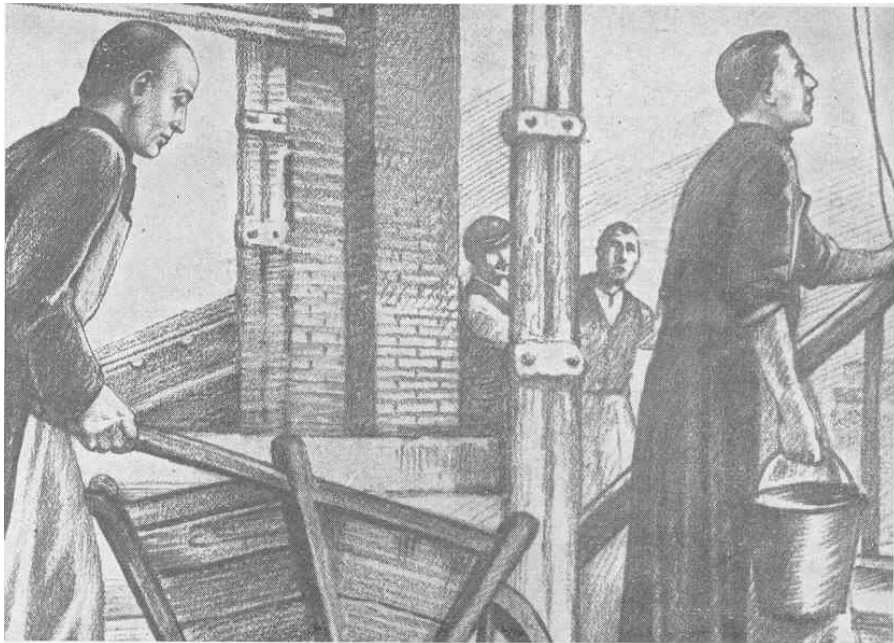


# **THE STIGMATINE**

and the

## **MANAGEMENT**



of the

## **GOODS of the CHURCH**

**Rev. Joseph Henchey, CSS**

**2015**

†  
†††  
†

## Table of Contents

	Page #
<b>Presentation</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. Regular correspondence with Mother Leopoldina Naudet</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. An Exchange of letters with a Rev. Mother Foundress, Teresa Gamba</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.1. Refusal of a Donation [Stipend?] from her</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.2. <u>Italian Originals of the Rev.da. T. Gamba's Correspondence with Fr. Bertoni</u></b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3. St. Gaspar's Total Offering to the Restored Society of Jesus [Jan. 1837]</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4. <u>Excerpts from the Personal Diary of the Rev. Fr. John Nepomuceno Stoeger, SJ, regarding this matter</u></b>	<b>16</b>
<b>5. St. Gaspar's Total Offering of his Entire Enterprise to Pope Gregory XVI</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>6. The Gracious Refusal of a Substantial Inheritance left to the Community by the Family of one of our Confreres, Fr. Francis Cartolari</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>7. The Codification of this Aspect of the Pauline Revelation and the Ignatian Spirit – highlighted in St. Gaspar's Original Constitutions</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>7.1. Part XI – "Familiar Conversation with Our Neighbors toward their Salvation</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>7.2. c. 5: The Manner of visiting and assisting our Neighbors in their Danger of Death [<u>CF ## 291-297</u>]</b>	<b>26</b>

## THE STIGMATINE: and the MANAGEMENT of the GOODS of the CHURCH

7 If one of your kindred is in need in any community in the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand against your kin who is in need. 8 Instead, you shall freely open your hand and generously lend what suffices to meet that need. 9 Be careful not to entertain the mean thought, “The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,” so that you would begrudge your kin who is in need and give nothing, and your kin would cry to the Lord against you and you would be held guilty. 10 When you give, give generously and not with a stingy heart; for that, the Lord, your God, will bless you in all your works and undertakings. 11 The land will never lack for needy persons; that is why I command you: “Open your hand freely to your poor and to your needy kin in your land.” [Dt 15]

11 The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me. [Mt 26]

10 As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards [economy] of God’s varied grace. [1 P 4]

### Presentation

This idea from St. Paul [2 Co 4 & 9] and beyond, seems to have been called to mind by the Stigmatine Founder on several occasions – both for his own followers as well as for those he was spiritually directing. The more recent Stigmatine biographers [Fr. Joseph Stofella and Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove<sup>1</sup>] can lead us in this reflection. There follows here an account of Fr. Bertoni’s ideal for the absolute gratuity [*gratis omnino*] for the Ecclesiastical Ministries and the Renunciation of a number of spontaneous offerings – as well as his idea of giving the property away to those who might make better use of it.

From all indications, Fr. Bertoni wished to mark his entire undertaking a careful drawing of the portrait of Jesus Christ in the lives of each one. Fr. Gaspar’s whole endeavor could indeed be defined as one great work of beneficence [*to serve God and the Church absolutely gratuitously* – *Compendium Rude*, n.3 – quoting the *Formula* of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Modello di santo Abbando*, Part II, c. 1: Effective Poverty, n. 4]

The Congregation is now close to its second centenary of existence. At the very beginning, the school with which Fr. Bertoni began his efforts as a community opened in 1816 for the children of the working class, and it was tuition free. Over the years of the Founder's life the assistance the men of the Stimmate offered to the Diocese of Verona, in its parishes and oratories [an early form perhaps of our "C.Y.O."] particularly – were all gratuitous. The professorships that some of his early followers [admittedly, all diocesan priests] offered for moral theology particularly, church history, and spiritual direction, remained salary free as far as the Stigmatine community was concerned. The Founder himself seemed to go to near extremes in filling the royal post as *Almsmoner* and spiritual guide [in the person of Fr. Luigi Bragato, one of the early Stigmatines closest to the Founder] of the Empress Maria Anna of Austria at the Royal Court of Vienna [the departure of Fr. Bragato was a real sacrifice for Fr. Bertoni- even though from his position of influence, he was able to provide some real support in the legal problems that developed later] – should all be gratuitous. It is recorded that she wanted to provide her Stigmatine spiritual advisor, but Fr. Bertoni respectfully declined repeated generous offers. The idea of a salary-free Counselor to the Empress was staunchly opposed by Royal Prime Minister, Metternich [SA Doc 20, p. 180; Doc 27, pp. 579, ff.].

This theme of Fr. Bertoni's total selflessness was evident even in those early times for the Community in the little Church of the Stimmate in Verona. There were no collection boxes – nor collections during any of the services conducted there. Offerings were flatly refused – and there is some record of the men actually taking an offering to the homes of would-be donors, graciously returning their gesture of generosity. There is a known incident in the life of St. Gaspar himself when someone did offer him personally a generous stipend which he accepted, and gave the contribution to some other religious who was more poorly trying to fend for himself.

It came to the attention of the Oratorio, Fr. Sorio, a great admirer of St. Gaspar, that this detachment served as a kind of 'seal of Fr. Bertoni's extraordinary virtue.' This consisted in having many times renounced very large sums of money. We can consider here several well-known incidents from the early testimonies concerning Fr. Bertoni's life and ideas.

†††

## 1. Regular correspondence with Mother Leopoldina Naudet

[Suggestions for her composition of the Constitutions]

Letter 119, dated July 20, 1827

It is not right to free oneself from responsibility, should some harm come to the rightful owner, who, in the case proposed to me, the Administrator is the Church...

[9487 Lettera 119.

Alla Illustrissima Signora Leopoldina - S. R. M.

Illustrissima Signora,

Non è lecito liberarsi d'un livello in pregiudizio del legittimo padrone, il qual nel caso propostomi è Cristo Nostro Signore, e l'amministratore è la Chiesa. Nel passato giubileo dovetti scrivere a Roma per questo caso avvenuto; e la persona fu sottoposta a una notevole compensazione del danno recato...]

+++

Letter 151 – dated Septuagesima, Feb. 15, 1829]

The back-ground to this letter is that Mother Naudet had presented the Plan for her new Community, housed in the former Carmelite Convent, dedicated to St. Teresa of Avila. This building was actually under the legal ownership of St. Gaspar and he granted it out-right for the Sisters of the Holy Family, for their perpetual use. Mother Naudet wrote back suggesting that Fr. Bertoni continue in the administrative requirements of the building which he graciously declined:

... So, Reverend Mother, for the other aspects about which you have spoken to me, I do not feel that I can accept your suggestion. Nor would Fr. Louis be available as he is a man quite busy in other tasks assigned to him by the Lord. God Himself is the owner here, and we are but His servants, and so it would never be fitting to depart from what He wills. So neither I, nor any of my companions here can help you in this, other than in our prayers that we always offer for you, and for the prosperity of your Institute.

Therefore, Reverend Mother, you will be helped by God Himself, Who is greater than all. I further believe that His Providence will make known to you whatever it is that will serve for the greater benefit of your Institute, and hence it is good that none of us can be involved in the administration of the house, nor will any of us do so. In your prayer to the Lord implore His help, and think it all over well. As for the decisions in the more delicate matters may be concerned, may all be handled obtaining counsel of the more capable members of the house, and let the decisions be made in accord with prudence and as the heart will dictate. Do not take any steps that are not agreed upon, unless the authority of the Holy Father should seek it. Once you have made it all known first to Fr. Guerreri, Monsignor the Capitular Vicar might be sought out for his approval...

[Italian Original]:

Illustrissima Signora,

Appena ricevute le Carte, ho cominciato leggerle; e con piacere sono giunto al segno che troverà fatto da me con la matita, dove volea riflettere, e non poteva, e il Signore mi ha messo in letto, e non ho testa pur da riflettere per far bene. Mi pare che il Signore accenni di valersi dell'opera del P. Maestro, del quale si può fidare, e spedirà l'affare.

Per il resto di che Vostra Signoria mi parla, io non sono ora in caso. Né D. Luigi è uomo da ciò, né convien metterlo in queste faccende, che il Signore gli ha dato per le necessità ben altro che fare.

9571 Iddio è il padrone e noi siamo li servi; né ci convien partire dal suo volere. Né perché né io né veruno de' miei possa aiutarla se non dell'orazioni, che facciamo sempre per Lei e per la prosperità del suo Istituto, perciò Vostra Signoria non sarà aiutata da Quello che è più che tutti. Credo anzi che la sua Provvidenza così determini ella medesima, per maggior bene del suo Istituto, dove è buono che al tutto non ci siamo entrati, né ci entri verun di Noi.

9572 Ella, implorato l'aiuto divino e raccolto, se il crede bene, il parere delle più discrete di casa, facciano quello [che] la sua prudenza e il cuore loro detta, non legandosi a quello che non si sentono, se l'autorità del Santo Padre nol chiedesse. Letta poi al P. Guerreri la Carta, può far chiamare Monsignor Vicario per l'approvazione. Mi raccomandi molto al Signore, e pieno di venerazione mi protesto,

Or ora, questo dì, la Settuagesima [15 Febbraio 1829],

*Umilissimo Devotissimo Servidore*  
*G. Bertoni*

## 2. An Exchange of Letters with Rev. Mother Foundress, Teresa Gamba

### 2.1. Refusal of a Donation [Stipend?] from her

[Late January 1823]

To continue this account of one aspect of the Stigmatine spirit derived from St. Ignatius, St. Gaspar in 1823 refused the offerings of a Teresa Gamba. She had gathered around herself a group of companions to take care of the young girl urchins. She dearly wished to make an offering to assist her spiritual guide and advisor, for his newly founded Congregation – but, he preferred that she keep it for her own group. He was almost scrupulous in keeping his own rule. Our Stigmatine historian, Fr. Joseph Stofella has recorded this event, and it may be found in St. Gaspar's *Epistolario* <sup>2</sup>:

... These are two brief notes apparently in response to letters or communications of some kind from Teresa Gamba. By means of these two responses from a St. Gaspar, we enter right into the heart of this present discussion. His was the habitual renunciation – that might also be called “systematic” – of all offerings even those spontaneous in nature, if they represented someone else's money. He does point out why it was that he refers to apparent exception to this practice in accepting the legacy of the Church of the Stimmate and an adjoining building, left to him in the will of his former professor of Moral Theology, the Arch-Priest Nicholas Galvani. Fr. Bertoni states that his reasons for that were so evident, it would not be necessary to offer them anew in nearly 7 years after the event.

With regard to this Nun, the Reverend Mother Teresa Gamba, served the Church as a Hermit of St. Augustine in an old former Monastery dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, in the area of the Church of St. Zeno in Verona. She was known in religion as “Teresa of the Crucified” – her blood sister Theodora accompanied her, and her religious name [rather exotic by today's standards] was “Teresa the Fortunate.” From the year 1798, she served as superior for a three year term, and she was elected in 1801 as the ‘Vicaress’ of the community, being re-elected again as superior in 1804. This information was garnered from an old Chronicle of the Monastery, a copy of which was found in the Library at the Stimmate. With the suppression of religious houses in Verona brought about the occupying forces of Napoleon, both sisters had to return to their family home. From her hand writing and

---

<sup>2</sup> pp. 363, ff.

the appearance of her notes, the Reverend Mother Teresa shows some indication that she was not very well educated.

The context for this exchange of letters was the death of Fr. Nicholas Galvani, on January 6, 1823 – who had been serving as spiritual director of the Reverend Mother Teresa. It seems that Fr. Bertoni then took her spiritual direction over and she wished to make some contribution for his commitment to them. This is her letter to Fr. Bertoni:

**Most Reverend Father,**

**In humble prayer, I beg the goodness of your Reverence to receive this little package, as it is no longer useful to me. I have thought that my coming to you might be prolonged further if this could be pleasing to God. But, I recommend this to you because I have so much need of spiritual direction. And along with my sister, please bless me.**

**Your most humble servant,**

**Teresa Gamba**

Fr. Bertoni's initial response to her seems to have been in Fr. Michelangelo's handwriting, as the letter seems to have been dictated to him by Fr. Bertoni:

**Very Reverend Mother**

**I received your letter just as I was leaving to preach [perhaps his regular Friday night devotions at the Church of the Stimate, honoring the Sacred Stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ], and I thank you most sincerely for the packet. And I will always keep a loving remembrance in my heart for that extraordinary care that you have shown in my regard, by asking me without any coercion to keep your gifts. However, this would be something totally against our already expressed pacts here, so please excuse me if I cannot accept the gift.**

**While manifesting to your very Reverend Lady-ship, my profound esteem and profession, that I profess in your regard... [unsigned]**



Reverend Mother Teresa responded to this letter:

**Your Reverence,**

I have received the package that your reverence sent back to me despite my hope that out of goodness you might accept it. This is not a gift, nor a donation, but a kind of 'retainer' flowing from my Agreement. Please accept my wish that your charity would receive it. And if the person proposed to me [as Spiritual Father] will be approved, at my death there will be disposed of these monies in the manner you decide, after having denied me the possibility of experiencing this in life. Please respond to me, ever so briefly, or indicate to me a person to whom I might be able to say that which my heart and will inspire me to do so. And please support me that this most bitter separation from the Arch-priest [Fr. Galvani] who has left me a spiritual orphan as I still need to find a capable person to whom I might be able to confess.

Please bless me and pray always for me.

The 6<sup>th</sup> of M [March/May?] 1823.

Your most humble servant

**Teresa Gamba**

And Fr. Bertoni responded to her apparently right away, with a fragment of a letter without date, introduction or conclusion:

... My constant maxims impede me from accepting the gift which Your Ladyship, has offered me for a second time, and these maxims also oblige me to refuse it even after my death. While I did accept the inheritance from the Archpriest, Fr. Galvani, the reasons I did so are so clear that it would be in opportune to repeat them here. As a result, may Your Reverence follow my counsel in this matter: hold this and anything else for those uses that I am unable to foresee up until my death. And if God might not choose to please me in this regard, at the time of my death, may it all be disposed of it in accord with whatever prudent counsel you might receive from the one who will draw up your last will and testament. Please do not leave anything in my behalf nor for my companions here at the Stimate, because I do not accept it, and I will make sure that my companions do not accept anything either. What matters most to me is that these maxims be well adhered to, as I know these ideals are too important for the glory of God in these circumstances. Therefore, and giving thanks for the infinite charity of your reverence, I send to you my veneration and perpetual gratitude...

†††

## 2.2. Italian Originals of the Rev.da. T. Gamba's Correspondence with Fr. Bertoni

Mss 9764 [Lettere della Madre Gamba e risposte del Signor D. Bertoni]:

*Al Molto Reverendo Signor Don Gasparo Bertoni, alle Stimate.*

*Vostra Signoria Riverenza,*

*Con umile preghiera supplico la bontà di Vostra Signoria ricevere il piccolo contenente, essendo affatto inutile a me. Avrebbe il mio cuore bramato più lungo il mio trattenimento con Lei. Dirò che a Dio non sia piaciuto. Me le raccomando, perché ne abbisogno, oh quanto! E con questa mia sorella ci benedica.*

*Umilissima sua serva, Teresa Gamba*

Reverendissima M.a

Ricevo la pregiatissima sua lettera nell'atto che sono per predicare, e la ringrazio assai, e ne serberò per sempre nel cuore viva la riconoscenza, ad un affetto sì grande ch'ella dimostra per me facendomi sin forza a tenere i suoi doni. Ma essendo ciò contro i nostri patti espressi, mi scuserà se io non li posso ricevere, e protestando a Vostra signoria Reverendissima la profonda mia stima e venerazione, me le professo...

II

9765 *Al molto Reverendo Signore Don Gasparo Bertoni, S. R. M. Riverenza,*

*Ritengo l'involto che Signoria Vostra rimandò, sulla fiducia che per bontà lo riceva. Non è questo regalo né dono, ma pochi avanzi del mio convento. Accordi che ancora ne prieghi la sua carità di riceverlo; e se dalla propositami persona sarammi approvato, alla mia morte sarà disposto se ciò che in vita ella mi nega. Mi risponda per bontà una riga, oppure mi mandi una persona alla quale possa dire ciò che il cuore e la volontà mi dice; e per secondarmi le sovvenga che la mancanza amarissima del Signor Arciprete mi ha lasciata affetto orfana, e che ancora devo trovarmi persona stabile per confessarmi. Mi benedica e priegi sempre per me.*

*Or ora 6 M. 1823*

*Umilissima... serva, Teresa Gamba*

9766 Le mie massime costanti impedisconmi di accettare il dono per la seconda volta offertomi da Vostra Signoria, e mi obbligano anche a ricusarlo dopo la morte. Se ho accettato il legato del Signor Arciprete Galvani, le ragioni sono così chiare, che sarebbe inopportuno il renderle. Del resto faccia Vostra Signoria secondo il mio consiglio: Tenga questo ed altro per quegli usi che non deve mai fino alla morte disperare di aver a fare. E se a Dio non piacerà consolarne, in morte ne disporrà secondo il consiglio prudente di chi avrà a stendere il suo testamento; non però in favor mio né delle Stimate, perché né accetto io, né farò che accettino i miei compagni a' quali soprattutto mi preme che queste massime siano bene raccomandate, sapendo io bene che troppo importano all'onore di Dio in quete circostanze.

Rendendo intanto alla carità di Vostra Signoria Reverendissima infinite grazie, protesto la mia venerazione e la perpetua mia riconoscenza.

†††

### 3. St. Gaspar's Total Offering to the Restored Society of Jesus

[January, 1837]

By this time, it was now going on 21 years since St. Gaspar and a few companions came to the Stimate, on November 4, 1816 in the enthusiastic hope of establishing a new religious community. In addition to the above gracious refusal of gifts and bequests, at least twice he offered his entire undertaking once to the Holy See – and also to the then recently reinstated Society of Jesus. Some of the documentation of these incidents and the names of potential beneficiaries, have come down to us.

In November of 1837 – 21 years after the initial foundation of the Community – it was in dire straits. There had been a number deaths, and the confiscation of the property by the civil authorities, that would lead to endless court trials. The Founder was by now practically an invalid, “between his bed and his chair,” repercussions from earlier attacks of ‘miliary fever’. It was bandied about that the formerly repressed Society of Jesus would soon be returning to Verona. This situation is described in Fr. Stofella’s biography of the Stigmatine Founder<sup>3</sup>.

A personal mission was sent there in the persons of Fr. Joseph Ferrari, SJ, with a companion assigned to him by the Jesuit Father General, by the name of Fr. John Nepomucene Stoeger, SJ. They very soon made their way to St. Gaspar, due to the extraordinary moral reputation he enjoyed in the city, in order for them to receive his advice. The Jesuits had seemed to have come to a dead end in their efforts to re-establish themselves in Verona. Their old ‘nest’, their former residence consisting of a college building, class rooms and a church, even this locale remained unavailable to them. This was old St. Sebastian’s, which Fr. Bertoni himself attended as a teen ager for his high school years, and came to know and to be directed by a Fr. Louis Fortis, SJ, (a local boy [!]) – who would eventually be elected Fr. General [1820-1829] of the re-established Jesuits. He would be remembered by his insistence on Jesuit poverty [as St. Ignatius described his charism in a letter: Praedicare (evangelize?) in paupertate] with all these ex-Jesuits who desired to return to the Society, but with personal accounts held in their own names, after working many years on their own<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> P. Giuseppe Stofella, stigmatino, *Il Venerabile Gaspare Bertoni. Fondatore dei Preti delle Sacre Stimate di N.S.G.C.* Verona: PP Stigmatini 1951, pp. 194, f.

<sup>4</sup> cf. *For Matters of Greater Moment. The First 30 Jesuit General Congregations*. St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources 1994.

They had thus far been unable to procure anything which they considered suitable for an eventual Novitiate for the Society in Verona.

When St. Gaspar was made aware of all this, it became known that he was most anxious to see the establishment of a Jesuit Novitiate in the city, that would also be beneficial to the entire diocese. As a result, he made the out-right offer of two sites listed as his own property: that would have meant the House of the “*Dereletti*” [originally a kind of religious haven formerly used to house the abandoned, ‘derelicts’], and then a second building near the old parish church of the Most Holy Trinity in Verona. Fr. Bertoni further expanded his offer that if perchance that neither one of those two locales would have met the Jesuit needs, St. Gaspar did not hesitate to offer the building next to the Stimate, reserving a few rooms for his own men. The Stigmatine Founder then went even further: he offered the school itself, presently so well managed at the time by his own followers, and that he, Fr. Gaspar, would support the maintenance of the needed teachers. He always yearned for what would be best for the broader Church.

In the preparation for, and as part of, St. Gaspar’s Cause of Canonization, a large tome containing contemporary testimonies regarding him, was published in 1958. Among the folders in the Archives submitted to the Vatican was one entitled: *“Various testimonies regarding devotion, the works of the Servant of God, in behalf of the Society of Jesus, to be reinstated and then eventually restored in Verona, 1837-1910”* - listed as “Document 34”, pp. 641-650]. In part, this Document [prepared by the Stigmatine Historian, Fr. Joseph Stofella, CPS – and presented to the Holy See by the then Postulator General of the Founder’s Cause, Fr. Joseph Fiorio, CPS] offers in part the following account:

The Company of Jesus had maintained in the City of Verona St. Sebastian’s Church and College, with its schools, up until the year of the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773. Many years later there finally dawned the day when this Company of Jesus would be re-established by Pope Pius VIIth, and the Jesuits sought to return to their old locale. The Jesuit Superior General, Fr. Roothan, SJ, a “Servant of God” in the official sense, and a personal friend of Fr. Marani and other companions of St. Gaspar, entrusted this mission to a Fr. Joseph Ferrari, SJ, and assigned Fr. John Nepomucene, SJ, as his companion. They made their way to Verona, and the episode continues in late January 1837. Their every effort was met with failure. The old College of St. Sebastian’s was simply unavailable, even though the Jesuits had originally high hopes in its eventual acquisition. Furthermore, the property which

they thought would prove most suitable for a Novitiate was likewise unavailable. As a result, the Jesuits re-thought their earlier ideas about returning to Verona.

It is at this point, that Fr. Gaspar Bertoni stepped forward and offered to the Jesuits gratuitously, with no strings attached, his entire endeavor, schools included, that were being quite well conducted by the Stigmatines. His original offer included just one building in the confines of St. Stephen's parish, which had once served as a refuge and safe haven for the homeless, and had the inglorious title in Italian, "the House of the *Dereletti*". A second offer made by Fr. Bertoni to the Jesuits of an old monastery building within the confines of the Parish of the Most Holy Trinity.

And St. Gaspar then added that if neither one of these two locales met the Jesuits' specifications, he would also hand over to them the building of the Stimmate, including its long successful school, including the commitment to provide financial arrangements for the salaries of those who would come to teach there. It was as though Fr. Ferrari SJ could not believe his ears! At first, he outright turned down this generous offer, and wanted the Stigmatines to continue the work - but added, if necessary, it would be that the Jesuits would re-consider and make some use of the property offered, on a temporary basis.

His companion on this personal Mission from the Jesuit General, Fr. Stoeger, SJ, had recorded this episode in his own Spiritual Diary, often suggested in Jesuit spirituality, today sometimes referred to *Journaling*. This matter came to our knowledge through contacts with the Jesuit General Archives in Rome. In the end, Fr. Bertoni's extraordinary gesture remained on the level of an offered gift. In time the Jesuits did acquire a property for their Novitiate, and a few years later were able to return to their old site at St. Sebastian's.

The Stigmatine, Fr. Charles Zara compiled a series of 'Reminiscences' [*Notizie*] from his conversations in later years with the early members of the Stigmatine community, who had witnessed these events. Fr. Zara noted that it was common knowledge in those early times that Fr. Bertoni nourished a deep admiration for the Society of Jesus and ardently hoped that they would be re-established in Verona. So full of humility as he was considered to be by his contemporaries, Fr. Bertoni was convinced that the Jesuits could serve the Church even better in the work than he himself had developed as our first available Apostolic Mission. Fr. Bertoni's prime interest that the Church be served by the best and most competent Missionaries available. Actually, the saintly Founder's offer included himself, all his companions, his dwellings and all his financial estate! [This is interesting in that a number of the

early Stigmatines truly had wanted to be Jesuits, but could not because of the suppression of the Society and the intransigence and pressing needs of their local bishop – they were juridically all diocesan priests under obedience to the local Ordinary. By this time, there was a new local bishop who might have been more open to such an idea.

In the end, nothing came of this extraordinary offer. From their own testimonies, the Jesuits were much inspired by this example of St. Gaspar. In their gracious denial of this extra ordinary gesture they never forgot St. Gaspar, as the lord through them made other arrangements for the sons of Ignatius to return to Verona.

This was certainly no empty offer, nor was St. Gaspar, in declining health, and just trying to avoid personal responsibilities: at that time, the Stigmatines numbered [cf. Doc. 12]: 12 priests [including Fr. Bragato, permanently assigned to the Royal Court in Vienna], two clerics, three Brothers – and also some substantial financial resources to keep his project moving, and in the hopes it it would develop further.

As far as written documents regarding the offer of himself and his followers, there is not any. Fr. Stoeger, SJ kept a careful record of the facts as they unfolded in this incident – and he makes no mention of it. It is highly probable what Fr. Zara had noted as included in the integral offer [*se stesso, i suoi compagni, le sue case e sostanze*] – is not included in any other written document and is perhaps the content of community conversations among the Stigmatine confreres.

Perhaps one more comment might be noted here: in Fr. Bertoni's ideal, which seems to have been his ultimate motivation was that all be for the glory of God, and the broadest extension of his original mission open to him. He realized his own resources were limited, and that all might fare better in the well organized Jesuit Society. While the Jesuits were much comforted, they declined the offer and the Stigmatines went on with the tasks undertaken, under the leadership of the saintly Founder. Perhaps all was understood in the ideal presented by St. Paul: may this good work begun in us, be brought to completion on the day of the Lord [cf. Ph 1:6]. This verse – indicating the utmost trust in the Will of God - would be quoted in St. Gaspar's central Constitution, presenting his ideal of the "Apostolic Mission" [cf. CF # 185].

†††

**4. Excerpts from the Personal Diary of the Rev. Fr. John Nepomuceno  
Stoeger, SJ, regarding this matter<sup>5</sup>**

**... Feb. 20, 1837:**

A very unexpected favor was offered to us by Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, who is the head of a Congregation of Priests. These men conduct a school to the great edification of all. He offered his property to Fr. Ferrari that we might make use of it as a Novitiate. We suspended pursuing this further, until the results would be made known to us regarding the projected purchase of the old Monastery of the Reformed.

**March 9, 1837:**

Today, Fr. Ferrari stayed in bed, for he has been ill. He sent his companion, Fr. Stoeger, to make an inspection of another house offered by Fr. Bertoni for our use of it for a Novitiate. Fr. Bertoni himself had Fr. Stoeger accompanied by one of the priests of the Congregation, as he was occupied. This locale is near the Parish Church of the Most Holy Trinity, and was once a monastery of the Benedictine Fathers. This house is presently occupied by a few religious women and is vast, well located, and it has a very large garden next to it. But all these advantages are somewhat neutralized with the presence of a parish church near by, and because there is also a kind of reform institution near by, where there are found many inmates of each sex, who dwell so close to the garden of this house, that the voices of those living there can be heard. This fact provides a very great impediment for a Novitiate near by.

**March 14, 1837:**

On reviewing the state of our affairs and on the fitting steps taken in due deliberation, the following is clear: it has been noted that here in Verona there have been established so many religious Institutes. This has all taken place solely counting on Divine Providence. With this in mind, our Company as well ought not merely to hold out until everything just perfectly fits our desires. Therefore, our Company, too, to go ahead with our plans counting a grandiose confidence in Divine Providence. This was so exemplary in our predecessors. Fr. Ferrari is of the bent of mind to accede as far as is possible to the proposals made by the City. In order for us to proceed more securely, meetings were held with the illustrious Fr. Gaspar Bertoni,

---

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Document 34 as part of the *Positio* prepared [1958] for the Founder's Cause of Beatification, pp. 645-647.



a man of great personal authority and of a holy life. This man, from the bottom of his heart has committed himself for the good success of our Company.

**March 15, 1837:**

After lunch today, Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, who is so much in support of the Company of Jesus, sent to us one of his Priests in order to make the following declarations to the Company. Fr. Bertoni, with his entire Religious Congregation, offers, as was made known a few days ago, their two houses presently in their possession. This offer has been made to us in order for us to establish one of them here as a Novitiate. These men are further ready to hand over these properties gratuitously to the Company. Should these properties are not seen as useful for Our purposes, then, the very Convent in which his Community presently dwells is part of his offer. His Community is disposed to move into just a few of the rooms in the Convent.

Should it be that the Company of Jesus, because of present circumstances, might not be able to conduct the classes at St. Sebastian's, Fr. Bertoni is further disposed to hand over the school there. Furthermore, should it prove opportune, he would be ready to hand over to the Company the necessary means for the support of the persons needed for this purpose.

Fr. Ferrari, recognizing with extraordinary affection of gratitude the generosity of this holy man, declared that in no way would be accept the schools, which are presently so well managed by the donor's Congregation. However, he would reserve the decision on whether some eventual use might be made of one of the two building included in the offering Fr. Bertoni made, in order to establish there our Novitiate.

†

Fr. Bertoni was long and gratefully remembered in the Province of the Jesuits in and around Verona for his spontaneous and self-less offer.

†††

## 5. St. Gaspar's Total Offering of his Entire Enterprise to Pope Gregory XVI

AUGUST 9, 1838<sup>6</sup>

About 20 months later, Fr. Bertoni had further strengthened the financial support of his school. Once again, this time in deference to the Holy See, his spirituality motivated him for a second time to make an outright offer of his entire undertaking. It does not seem as though he were just trying “to get rid of a burden” that his failing health had rendered so much of a challenge. Nor did he make these gestures because there were not many new fresh prospects for the Stigmatine way of life. There is nothing in our history that would favor any such interpretations. These generous sentiments flowed from his own conviction of self-giving [as *A Model of Holy Abandonment*] for the betterment of the Church. It seems rather this led to his enormous respect for the Church and her goods. Fr. Gaspar believed in his heart every day that the Church herself lived a high level of Holy Abandonment to the all-wise God. He yearned to see in what way these Church goods would be the most beneficially and competently utilized for the glory of God and for the ever more competent service of the Church.

This first letter of St. Gaspar to Pope Gregory XVI [dated August 9, 1838] was made known to later generations of Stigmatines through the initial biographer of the Founder, Fr. Gaetano Giacobbe<sup>7</sup>. It is evident that this letter, while dealing with rather practical matters, indicates again the fundamental detachment and sense of real poverty of St. Gaspar. The goods that he administered belonged to the Church – the Founder looked on himself as the administrator, or treasurer. Like the talents in the Gospel parable, as a good far-sighted steward [cf. Lk 12:42], St. Gaspar wanted the value of the estate to develop.

It seems that Fr. Marani had come across this letter in a folder assembled containing official Reports of the Stigmatine Institute to the Church authorities. This folder manifested the date of December 14, 1853, 6 months after the Founder's death. One of the contemporary Stigmatines in the Founder's life-time, Fr. Benciolini, suggested that this Report indeed was intended for the authorities in Rome, and perhaps as well as the imperial government in Vienna.

<sup>6</sup> This pattern of St. Gaspar regarding his most sublime conviction regarding Church property which he administered, something like our modern with the “Power of Attorney, or as the *Economus*, in our modern terms - never to be mis-managed, embezzled’. This ideal of the Founder is well covered in Fr. Stofella's biography of Ven. Gaspar 1952, pp. 196, ff.; cd Summ. Add. Doc. XX, pp. 178, ff; Doc. XVII, pp. 583, ff.

<sup>7</sup> For these comments, cf. *Epistolario del Ven. Servo di Dio, P. Gaspar Bertoni* 1954, compiled by Fr. Stofella, pp. 339,f.

The back-ground for this communication seems to have been the following: as the years passed, St. Gaspar wanted to be sure his life-long commitment at the Stimate and beyond might continue after his death by providing it with those investments available to him for this specific purpose. In order to do this, Fr. Bertoni sought to acquire preferably those properties which originally had belonged to religious communities, before being confiscated by the Government in the after-math of the era of Napoleon and the civil government. This effort to strengthen the finances of the little community at the Stimate came directly from Bishop Joseph Grasser, the Ordinary of Verona, confidant and friend of St. Gaspar.

It seems that one of the Stigmatines had an appointment with the Bishop on another matter, and the Bishop is recorded to have said something like the following: 'Please tell Fr. Bertoni, in my name, that I would like to see the purchase of those formerly religious houses, which the government suppressed. Try to find a person of confidence who would serve as a "straw buyer" for the Congregation.' The Stigmatines complied with all this, and chose an individual by the name of Dr. Maggi.

In compiling this folder, Fr. Marani noted the following: it is good to remember here that the saintly Founder did not need an express command from the Bishop in order act – even a hint sufficed. Fr. Bertoni approached the Finance Ministry when a number of Veronese properties of suppressed religious communities were put up for sale, to make money for the government. The Bishop was strongly of the view that those properties that belonged once to the Church, should return once more to her dominion and God's service. And the Bishop promised the Stigmatines that he himself would make all the necessary arrangements with the authorities in Rome. Once all this was carried out, it was then that St. Gaspar dictated this following letter to Pope Gregory XVI:

**Most Blessed Holy Father**

The very least of your servants, the under-signed priest, with a few companions, gratuitously serves the Spouse of Christ in a clerical and common life, in order to honor in her our common Creator and Savior. And this work has been found to be of some use by two successive Bishops<sup>8</sup>. It has been encouraged after having restored and embellished a Church, and having constructed a suitable residence and school building. In his declining age, this priest has been able to set aside a certain system of financial support of savings, so that this ecclesial service might go on, and not stop with his death.

---

<sup>8</sup> Liruti and Grasser.

Now the most zealous Bishop here has strongly encouraged him to purchase a certain property formerly belonging to Religious, which the Finance Ministry had recently put up for sale. With this encouragement, therefore, the community acquired it at the price of 160,000 Austrian Lira, and now with the agreement already reached and the property purchased, this is now presented at the feet of the Vicar of Christ and of the Apostles<sup>9</sup>. Now, if it should appear to the Holy Spirit and to You, most Holy Father<sup>10</sup>, that this might all be seen as a kind of sincerely *obsequious*<sup>11</sup> service of Christ our Lord and for the best possible utility of the Church, to designate this entire enterprise of Yours to that purpose that I had in mind, taking the property from its present profane use, I would receive all this from Your hands, as a gift from Heaven.

Should the Holy Spirit and Your prudence dispose otherwise, I will also be very happy and consider myself blessed in that the Lord and You might consider me worthy enough to receive from my hands, a gift as minimal as would be a bit of gold, which I, in all confidence, have placed at Your most holy feet: and that this whole undertaking would not cease from its present purpose that I have given to it. This would be for me one more reason rather to trust in being enabled to manage it and with greater perfection, and to work at this.

The very purpose of all this from my perspective as well that of my companions: to spend ourselves totally in serving our Lord and His Church should He find us worthy of such a noble plan.

It is for this purpose of ecclesial service that I, also, with other financial means, have endowed this enterprise with an excellent ecclesiastical library, updated as far as has been possible. I was able to find some books lost in the government confiscation. So, I beseech Your Holiness for the permission either to hold on to all this for my purpose noted above – or, to indicate to me whatever in the Lord might please you to make use of all this for His greater honor and glory.

And with all the vigor of my faith and devotion, I remain most humbly prostrate as I kiss the feet of Your Beatitude.

Verona, 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1838.

Your most lowly, devoted and obedient son,  
Gaspar Bertoni.

<sup>9</sup> Fr. Stofella that this entire procedure seems to resonate from Ac 4:35, 37:

35 And laid it down before the feet of the apostles. And distribution was made to everyone, according as he had need. 36 And Joseph, who, by the apostles, was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, by interpretation, 'The son of consolation',) a Levite, a Cyprian born, 37 Having land, sold it, and brought the price, and laid it at the feet of the apostles. [Ac 4]

<sup>10</sup> [Ac 15] 28 For it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things.. [Ac 15]

<sup>11</sup> The Italian here is: ... *torni all'ossequio di Cristo*... *Obsequium* is one of Fr. Bertoni's often used terms to describe his service to the Church.

While so much in the style of many of these expressions are much outdated by today's more matter-of-fact mentality, this may help the modern reader by shedding some light on how our predecessors so sincerely understood the charism, In obsequium Episcoporum. [CF # 2] – whatever would be of greater use to the Church and to the service of her Bishops [cf. CF # 185]. The expression, of course, is based on Romans 12:1 – and was much in use in the Jesuit tradition. The original Jesuit Constitutions were written in Spanish – and for this one series of words: servir [– servo – servitium] his Secretary, Fr. Polanco, SJ, in translating into Latin used three words: servire – auxiliari – and obsequi. The basic biblical reference seems to be the Suffering Servant of Isaiah: cc. 42; 49; 50; especially: cc. 52:13-45 3:12 – whose entire life was offered as an asham, holocaust.

†††

## 6. The Gracious Refusal of a Substantial Inheritance left to the Community by the Family of one of our Confreres, Fr. Francis Cartolari

[Nov. 6, 1794 - July 3, 1846]

A Document was found in the Archives of the Stimate that came to be known as the *Miscellanea Lenotti*<sup>12</sup>. The contents contained therein were assembled by the second Superior General, Fr. John Baptist Lenotti, in the years of 1853 and 1854, right after the Founder's death. This folder contained two parts:

- Various Testimonies of Contemporaries of St. Gaspar concerning him;
- Notes taken by Fr. Lenotti perhaps with a view of an eventual biography of Fr. Bertoni.

In Chapter 7 of this latter part of Part II, the title is: "Concerning his Mortification and selflessness and his love for Poverty."

In a few words, this is what happened: Fr. Cartolari died, on July 3 of 1846. He had come from a noble family that was indeed very wealthy. This good man was able to put aside his noble roots and his great wealth, when he joined the Community. He was happy to serve in the modest common life lived at the Stimate. When his Mother died Fr. Francis was the principal heir of an immense estate. When this will became known to him, a year or so before his own death, he truly wanted to hand it over immediately to Fr. Bertoni for the work they shared in at the Stimate for the Diocese of Verona. So, Fr. Cartolari drew up his own will in which he named Fr. Bertoni as his heir – and added the names of any of the following who might still be alive when Fr. Gaspar died. The names listed were: Fr. Michaelangelo Gramego; Fr. Gaetano Brugnoli; and Fr. Francis Benciolini. The amount of this will was something like a half a million of Austrian Lira. Calculating its worth in those times [1846], this amount today would have reached millions of dollars!

Two days after his death, Fr. Francis Cartolari's will was published. When its contents were made known, Fr. Bertoni expressed himself openly, saying that he did not want any part of it. However, he wanted the rest of the men to make up their own minds. After prayer, the others with Fr. Bertoni conducted something of a House Chapter, to decide by secret ballot whether they would accept this large inheritance or not. Once their vote was verified, they drew up this following document which they all signed it over for the survivors of the Cartolari family:

<sup>12</sup> Cf. SA Doc. 20 – cf. especially pp. 178, ff.

**July 5, 1846.**

**We, the under-signed, of our own free and serious will, renounce all of the rights that would come to us through the reading of this will, of Fr. Francis Cartolari. We renounce it all, in favor of his brother, Sir Anthony Cartolari, of the nobility.**

**In faith whereof, we here sign:**

**Gaspar Bertoni, Michelangelo Gramego, Gaetano Brugnoli, Francis Benciolini.**

After this modest “ceremony”, the four priests gathered in their domestic oratory where Fr. Bertoni delivered a sort reflection and they expressed their thanks to God for the graces they all felt they received that day. One of them, Fr. Bragato stated that they would keep as their inheritance the wonderful memory they all had of Fr. Cartolari in life as a member of their disciplines community, and his spiritual contribution to their lives. It helps to keep in mind that this was not a stellar age for priests and religious in this regard – many had “earned” the unviable reputation for cupidity and avarice. Some of the contemporary Founders of the era – like Fr. Gaspar – had as their “secondary” purpose, that of renewing religious life.

Anyone who might have both some knowledge and some interest in Stigmatine history might indeed wonder how Fr. Cartolari would ever have drawn up such a will, knowing his companions as well as he did. He had entered the community in 1822, and at the time of his death, he was 52 – so, he had spent 30 years or so in the first Stigmatine Community<sup>13</sup>.

In Fr. Lenotti’s Chapter 7 of Part II of the work *Miscellanea*<sup>14</sup>, he describes this whole episode in admiring terms. He states that this gracious renunciation of a most substantial will was truly an act of admirable generosity in behalf of the Cartolari brother, Anthony, and his heirs. Fr. Francis’ will was compiled in such expansive terms - he was remembered as a real asset in the community during his life. Because of his wealth, in Fr. Bertoni’s illnesses and apostolic commits, he often had to make small payments with money that the Community did not have for necessities. So, Fr. Cartolari occasionally came to the rescue - and Fr. Bertoni would tend to repaying the Cartolari estate as soon as he could.

<sup>13</sup> For these insights, cf. Fr. Stofella’s biography of Fr. Bertoni, pp. 256, ff.

<sup>14</sup> SA Doc. 20, pp. 179, f.; Doc. 26, pp. 543, ff., Doc 27, pp. 582, f.

These instances were rare. Anthony Cartolari bore the title of “Count” and when he became the prime beneficiary of this huge sum, as would be expected his gratitude knew no bounds. These gestures of St. Gaspar were admired by the other companions, but they did not surprise at them. The rather worldly ecclesial situation in which these sincere men lived, though, this episode was broadly, deeply favorable witness. Such renunciations of such valuable assets and large sums of available money were most surprising and almost unbelievable to the world in which they lived.

It was in this context, in the 1840’s – with increasing poor health and declining membership, that Fr. Bertoni set to the task of composing his Original Constitutions. This sublime ideal was codified in them.

†††



## 7. The Codification of this Aspect of the Pauline Revelation and the Ignatian Spirit – highlighted in St. Gaspar's Original Constitutions

This is a record of the early days of the Stigmatine Congregation that Fr. Bertoni graciously turned down a very substantial offer from a wealthy citizen – who, in addition to the 60 thousand Lira of those times, wanted to make the Stigmatines his heir. Then, one of Fr. Bertoni's spiritual directees, a very wealthy Veronese woman, offered him substantial monies and also had made a will making Fr. Bertoni the chief beneficiary. Again, he graciously refused her and had her change her will, leaving him and his community entirely out of it.

He was almost scrupulous in keeping his own rule regarding Confessors and whatever assistance that they might be called upon to give to dying believers in the drawing up of their last wills and testaments. This proved often to be a cause of real scandal in many periods of Church history. St. Gaspar's understanding of this delicate mystery may be noted in his Original Constitutions [cf. Part XI, "Familiar Conversation with Our Neighbors toward their Salvation", c. 5: The Manner of Visiting, or assisting our Neighbors in Danger of Death" ## 293-296].

### 7.1. Part XI - "Familiar Conversation with Our Neighbors toward their Salvation"

293. After these initial rites, he will direct that all leave the room, and approaching the bed where the sick person is lying, he will speak to him gently, kindly, that he might place all his hope in God, that he might patiently bear this visitation of God, that he might believe that this will profit his purification and temporal punishment, that he promise emendation, that if God should grant him life, he will look for penance for the sins he has committed, that he would dispose of his worldly goods while he is still conscious and enjoys the use of reason, that he might redeem his sins by giving alms, that he might pardon those who have sinned against him, that he might maintain the right faith and belief, that he never despair of the mercy of God.

When the mind of the sick person is thus relieved with these and other like acts of encouragement, after having given the blessing, the priest will withdraw, to return after a little while, that he might give some space so that the sick person might be able to think of his sins.

294. Priests who are called to assist those who are close to death will stay with them only as long as necessity demands. However, even though it should prove necessary, it might happen that he should exhort the sick in this situation of drawing up their wills, nevertheless the confrere should not actually assist them in so composing their wills.

295. For the same reason, even so, where it should prove necessary, the sick person should be exhorted that by reason of the danger of death he is under, he should dispose of his goods, the Confessor is not to offer to the dying person any counsel concerning the manner of this disposition, unless except for those matters which may be necessary for his salvation, as making restitution to another, the payment of his debts, appointing his necessary heirs, so that, in so far as it is possible to do so, every occasion of later law-suits and litigation be removed. It is not necessary to descend into particulars, because this presents the same inconveniences.

296. If, however, the sick person should ask for some information concerning those matters about which he can make some disposition, it pertains to the office of Confessor to counsel that which he might judge to be expedient for the greater service of God, and for the greater benefit of the soul of the testator. In order that our Confreres do this in the proper manner, let them observe the following:

297. No one of our Confreres should, or can encourage any testator to leave perpetual alms to the houses and churches of the Congregation. Nor should any Confrere make any effort to have legacies, or debts, or any ill-gotten or doubtful goods, be left to, or bestowed on the Congregation [Clem. 1. *De Privil.*].

†

## **7.2. c. 5: The Manner of visiting and assisting our Neighbors in their Danger of Death [CF ## 291-297]**

CF # 291: This is studied by Suarez in his Book IX, Chapter IX, which has as its title: 'Whether the Society should offer a Particular Care in assisting its Neighbors in the Danger of Death'<sup>15</sup>, and is made up of 11 numbers. There is also included here a reflection on the Wills of the Dying. This is reflected upon by St. Ignatius in CSJ nn. 412, ff. :

<sup>15</sup> cf. Suarez, o.c., pp. 1051 b - 1056 b.

Just as one's fellowmen are helped to live well by what has been stated above, so an effort should be made to know what helps them die well, and what procedures should be used at a moment so important for gaining, or losing the ultimate end, eternal happiness. [CSJ n. 412]<sup>16</sup>.

It is good to have a compendium on the method of helping someone to die well, to refresh the memory when this holy ministry must be exercised [CSJ n. 413].

This all falls under the umbrella of an important aspect of the Apostolic Mission described in Part VII of the Jesuit Constitutions:

The members will occupy themselves in corporal works of mercy to the extent that the more important spiritual activities permit and their own energies allow. For example, they can help the sick, especially those in hospitals, by visiting them, and by sending others to serve them... [cf. CSJ n. 650].

Fr. Bertoni's first sentence in CF # 291 is a combination of CSJ 412 quoted *verbatim* by Suarez, and the second sentence is from Rule 40 for the Prepositus<sup>17</sup> :

*'Let care be taken so that the confreres might be experienced in conferring on their neighbors all that is required for dying well, and that they might know perfectly well which manner is to be observed in that moment of time upon which eternity depends. There should not be lacking those who will hear the confessions of the sick laity and who can assist the dying.'*

Suarez concludes that this is one of the ministries that is supremely proper to the Society, and it is one to which from their own Rule the Community is held, in that obligation by which the Company is obliged to the rest of the works of the Institute.

+++

<sup>16</sup> NB: Fr. Bertoni quotes this Constitution directly to some extent: *...ita curandum est ut ea qua ad bene moriendum illis conferunt percipiantur; quique modus in eo tempore, in quo tantum est momenti ad finem ultimum aeternae felicitatis consequendum...*

<sup>17</sup> cf. Suarez, o.c., pp. 1051 b - 1052 a.

CF # 292: Suarez continues here in n. 2<sup>18</sup>, entitled: 'This Ministry is in harmony with the religious state.' The fact that this work is fitting to the religious state is sufficiently proven, because it is most proper to charity, and contains nothing contrary to the above-mentioned religious state, if in it the proper manner be served. And it is confirmed, for the Sacred Councils greatly commend to pastors this ministry, as one might note in the Council of Nantes, c. 4, which from this source I will quote literally, because it excellently describes the manner to be observed in this task: *Whenever a priest [it says] should hear that someone is ill in his town...* - the rest of this quote forms the second part of this Constitution, following Fr. Bertoni's introduction:

**'Whenever someone of our confreres has been called to some sick person, whether poor or rich, no matter from what illness the person may be suffering, and at any hour of the day or night, *he should go to this person with all speed, and on entering into the sick-room, he will sprinkle holy water upon the ailing person, and throughout the entire room, praying the antiphon, 'Sprinkle me, o Lord', with the antiphon [Council of Nantes, c. 4]***<sup>19</sup>.

+++

CF # 293: For this Constitution, the Suarez citation of the Council of Nantes continues, c. 4, word for word - and Fr. Bertoni copies it here, as a brief lesson in pastoral theology. This is all taken from the *Compendium* which St. Ignatius' secretary, Fr. Polanco, drew up:

***'After this, he will direct all to leave the room, and approaching the bed, on which the sick person is lying, he will address him kindly and gently, so that he might place all his hope in God, that he might patiently put up with this affliction, that he might believe that this comes to him for his purification and correction. This is so that the sick person might confess his sins, that he promise amendment, should the Lord spare his life, that he do penance for his committed sins. The priest will advise him that he might make some disposition for his goods while he is still conscious and enjoying the use of reason, that he might redeem his sins by giving alms, that he might pay back those against whom he might have sinned. He will encourage the person to maintain the correct faith and its tenets, that he never despair of the mercy of God.***

<sup>18</sup> cf. Suarez, o.c., p. 1052 a.

<sup>19</sup> ib. The first line here is taken from the next column presented by Suarez, p. 1052 b, near the top of the page - following a quote from St. Augustine.

*'When the mind of the infirm individual has been encouraged with these, and similar exhortations, once he has given the blessing, the priest will withdraw. After a short while, the priest will return, in order to give time so that the sick person might reflect upon his sins.'*

+++

CF # 294: There was always some danger in this ministry - that a misguided priest would strive to get the sick person to include him, or his religious community, in these wills. Suarez includes a section here entitled: 'A Two-fold Calumny is rejected, by which the Society on account of this Ministry might be attacked by those badly disposed toward her.'

Then follows n. 3: 'The first of these two which is objected to our men - The Objection which is directed against us'. Suarez goes on<sup>20</sup>: For indeed there is no enterprise of such charity which, either by calumny, or by some negligence, could be reprehended. In two manners, therefore, the Society presents its position regarding this ministry. One pertains to the solicitude for those who are dying of some suffering; the other concerns those who are suffering a violent death as capital punishment.

Concerning the former ministry [solicitude toward those who are dying], avarice is reprehended, because the priests of the Society desire to assist the dying, so that they might participate in their worldly goods, by inducing the dying so that they might dispose of these goods in their will, or in some other way. However, this is quite contrary to the spirit and intention of the Society. While there is some room allowed for private errors, or defects in this matter, and which perhaps, either from wayward human affection, or from zeal not based on good knowledge, might be committed. Any such intention is detested by the Society which prohibits any such activity. Therefore, in the last of its rules, *the priests who are called....* - and these are the opening lines of Fr. Bertoni's CF # 294, which now follows *verbatim*<sup>21</sup>:

---

<sup>20</sup> Cf. o.c., p. 1052 b, second half.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. o.c., pp. 1052 b- 1053 a.

*'The priests who are called to assist those who are close to death, shall remain with them only as long as their need would require. And although, whenever this might be necessary, it would be fitting to exhort these seriously ill persons<sup>22</sup> that they should make their wills, but they will not assist them in doing so.'*

+++

CF # 295: the great delicacy legislated to the Jesuits in this matter is shown in Suarez' further lengthy commentary here. Our next Original Constitution is taken from the Jesuit theologian's n. 4 here: 'Our members are not permitted to give any further counsel concerning their dispositions of their worldly goods to those who are dying. What and when counsel is requested.' This text<sup>23</sup> provides Fr. Bertoni's text here, *verbatim*:

*'For the same reason, whenever it might be necessary, the sick person is to be admonished to dispose of his worldly goods because of his danger. However, he should not be counseled concerning the manner of his disposition of these goods, except in those matters that might be necessary for his salvation, as making restitution of others' goods, the payment of his debts, appointing the necessary heirs so that, as far as it lies within him, every occasion of strife and law-suits might be removed. However, it is not proper to descend to particulars, as this would lead to the same inconveniences.'*

+++

CF # 296: this Constitution continues *verbatim* the same Suarez text:

*'If, however, the sick person should seek counsel concerning those matters about which he can freely dispose, it does pertain to the office of Confessor to suggest that which he judges would be of the greater service<sup>24</sup> of God and to the greater help of the soul of the testator. In order that our confreres accomplish this in the proper manner, they should observe the following...'*

+++

<sup>22</sup> Here Suarez uses the word *aegrotos*.

<sup>23</sup> cf. Suarez, o.c., p. 1053 b - the second half of the column.

<sup>24</sup> NB: the word here is *obsequium*.

CF # 297: In Suarez' text here, he quotes CSJ n. 564, and Fr. Bertoni uses these words of from St. Ignatius: ... *ad eleemoysinas perpetuas domibus, vel Ecclesiis eiusdem Sodalitatis [Societatis] relinquendas incitare...* That Constitution reads:

Although it is praiseworthy to induce others to do good and holy works, especially those which endure perpetually, nevertheless, with a view to greater edification, no one of the Society ought to, or may induce any person to establish perpetual alms for the houses or churches of the Society itself.... [CSJ n. 564].

The second half of Fr. Bertoni's CF # 297 is found on the next page of Suarez<sup>25</sup>, quoting Clementina 1 *De Privilegiis*:

'No one of our confreres ought to, or may induce any person to establish perpetual alms for the houses or churches of the Congregation itself'<sup>26</sup>. Nor likewise shall any confrere bring it about that legacies, or debts, or ill-gotten or doubtful goods be left to his Congregation [Clem. 1, De Priv.].

This entire segment St. Gaspar's rule is taken almost *verbatim*, from Fr. Francis Suarez' great Commentary on the Constitutions of St. Ignatius<sup>27</sup>. Any self-interested care of the sick for possible financial gain from the dying, was looked upon as reprehensible. In the special ministry toward the sick and dying, it is to be most blame-worthy wherever the Priests of the Society of Jesus seek to assist the dying, so that these confessors might participate to their own advantage, or that of the community, in the worldly goods of these dying believers. Any effort to induce these failing members of the Church to make out their wills in such a way that the minister of God's mercy might profit either personally, or for his community in this extreme moment of someone's death. Conduct of this nature is very far from both the spirit and the intention of the Society of Jesus<sup>28</sup>. This Ignatian spirit of poverty was inherited by Fr. Bertoni, with which he was imbued.

†  
†††  
†

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Suarez, o.c., p. 1054 a.

<sup>26</sup> NB: this translation is from George E. Ganss, SJ. *St. Ignatius of Loyola. The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Translated, with an Introduction and a Commentary.* St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970, p. 256.

<sup>27</sup> De Religione Societatis Iesu, Book 9, c. 9, pp. 1051 b – 1054 a.

<sup>28</sup> cf. Suarez, l.c., p. 1052 b.