hymn of the devotion of a church, and it is indeed that way. To the already long and diverse test presented by your loved ones when they choose the way of life, the Lord, in his immense grace adds the aspect of fear and spiritual fear, with some complement of desolation. Be grateful, then, that He treats you like a chosen one to continue near Jesus on the ascend to Calvary. I watch with happiness and commotion of the spirit this way of acting of the grace in you, my most beloved daughter. Had I not seen you so shaken, I would not be so happy, because I would see that the Lord gives you fewer jewels. This is why I, who with holy compassion fervently wishes for your advancement, rejoice and am glad every day more thinking about this situation.

(December 6th, 1916, to Erminia Gargani)

December 5th It is not abandonment but rather love what the most sweet Jesus shows you. It is not true at all that you offend God, in a state of drought and desolation of spirit in which the most loving Savior has placed you, because His vigilant grace keeps you very well away from such offenses. Therefore, if, as it is definitely true, you do not offend God and, on the contrary, you are loving him in such a situation created by Him, what reasons do you have to anguish? Why do you worry? Re-start, therefore, your climbing of the cross, lay over it and be patient with yourself, because in our patience - our divine Teacher tells us - we will save our soul. This situation will be more meaningful when it is less mixed with concerns and doubts.

(December 6th, 1916, to Erminia Gargani)

December 6th Become motivated and be convinced that God is pleased with you and that He finds in you his peaceful dwelling. Do not wait for Mount Tabor to see God, you already contemplate Him, without realizing, at Mount Sinai. I believe that yours is not a troubled interior incapable of loving goodness. At this stage, one can only like supreme goodness in itself and no longer in its gifts. The thoughts of the mind, the involuntary distractions, temptations, etc., are products offered by the enemy, but because they are rejected by you, there is nothing wrong in this. When the devil makes noise, it is a good sign, it is a sign that he desires your will and, therefore, that he is outside your will. What should scare you, my beloved sister and daughter, is his peace and harmony with the human soul. During periods of the drought of the spirit, be humble, patient and resigned to divine will, and do not neglect anything that you usually do during times of spiritual joy, because true love is not about experiencing many consolations when serving God, but in a will always ready to do everything that God wishes to send us for our spiritual advancement and for His glory. Always believe in this, and do not worry if it is difficult and painful for your soul to believe it, even if you do not understand the reason for it. Even the martyrs believed by suffering. The most beautiful Creed is the one pronounced in sacrifice and causing us suffering.

(December 6th, 1916, to Erminia Gargani)

December 7th Bear in mind, my brave daughter, that God can reject everything to a creature conceived in sin and who bears the permanent imprint inherited from Adam. But He cannot at all reject the honest desire to love Him. Therefore, if for other reasons you cannot be sure of the celestial charity towards you, and you do not wish to believe me who speaks in the Lord, at least you could be sure by this reasoning. In conclusion, you can and should be at peace and happy. Believe me who speaks on behalf of God. Keep away from such fear, renounce such shadows with which the devil is attacking your soul to torment you and keep you away, if it would become possible, from frequent communion and from the path of perfection. I know that the Lord allows the enemy such assaults, because His mercy makes you more pleasing to Him and He wishes that you are more like Him in the torment of the desert, of the garden and of the cross. But you well know how to defend yourself, keeping the devil away and rejecting his malign insinuations. Have I been cleared? Be courageous and move on. Fight like a brave one and you will receive the reward of strong souls.

(May 13th, 1915, to Raffaolina Cerase)

December 8th Escape, escape even the smallest shadow that makes you feel important. Reflect and keep always in front of the eyes of the mind the greatest humility of the Mother of God and ours, who, when the celestial gifts started to increase in her, she deepened every time more in humility, in a way that, at the same moment in which she was covered by the shadow of the Holy Spirit, which transformed her in the Mother of the Son of God, she was able to sing: "Here is the slave of the Lord". And the same way, our beloved Mother sang in the house of Saint Elizabeth, even though she was carrying in her virginal womb the Verb made flesh. Your humility should grow while the gifts increase, believing that everything that has been given to us is goodness, in such a way that your spirit would break in continuous praising. Acting this way, you will defy and conquer all the wrath of hell: the enemy forces will be destroyed, you will be saved, and the enemy will burn in anger. Trust in divine help and rest assured that He who has protected you until now will continue His work of salvation.

(March 8th, 1915, to Annita Rodote, Ep. III, 61)

December 9th Your meditation should usually be about everything that has to do with the life, passion, and death, and also the resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ. You could also meditate on his birth, his fleeing and stay in Egypt, his return, and his hidden life in the workshop of Nazareth until he was thirty years old, his humility when he was baptized by his predecessor Saint John. You could meditate over his public life, his most painful passion and death, the institution of the most holy sacrament, precisely during that night in which men were preparing the most horrific torments for him. You could meditate also on Jesus who prayed in the garden and who sweated blood thinking of the torture that men were preparing for him and thinking of the ungratefulness of men who had not appreciated his goodness. Meditate as well about Jesus being taken prisoner and being judged, whipped, and crowned with thorns, in his way to the top of the Calvary carrying the cross, meditate on his crucifixion and, finally, on his death on the cross, amid an ocean of anguish, in front of the eyes of his most afflicted Mother.

(December 11th, 1916, to the Ventrella sisters, Ep. III, 548)

Decemb er 10th Continue, my good sisters and daughters, remembering me in the treasures of your prayers, especially during this time I am enduring a difficult test. And rest assured that I fervently wish and will continue to wish for spiritual health more than the physic al one, besides that grace that you already know about. In my poor, but also repeated prayers, I will not forget you and neither will I forget that you too do that faith and this hope I wish you all the good ness of heaven. Let us now address your spiritual needs. Those curiosities of the spirit that you experience are evil tricks by the tempting one. God allows them, not because He hates you, but rather because He loves you. The feeling is not judged, but rather the consent of it. And I motivate you in the most sweet Lord to feel at peace, because you do not offend the Lord in this neither the Lord hides to punish your infidelities which, I declare in the name and in virtue of holy obedience, do not take place in you, at leas t not committed with full awareness and determined will.

(December 11th, 1916, to the Ventrella sisters, Ep. III, 548)

December 11th The hope of being in eternal peace is good, is holy, but it is essential to moderate it by the complete resignation to the will of God. It is better to do the wish of God on earth than enjoy it in heaven. To suffer and not die was the desire of Saint Theresa. Purgatory is sweet when one suffers for the love of God. The tests to which God subjects you and will subject you, are all signs of divine predilection and there are jewels for the soul. Beloved, Winter will pass, and endless Spring will arrive, much richer will be the beauty when more difficult have been the storms. The darkness you are experiencing is a sign of the proximity of God to your souls.

(December 11th, 1916, to the Ventrella sisters, Ep. III, 548)

December 12th Moses, the great leader of the people of God, found the Lord in the darkness of Mount Sinai. The Hebrew people saw Him in the form of a cloud and like a cloud He appeared in the Temple. Jesus Christ, during the transfiguration on Mount Tabor, was first visible to the apostles and later He became invisible because He remained wrapped in a shining cloud. The fact of the hiding of God in the darkness represents something gigantic to our eyes because, from visible to invisible, He transforms in pure divinity. The fight with the enemy should not scare us: the closer the soul is to God; the enemy goes more to the bottom of us. Therefore, have courage. When speaking about darkness, I have also replied to your question of why the shadows seem to hit you more. They are not shadows, my beloved daughters, but light, and such strong and bright light that confuses the soul, which is used to think of God in a normal and almost human way. Give thanks to the Lord, if, already in this life, allows you to taste such a vision in which not seeing anything one sees everything.

(December 11th, 1916, to the Ventrella sisters, Ep. III, 548)

December 13th Be certain that internal fights are not dangerous for the fidelity to God. They are opportunities for precious merits which have the name of the crown and the palm of victory. Do not doubt the kindness of your actions because everything you do is under the influence of obedience, which I have previously told you and tell you again, and I have told you in general about thoughts, actions and about rest itself which should be practiced for the glory of the divine Majesty. The only thing this obedience does not include, and cannot include, are the actions that you clearly know that imply offending God. Have I been clear? Have you understood me well? Act according to what I have told you and leave everything under my responsibility. Go for daily communion, always rejecting your doubts which are not rational. Trust in blind and happy obedience and do not fear falling into evil. The rule that will lead you to the harbor of salvation and the divine weapon to claim victory is complete submission of our judgment to the will of He who oversees guiding you in darkness, in the confusion and in the battle of life. Let me repeat because it is important: reject doubts for the sake and in virtue of obedience, and rest assured that, in such battles, you do not sin. I assure you of this and it is indeed this way. the pious and kind Virgin continue to grant you the always present kindness of the Lord so that you could withstand until the end so many tests of love as He presents to you, with the more numerous mortifications. I can predict that, when you will die with Jesus on the cross, you will be able to sweetly say to Him: Mission accomplished!

(September 12th, 1915, to Annita Rodote, Ep. III, 98)

December 14th Continue to keep this most fervent desire of pleasing Jesus, and He, who is so good and does not look in detail, will reward such holy desires, making you grow and develop on his holy paths. Live your entire life for Him, always keeping away from those useless thoughts that fill the heart of pride and that confuse and overwhelm the mind. In all your actions, including the most indifferent ones, seek with sincerity to do them with the honest intention to please God, rejecting even the slightest desire of self-good. And what good could be more valuable for the soul than pleasing God? Regarding yourself, always keep a humble attitude, convinced that all services that the soul could offer to God, even if many in number, are always insignificant, and, if they receive honor and merit, it is because of the grace of the Lord.

(December 5th, 1918, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis, Ep. I, 1071)

December 15th I see myself submerged in an ocean of fire. The wound that is opened again bleeds all the time. This wound alone would be enough to cause my death a thousand times. Oh, God, why don't I die? Or is it that you do not see that for the soul that you have wounded, even life represents torture? Are you so cruel that you remain deaf to all the cries of the one who suffers, and you do not comfort him? But, what am I saying?...Forgive me, father, I am out of control, I do not know what I'm saying. The enormous pain caused by the wound that is always open makes me upset even against my will, it makes me lose my temper and it makes me feel crazy, and I do not believe I can stand anymore. Tell me clearly, father: do I offend the Lord when I fall so deep? What should I do not to make the Lord upset if screaming is unavoidable and there is no strength available to stand the pain? God of mine!...Soon...let me leave the physical world because all efforts are hopeless to escape spiritual death. Heaven, I believe, has closed on me, and all my efforts and cries turn against me, like arrows, to fatally wound my poor heart. My prayer seems helpless, and my defeated spirit, at the first attempt to find again the way out runs into the one who deprives it of all courage and power, discouraging it and leading it to the most absolute helplessness and void, and not being able to do anything else that would represent a risk. And if there is a possibility of a way out, my spirit finds itself reduced to the same helplessness.

(September 5th, 1918, to Fr . Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

My God, you know all too well. Send at least a light to my guide so that he can discover what I can't find: the true source of so many ailments in this creature. I never had my faculties so incapable and so atrophied. How much pain this is for the will, for the memory and for the understanding! I think that for a will that seeks and at least desires goodness, it is difficult and unimaginable the pain it suffers. The same way, for someone who, enriched by so many memories of divine greatness by its merits and rights, and in regard to oneself, memories of personal obligations and the veneration owed to his creator, it is a deadly pain not being able to comprehend what is mysteriously discovered later. (...) The understanding is sort of squashed under the rock and, even if it has much knowledge, it becomes blind, with a blindness so painful that only someone who experiences it could talk properly about it. And, according to me, suffering becomes unbearable to the understanding that, from the beginning of its activity, tests have made it more alert, and it has later experienced the opposite with the brightest beams of true life. My God! lead me into repentance, force me into sincere contrition and to firm conversion of the heart towards you.

(December 17th, 1914, to Raffaelina Cerase)

At the beginning of the holy novena in honor of the Holy Child Jesus, my spirit feels reborn to a new life: the heart feels very small to contain heavenly goods. The soul feels like fainting before the presence of our God who became flesh for us. What can one do to resist loving Him always with a renewed flame? Let us get closer to the Child Jesus with a heart clean of guilt and we will taste how sweet and soft it is to love Him. I will never stop, and least these holy days, to pray to the divine Child for all men and women, especially for you and for all the people that you love so much. I will ask Him to make you part of all the gifts that He has so generously poured and that he pours every day more on my spirit.

(August 17th, 1918, to Rachelina Russo)

The goodness of your soul is to be completely in and of God. Who is only of God becomes saddened when offending God, and his sadness remains for that reason in a profound, quiet, and peaceful humility and submission from which he recovers with the help of divine mercy, through a sweet and perfect trust, without melancholy or contradiction. Who is only of God does not seek anything but God, and, because he is not less in tribulation or in prosperity, remains in peace amid adversities. Who is only of God thinks continuously about Him every moment of this life and tries to be every day better to the eyes of God, and he finds and admires God in all creatures, and he says with Saint Augustin: "All creatures, my Lord, invite me to love you". Who is only of God wants everyone to know that he wants to serve Him, that he wants to love Him, and tries very hard to perform all exercises that would help him to remain united to Him. Be, therefore, always of God, my most beloved daughter, be only of Him, only wishing to please Him, and to His creatures in Him, according to Him and for Him.

(December 19th, 1913, to Antonietta Vona)

Thinking of this coming Holy Christmas, I send you, from my heart and with great brotherly affection, my most sincere congratulations, asking the little Jesus to grant you spiritual and temporary happiness. send so fervently to Him for you, for all superiors and for the entire world! I do not have any message to convey, I can only say that their situation is enviable. Seeing them so tested, I rejoice in my soul, and I feel towards them holy envy, that of emulation. Their situation, dear father, especially some of them, is such at this moment that they are not able to receive any relief, not even good words that I could give them. God has sunken in the darkness their understanding. He has placed their will in dried land, memory in the void, the heart in bitterness, in defeat, in extreme desolation, and all of this is a reason for the greatest envy because all is aimed at predisposing and preparing their hearts to receive in them the genuine image of the spirit which is nothing else than the union of love. God is with them and, to convince them of that, it should be enough for them their will to be always ready to devote completely to God and to act to his service and honor.

(December 20th, 1910, to P. Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

My most beloved father, thinking of this coming Holy Christmas, I find that a conscience duty pushes me to take this opportunity to wish that it is filled with all heavenly consolation that your heart most desires. Although I have always prayed for you, who have been and will be a person that I love very much, these days I will not forget to redouble my prayers to the heavenly Child, so that he grants to spare you of any misfortune in this world, especially of the misfortune of losing the Child Jesus. My bad health continues with its better and worse moments. I suffer, it is true, and I suffer very much, but am most happy because, also during suffering, the Lord does not cease to make me experience indescribable joy.

(December 20th, 1910, to P. Benedetto da San Marco in Lamis)

For the coming Holy Christmas and the celebrations of the end of the year, with my heart full of gratitude and affection more than brotherly, I send you my most sincere congratulations, asking the heavenly Child for your spiritual and temporary happiness. Do not doubt, father, that your son knows how to deliver, as much as his youth allows him, his duty with receive my poor and weak prayers, that I send him these days, with the most holy persistence, for the Order, superiors, the province, and the entire Church. Let me tell you about a very peculiar phenomenon that has been happening to me for some time, and that, on the other hand, does not stop worrying me. During my prayers, I forget to pray for those who have asked me to pray for them (not all of them, I must say) or for those that I intended to pray. Before starting to pray, I try hard to ask, for example, for such or such a person, but, my Lord, as soon as I start praying, my mind remains in the most complete void and there is not even the most remote trace o f what I had been wishing. Other times, while praying, I find myself motivated to pray for those I had never thought to ask and, what is more wonderful, sometimes in favor of those I have never met, seeing, or heard, and those who have never asked me to pray for them, not even throu gh others. such a strange and new phenomenon, and shall God wish for you to express it to me, I will beg that you do not deprive me of such information.

(December 22nd, 1914, to Raffaolina Cerase)

Lord and the most Holy Virgin make you ever most deserving of everlasting glory. With this faith and with these feelings, I wish you all the most beautiful celebrations of the most holy birth of the Child Jesus, and I fervently pray that you can repeat those celebrations many times in your life, and always with increasing charity, which is the queen and mother of all virtues. How sublime is the beautiful virtue of charity that God the Child has brought us! Everyone should keep it in their heart, and especially those who profess sanctity. To such sanctity, the Lord, without merit on your part, has called you, and, if it is true that I see you well on the path of charity, I still continuously invite you to keep getting better at it every day.

(August 4th, 1917, to an unknown recipient)

The coldness of the spirit, that you sometimes experience, should neither surprise nor defeat you nor discourage you. As long as you have a true and fervent desire and you do not stop practicing compassion due to the surprise, defeat or discouragement, the soul remains in goodness and serves and loves God, especially with unselfish love. Tell me, my good daughter, was sweet Jesus not born in the coldness of the heart? and, why would He not continue to be in the coldness of the heart? I refer to that coldness that is not about the weakening of our good intentions, but simply a certain tiredness and heaviness of spirit which make us painfully walk on the path we are traveling, and from which we do not wish to ever separate until we reach the finish line.

(December 24th, 1918, to Antonietta Vona)

your heart. These and similar ones are the wishes that I have presented to the Baby in Bethlehem on your behalf these days. Our Lord loves you, dear daughter, and He loves you dearly. And if He does not always let you experience the sweetness of His love, it is to make you become humbler and more worthless to your own eyes. But not because of this you should stop asking with all I trust to His holy goodness, especially during the time that we represent the way He was, a small child in Bethlehem. Because, dear daughter, for what other reason would He assume that sweet and kind condition of a child if not to motivate us to trustingl y love Him and to lovingly give ourselves to Him?

Page 360

it more deserving of His divine love. With these very sincere wishes that, repeatedly these days, I am presenting in front of Baby Jesus in your I am pleased with the way the spirit works in you and, at the same time, that I congratulate you, I join you in blessing the divine mercy for so much predilection, as it has been shown to you. Therefore, enlarge your heart and let the Lord work freely. Open your soul to the divine sun and seek that its beneficial beams take away the darkness from your soul, because it is the enemy who often casts shadows in it. I recommend your obedience without reasoning to whom occupies the place of God. The obedient soul -says the Holy Spirit - will sing victory before God. Feel like absolutely nothing in front of the Lord. And keep everyone in high esteem, and especially those who love God more than you. And be happy for this, because the love that you have not been able to offer God, is given by other souls more loved by Him and more loyal to Him. (Not dated, to Maria Gargani)

(March 30th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Grow always and do not ever get tired of improving in what is the queen of all virtues, Christian charity. than the iris of your eyes, because it is precisely it the most pleasing to our divine Teacher, who with a commandment of the divine Teacher. This way, we will overcome all difficulties. Charity is such a beautiful virtue, Raffaelina, that the Son of God, precisely to make it burn in our heart, wished to descend to the core of the eternal Father and make himself like us to teach it and provide it to us, with the means he left us, the achievement of this most illustrious virtue. Let us persistently ask Jesus for this virtue and seek to grow in it every day with renewed strength. Let us ask for it, I repeat, and especially during the celebration of the rise of Jesus. Please ask for it for me as well, because I need it very much so that I don't stumble, so that I don't become disloyal to the mercy of the Father in heaven.

(September 7th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

I motivate you to join me and to come with me close to Jesus to receive a hug, a kiss that will sanctify us and save us. Let us listen Saint King David who invites to devotedly kiss the Son: "Kiss the son", because the son of whom he speaks here the true prophet is no other than that the one that the Prophet Isaias said: "A child has been born to us, a son has been given to us: Puer natus est nobis, filius datus est nobis". This child, Raffaelina , is that loving brother, that most beloved spouse of our souls, whose holy spouse on the Song of Songs looked for company and sighed for his holy kisses: "Who could give me you as my brother, and I would look for you and kiss you! Kiss me with the kiss of your lips". This son is Jesus, and the ways of kissing him without betraying him, of hugging him in our arms without squeezing him, the way to give him a kiss and the hug of grace and love, which He expects from us, and promises to return to us, is, according to Saint Bernard, to serve Him with true affection, to work on holy actions following his heavenly teachings, which we profess in words. Therefore, let us not stop kissing the divine Son, because if the kisses we are given Him now are such, He will come, as He has promised, filled with mercy and love. He will come to take us in his arms and to give us the kiss of peace at the last sacraments at the moment of our death. We will this way end our life with the holy kiss of the Lord, a wonderful kiss of divine dignity, in which, according to Saint Bernard, faces do not get close to each other, the lips to the lips, but the creator with the creature unite in eternity, man and God.

(September 7th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Yes, holy lover, Lord of our life, “your embracing chest is better than wine with an aroma more exquisite than perfumes”. Dear daughter, who could tell me the incredible secrets hidden under the veil of the words expressed by the wife of the Song of Songs? I would try in vain, even if I wanted to explain all the wonderful secrets. What I can say is that the soul, when the Lord allows it to say such words, as the wife expressed in the Song of Songs, it feels such sweetness that it realizes that Jesus holds it close to him. All its faculties remain then in calm in a way that it seems to possess God as much as it desires Him. It seems to touch with its hand the nothing that is all the things of this world. The divine Spouse starts showing the soul the most important truths in a way, and for sure new. But the soul does not see this divine lover that manifests itself this way, it only knows that He is with it, and it cannot doubt this at all. The soul finds it self in a place so bright, it experiences such incredible effects of the union with the Spouse, and it feels very firm in the virtue that it feels to be a different soul from before. It lives submerged in this ocean of consolation completely heavenly that, in the drunkenness of its joy, it does not know what to desire or ask God. In conclusion, in this stream of light and happiness the soul does not know what has transformed. It feels it has been transported outside of itself. It feels that the divine Spouse hugs it so close to Him that the poor soul, in front of such joy, feels like fainting in a way. It is precisely at that moment that it feels like being lovingly taken in the divine arms, and that He squeezes it next to His side, to His divine chest, and it is such the celestial drunkenness of the soul that it becomes overwhelmed and almost out of itself. So, in an impulse of holy craziness, the soul could tell its sweet conqueror: “your embracing chest is better than wine with an aroma more exquisite than perfumes”.

(December 29th, 1912, to Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

Another year that passes to eternity under the weight of the sins that I have committed during the year! How many souls more blessed than mine welcomed the beginning of the year but did not see the end of it! How many most blessed souls, which I envy, have passed to eternity with the death of the just, with the kiss of Jesus, consoled by the sacraments, supported by a minister of God, with a smile on their face, despite their pain and suffering to which their bodies were subjected! Dear father, life on earth bores me. Life in this exile is to me torture so bitter that I can hardly continue any longer. The thought that at any moment I could lose Jesus torments me so much that I cannot explain. Only the souls that sincerely love Jesus would understand me. In these solemn days for me, because they are the celebrations of the celestial Child, I have often experienced such excesses of divine love that so frequently make my heart suffer. Completely convinced of the kindness of Jesus towards me, I have trustingly asked him: "Oh, Jesus, how could I love you, how could I suffer as much as I could and please you and repair in any way all the ungratefulness of humanity against you!".

(March 30th, 1915, to Raffaelina Cerase)

Have unlimited trust in God also when misfortune and attacks of the enemy arrive to annoy you. Those spent in merciful actions to the divine Spouse, to Him all your actions be guided, all your heart beats, all your sighs. Always remain with Him during times of misfortune and tribulation. Remain also with Him during spiritual consolation. In conclusion, live for Him, spend all your life for Him, give Him your departure from this world and that of others, when where and how He wishes. Always show and in everything, more deserving of your Christian vocation. Live in a way that the celestial Father could be proud of you, as He does with so many souls that He has chosen the same way that He chose yours. Live in a way that you could repeat every moment with the apostle Saint Paul: "Imitate me, like me who is Christ Jesus". Live in a way, I repeat, that even the world could firmly say: "That is Christ". Oh, I ask mercifully, do not think that this is exaggeration! Every Christian, true imitator, and follower of the Nazarene can and should call himself a second Christ, of whom he carries very importantly His footprint. Oh, if every Christian would live according to his vocation, this world of exile would become a paradise .

(October 14th, 1912, to Fr . Agostino da San Marco in Lamis)

I am totally aware that there is nothing in me that could attract the eyes of our most sweet Jesus. It has only been his mercy that has filled my soul with so many goods. He almost never lets me out of his sight, He follows me everywhere, gives life to my life poisoned by sin. He makes dense clouds dissipate, in which my soul is wrapped after sinning. As soon as I close my eyes, I see the night come down, I see paradise opening to me and, happy by such a vision, I sleep with a smile of happiness on my lips and a complete peace on my forehead, waiting for my small childhood friend to come to wake me up, so that we could sing together early praises to the beloved of our hearts. Oh, my dear father, if after knowing my reality, you feel compassion, I beg you to please, please pray and tell this to my beloved, on my behalf, as proof of my love and gratitude.