



THE LANDING STAGE

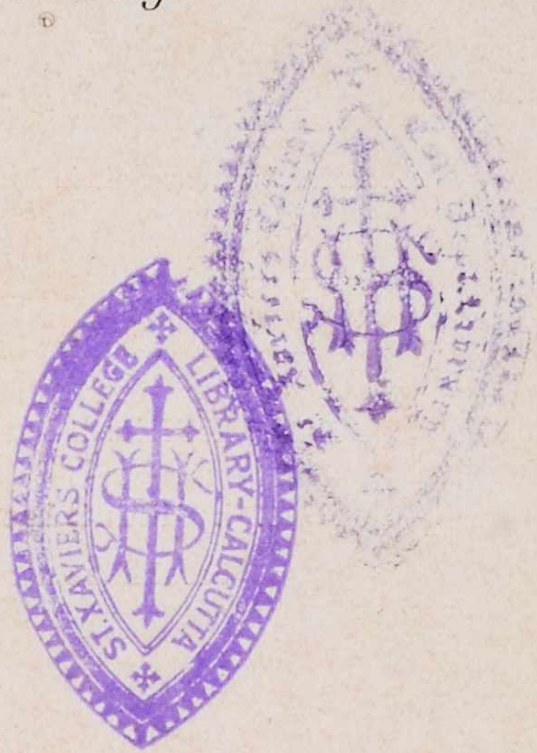
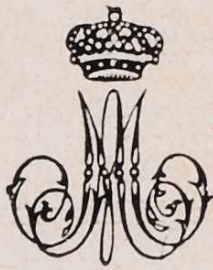




THE GEM AMONGST ITALY'S MAIDENS



THE LIFE  
OF THE  
BLESSED BARTHOLOMEA CAPITANIO  
*Foundress*  
*of the Sisters of Charity*



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IMPRIMATUR:

✠ PAUL PERINI, S. J.,

*Bishop of Calicut,*

*Adm. Ap. of Mangalore.*

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*H. E. Mgr. Bongiorigi, Auxiliary Bishop of Brescia, last year, (1926) concluded his panegyric in honour of Bl. Bartholomea Capitanio saying:—*

**“READ the life of Bl. Bartholomea Capitanio: it has produced great fruits of sanctity in many souls.**

**READ her life: it has peopled the cloisters with virgins.**

**READ her life: it has taught the young seminarists how a priest should live according to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.”**

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## FOREWORD.

A most wholesome and holy task is undertaken by those who give wide publicity to the virtuous actions of noble and generous souls, not only because in so doing due homage is rendered to virtue and to the souls that have practised the same, but also on account of the utility we may derive therefrom. How numerous and splendid soever such examples might have been in the past, new ones will never prove superfluous, nor satisfy the need we have of them ; for our slothfulness in doing good is so ingrained in our weak nature that almost at every moment we feel the want of encouragement and of stimulus.

One of those noble and generous souls was the Blessed Bartholomea Capitanio, beatified on May 30th 1926, by Pope Pius XI. Her life so plain, her examples so bright, cannot but do much good to those who will read her biography with due care. These examples will be useful to *girls* who will find in the Blessed Bartholomea a model



of virginal chastity, at once perfect and easy of imitation: a model that will help them to keep spotless and immaculate that maidenly purity which is the fairest ornament of their sex. These examples will be useful *to all those* who are working for the Christian education of the young, because they will learn from them many various means to educate their charges successfully; they will realize how very important it is to give the first place to piety which not only "ad omnia utilis est," as St. Paul has it, but is the chief means of forming the character of a Christian. To *persons living in the world*, the examples given by the Blessed Bartholomea will conclusively prove, that even amidst the cares of this world, it is possible to attain an eminent degree of sanctity, merely by carefully carrying out the duties of their state of life, and the exercise of charity towards the neighbour. *Religious* will be able to study in the life of the Blessed Bartholomea a vivid example of an existence entirely detached from the world, and spent in God and for God alone, not only by the practice of the three substantial religious vows, but by other vows too,



calculated to lead the soul to a most close union with the Divine Spouse.

There are several lives of the Blessed Bartholomea written by Italian authors. The present biography is the first English translation of the life of the Blessed Bartholomea, by Fr. Alexander Tamborini, printed at Turin in 1922.

Kind reader, the perusal of these pages shall excite in thy heart a pious yearning of imitating now this, now that virtue practised by the Blessed Bartholomea, as will most suit thy circumstances and thy state of life.

*The Sisters of Charity, Mangalore.*

[Thanks are offered in a special manner to the Rev. Sisters of St. Agnes' College, A. C., Mangalore, who have rendered us invaluable help in translating this simple biography.]

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## Childhood.

NESTLING close to the Parish Church of Lovere, a fairly large town in the Province of Bergamo, stood a little bakery owned by Modesto Capitanio and his wife Catherine Canossi, who were also traders in corn and bacon. Here on the 13th of January 1807, was born their eldest child, Maria Bartholomea Capitanio, singled out by God to add a new army of zealous workers to the Church Militant. The sound Christian training which she received even in her earliest years, made of this naturally gifted child an amiable and lively character. Bartholomea, however, was not wholly free from the defects of an impulsive temper which called for a constant struggle with herself.

Little Bartholomea was tenderly loved by her parents and the brothers and sisters who year by year enlarged the family circle. Even at this early age, she found delight not in dolls or playthings, but in the angelic smiles of her baby brothers and sisters. But God who had marked her out as his own, snatched from her even this innocent joy. One by one the little ones died with the exception of two—Lucia and



Camilla. Though Bartholomea did not yet realize the sting of death, she keenly felt the void in the heart and home of her parents. Her young heart could not but turn to God in this her first grief.

Buoyant and vivacious by nature, the child soon regained her spirits and proved herself the joy and sunshine of her home. She never could sit still for a moment. But though talkative, she was invariably occupied with some household duty or other. She became in time quite a little helper to her mother. Bartholomea was equally eager to join her companions at their games. Not only did she take the lead in these sports, but very often she acted as their teacher, repeating to them the instructions she had heard in the church. Gifted with a thirst for knowledge and a retentive memory, she interested herself in whatever appealed to her youthful mind. To impart to others the knowledge she herself had imbibed was a veritable joy to her. But on all occasions she loved to play the rôle of leader, whether at games or at study, either as a teacher amongst pupils or as a mother towards her children. She was often seen leading her "pupils" and "daughters," to the church, praying with them and ably directing their singing. Restless as she was Bartholomea was still ever pious and docile. Those who were interested in the growing child, entertained high hopes for the future, not unmingled with fear lest her strong inclinations get the upper hand.

Bartholomea's susceptible nature was thrown amidst scenes which could not but leave their mark on her tender, impressionable mind. She had imbibed the evil ere she could realize its vileness and though her pure soul passed unscathed through it all, yet it disturbed her quiet. The example set by her father was far from edifying. Of an unruly impetuous character and addicted to drink, he spoilt the peace of the house, ill-treating his wife and children and bursting into



abusive language. He passed for "the Madman" in the country. But her mother's influence went a great way to counteract the harm done by her father. Under her loving care Bartholomea developed those distinctive traits of character which helped her on in her great work.

No extraordinary event marked Bartholomea's childhood, yet even now she evinced that determined purpose which later made her so dauntless in pursuing her ideal in the face of pain and sacrifice. She was pious, too, and delighted in attending the Church. The sermons she heard impressed her deeply even at this tender age. Once, after hearing a sermon on sin, she was overcome by sorrow and burst into tears. Then, crucifix in hand, she made her first resolution: "O Jesus, I will never offend Thee." We know little of Bartholomea's sentiments at this period, of the intense love that burned in her soul, or of the fervent prayers she offered up for her family.

## At the Boarding-House

BARTHOLOMEA'S mother, who so carefully watched over her child, was consoled to see her develop into a good, steady girl. But she feared for her because of her vivacity and the ill-treatment she received from her father, whom she loved tenderly. To keep her out of harm's way, and at the same time to procure for her a sound Christian education, the mother entrusted her first-born to the Poor Clares, on the 11th July 1818. God, who destined her for a special mission, provided for her this Convent home. It was scarcely a year since these sisters, who had been forced on account of the



Revolution, to seek shelter in private houses, re-entered in procession into their happy home. Here Bartholomea, to her great delight, found herself in the midst of girls of her own age, with Sisters for her guardians, with a courtyard for play and a little church to pray in. Her joy found expression in jumping up and down the boxes in her room. The experienced eye of Sister M. Francisca, her mistress, saw at once what a treasure they had in that child. Henceforward Bartholomea became the object of special care and attention. Under this expert guide, she soon distinguished herself in study and manual work. But it was her virtue and her amiable vivacity that endeared her to all. She won the esteem of teachers and companions alike. She did, indeed, "shine like a star" in that happy school.

Sister M. Francisca knowing the difficulties of her charge, used much tact and ingenuity to attract the children to the practice of virtue. To excite their innocent hearts to happy rivalry in striving after sanctity, she utilized even the hours of recreation for this purpose. She proposed questions such as "who among you wishes to be a Saint," or "which of you will be the first to become a Saint?" Simultaneous shouts of "I" "I" greeted the query. The game that followed was even more interesting to the enthusiastic band. As though she were inspired, the Sister asked the girls to gather bits of straw, which she held in her hand. They were then to come up and draw one in turn. The girl who secured the longest straw was taken as singled out to acquire the halo of sanctity first. While all the children eagerly stretched out their hand in the hope of getting the coveted distinction, Bartholomea remained thoughtful for a moment. She next hurried to Church and with intense confidence recited three Ave Marias on her knees, adding the petition "O Madonna let me have the longest one." Was it by chance or by a special design of





THE GAME OF STRAWS



Providence, that Bartholomea's outburst of childlike trust was immediately answered? To her this was no childish game, but a special call from Heaven to tread along the higher paths of virtue. Her face flushed, bursting into tears she went as speedily back to Church, to implore Heaven's assistance once again, to become a Saint. From this day forward she felt it her duty to excel in the spiritual life. It was now that she drew up a Rule of Life to strengthen the resolve: "I will be a Saint, a great Saint, a Saint soon."

With characteristic energy she set to work to attain this new ideal that was put before her apparently by chance. That she was not yet a Saint, she knew well, especially when she contrasted her life with that of St. Aloysius whose life was there being read to them. It was only now that she fully appreciated the virtues of this youthful Saint. So enamoured was she of St. Aloysius that she secured from her parents a copy of his life which she soon committed to memory. Not even sleep could separate her from her beloved patron, for she placed the life she treasured, under her pillow by night. But her devotedness to the Saint did not consist in mere admiration. More than once she was heard to exclaim that she wanted to tread in his footsteps. She was confident that the virtues he practised were not out of her reach. Thus though the life of every Saint inspired her to fresh efforts, St. Aloysius became her practical guide through life. She desired to walk in his footsteps, and to do and suffer for Jesus, as he had done.



## Efforts to attain Sanctity.

THE paths that lead to sanctity are as varied as there are Saints in the Church of God; but there never was one Saint who did not regard mortification as one of the essential means to attain it. Bartholomea herself tells us that she began with mortification. Having read that no one who indulges her appetite can acquire a spirit of prayer and piety, she began to deny herself little 'dainties at table. To be more like her patron St. Aloysius, she would do without the fruits and sweets her mother brought her. She courageously overcame her appetite and allowed herself no taste of any delicacy. Instead she gave her share to the poor. At times she distributed it amongst her companions, making them believe that she did not care for it. On the other hand she gladly partook in larger quantities of whatever was distasteful to her, exchanging delicacies for coarser food. Only when questioned by her mistresses did she acknowledge how much these mortifications cost her. The efforts she made to overcome herself often brought tears to her eyes, yet never did she allow herself to taste of anything pleasing, without adding water to it to make it insipid. This generous soul, however was not satisfied with merely shunning delicacies. She found innumerable opportunities for denying herself, especially on the approach of great feasts. She fasted every Saturday, and abstained from wine and tiffin on Fridays.

She was equally heroic in overcoming her repugnance for any person or place. She went on her knees and kissed the ground forming with her tongue a cross on it. She allowed



insects to sting her eyes, till the tears flowed, yet she would not drive them away. She was ingenious in finding occasions for mortifying herself further, — she never warmed herself even in extreme cold, nor did she seek any support when sitting or kneeling. Besides she walked with little stones in her shoes. These little sacrifices which filled her day, Bartholomea carefully noted down with beads which she carried on her for the purpose. Once the number of these little acts went up to a hundred and twenty. Who can doubt that these untiring efforts of a girl of twelve to tread on the path of sanctity, not only delighted the Heart of Jesus, but daily won for her more graces from on high.

One day she came across a passage which inspired her to regulate every movement of her body, and particularly watch over her senses. The body being the temple of the Holy Ghost ought to receive a respect similar to that which is paid to sacred vessels. Specially is this true of virgins consecrated to God. She henceforth kept a strict guard over her eyes and never fixed them on any person or scene, even the most innocent. At play she controlled her natural vivacity. Talkative as she was by nature, she not only refrained from any worldly conversation, but never even uttered a useless word. To school herself to it, she kept a small stone in her mouth. Like an Ignatius, she restrained her merry peals of laughter, though her face was always lit up with a serene joy that bespoke the calm and purity of her soul. This modest bearing and irreproachable composure marked her at all times. When in bed she was an angel in her attitude.

Bartholomea was fully conscious of the rare gifts of nature and grace, she possessed. No sooner was she aware of the first risings of self-complacency than she perceived in them the snare of the devil leading her to believe that she had attained a high degree of perfection, and was better than her companions. With a ready and energetic will



she not only stifled every thought of pride and vain glory, but she confessed her failings in public while ingeniously concealing her practices of piety and mortification. She never spoke of herself whether favourably or not. She asked the good sisters to make known her defects to her, and accepted corrections with humility and gratitude. Never a word of excuse escaped her lips. Extremely sensitive by nature and imbued with a high sense of honour, she keenly felt every accusation, reproof and penance. Though her heart was bleeding, yet she never spoke in self-defence when unjustly accused, but accepted all with undisturbed serenity. Falsely accused of a fault, she was once made to kneel in the middle of the school. Her companions who knew her innocence, could not help weeping at seeing her in that posture. Bartholomea remained silent, until one of her companions, unable to stifle her remorse, acknowledged her guilt. Bartholomea looked lovingly at her companion, happy with the joy of her victory. When asked why she did not justify herself, she replied that she loved suffering, and that on the morrow she would offer this flower to Jesus after Communion. She sought to be despised and to overcome repugnance towards one or other of her companions. She begged pardon of them for the smallest offences.

God rewarded her heroic efforts to overcome herself with yet further trials. Though the most intelligent and best behaved pupil of the school, once she was not promoted. Her companions expressed surprise, for they knew she did not deserve such a humiliation. But Bartholomea obeyed without any complaint. A month later she was allowed to return to her class. This was probably done by one of her teachers who wanted to test her virtue not only in small things but in greater ones as well. There was a time when the boarders were dissatisfied with the food given them. Their complaints



soon became known outside the school and occasioned the visit of the District Collector. Bartholomea had alone carefully refrained from taking part in their complaints, but she was nevertheless publicly accused as being responsible for the calumny spread against the school. Innocent as she was, she yet remained silent and on her knees humbly asked pardon of all. Her companions were both astonished at her humility and angry because she was so unjustly blamed. Another time when the boarders were at dinner, Sister M. Francisca called Bartholomea to her, to give her a cup of soup. In handing it to her, she purposely dropped it and then desirous of testing the virtue of her favourite pupil, she reprimanded her for her awkwardness. She even commanded Bartholomea to drink the soup from the ground. The humble girl at once bent down and obediently partook of the soup, but mingled with it the tears which freely streamed from her eyes through the extreme natural repugnance she felt. Smiling through her tears, she rose up while her astonished companions could only gaze at her. "What the teacher commands is God's command"—she used to say. When questioned how she could stand such humiliations, she replied that though she felt them keenly, she consoled herself with the thought that when Jesus came to her heart He would take away all her pain. Once Bartholomea was severely reproved for an action she had done at the express order of the Mother Superior. Of that order her teacher was ignorant. Though the girl could have easily defended herself, she received the reproof in silence. It was only when some of the sisters present spoke of it to the Superior that they came to know that Bartholomea had but carried out the order of the Superior. "Whence did you derive such strength to humble yourself and suffer?" they asked her. Her answer was, "When we read what the Saints did, it is impossible not to feel a desire to emulate them."



To her intense joy Bartholomea was allowed to receive Holy Communion at first frequently later on even daily. She understood that she should prepare herself more fervently for these frequent visits of our Lord. Feeling that by indulging in useless talk she would be failing in respect to her Divine Guest, she tried to avoid it on the days she received Holy Communion. She approached our Lord with the respectful familiarity of a daughter, listened to all his whispered communings with her soul, and while receiving His heavenly gifts, gladly offered herself to Him that He may entirely transform her. She loved to imagine our Lord in all His majesty, goodness and beauty, as when He went about doing good in Palestine, and she freely opened her heart to Him. She brought to Him all her dear ones,—her mother who sometimes confided to her the awful martyrdom she had to endure at the hands of an intemperate husband, and begged for her daughter's prayers, her father whose conversion she longed to obtain and her sister in whom she wished to effect a change. Her relatives too were in the habit of asking for her prayers in their family troubles and necessities. For all these she besought our Lord for help and comfort. Those who knew the bitter trials Bartholomea was going through, marvelled at her calm and serene look. To their remark that some sorrow must be piercing her heart, she only replied that she drew her help and consolation from Holy Communion and that in Jesus alone she sought comfort and from Him gained strength to suffer yet more. Gradually she acquired such fervour in prayer as to be almost proof against distractions. At her free moments she accustomed herself to retire to Church to pray. She stole even the hours of sleep to prepare herself for Holy Communion. Her heart's desire was to live in closest union with our Lord, and to be His child of predilection.

Towards our Lady, Bartholomea had a simple and loving devotion. Besides her prayers, she fixed upon a number of





HER FIRST COMMUNION



mortifications in honour of Our Heavenly Mother and fasted every Saturday as well as on the eves of her feasts. She called the Month of May her Carnival, during which she gave free vent to her affection for Mary. It was a pious practice in the school to hold daily devotions in this month of our Lady and on the closing day to crown her with the good works performed in her honour during the month. Bartholomea delighted to gather the choicest flowers for Mary's crown. Not an occasion did she let slip of practising little acts of virtue. She showed a singular ingenuity in heaping up heavenly treasures for her dear mother. On the last day, radiant with joy, she made her offering to our Lady while tears of consolation flowed from her eyes. Not satisfied with this crown she had prepared, she added to it a fervent wish to give yet more, to give herself all in all, to give what love longed to offer, but was powerless to accomplish. These spiritual flowers, Bartholomea offered in particular for her dear father's conversion, as also for all that were in distress and misery, for her tender heart was ever touched at sight of sorrow.

At this time Camilla her younger sister was with her at school. They loved each other dearly and found mutual sympathy in their family sorrow. But Camilla who inherited her father's disposition was often punished for her stubbornness. It was then, above all, that Bartholomea proved herself a true guide and comforter to her younger sister. Very kindly she put before Camilla her duty of correcting her faults so as to endear herself to those around her and thus give consolation to their afflicted mother. Bartholomea's words of advice were not ineffective. Slowly but steadily Camilla was brought around to fight against her weaknesses and to imitate her sister's holy example.

Among her many companions with all of whom Bartholomea was a favourite there was one soul akin to her own,



gifted, strong and high-spirited. This was Giovannina Grassi, a child singularly devoted to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, from her earliest years. Before she was old enough to receive Holy Communion she accompanied her mother to Church, and when the latter returned from the Altar rail, the little one nestled close to her mother that she might feel the Heart of Jesus beat with her own. Returning home she tenderly kissed the mouth and lips which had received that Jesus, whom her child's heart longed so ardently to hold within her own. Giovannina had also a warm affection for the poor, whom her mother had taught her to look upon as the images of Christ. The child gladly deprived herself of various little things to relieve the suffering members of Our Lord's body. To her parents who were somewhat anxious for her future, she gave this assurance "you will see that I shall be wise, I will be a saint." Of her own accord she had asked to be admitted as a boarder in the Convent of Lovere. With this favoured child Bartholomea cultivated a friendship, cemented by their common aim of becoming saints.

Bartholomea was barely fourteen when her parents intended to withdraw her from the Boarding House. Being the eldest, her family reposed their hopes in her, as they could not be maintained by the father's little shop. The sisters, however, who knew her intelligent and virtuous ways felt she would be more useful in the Boarding House. They pleaded for her longer stay there, in order to complete her studies. Their request was granted, Bartholomea was delighted for she already felt a call to the active life, especially to teaching. She blessed Providence for thus opening to her a way to realize her vocation. Equipped with the necessary studies Bartholomea was posted as Assistant Teacher, with the sanction of the local Inspector.



The girls of the first elementary class were entrusted to her. Although untrained she proved herself both a teacher and a mother to her young charges, diligently sowing in their innocent hearts seeds of virtue which were destined to bear abundant fruit in the future. Virtue taught her the most tactful methods of dealing with her pupils, far better than any treatise would. She utilized every occasion to instil virtuous habits into them. Their good and bad traits, alike, afforded her opportunities for this kind of apostolate. At times on the feasts of Our Lady she taught the children to send greetings to their heavenly mother, in the shape of letters. At recreation she was no less an apostle to her charges, suggesting pious practices, relating edifying anecdotes and teaching them hymns, even whilst taking part in their childish games. A deep spirit of faith and a warm love for the little ones made up for what she lacked in training and experience. She knew neither weariness nor annoyance in her dealings with them.

Bartholomea was gradually though unconsciously preparing herself for the training of the young by her prompt acquiescence to the voice of her superior. At the call of obedience she gave over her charge of prefect of the little ones—a task which in spite of its exactions had without doubt its compensations—for the responsible office of prefect of the bigger girls. Her position was no easy one, for the girls she had to deal with now, were of an age when passions begin to assert themselves, and when only too often the first bloom of innocence had already been lost. But Bartholomea was equal to her task. She had recourse to her unfailing power of winning over the confidence of others; and once mistress of their hearts, she spared no efforts to turn their affections to God. It was not long before her charges took positive pleasure in modelling their lives after that of their zealous guide. Not in vain had the Divine Designer endowed her





with those wonderful organizing powers which she so unassumingly yet effectively employed.

While thus engaged, her advancing intelligence, enlightened from on high, gradually began to realize, the kind of life that God wished of her. Her mind raised from the petty interests of life, could no longer find any satisfaction in mere childish day-dreams; her heart yearned more ardently for God, and even her very body, seemed infused with fresh energy to work for the cause of Christ.

But satan jealous of her higher aspirations assailed her by thoughts that made her fear for the purity of her spotless soul. A hard struggle followed, in which she endeavoured to keep herself pure as an angel. To overcome all contrary inclinations, she renounced determinedly every affection for creatures. Her heart and mind now rested on something far higher and nobler—the infinite beauty of God—her thoughts could soar at will, without let or hindrance.

Urged by a special inspiration, she one day, when barely sixteen proceeded in festal attire to an altar of Our Lady. Prostrate there she made a temporary vow of chastity and besought her heavenly mother to present it to Jesus. Immediately she felt her soul breathe a new atmosphere. Henceforth not even the shadow of a thought ever sullied the virginal whiteness of her soul. When temptations tried her she just turned her glance to a picture of Our Lord or of St. Aloysius, or else she sought distraction in works of piety and charity. Thus by constant vigilance did she secure this priceless grace. Her strenuous efforts resulted in the complete submission of her lower to her higher nature.

A year and a half later, she renewed her vow, this time, for life. With all the ardour of her soul she consecrated her body to the most Holy Trinity, solemnly affirming that she



chose Jesus Christ for her Spouse. Her one desire now was to love only Him, to think always of Him, and to work wholly for Him. So much joy inundated her soul, that she could wish for nothing better. But her life was not to be one of unmixed consolation. She did not doubt the assistance of Jesus, to whom she belonged entirely; nevertheless, she knew full well, that it was incumbent on her to imitate her crucified Spouse. His lovers must be ready to follow Him even unto Calvary and Bartholomea was not to be kept back by difficulties. To a companion who had bound herself by a similar vow she wrote: "Do not look upon it as a trifle; your lot is a thousand times more enviable than that of any earthly queen." To herself it meant so much that she kept up solemnly each anniversary of her mystical nuptials.

Bartholomea had given her heart wholly to Christ, but there yet remained to her one more possession, the independent use of which, she felt would be dangerous to her—her will. Bartholomea realized the hidden snare that might entrap her in the guise of apparently holy actions to which her nature inclined. She therefore surrendered her will into the hands of her confessor thus making her holocaust complete. She even vowed to obey him in all things. In indifferent matters, she chose whatever pleased Jesus more regardless of the promptings of nature. She looked upon herself as a duster in the hands of our Lord, to be used or put aside just as He pleased.

In spirit Bartholomea was in truth a religious. It only remained for her to receive the holy habit, which would entitle her to the protection and aids of community life. The convent which she had come to look upon as her home, attracted her strongly, but it did not answer the deeper sentiments of her heart. The sisters did much good undoubtedly, but would there not be even greater scope for the



exercise of charity and zeal among souls ignorant of the true faith, or those abandoned to suffering or destitution? To serve them would be to render direct service to Jesus Christ Himself. Her holy aspirations were unfortunately nipped in the bud, for her parents suddenly required her return home. Her cherished plans seemed unattainable. The happiest period of her life was now closed. With deep pain she bade farewell to her dear companions and to her still more dear teachers. Life at home, shorn of its ideal, with its common place occupations, its unholy atmosphere, its mundane interests and its solitude would be no cheering one. Nevertheless Bartholomea betrayed not the least displeasure in obeying the will of her parents. Her companions and teachers keenly felt the loss of one whom they had grown up to love as their own sister. Their tears flowed unrestrained as she embraced them, begging their pardon, thanking them for their kindness and requesting their prayers. Finally she tore herself away from Sister M. Francesca, who whispered to her: "I place you in the Heart of Jesus, and under the mantle of the Blessed Virgin, until you join them in paradise." Bartholomea in a resolute voice, significant of a promise, replied: "So shall it be." The pearl of the boarding-house had left to be thrown on a common place world.

## Home once again.

OVERCOMING all repugnances, Bartholomea entered her home, determined to do her utmost to love it, setting aside all regrets for the happy past. The change was painful indeed. Far



from any church, deprived of the work that had filled her days, and placed amid worldly environments Bartholomea realized the necessity of a strict guard over her virtue. The better to ensure its safety, she armed herself with a strong resolution which later became the rule of her life. She determined to take St. Aloysius for her model and after his example to become a saint.

She now vowed obedience to her parents as she had done with regard to her confessor and mistress. To this vow she added these resolutions to guide her conduct at home:

1. My behaviour at home will be that of a saint.
2. I will obey and respect my parents as the representatives of God, helping them in all their needs.
3. I will not desire any preferential treatment, and will carefully hide my own inclinations that my parents may be free to command me.
4. Not only will I be on my guard against giving them any trouble, but I will not interfere in family affairs except through obedience.
5. When occasions for vexation arise I will neither raise my voice nor get cross.
6. I will endeavour to fulfil my duties with equable temper, willingly choosing for myself what is most disagreeable and sparing others the trouble of serving me.
7. I will give the preference to household duties, and thus secure peace in the family.

At home Bartholomea drew up a time-table for herself, allotting to each of her various duties the time required. She commenced the day with prayer. Kneeling before our Lord she offered Him all her good-works of the previous day in reparation for the insults He received from so many souls. Strengthened by prayer, she returned to her household duties or assisted her father in his shop. The little free-time she



had, she invariably spent in Church or in visits to the poor and suffering—the old and neglected being the special recipients of her charity. In the evening she again made time for a last visit to her Jesus, when she took part in any service that might be going on. Bartholomea never left the house except with the permission of her parents and after acquainting them with her destination. Her mother rejoiced at the child's piety and docility, but her father at times objected to her visits to the church. The poor girl then carefully concealed her veil from her father, lest he be provoked to anger, but contrived still to be often with our Lord.

A new mission was now confided to Bartholomea—that of Angel of peace. Her unhappy father, addicted to drink often rudely disturbed the harmony that should have reigned in their home. In his drunken fits he would strike his wife and even cast her out of the house. The neighbours too were put to trouble by his conduct. It was Bartholomea's task to re-establish union. Often it proved no easy one, particularly on account of her conflicting sentiments of loyalty to her father and of sympathy for her suffering mother. But Bartholomea never once opened her lips to pass judgment on her father, nor did she ever complain of his misbehaviour. With the same untiring patience and affection she prayed for him while trying to calm him. "If patience does not succeed, love must," she was heard to say.

Many a time did Bartholomea go in search of her father, to the public-house. One evening, seeing he had not arrived, till late she enquired at a neighbour's house. A friend offered to call him. "No, no" replied Bartholomea, "the place is not a fit one for you—I shall go myself." She then turned her steps prayerfully to the detested grog shop. There, was her father seated at a table, a bottle before him, amidst a crowd of coarse companions. The vulgar speech that dropped



from their lips, as well as the atmosphere reeking with smoke, and the fumes of wine, drew tears from the eyes of Bartholomea. She however was too pure to be in any way contaminated by the degrading surroundings. No sooner had she caught sight of her father, than she went up to him saying softly; "Father, finish your game and come home with me, I have something to say to you." The poor man was about to drink afresh, and start another game of cards, but something heavenly in his daughter's look touched his heart. Laying aside the pack, he followed her out with unsteady steps.

About this time there was a rupture between Bartholomea's father and one of the neighbours, who on purpose provoked him with insulting words, that when beside himself with anger his action might call for judicial procedure. Bartholomea's father would have fallen into this diabolical snare, but for her timely interference. Heedless of her own person, she threw herself between the two duellists, and drew away her father by sheer force. Yet not even in this trying moment did her filial respect towards her father diminish by a single iota.

Indulgence in passion had not wholly extinguished paternal sentiments in the heart of Bartholomea's father. When reason held its rightful place he knew how to appreciate his precious daughter. At such moments, which alas, were but too rare, he called her his pet and affectionately caressed her. Generally however it was rather with hard words, insults and even blows that he responded to the unwearying kindness of his child. Bartholomea was imbued with too deep a spirit of faith to be moved by any personal injury. God has commanded us to do good to them that hate us, how much more then, she argued, should she not bless her injurer, when he was her own father. Consequently she studied to win him over by a noble generosity and affability which only increased, the more he lowered himself by unseemly acts.



Such virtue could not go unrewarded. Her consolation was in proportion to the price she paid. The gentle rain of grace gradually softened the hardened heart of the poor sinner until he awakened to a keen sense of his own misery. Once convinced, his conversion was not a long way off. He soon regulated his life and lived as a true Christian. Shortly after this miracle of grace, his neighbours were astonished one day to see him attentively listening to his daughter, while she read him a devout book. To them the change was almost incredible but Bartholomea was not satisfied. Complete happiness came to her some time later, when she succeeded in making her father recite his rosary instead of resorting to his old haunt.

Her hardest conquest was now complete but there remained another—her own sister, Camilla. In age Camilla was five years junior to Bartholomea, but was already obliged to quit the boarding-house, on account of ill-health. Bartholomea suspected that bad conduct had something to do with her dismissal, and resolved to do her best for her erring sister. Haughty of mien and of an overbearing temperament Camilla tried to lord it over her sister. Bartholomea bore with it all, excusing her sister's irritableness by attributing it to her nervous complaint. Their father could not but prefer Bartholomea to his younger daughter, and Bartholomea rather than be displeased at this, prayed that preference be shown to her sister; for in her humility she sincerely believed that Camilla possessed qualities superior to her own. Her patience and her selflessness finally touched Camilla, who yielded herself into her sister's hands, and learnt from her true piety and virtue. Together they performed their devotions, and later Camilla rose so high in holy practices that the two vied with each other in the exercise of their spiritual duties. Thus did silent, suffering and prayer bear abundant fruit. Bar-



tholomea's mother looked on with unspeakable joy at the transformation wrought in her home and blessed the daughter whose sanctity had brought it about.

## Rule of Life.

THERE are some souls who from their earliest days are carefully shielded from whatever might mar their baptismal innocence. This is a special providence of God—He is master of His gifts and can dispose of them at will. Such souls walk unconsciously in the paths of sanctity. The greater number however have to toil hard to attain any degree of perfection. Bartholomea was not of the privileged few. She looked upon her soul as a piece of metal which had to be placed on the anvil of duty, to be beaten out and moulded by the hammer of self-sacrifice. She worked assiduously at breaking her own will, a task not at all agreeable to girls of a growing age. It is astonishing to read how carefully she studied herself, and drew up a rule of life. With minute attention she noted down all the good works that she could perform, as well as such points as would help to perfect herself. She scrutinized and laid bare her least defect and resolved to destroy it even at the cost of her blood.

The following is an extract from her spiritual note-book. "Good Jesus, for a long time I have understood, that you have wanted something great from me—You wish that I should become a Saint. All along I have resisted your inspirations, but now I can no longer keep aloof from you—Your charms have won me, and I will become a Saint, cost



what it may. To work for my sanctification I will try to do the following:

- A. 1. I will sleep only as much as is allowed me i. e. neither more nor less than  $6\frac{1}{2}$  hours. As soon as I wake I will turn my thoughts to God and to Mother Mary. I will kiss her statue, and recommend myself also to my Guardian Angel and to St. Aloysius.
- B. 2. After dressing myself modestly, I will say my prayers and make my meditation, either in my room, or in the Church. I will hear Mass and communicate daily.
- C. 3. On my return home, I will devote myself to household duties, choosing by preference menial offices. After dinner I will allow myself some slight relaxation. Before starting work again in the afternoon I will obtain the blessing of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and conclude the day's work with another visit to Him and His most holy Mother. To and from the Church, I will speak no useless word, and observe strict custody of the eyes.
- D. 4. Towards evening I will spend some time in reading a spiritual book. Then in my room I will recite on my knees, the holy rosary, followed by pious meditation, and end with an examination of conscience.
- E. 5. After noting down my faults, I will compose myself to sleep with my mind fixed on some spiritual thoughts.
- F. 6. Every time I awake at night, I will arise from bed, and make a short visit to my Crucifix, recommending to Our Lord poor sinners and those about to die.



- G. 7. In the Church as well as during my prayers I will never raise my eyes, unless charity requires it.
- H. 8. During the day I will endeavour to keep myself in the presence of God, by little ejaculations and frequent acts of Spiritual Communion.
- I. 9. Every hour I will recollect myself, examine my actions of the past hour, ask God's pardon for my failings and offer myself anew to Him.
- L. 10. Each time I enter my room I will perform an act of homage to the Crucifix and the Blessed Virgin with an "Ave" and "Gloria" or with a simple aspiration.
- M. 11. Three times a day I will make ten genuflections before the Crucifix in my room, and three visits to the Blessed Virgin.
- N. 12. I will not say anything that might harm another; to ensure this I will not interfere in the affairs of others.
- O. 13. The poor will be the object of my special care. As far as I can I shall help them; speak to them whenever opportunity permits, and visit them thrice a week.
- P. 14. I will never touch another even in jest, not even a child. I will not fix my glance on men nor think or speak of them uselessly. I will not look at women unbecomingly dressed.
- Q. 15. I will maintain peace in the family, taking care never to raise my voice nor show any displeasure in my manner.
- R. 16. I will look upon my Superiors with deep respect and never desire that they should prefer me to others. I will obey everyone as though obeying the Saints: my sister's words will be to me like those of



St. Aloysius ; my parents' those of Our Lady, and my Confessor's those of Our Lord Himself.

- S. 17. With my Confessor I will be candid and unreserved following his advice exactly. Confessors and confessions will not be a topic of my conversation.
- T. 18. For all Priests I will have the respect that their sacred character demands, never taking the liberty to say anything which may offend them in the least.
- U. 19. I will daily keep an hour's silence, if possible. Before Holy Communion I will not speak uselessly and never on worldly topics.
- W. 20. On Mondays I will offer Holy Communion for poor sinners; on Tuesdays for the souls in Purgatory; on Sundays I will devote part of my time to instruct ignorant girls.
- X. 21. Once a month I will make a general confession of the faults of the month; the same once a year. Every month I will set apart a day for recollection.
- Y. 22. I will thank God for all that He gives me and commence every action with the sign of the Cross. I will keep my vows constantly in mind and renew them often.
- Z. 23. In whatever I do, I will recall the saintly example of St. Aloysius, whom I will try to imitate as closely as possible.
- V. 24. I will study the best means to do good to my neighbour, in particular to girls. With them I will be kind, patient and pleasant in order to help them the more.
- K. 25. In teaching I will have no other end in view than the glory of God and the good of souls. I will try to instil in young hearts true devotion and piety, teaching them how to pray and how to derive profit



from sermons and spiritual reading. I will love my pupils impartially bestowing on each of them the same care and charity.

- AB. 26. As sanctity consists chiefly in self-abnegation, I will be very diligent in denying my own will. For this end I will never manifest my particular inclinations and opinions and be glad to comply with the wishes of others.
- AC. 27. To none will I complain of anything. Of my sorrows and my bodily ailments I will speak only to my Confessor in case he should make inquiries.
- AD. 28. I will not ask for anything superfluous either in food or drink. When a choice is given me I will take that which is less pleasing to me. As for necessities I will humbly ask them of my parents.
- AF. 29. I will oblige everyone who requests a service of me.
- AG. 30. I will not yield to curiosity even in lawful matters so that I may keep my heart disengaged from worldly thoughts and more united to God.
- AH. 31. I will be firmly determined never to speak on such worldly topics as wealth, beauty, dress, marriages, amusements and the like.
- AL. 32. I will try not to make myself singular either in my exterior behaviour or in my spiritual exercises.
- AM. 33. My letters will be short except when necessity or charity require otherwise. I will not correct any mistakes I might make in writing them.
- AN. 34. I will never give a thought to nor speak about things which I have done for others, but try to keep my mind fixed only on my sins and on what I should be were God to withdraw His grace from me.
- AP. 35. When praised by friends I will skilfully turn the discourse to something else. If praised by my



superiors I will keep praying God in my heart to enlighten them and me upon my vileness.

AQ. 36. I will never justify myself nor speak in my own praise or dispraise.

AR. 37. In giving my opinion I will not persist in it.

AS. 38. I will not claim for myself any distinction or special care nor allow others to do the same for me.

AT. 39. I will try to lead a hidden life and suffer with pleasure for the glory of God whatever tends to humiliate or offend me.

AV. 40. I will read this rule of life daily as a reminder to correct myself when I have failed.

This her "Rule of Life" was not a mere list of book-resolutions, but one adhered to faithfully. Fortunately for us, some of the books which record her failures and her victories have been preserved. The space of time which they cover is an incontestable proof of her persevering efforts at self-correction. What strikes us in reading them is the fewness of her faults.

Her method of noting down her examen is all her own. Each resolution was represented by one or more letters of the alphabet, and against each she would daily mark a little sign. Thus:

= meant that the resolution had been kept.

× negligence.

+ failure.

... impossibility.

0 followed whenever possible.

l kept partly (this happened when the resolution implied more than one act of virtue).

The mark signifying a failure appears occasionally during the first months of her efforts; later it hardly ever occurs.



Every month she submitted her account to her confessor, who prudently guided the extraordinary soul confided to his care. How few young girls of today are as assiduous in the pursuit of virtue! May the intimate knowledge of the workings of Bartholomea's soul, move to imitation all those who like her wish to attain a very high degree of perfection.

















AUGUST 1831

|    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| A  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| B  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| C  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| D  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| E  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| F  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| G  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| H  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | :: | =  |    |
| I  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| J  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| K  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| L  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| M  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| N  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| O  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| P  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| Q  | 0 | = | = | 0 | = | = | 0 | = | = | =  | 0  | =  | =  |    |
| R  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| S  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| T  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| U  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| V  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | = | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |    |
| X  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |    |
| Y  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| Z  | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| AB | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |
| AC | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | = | =  | =  | =  | =  |    |

From the 14th of this month I left off marking my register, partly because I was sick and had no time, and partly because I was lazy.



AUGUST 1831—*continued*

|     | 1 | 2 | 3   | 4 | 5 | 6   | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10  | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|-----|---|---|-----|---|---|-----|---|---|---|-----|----|----|----|----|
| AD  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AF  | = | = | =   | = |   | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AG  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AH  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AL  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AM  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AN  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AP  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AQ  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AR  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AS  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AT  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AV  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AX  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AY  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AZ  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AE  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AO  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AI  | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0 | 0 | 0   | = | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |
| AA  | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0  | 0  |
| AU  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AJ  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| AK  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| W   | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| /o  | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| C/o | = | = | =   | = | = | =   | = | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =  | =  |
| V   | = | = | ... | = | = | ... | = | = | = | ... | =  | =  | =  | =  |

From the 14th of this month I left off marking my register, partly because I was sick and had no time, and partly because I was lazy.

OCTOBER 1831

|    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4   | 5 | 6 | 7   | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|----|---|---|---|-----|---|---|-----|---|---|----|----|----|
| A  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| B  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| C  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| D  | = | = | = | =   | = | = | ... |   |   |    |    |    |
| E  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| F  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| G  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| H  | = | = | = | ... | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| I  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| J  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| K  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| L  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| M  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| N  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| O  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| P  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| Q  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0 | 0 |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| R  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| S  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| T  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| U  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| V  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| X  | = | = | 0 | =   | 0 | 0 |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| Y  | = | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0 | 0 |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| Z  | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| AB | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |
| AC | = | = | = | =   | = | = |     |   |   |    |    |    |

Owing to family circumstances (the sickness and death of her father) I could not keep my register till the 1st November 1831.



OCTOBER 1831—*continued*

|     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6   | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|-----|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| AD  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AF  | 1 | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AG  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AH  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AL  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AM  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AN  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AP  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AQ  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AR  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AS  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AT  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AV  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AX  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AY  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AZ  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AE  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AO  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AI  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AA  | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AU  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AJ  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| AK  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| W   | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| /D  | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| C/D | = | = | = | = | = | =   |   |   |   |    |    |    |
| V   | = | = | = | = | = | ... |   |   |   |    |    |    |

Owing to family circumstances (the sickness and death of her father) I could not keep my register till the 1st November 1831.







## APRIL

|                 | 1 | 2 | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8 | 9 | 10  | 11 | 12 | 13  | 14  | 15 |
|-----------------|---|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|---|-----|----|----|-----|-----|----|
| AF              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AH              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AL              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AM              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AN              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AP              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AQ              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AR              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AS              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AT              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AV              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AX              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AY              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AZ              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AO              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AI              | = | 0 | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | = | 0 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0   | 0   | =  |
| AA              | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0 | 0 | 0   | 0  | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0  |
| AU              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   |     | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AJ              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AK              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| W               | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| X               | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| Is              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| Cl <sub>2</sub> | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| V/              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| AE              | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| E               | = | = | =   | =   | =   | =   | =   | = | = | =   | =  | =  | =   | =   | =  |
| V               | = | = | ... | ... | ... | ... | ... | = | = | ... | =  | =  | ... | ... | =  |





These records kept with astonishing precision and assiduity, are, undoubtedly, the best documents of the interior and exterior life of Bartholomea; still she does not seem to have been satisfied for in 1826 she subjoins to her "Method" another article sanctioned by her confessor, stating the penances she would perform for every infringement of the practices viz.: "to form two crosses with the tongue on the ground for every + ; one, for every I ; to kiss the ground three times for every X." And yet with all this, in the month of September 1832, after having marked her "violations" she writes: "Oh, beautiful years of my youth, what have I done with you?"

Young as she was, she had already advanced far in sanctity. Where shall we seek the motive force that led her on? Natural tendencies cannot account for this wonderful progress. In fact no martyrdom is so painful as the daily grinding of self-conquest. Whence then did Bartholomea draw her strength but from love that knows no difficulty? Her love was like that of the saints, delighting in sacrifices. She concluded her resolutions with the following prayer: "My dear Jesus, grant that this rule of life may not be presented to me as a reproach on the last day." She then presented it to her confessor for approval. Our Lord who rewards generous souls by asking of them greater sacrifices inspired her with yet another resolution. She obtained permission from her confessor, to wake up every night, for a visit to Jesus Crucified. She offered this mortification and prayer, in reparation for those who slept in mortal sin at that hour, and begged her Crucified Lord to preserve them from an unprovided death. Love is inseparable from the spirit of reparation, and Bartholomea realized this.



## Her Confessions.

THE better to advance in spirituality Bartholomea laid bare her soul to her confessor, with utmost simplicity and sincerity. She saw God in him and endeavoured to be as transparent before him as she was in the eyes of God. It is easier to confess a grievous sin than certain humiliating defects, particularly such as lower us in the eyes of those whose good opinion we prize. Perhaps a saint is even more sensitive in this point. Bartholomea was no exception, and it cost her not a little to accuse herself of her failings; she mentioned trifles which many another would have passed over. Knowing her proneness to self-complacency, she attacked it humbling herself by accusations like the following:—

“The thought crossed my mind that my confessor would remark that I am good and obedient. I felt satisfied that a priest overlooked a thoughtless action of mine. It pleased me greatly to hear some one call me “lady”—I thought myself more capable than another.

On my way to the communion-rails the thought occurred to me that the priest would mark me out as one steadfast in piety. The vain thought came to my mind that when I become a religious, my mother would relate to others how I did not partake of food or drink except at her bidding. I wished that my confessor would overhear me while I spoke to a friend on some spiritual topics.

On witnessing the funeral of a nun, I imagined they would do the same for me, even though I should die a secular, considering I led such a holy life.

When I did not feel well, I found pleasure in the thought that were I to die, my friends would say they had lost a great treasure in me."

Readers might be inclined to judge that Bartholomea was in a morbid state of soul resulting in scruples. But such was not the case; she was never a victim to scruples. It was rather her delicacy of conscience combined with her earnest desire to have not even a thought displeasing to God, that led her to deal thus minutely with her imperfections. As a proof that her confessions were not those of a troubled conscience, we are told that she was never long at the confessional. She was careful not to waste her confessor's time, nor to try the patience of those waiting for holy absolution. She carefully practised the maxim she taught her pupils: "Few words to the confessor, and many words to our Lord." Although she had easy access to her confessor, Don Angelo Bosio, she never approached him without real necessity, nor did she make the direction she received from him, a subject of ordinary conversation. Don Bosio, with prudent zeal urged or checked the ardour of his penitent. He considered it a privilege to direct such a soul, and remarked more than once that if he had helped Bartholomea by good counsel, she had taught him much more by her example.

### I am Espoused Already.

As Bartholomea progressed in sanctity her appearance grew more attractive. If education can refine the expression



of the face, how much more will not sanctity mark it with its holy impress. Bartholomea's exterior was always modest and composed. And in her simple dress a grace distinguished her among the girls of her age. Every gesture of hers was well regulated—there was neither angularity nor affectation in her behaviour. Her looks and her speech were friendly with near acquaintances; with strangers she kept a prudent reserve. Her cheerful face and her affability combined with the dignity of her bearing, made many a one exclaim: "How like a Madonna she looks." Even men of loose morals were compelled to respect her presence, and did not dare to utter the least objectionable word before her. Many a young man looked on her with fond hope, but none had the courage either to express his sentiments, or to let her know in any way that he sought a reciprocation of his affection. Finally a proposal of marriage was made to her through her superiors and parents. She resolutely rejected it, answering: "I am espoused already." Not that Bartholomea was dead to human affections, and could not feel the power of earthly love—this is a mistaken idea of those who have never sacrificed human love for the divine. In her little note book we come across the following jotting which shows that Bartholomea was not insensible to natural affections, but that in the light of a higher love, earthly ties did not allure her. She says: "For once, my heart asserted itself and turned towards a certain person; but it was only for an instant. Immediately I recalled that I had given my love irrevocably to Christ, and begged His forgiveness for this momentary infidelity. Never again was I disturbed by any similar temptation."

This refusal seemed to mar her future prospects, but Bartholomea was not acting on a momentary caprice but with full deliberation. To her companions, such conduct

was incomprehensible, just as it is to many in our own day. They cannot even dimly understand the all-sufficing and all-compensating love of the Divine Spouse of souls,—a love so precious, that to secure it one must indeed sell all he possesses. Only those who have entirely divested themselves of everything terrestrial, can ever hope to understand such a love or to enjoy its inexpressible sweetness.

### In the School-Room.

BARTHOLOMEA had so far occupied herself with household duties and also assisted in the little shop. But her confessor and parish priest understood the child was called to nobler tasks. Her education made her competent for other than household work. They, therefore, advised her to devote herself to the education of children, knowing full well that she was singularly fitted for it. She acted upon their counsel as the manifestation of God's holy will. She was however, only qualified to be a private teacher. She now set about preparing for the government diploma. She successfully underwent the test on the then prescribed methods, before the Inspector of Schools at Bergamo, securing the first place among the Elementary Lower Grade teachers.

In 1825, fired with apostolic zeal, she started her school in an apartment of her modest cottage, which she had furnished for the purpose. Many of the little ones now under her care had never attended school before. The numbers daily increased, and it was necessary to separate them into different classes. It was soon perceived that the space was





CATECHISM CLASS



insufficient to hold all. Bartholomea was therefore obliged to transfer her school to a larger house belonging to Don Bosio. Bartholomea had indeed a heavy strain on her for she worked single-handed; but she trained the older girls to help her to look after the younger ones. Her parents expected some profit from the school but Bartholomea never spoke to them of what she received—a sum which must have been trifling as some paid only a lira a month, others less and the rest, nothing at all.

The little school soon became a model school. It admitted even the poorest girls, some of whom could afford to give but an hour to their schooling, during which they learned to read their prayer-books, to write a simple letter and to work out ordinary calculations. Years after some old women still recalled their school-days under Bartholomea when they attended class barefoot and destitute of either basket or books.

The young mistress profited by the experience she had gained in the Boarding House, and fulfilled her charge most effectively. In a short time she had so won over the hearts of the children that she found it easy to lead them along the paths of piety and duty. She was indeed a tender mother to her pupils, watching over them with devoted love and training them to habits of virtue and self-conquest. To leave fruit at table on Saturdays in honour of our Lady, and on behalf of the poor, to keep half-an-hour's silence, as a little mortification—these were some of the pious practices she taught them.

At the beginning of class each morning, she proposed a particular virtue to be practised by the children saying: "Today I shall see who will be the most obedient, or the most attentive, or the most silent." Of course each one was eager to be the privileged one, and thus a healthy and holy emulation



was roused among them. In the course of the day she sometimes called out a child to the front of the class and showing her a crucifix asked her: "Do you love Jesus," "Yes, yes," came the quick reply; whereupon she hastened to suggest little practices of piety suitable to the age of the children. She usually wound up these little exhortations with some little present. At other times she questioned the children on the good actions they had done that day. After hearing in detail their account of the day, she spoke a few words of encouragement, adding suggestions for improvement. It was her delight to have these innocent little ones around her, and to lead them daily to the neighbouring church for Mass, or for visits to our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. She knelt with them and taught them to pray with the fervour and respect that befitted the house of God. Often she recommended her intentions to their prayers. Needless to say these intentions were only for their families and their future welfare, as also for a clearer understanding of God's will in her regard.

With the instinct of a born teacher, Bartholomea realized that a domineering attitude never succeeds; consequently she was extremely careful not to cause the least annoyance to her pupils, as excessive use of power leads to its abuse.

Bartholomea had a method all her own, for the correction of her charges. Her dictation lesson consisted of lines embodying either counsels for good behaviour or a reproach directed towards the delinquents, or a suggestion for the practice of virtue. While reading over the lesson, she made her applications according as the occasion required. The procedure could not fail to prove effective. If she perceived any ill feeling among the girls she worked to bring them quietly together, and make them exchange fruits etc., thus reconciling them. Punishments were unknown in her little school—a mild rebuke was all that was ever heard. To secure discipline



it was enough for her to remark to a naughty child: "If you take advantage of my patience do you not deserve to be punished?" When a child had lost the connection of a lesson on account of inattention, Bartholomea would say: "I have gone through it at least three times; now use your intelligence and think it out." Thus while not overlooking negligences she refrained from whatever might hurt the sensitive feelings of a child. More serious faults were dealt with ingeniously. The culprit was left to herself, while the rest of the class was taken for some interesting and instructive lesson. No child could hold out against this. A memoir of one of her pupils is extant, in which we come across the following entry: "Bartholomea would tell me that her little finger infallibly informed her whenever I had been up to mischief. I do not know whether she threatened others similarly, but for my part, being young, I gave full credit to her words, and dreaded being caught. One day in a fit of temper against my mother, I threw out a plate of soup, breaking it. On going to school Bartholomea immediately told me, that her little finger had given her a full account of my misdeed. I was certain my mother had not met her, nor could anyone else have conveyed the news to her. The fact impressed me so deeply that I was completely cured."

The children found in Bartholomea not merely a guide and teacher, but an interested playmate as well. With characteristic zest she called them around her and taught them new games or directed them in old ones. Her promise: "If you are good I will teach you a new game," worked wonders, among the pupils, for what will not girls do with the prospect of a new game in store. Having roused their eagerness, when it was time for play, she completely satisfied their desires. With Bartholomea in the playground, it was impossible to mope or sulk, much less to quarrel. Only merry voices and



peals of laughter could be heard around. Bartholomea thus made herself all things to all,—but without the least touch of artificiality about her.

Every Sunday and Thursday evening, she took the children out for a walk. In Carnival this was extended into a full day's outing to a small house and garden she had at Sellere. The children started at day-break well equipped with provisions for the day. They spent a delightful time at the villa, the height of their enjoyment being a dance to the accompaniment of Bartholomea's tambourine. Bartholomea was happy to see her children enjoying themselves, and did not attempt to check their healthy liveliness and chatter.

The parish priest found in her an invaluable aid. She assembled the children of the country-side and herself took them for Mass. She taught them to assist at Mass in a spirit of prayerful reverence and showed them how to follow the ceremonial of the Holy Sacrifice. Her catechism lessons were simple and clear, accompanied with suitable examples and illustrations. With a mother's care she prepared the little ones for their first Communion. Her deep knowledge of their young souls, made her an expert at this task. She then proceeded to prepare them for their first Communion, inflaming their little hearts with love for the dear Jesus who was soon to visit them. At the same time, she did not neglect to impress upon them a great fear of whatever might soil the beauty of their souls.

On the great festivals of the Church she carefully trained the children to take part in the church-services and processions. She herself dressed the little girls who were to strew flowers, in their white frocks, veils and wreaths.

During the ceremonies she was ever ready to put aside her private devotions in order to be useful in every direction. Mothers, knowing it was her delight to draw souls to





THE LITTLE ONES' MOTHER



God, often brought their little ones to her when they themselves were too busy to be with them in church. Well did Bartholomea fulfil her charge, keeping the youngest close to her.

The special objects of her tender care were the waifs whose ragged clothes and pinched faces are a common feature of the street everywhere. Drawing them to herself with maternal kindness she took them to her house, and taught them the rudiments of knowledge, and above all prayer. Her labours were not unrequited. The forlorn children, deprived of even a mother's care, took new life under the warmth of her affections and clung to her with gratitude. The golden hearts that beat beneath their sordid exterior opened to her, and vowed to do as she bade them. On her way to church, they crowded round her. Even among these, the poorest of the poor, there were some who were dearest to the heart of Bartholomea. They were the ignorant, the stupid and the daft whom she called her "Benjamins." Had they been abandoned to their fate they might have been acquainted with the most degrading vices, scarcely realizing the extent of their crimes. In Bartholomea they found a succouring angel. When the passers-by mocked at them or despised them, it was Bartholomea who always sided with them and protected them. They were not suited for book learning, but there was a science in which their minds and hearts were open to instruction,—the Science of Sanctity, into which they were gradually initiated. The spiritual affection she felt for them was so deep that breaking the bounds of her usual reserve, she was seen actually caressing them, and imprinting on their foreheads, a kiss, the sign of friendship, while her lips would softly repeat, "How I love you,—receive from me that affection which all the world denies you." Thus did the selfless girl lavish the wealth of her love on these poor waifs and strays. Nothing but the truest love of God could have prompted such sentiments.



Obedience frequently required of Bartholomea services of zeal and charity on behalf of boys, who would else have gone astray. They responded to her care in spite of the restraint it meant to them. In fact some of them were heard to remark: "Our teacher makes us say so many prayers, yet though it costs us, we say them willingly because she is so good.

Many a mother made Bartholomea her confidante, pouring out into her sympathetic ears all her sorrows, particularly those caused by a misguided son, who brought shame and disgrace on the family. With gentle persuasive words Bartholomea guided the steps of those straying sheep back to the straight road, and influenced them so far, as to gather them together and make them receive the sacraments. She herself instructed them in Christian doctrine and gradually trained them to practices of piety. When other means failed she had recourse to letter-writing. While she spoke of God she did not shrink from putting plainly before them their evil ways. These letters were always effective in bringing them to a better manner of life.

Bartholomea kept an even more vigilant eye on the girls of the village. Some of them were in danger of losing their good name, and anxious guardians brought them to Bartholomea, that she might direct them aright. In such cases she took the greatest care, never by any word to let them see, that she knew their pitiable plight. Instead she acted towards them as a loving sister would. Her love for these unfortunate souls wrought a change of life in them. She had nothing but pity for them. Not even in thought did she blame them. "Were I in their circumstances, who knows how much lower I might have fallen," she told herself, and spent her energies in organizing help for their safety. It was while thus occupied that she desired ardently to be able to work for the education of abandoned children who had never experienced the joys of



home and love. She planned an asylum wherein they would find protection and employment to keep them from danger, for, as she said "Poverty is a bad counsellor."

It was not long before the inhabitants of Lovere noticed the wonderful transformation brought about in the youth of the village. Whenever they came across a well-behaved young girl, they did not doubt she had been trained by Bartholomea. Among these was a handsome young girl named Helen Omio. Her parents desired her to keep pace with the world, dress fashionably and dance at balls. The angelic influence of Bartholomea changed her. Helen put aside vanity, and following in the footsteps of her instructress became an exemplary girl. Her behaviour in church was particularly edifying. Her pretty face looked still more attractive under the influence of grace. Soon she was envied by her companions when a rumour got abroad that a favourable match had been arranged for her. On hearing the news Bartholomea remarked "Helen will never marry, she is a flower reserved for God." Her words proved true, for God transplanted it in His heavenly garden.

## Beginnings of the Institute.

THE good work begun by Bartholomea was so much appreciated that a friend of hers Catherine Gerosa by name placed one of her houses at Bartholomea's disposal. A room was immediately turned into an oratory, and supplied with linen richly embroidered. Sunday evenings found the girls of Lovere gathered in this little place of prayer. A regular



programme was gone through : the recital of the rosary, singing of the Vespers of Our Lady, and spiritual reading. These exercises fulfilled, the children joined together for some innocent and hearty recreation with Bartholomea as the moving spirit. Their holy angels alone know from how many dangers they have been saved by means of this wise organization. Gradually taught to love what was truly worth loving, the girls unconsciously developed steady and refined character.

Having once established their weekly meetings, Bartholomea drew up a set of rules for the girls of the oratory as she called them. The best among the older ones, were appointed in charge of the Sunday school children who numbered some three hundred. Guided by the Father Director these monitresses, had to help on works of charity. Each had to play the part of a mother to the group of children entrusted to her, preparing them for the reception of the sacraments, watching over their conduct in church, instructing them, and taking a warm interest in their general welfare. The monitresses had besides, other duties according to the particular offices held by them. The librarians were responsible for the library, they also marked out the hymns to be sung; the sacristans saw to the decoration and the general cleanliness of the oratory; the reader kept ready the spiritual reading for the meetings; the chantress had to train up and maintain a good choir. There were even infirmarians in this model association. It was their duty to visit sick members, specially if they happened to be poor, and serve them as far as lay in their power.

The sacristan generally rang a bell to gather the children together. Then each monitress took the attendance of her class, while the children remained silent and attentive. Nothing but supernatural love could have helped Bartholomea through all these labours. Much as she had already done, it



was not enough to satisfy her zeal. She formed three little bands of twelve girls each, dividing them according to their age. They were remarkable for their practice of virtue. Next she abridged the life of St. Aloysius dividing it into fifty-two chapters, each being an exemplification of some particular virtue. Every week each girl was asked to practise one of these virtues, and at the close of the month she gave an account to the Father Director how she had conducted herself. A monthly meeting was held by them, at which a rule of life was read, and the individual members were free to choose any special practice, unknown to the rest, so as to give free and spontaneous scope for the exercise of their generosity. Bartholomea, their leader, called them to her house every week, to keep the fire of fervour constantly burning in their hearts by means of kindly corrections and prudent advice. It was a source of much consolation to her to notice the docility with which they followed her directions. Seeing how they advanced in love of piety and simplicity, she was at times troubled with the thought that they might not persevere. Her only resource then was to confide them to the care of St. Aloysius, and to beseech him with all the affection of a sister, that not one of them might be lost.

Among the many associations she started for the spiritual good of her neighbourhood, the one most dear to Bartholomea was the Confraternity of the Heart of Jesus and Mary. It was formed of a fixed number of eighty-four members in imitation of the Apostolic College. Twelve priests represented the twelve Apostles, and there were seventy-two virgins, in memory of the seventy-two disciples. Its aim was to revive the piety and fervour of the early Christians, and for this they were expected to practise their faith even to a heroic extent. Inspired by a deep devotion to Our Lady, the members tried to lead a life of perfection, and to conduct an



Apostolate for the sanctification of their neighbours. They shared in common whatever merit was gained by them, and were united by a bond of union which enabled them while living like members of one family to correct and help one another with sincerity and charity. The holiest of the clergy and laity joined this confraternity which undoubtedly consoled the Hearts of Jesus and Mary while it made reparation for all the injuries and insults they receive. Bartholomea who earnestly desired to be a servant of Mary placed herself as the last and least member of the association.

Neighbouring priests had reason to envy the parish priest of Lovere for the treasure he possessed in Bartholomea. To derive profit from his good fortune, they sent picked girls from their own parishes to be trained by Bartholomea so that they might do likewise on their return. Many of the priests called her over to their parishes to spend a few days in organizing helpful associations. Bartholomea never refused these invitations—they were but so many new channels to her, to spread the love and worship of God, which was the one object of her heart. Her few, yet practical instructions stirred up so much enthusiasm, that the girls found the path of sanctity, an easy and attractive one. She encouraged the tepid and slothful while she stimulated the fervent to more strenuous effort. Those who approached her became her fast friends and sought her direction. When time did not permit her to stay long enough, she carried on her apostolic work by means of correspondence. So many came to her for help and counsel, that she was obliged at times to keep awake the whole night to satisfy their demands. One of her letters was so effective that the priest in charge of the parish to which it was addressed, wrote to Don Bosio, "Tell your teacher of Lovere, whose name I do not know, to write again, for her first letter has reaped the fruit of a



mission." None came in contact with her but was impressed by her sanctity. Those for whom she had worked remembered her long, and often remarked "Truly she is a saint."

About this time she found a fresh opening for her zeal. A few years previous, a priest, Don Jerome Ardenghi, had left a house, gardens and money for the purpose of a hospital. Catherine Gerosa's uncle too had left several houses for the same charitable end. Owing to several difficulties the beneficent design could not be carried out for a long time. Finally with the assistance of the parish priest, Don Barboglio and of Don Bosio the building was prepared to meet immediate needs. Bartholomea rejoiced at the thought that the poor and the sick, so dear to her, would now have more appropriate attendance. With her usual zest and energy she set about collecting furniture, linen, crockery and other necessities. Catherine and her sister Rosa, not only gave personal help, but added large donations as well. Bartholomea was junior to them, yet she had superior powers of management, and Catherine was happy to have her practical suggestions. No sooner was government sanction obtained in 1826, than the new hospital opened its doors to relieve the misery of the poor. The limited space permitted of ten beds only. Two infirmarians were placed in charge of the patients and Bartholomea was chosen procurator and directress of the hospital. Thus at the age of twenty Bartholomea found herself the mother of suffering souls. To her it was a source of great joy to set on foot, in the name of God, the sublime mission of comforting and saving souls. Only such patients were received as were seriously ill or reduced to misery through excessive work and neglect. Although burdened with occupations Bartholomea never absented herself from her post beside the sick. Every inmate was daily visited by her, and those received the largest share of her sympathy who suffered



most. She reserved for herself the task of dressing the most repulsive sores, and overcoming her natural disgust she cleaned the wounds with her tongue. Her time in the hospital was divided between cleaning and disinfecting the wards, dressing wounds, and attending to the most infectious cases. In imitation of the saints she often kissed those who were covered with ulcers, and prayed over them saying: "These poor suffering ones are to me as the person of Our Lord—O Jesus covered with sores, I kiss Thee."

Meanwhile Bartholomea did not neglect her duties as procurator. The registers were maintained in perfect order. She was soon obliged to go round begging for alms to meet daily expenses. It was a humiliation doubtless, but she did not yield to human respect. Writing to a lady friend she said: "I make bold to ask for your charity, not for myself but for the poor of the hospital." To another she wrote: "To my poor everything is useful." Generous souls compensated her trouble by their gifts which Bartholomea distributed among the sick. At times however, she met with mortifying refusals which she kept secret. While supplying the material wants of the patients, Bartholomea never failed to add a morsel of spiritual nourishment in the shape of kindly advice or encouragement. To all she spoke of hope, comfort and resignation, taught them to say their prayers, and prepared them to receive the sacraments. Many were heard to remark: "To go to the hospital is a sign of predestination," and this was proved by the conversions effected there. A vicious soldier was once admitted. Several ladies tried to broach the subject of religion to him, but in vain. Finally Bartholomea made an attempt. Kneeling by his bed, she prayed for him, then addressed a few kind words to him. They worked like magic. The soldier was deeply touched and determined to reform his life. On being discharged from the hospital, he



resided with a neighbouring family instead of returning to his own home. His hostess, one day, came upon him in a deep prayer. Rising up, he exclaimed, "I must give myself to a life of penance." Then alluding to Bartholomea he added, "You have a hidden saint in your midst." Soon after, he burnt all his bad books, quitted the company of his evil friends and was not heard of for some time. When he next appeared, he could hardly be recognized in his friar's garb.

### Fresh Efforts at Self-Conquest.

WITH the delicacy of conscience that marks the saint, Bartholomea realized deeply her real or supposed shortcomings. "My predominant defect is pride," she used to say, "pride which lies concealed even in the menial actions I perform. It is this pride which makes me resent interiorly any contradictions, neglect, derision, or light banter I receive, instead of suffering all for the love of God." The young girl waged relentless war against her chief failing, a struggle which lasted several years. To her hypersensitive conscience, even the least suspicion of pride was a serious fault and an occasion for self-humiliation. She checked temptations of self-complacency or pride and self-love. I will let every one trample on my self-love, and overcome my natural repugnances, even should it cost me a bloody sweat. I perceive this passion is an obstacle to my advance in perfection, and hence I resolve to build my sanctification upon the steady foundation of humility. I will fly from vain thoughts and hold myself as the most wretched of all. I am determined to become the



humblest of creatures, and to attain humility by courting humiliations.

She was not content with these resolutions. She yearned for humiliations. At this time she wrote to her confessor: "I recommend myself to your charity. If God inspires you to humble me in extraordinary ways, do not spare me. I know I shall not be able to stand the least trial, but I am not discouraged, for my falls will only show me my own weakness." We do not know what humiliations her confessor suggested, but we have abundant instances of those she imposed on herself. When praised, she felt a flattering voice tempt her to enjoy the words of praise. But she understood she was thereby robbing God of the honour due to Him and at once checked such vain thoughts. Not only did she try to avoid praise, but she actually sought for humiliations. If commended for her learning, she would purposely allow ridiculous mistakes in her writings just that others may form a poor opinion of her knowledge. She was popularly esteemed as a saint, but in her thirst for self-abasement she wished to be counted as nothing. With this end in view, she wrote out her general confession, signed it and threw it about so that any one could read it. Several did so and commented on it. Again she was persistently tempted with the thought: "Perhaps after my death my life will be published." Determined to conquer this feeling of vanity, she put down the temptation on paper, and left it for anyone to read and ridicule her. Surely more than one must have read it and satisfied her desire for humiliations.

She went further in her love of humility. She decided to reveal the same temptation to her sister Camilla, who was often with no reason infuriated with her. With a supreme effort that cost her a sweat of blood, but with perfect sweetness, she made known to her sister the thought suggested to her by



the temper. We may well imagine how Camilla received her words. "*Your* life to be written! You who are the *worst* of us!" she exclaimed; "well let them ask me about your virtue, I shall tell them." Camilla's sneer was indeed a sharp blow to pride, but it was a blow that Bartholomea had voluntarily sought for.

Most men work to secure the esteem of those with whom they live. Bartholomea however feared for herself and tried to make her pupils think badly of her. She wrote out her defects on little slips of paper, and inserted them in the books used by the children. They were too young to understand the underlying motive and believed their teacher was indeed worse than she appeared. About this time some lampoons were written on her and circulated by ill-mannered young men who were angered by her effort to improve the village girls. Bartholomea far from justifying herself, delighted in the calumnies uttered against her and even helped to make them more public. On another occasion she was accused of making the children rebellious, when she had only striven to make them submissive to their superiors. Not a word of defence escaped her lips, instead she told herself "Today I have had perfect joy."

While struggling to overcome herself, she exclaimed to Jesus in a burst of love: "I know Thou wishest me to be crucified with Thee on the Cross. Aided by Thy grace, I shall count myself fortunate if I can drink some drops of Thy most bitter chalice. I am ready for humiliations, contradictions, illness, for loss of dear ones, of goods or honour, for aridity, temptations, persecutions, ingratitude; I am ready to suffer all these even continually if it be Thy holy will."

Notwithstanding her constant struggle, she was still beset with temptations of pride. But she did not give up the fight as lost; she took some heroic means to write down scrupulously

the proud thoughts that passed through her mind and to give them to her confessor. She then nerved herself to bear the shame such an avowal would cost her. Each day she totalled up her failings. The first few days they amounted to seven or eight, a number that Bartholomea thought much too large. Failures did not daunt her. To the saints nothing was too painful or too hard; they stopped at nothing when it was a question of giving to God. The nearer they drew to Him the more did their little imperfections appear hateful to them. Others would not have been aware of having committed such faults as Bartholomea noted down. Her conscience, trained to have a strict guard over itself did not let anything escape unnoticed. There is an extract from her book. We may judge for ourselves as to the gravity of the faults.

1825 JANUARY

6th: I expected someone to remark: "How clever she is!"

I felt pleasure when two priests saw me talking to a virtuous girl.

On arriving late for the meeting, my first impulse was to excuse myself.

It made me glad to be asked to assist at the recitation of the catechism lesson.

7th: I felt some self-satisfaction when others saw me talking confidentially to a lady.

8th: I fancied someone was speaking well of me.

I made known a good desire of mine with the intention of being praised for it.

I thought well of myself, and was grieved that a certain person came to know one of my faults.

9th: When praised, I answered in a low voice, that the praise might be repeated. Several times to-day I recalled that praise.



On coming late for the meeting, I remained behind, lest others should notice my negligence, and immediately excused myself.

10th: I told another, that I had visited a distinguished person, that she might think highly of me.

11th: I thought I was the first to do a certain good action.

12th: When I saw a certain article in the house of a wealthy person, I was flattered to think we had the same at home.

13th: I preferred myself to another in good conduct. When anyone addressed me disrespectfully it displeased me. I felt a little annoyed.

14th: I persisted in my own opinion, and thought it better than that held by one superior to me.

I rejoiced at hearing something in my praise.

15th: I tried to hide something, which if made known, would have dishonoured me.

I did not agree to a reasonable suggestion which came from another.

I was somewhat harsh in my tone of speaking.

16th: I thought myself something of a saint in some points.

I took complacency at seeing the number of my pupils increase, and was displeased that the help of another teacher was asked.

17th: I took the credit of a good deed to myself.

I showed myself competent in spiritual matters. When admonished I justified myself, and repeated the incident to a companion to show I was right.

I exhibited a piece of work done by myself.

18th: A notice was to be exposed publicly, and I was sorry I had not written it better. It shamed me that I could not answer a question. When another was praised, I wished I were the subject of the praise.

I thought myself something when asked for my opinion.

19th: I wished others to know that I refrained from warming myself at a fire, in spite of the cold.

On hearing that I had written a good letter, I felt self-complacent.

20th: I thought the nuns' confessor would think well of me, at seeing me so often at the Communion Table.

I showed ill-humour when obliged to do something according to my parents' taste.

I thought it would be well for me to act dependently, that others might think me submissive.

21st: At a remark that I came of a well-to-do family, I was flattered; also on hearing it said that I behaved like a nun.

When a sick person recommended herself to my prayers, I thought myself good.

I was sorry to be seen at a repast, at which we had only coarse food.

22nd: I thought I had made some advance in the practice of humility.

When singing I fancied others would say I sang well because I had a peaceful conscience.

23rd: I refused to yield to the will of others in a lawful action.

24th: I wished I were the richest and most honoured of all, and grieved that my parents were not of noble blood.

25th: I thought I had the affection of my companions because I deserved it for my virtuous life.

I asked God for suffering, whereas I am not able to bear the least affliction.

Whenever I read the life of a saint, I like to practise similar virtue; but even there, vanity shows itself, for I imagine others will have a good opinion of me, even as they have of the saints.



26th: I overheard two persons speaking well of me, and was delighted. Hearing that I had been spoken of I fancied the conversation had been on my acts of virtue.

27th: I had spent the whole day in pious practices and was just thinking with satisfaction that I had not given in to pride, when the thought crossed my mind: "What a long time you spent in church to-day!"

28th: I placed some much appreciated books on my table that others might think me well-read.

29th: In a few words I let others know the good I did; their words of praise frequently came up to my mind, even though some of them were said in mere sport.

30th: I was pleased that an act of charity I did was noticed by someone. I spoke ill of myself, whereas in reality I believed just the opposite of myself.

On visiting a person, I took the seat of honour, instead of offering it to my companion.

We cannot sufficiently admire these persistent efforts at self-correction. Her note-books show a gradual decrease in the number of faults committed, without her being successful in eradicating them completely. There could not have been any deliberate guilt on her part. God must have permitted temptations to assault her occasionally, to keep her humble, and to give her occasion to keep constant watch. On some days the entry: "Nothing to-day," is seen. 'Nothing,' in her words meant freedom from even the most remote thought of pride, since she had her soul in her hands, and was aware of the least failing in thought. Her one desire was to be perfectly pure in soul, and this not just for a day, but always.

The struggle continued unremittingly, and the spiritual diary shows decided improvement. The last entry is on

September 8th, 1832. The days previous to that show the following remarks:—

- 1st Sept.: I am not aware of any failure.  
2nd „ : No failure to be recorded.  
3rd „ : My self-love was hurt interiorly when something was done contrary to my inclination.  
4th „ : I justified myself in my own mind.  
5th „ : No failures to-day.  
6th „ : I do not remember having had any thoughts of pride to-day.  
7th „ : No thoughts of pride, D. G.  
8th „ : A feeling of dislike crossed my mind. Then reflecting on the perfections of the Blessed Virgin, I felt an ardent desire to imitate her. But even in this holy thought self-esteem showed itself.

In reading these accusations, we must make a large allowance for the delicate conscience of a saint. What appears trivial to the ordinary soul, is unbearable to a saint and there is not the least doubt that Bartholomea looked on her slight imperfections with utmost severity. Her companions never saw the least movement of passion on her face, nor did anything in her offend them. Yet we see such entries as: “I was rude to-day; I scolded a child brusquely.” Such words are much too strong. In reality her failing, if there was any, was that she had not acted with the greatest gentleness possible.

Bartholomea was so humble that she believed she was too forward if no occasion to depreciate herself in public occurred. Nor did she ever think that her acts of virtue were free from self-love. Besides she carefully refrained from holding on to her own opinion. Can we doubt then, that with such heroic efforts that Bartholomea was already





AT THE PATIENT'S BEDSIDE .



far advanced in the path of perfection. Not a few regarded her as a saint already.

## Works of Mercy.

WHILE Bartholomea's soul was developing spiritually, her works of mercy steadily increased. In a letter to a friend she wrote: "Let the poor be to us dear above all; they are the living representative of Jesus Christ. Let us therefore help them all the more, even at the cost of sacrifice. She herself acted upon this principle. At her repasts she usually set aside some delicacy for the poor who received it with great joy. At times she went so far as to distribute her father's linen among them. Frequently she went a-begging to supply their necessities.

When she had no material help to offer, she offered kind services accompanied by a genial smile, which the poor appreciated much more, for sympathy is like food to those who have never known love. This same spirit she inculcated upon her pupils, accustoming them to give alms, and teaching them to deprive themselves of a part of their meal that they might share it with the poor. She kept herself informed about the sick, and visited their poor huts, attending on them and cleaning up their neglected homes. When Holy Viaticum was carried to the sick, Bartholomea did her best to prepare at least a clean little room in which Jesus might be received. She got everything in readiness before the arrival of the priest. When the distant tinkle of the bell gave warning of his approach, she whispered to the patient: "Jesus is coming." She helped



them to make a devout preparation and thanksgiving. After death they could count on the prayers of Bartholomea and her pupils, whom she conducted to the cemetery to pray over the graves.

Love alone sustained her when nature shrank from so much sacrifice. There were some cases that called for heroic endurance. An old man whom she tended had such repugnant wounds as to cause nausea. Another patient had a cancer on the breast; its stench drove away all her relatives. Only Bartholomea approached her to dress the mortifying wound. In such acts of charity she invited her more virtuous friends to assist her. One of them, Jovannina Grassi, found the work a good training for her future life. Before leaving home for the convent, she wrote thus to her father: "I wish you to be kind to the poor in remembrance of me. If you could only realize the grief I feel in parting from them! I entreat you therefore to love them as long as you live; love them as you would have loved me. Let them be as dear to you as your own Jovannina. On the mountain across, there is a lonely hut in which dwells a poor sick man. I was wont to visit him. Now he will see me no more, and will miss me. Console him in my name. He has been bedridden for four years, and cannot live long. When you visit him tell him I have asked you to care for him, to love him and help him instead of me."

Bartholomea's compassion was not confined to the sick. She extended her active charity to the prison-cells where lies hid such untold misery. In her visits to the prison whither she was at times invited, she proved a true consoling angel to the inmates. She willingly complied with their requests, generously provided them with food and clothes, and helped them to keep in touch with their relatives. Each time the prisoners were allowed to receive Holy Communion, she



delighted to prepare their cells as well as their hearts for the solemn occasion. A ray of joy penetrated that dark abode, and even the most despicable realized they were still loved and cared for. She ordered her tenants of Sellere to supply her with good victuals for the poor convicts. But she was still more attentive to their spiritual needs. Goodness and charity opened to her a way into the hearts of the prisoners, many of whom were perhaps more unhappy than guilty. She spoke to them words of hope and comfort, and won many a wandering soul back to God. As they listened to the picture she drew of the true happiness of a conscientious life, women convicted of crime, felt their hearts deeply touched. The tears that flowed freely from their eyes were the first signs of a sincere repentance.

A well known incident in connection with her work in the prisons may be here cited. A man condemned to a long imprisonment in the Mantua dungeon was sent to Lovere for some legal process. There in the prison he made the acquaintance of Bartholomea and was completely won over by her words. He passed the remaining years of his sentence in a spirit of real Christian resignation. When released he retired to a convent for the rest of his life. How potent was Bartholomea's prayer for him, and her influence over him!

Bartholomea was not only an Angel of comfort in the prisons, but a messenger of peace in the homes as well. With a courage born of charity and tempered with extraordinary sweetness, she acted as a ready mediatrix between contending parties in families. Many young girls and women, victims of ill-treatment, whom she had protected against the tyranny of the strong, blessed their dear benefactress and thanked her from their hearts. One day Bartholomea heard excited cries from a neighbouring house. In a moment a crowd gathered on the road, but none dared enter the house



and stop the fight going on there. Bartholomea shuddered, and throwing herself on her knees, she gathered strength from prayer. The next moment she made her way through the crowd to the scene of the brawl. A terrible sight met her eyes—a son grasping a knife in his raised hand, was about to strike his father. The mother and daughter stood near by, pleading for mercy. Bartholomea stepped forward, took hold of the knife, reproved the father, addressed a few words of encouragement to the mother and daughter, then turning to the young man, bade him follow her, in a tone that could not be disobeyed. Cowed down he did as he was told, walking with bowed head through the agitated crowd. Bartholomea led him to her house, offered him a drink, after which he gave way to the last spasms of anger. She waited silently, till his passion had subsided. Once he had cooled down, she did not hesitate to rebuke him. “Think,” she said, “of the gravity of your crime and its consequences: the offence to God, the remorse that would have pursued you for the rest of your life, the scandal you have given, and the sorrow you have brought on your mother, brothers and sisters. You have failed grievously in respect towards your father, go now and beg his pardon.” The young man acknowledged his fault and promised reparation. He kept his word and from that day peace was established in his home. His deeply grateful family, thenceforth called Bartholomea “An angel of peace.”





ABSORBED IN PRAYER



## Spirit of Prayer.

AMID her various activities, Bartholomea kept up a fervent spirit of prayer all through life. She never forgot the prayers she had learned on her mother's knees, to which, however, she added many beautiful ones of her own. Besides her regular morning and evening prayers, she made an hour's meditation each day, and faithfully recited the rosary. Never did she omit her daily Mass and Communion, her visits to the Blessed Sacrament or the Office of the Blessed Virgin which she was accustomed to recite. To these her usual practices of piety, she was wont to add special prayers for the particular persons who had recommended themselves to her. From a note of hers, we learn that at one time she was praying for thirty-three such persons, for each of whom she prayed several times. Her prayers were so prolonged that at times she heard Jesus and Mary bid her rise, for her petitions were granted. At night she continued kneeling in prayer till her father called out to her from the next room and asked her to retire to bed. Obediently she arose, put out the light and composed herself to sleep, but the needs of so many dear ones filled her mind and she heard an interior voice urge her to arise and pray. Then once more, in obedience to the inspiration, she resumed her prayer in the silent darkness. Several times she passed the whole night thus on her knees, her prayer being interrupted only by the Angelus in the morning.

Bartholomea was deeply touched at the wickedness of the world, and the various needs of the people. She embraced



them all in her prayer—the good as well as the bad; to her the latter class included only those loaded with sin. She looked upon them as poor ignorant souls unable to appreciate the beauties of nature and the virtues that elevate the mind to God. Those whom she knew, she approached by various means, to bring to them the light of grace, the rest she charitably succoured by her good works.

The thought of pagan countries frequently filled her mind. She took a lively share in the propagation of the Faith and longed to spend her life as a missionary in the heathen lands. She fully understood the immeasurable happiness of those born and brought up in the true faith. In gratitude for this priceless gift, she kept up with great devotion the anniversary of her Baptism. In her humility she used to say: “How many pagans, had they been Catholics, would have corresponded to grace better than I do!”

In her prayers, Bartholomea took a warm interest in whatever concerned the Church, or her country. She survived three Popes—Pius VII, Leo XII and Pius VIII. It was a keen sorrow to her to hear of the bereavement of the Church each time, for she had a great veneration for Christ’s Vicar on earth. She induced her friends and pupils to join her in prayer for the election of a successor to the departed Pope. The interests of the Church, in those days of strife, claimed a large share in her prayer. Her country was at that time, in a state of revolution springing from the misgovernment of Austria which then occupied Lombardy and Venetia. Lower Italy was at the same time, plotting against the Church. Bartholomea gathered together her pupils and knelt at the foot of the altar. There with outstretched arms she supplicated God to establish peace. She had novenas and special exercises of piety offered up for the same intention.



Bartholomea made the joys and triumphs of the Church, also, her own. When the liturgical feasts came round, she prepared herself for them in the spirit of the Church and taught her pupils to do the same. At each feast she marked out certain practices in conformity with the spirit of the day and distributed them among the children, so as to make them work at something definite.

## Devotion to Mary.

THE feasts of Our Lady were particularly dear to Bartholomea. This is how she drew up a plan of action in preparation for her Mother's festivals:—

*The Immaculate Conception:* In imitation of Our Lady's purity let us try to practise the virtue of modesty. Let us daily make a short meditation on Our Lady, and keep company with her for about an hour, telling her all that our heart dictates. Each time we pronounce her name let us incline our heads.

*The Nativity:* That Mary might reign in our hearts, let us try to root out our defects, working against one each day. Let us offer the little Bambina, as many little "acts" as possible, for they are dear to her heart. Let us also be faithful in making a little visit at her altar each time we pass by it, and strive to enkindle her love in those around us.

*The Visitation:* Is it proper that Mary journeys alone to her cousin Elizabeth's house? Her daughters must keep her company and comfort her. Let us, then, throughout the day, keep near to Mary and do all our actions perfectly to please her. We shall not let our Mother go alone—we shall,

each of us, for two hours a day, be with her. Seeing our Mother's generosity in undertaking this weary journey, shall we not do something to relieve the poor, the sick, the afflicted, the ignorant and the sinful? Let us make it a point to perform daily, at least three acts of virtue.

*The Purification:* We shall imitate the Blessed Virgin in her submission to the Law of Purification and seek no distinctions in anything. On the contrary we shall fly the company of the great and never speak in praise of self. Like Mary, we too shall observe custody of our eyes on the road; in the church, remain recollected and prayerful, not leaning against the bench, carefully avoiding useless words or useless reading. In imitation of Our Lady offering her Son for our sakes, we shall make an entire oblation of ourselves to her. We shall keep a diligent guard over our souls, especially in those matters where we fall more frequently. At the Angelus let us gather round Mary and ask her to give us her child Jesus, as she once gave Him to holy Simeon.

*Our Lady of Sorrows:* Every day during this novena we shall offer Mary some relief in her seven sorrows by performing seven spiritual or corporal acts of charity. We shall visit the sick each day and think we have visited and consoled Mary herself. Besides we shall daily meditate on one dolour of Our Lady.

*Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel:* It will be our endeavour, in this novena to gain a soul to Mary. We shall invite several girls to join us in a daily visit to her altar. On the feast day itself we shall ask our Queen to enlighten some one who has not yet made the choice of a state of life.

*The Assumption:* Let us watch beside Our Lady's death-bed and keep her company. Each day let us visit some sick person in whom we shall see our Blessed Mother. On the



day of her Assumption, let us lift up our thoughts to Mary in Heaven.

*The Month of May:* During this month we shall kneel before the image of Our Lady for a short visit before we leave our room in the morning. To our customary prayers we shall add some pious practices performed in her honour. These may be:—

Obedience to every one in honour of our Mother.

Care not to fail in charity towards our neighbour, and to excuse his defects.

Not to be vain in dress.

To be very truthful.

Visiting the sick or giving alms to the poor.

To avoid touching others even in jest.

Hearing an extra Mass.

To share our tiffin with any poor person.

Relating a story of Our Lady to someone or other.

Being kind to those who are unkind to us.

To leave a portion of some pleasing dish at table.

Counting ourselves the least of all, to acquire humility.

To refrain from any word in praise or blame of self.

Never to justify ourselves when unjustly accused.

To obey even our inferiors and to speak kindly to them.

Choosing work contrary to our inclinations.

Concealing our good actions lest we be praised for them.

To avoid clinging obstinately to our opinion.

Mixing freely with the poor and keeping away from the company of great persons.

Punctuality at the Sodality Meetings and fidelity to all the duties assigned us.

To see Mary whose servants we are, in the person of those around us, and try to please her by serving them lovingly.

## Devotion to Our Lord.

*Christmas :* In preparation for this dear feast we shall keep ourselves recollected as though we were in the cave at Bethlehem, working for Jesus and Mary. Lest Jesus find no pleasure in coming to us, because of our many defects, we shall bind ourselves by a vow on pain of venial sin, not to commit any deliberate imperfection. We shall choose by lot various offices of ministration towards the Infant Jesus. The house will be prepared by prayer and acts of mortification; within it Jesus will be laid in a cradle of sweetness, charity and patience, warmed up by a brave and loving endurance of the cold. We shall offer Jesus some food in the shape of charity to the poor, or mortification of our appetite. These gifts we shall offer Him together with our hearts, on Christmas night. During the octave we shall imagine that the Heavenly Babe is entrusted to our care. One will play the part of His Mother by intimate union with Him, another that of St. Joseph procuring necessities for our Lord, by abundant charity to the poor and by a generous acceptance of every suffering. Others will, like the angels remain continually in His presence and keep their souls pure and stainless. The shepherds will be simple and sweet at all times, and live in strict poverty. Still others will be the Magi distinguishing themselves by fervent prayer.

*The Sacred Heart :* Let us during this novena replace the crown of thorns that surrounds the Heart of Jesus with one of beautiful roses, each by correcting a defect. Daily acts of charity will form this crown of roses for the Sacred Heart,



Each night we shall offer our flowers to Our Lady and ask her to put them in the place of the thorns. The Heart of Jesus thirsts for souls; let us then bring souls to him by every means in our power and specially by our prayers, our tears and our penances. When we see or hear of some sin committed, let us make an act of love of God, and tenderly kiss the image of the Sacred Heart in reparation. Let us strive to please Jesus by the fervent practice of the particular virtue which we choose for each day—such as humility, obedience, grateful acceptance of corrections, affability in our dealings with others, sweetness in correcting them, mortification of our self-love, recollection in thought and word, spiritual and temporal works of charity and a strict guard over our senses. Love of God is shown by following His inspirations in all our actions.

*Jesus on the Altar:* Bartholomea lived in intimate union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament by means of prayer and acts of sublime love. Here are a few of her reflections on this subject:—"Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has stolen my heart. This mystery is to me a revelation of love. I know not what else to say but this: 'I know my Jesus that Thou lovest my soul to excess; he who does not love Thee is not worthy to live, though he may daily approach Thy holy table. I feed on Thee and am thus transformed into Thee. How patiently Thou dost bear with my infidelities and irreverences; lovingly admitting me to Thy presence, hearing my supplications, comforting and helping me! Jesus, my friend, my brother, my father, my spouse, Thy presence in the Eucharist makes heaven of earth. Having Thee in Thy sacrament, I fear nothing, even though the world and all the powers of hell should rise up against me. Thou art my sure repose. I desire to be Thy chosen one, worshipping Thee in Thy sacramental presence.'"

Bartholomea's devotion to the Blessed Sacrament did not consist of mere sentimental outbursts. It was well proved



in action. After meditating on our Lord's life on earth, she would rise betimes in the morning, and unmindful of the cold, make her way to the church to pray for the agonizing. The thought of our Lord going to the mountains and deserts in search of souls, strengthened Bartholomea. Though the church she attended had nothing attractive about it, it was very dear to her because of Him who dwelt within. It was, however, not a wretched habitation like the stable at Bethlehem. Bartholomea herself gave a helping hand in adorning it on special occasions. Under her direction many little workers took up the duties of "Altar-ladies." She herself delighted in embroidering articles for church-use or mending church-linen or procuring a new supply according to her means. She did not think it below her dignity to sweep and dust the church, for to serve Christ is to reign, even though it be with a broom and duster in hand.

## More Apostolic Labours.

BARTHOLOMEA realised the longings of the Sacred Heart, and its yearning for consolation. "He Himself has taught us," she said, "the means of satisfying its desires—by seeking out souls and bringing them to His love and service." In many ingenious ways she strove to win souls for Christ. Her personality specially qualified her for this task. Besides she never lost sight of her pupils, even after they had left school, and corresponded with them to keep herself informed about their spiritual welfare. Whether far or near her solicitude on their behalf never slackened. Those in need had always a large share



of her affections and attention. She instructed the children to be like little angels helping each other by their good example. With the help of priests she managed to make effective, her apostolic labours. Prayers, counsels, penances—nothing was wanting in her manner of guiding souls. If she met with any insurmountable difficulty she held her own want of virtue responsible for it, and multiplied her prayers. When missions were preached, she and her companions stormed heaven by their supplications. She would distribute pious pamphlets, or collect money to aid those who were most in need of assistance. Once every year the teachers of the neighbouring schools gathered at her house to spend a day in recollection. Struck by a happy inspiration, she attended early Mass on Sundays, and then helped anyone, who was unable to repair to church on account of work. Bartholomea then took charge of the children, and did the cooking, thus enabling the poor mother to hear Mass peacefully. Bartholomea was indeed a vigilant mother, and kept a keen yet kindly watch over the young girls of the town. She especially prevented them from making undesirable friendships particularly with young men. Among the girls of the oratory, there was one who maintained a secret familiarity with a boy. Bartholomea calling her up spoke seriously to her. The girl was surprised, that Bartholomea knew of her connection for she had taken every care to keep it a secret. Whenever the girls dressed immodestly or too fashionably Bartholomea warned them of the dangers attendant on such conduct. Many of them touched by her words reformed their ways, and grew up sedate young women. The people of the town noticing the remarkable change in them, wondered what could have been the guiding power that worked such good. One girl in particular was so changed that she ended by joining the Poor Clares as Sister Archange. A little girl once came up to her with the request to be allowed



to curl her hair. "Does your mother allow it?" asked Bartholomea. "Yes," replied the child. "Then do it." But the permission was granted in such a tone as made the girl understand that she would do better in wearing her hair plain. On another occasion while Bartholomea was making her way to the church, with a companion, she met a woman dressed very indecently. Bartholomea stopping, spoke pleasantly to her, much to the surprise of her companion. The conversation was carried on in a pleasant vein, when Bartholomea changed the topic, and drew the attention of the woman to her dress. "Are you in need of a pin?" she asked, and without waiting for a reply, deftly adjusted the dress. This done, they took leave of each other cordially. Then turning to her companion she explained: "There are certain characters that must be handled very prudently. Only by humouring them first, can you bring them to do as you wish, without offence." About this time the worldly grandees of the town wished to introduce dangerous comedies and dances. Invitations were sent out to call in the band and players. All was in readiness, but when the hour struck, not a girl was seen on the spot. Bartholomea had succeeded in keeping them away. She was truly doing the work of a visible angel on earth.

### More of our Heroine.

WE must now pass on from her work to our heroine. Bartholomea never allowed scrupulosity and melancholy to approach her, and if tempted to either, she made the greatest efforts to banish them from her mind. She firmly resolved to



maintain an equable humour come what may. No wonder then, her face was always serenely happy, for an amiable face is the index of a glad heart. She wished her friends to act similarly. To one of them she wrote: "I am sorry to hear of your ill health. I hope you will be better soon. Meanwhile do not give vent to ill humour. Put away all sorrow and do not weep; try rather to keep yourself in a state of holy tranquillity, and place yourself trustingly in the hands of the good God. Be patient, take courage, and keep cheerful. Joy will do you more good than any other medicine." Later, she wrote again: "I perceive that you are still in a melancholy mood. Can you not exercise sufficient control over yourself and send it miles away? If you could but write to me that you are cheerful it would be equivalent to saying that you had recovered."

One of her companions who went weekly to confession, had not the courage to communicate as often, on account of a scrupulous conscience. Noticing this, Bartholomea one morning took her along with her for Mass. At the time of Communion, Bartholomea entreated her to communicate, then commanded and finally led her by force to the rails. That morning's Communion cured the girl of her scruples.

A gentle smile played continually about her features, and at times Bartholomea gave vent to her joy in song. When alone at home, whether she swept or dusted, or stitched or cooked, she lightened her work, and sanctified it by singing prayerful hymns; if at times her voice rose loud, she immediately restrained herself, biting her lips, lest those who heard it might think it fine.

Yet, in spite of herself, Bartholomea was sometimes oppressed by sadness. "I have been yielding to sadness," she once wrote to her confessor. He probably must have dealt



severely with the fault, for in reply to his advice she answered: "Your letter filled me with great joy."

Bartholomea was far from being a recluse. She loved to be in school in the company of lively little children, or in the oratory, where so many pious souls were gathered together. Once she had formed a friendship, it grew stronger, because founded on spiritual claims. Giovanna Grassi was one of Bartholomea's best beloved companions. Bartholomea once wrote her a very intimate letter, drawing up for her a method of life much like her own. Together, they worked enthusiastically to educate the young, and help the poor. With holy impatience they awaited the day when God would make them His very own. Bartholomea had also a special esteem for Lucy Cismondi whom she knew only by name. Once, on writing to her about a patient, Bartholomea addressed Lucy by the title of 'Lady,' a term of respect. In her reply, Lucy begged Bartholomea in all confidence, to call her friend or even sister, but not 'Lady'—Henceforth Bartholomea always saluted her as 'friend and sister.' A true affection sprang up between them and led to much good. Here is an excerpt from one of Bartholomea's letters to Lucy. "Not a day passes without my thinking of you. I recall gratefully the happy day we spent together in edifying converse and wish we could have such another! I desire to make a compact with you: whenever you ask God for a grace, or receive one from Him, let it be in my name too. To establish a close spiritual union between us, I would beseech you in future to make all your supplications and acts of love as coming from both of us together." They were so bound together in holy love, that they even desired to die together, thus to meet Jesus and His Blessed Mother at the same time. Apart from individual friends Bartholomea had also her little company of chosen souls, who with sincere confidence, admonished, counselled



and helped each other. They neither offended any one, nor took any offence, by their spiritual friendship. It was a faint intimation of the example set by our Holy Mother Church in primitive times.

Almost every night Bartholomea stayed up to a late hour watching and writing. She was a fast and neat writer. Many were the letters she had to write, for all the eighty-four parishes of the valley sought her direction. Her messages went out to all her friends whether learned or illiterate, rich or poor! Many of her letters are still extant, though several have been lost. What a huge volume of correspondence they form! To some she would suggest devotions, to others increase of fervour, while the faulty received advice to help them to correct their faults. Her companions feared lest so much work should tire her. "No," she replied, "entertaining myself with my friends, consoles me." At times the weary hands dropped down, and the tired eyes closed involuntarily; at other times the flame of her lamp died out. Then hastily closing her letters with an affectionate salutation to her friends, she turned her thoughts to Jesus and composed herself to sleep.

The saints are always serene and peaceful; their sweetness of temper is not understood by those who give themselves up to wild mirth, nor by those who impose on themselves an affected sadness. Bartholomea made efforts to be habitually cheerful. Even when affections brought tears to her eyes, she tried to smile. "If when I try my best to do good, something turns up quite contrary to my desires, then I must accept it as coming directly from God, and rejoice that in His gifts he mingles the bitter with the sweet."

Once during a terrific storm, accompanied by frightful claps of thunder and death-dealing lightning-flashes, Bartholomea remained unperturbed though her companions were



in tears. She had no cause to fear, and the ferocity of the elements could not disturb her tranquility. Meanwhile far from priding herself on her bravery she tried to soothe the others by suggesting to them acts of confidence in God.

Of a sensitive temperament, Bartholomea naturally felt any untoward circumstance keenly. Nevertheless she did not waver in trust, for she believed that God directed each event and would draw good out of evil. The pangs of a death-bed but turned her thoughts all the more surely to heaven. In any chastisement she saw only God's merciful hand that permitted it. When her dearest hopes were frustrated and her labours seemed in vain, she would yet say: "Some day grace will surely triumph." When her best endeavours to further God's glory were foiled by insurmountable obstacles, her one cry was: "It is the hand of God—He will provide." She welcomed scorn and insults, and bravely received contradiction, for, as she remarked, she would not allow the enemy of good to be victorious. Her motto was to do the will of God in all things, and in doing it she heard a voice saying: "Let me do as I think best. I know what I am about, and I myself will rejoice in the end."—Why do we not realize this? How often do we make ourselves miserable because we fancy we know better and wish to be the counsellors of God, advising Him how to act! In this we see the greatness of Bartholomea's soul, for to her the highest good was to do God's will. Accordingly she made a vow to abandon herself entirely yet joyfully to God's will, in spite of every difficulty. To keep a calm and cheerful exterior when the heart is wrung with grief, is indeed no small penance.

Bartholomea faithfully observed her resolutions regarding food. She recalled them as she sat down to table. Here are the points she resolved upon:—

1. I will not eat or drink out of meals, except when sick or in the company of others.



2. Even then I will mortify myself unperceived.
3. I will not take anything merely to satisfy my appetite.
4. I will take fruit only when so ordered, and then in small quantities; wine and coffee only as much as is really necessary.
5. I will never rise from table without making at least one mortification.
6. I will never satisfy my hunger completely.

Besides these practices, Bartholomea had another admirable habit. Whenever some delicacy was passed round, she would remark: "How happy such a person would be to have it! Could I not take it to him?" She would just taste it, if obliged, otherwise she preferred giving it to her dear sick.

With her confessor's permission, Bartholomea fasted on certain fixed days, as also on some days in the week. Much as she desired to fast the whole of Lent, she was not permitted to do so, on account of her weak health. She, however, made up for this by mortifying her senses, or at times by controlling the faculties of her soul, using them only for spiritual ends. Of penance, she spoke thus to one of her friends: "If we asked Jesus and Mary for counsel in our actions, they would tell us to bridle gluttony, to refrain from immodest attire, to mortify the eyes, to deny ourselves even lawful pleasure, to keep silence and to forgive every injury done to us. What a consolation it would be to us, if we had some of these gifts to offer Jesus and Mary each night!"

Bartholomea was no less mortified in the hours she gave to sleep. She slept just as much as was really necessary and curtailed even this repose for prayer or pious writing. A poor straw mattress under which she placed pieces of firewood was her only bed. She wore chains and a hair-shirt whenever her confessor permitted. People sometimes complained that Bartholomea injured her health by her austerities.



We cannot blame her confessor for allowing her to perform them, they rather were a disposition of Providence to purify here below, a soul so truly good.

A friend of hers tells us that Bartholomea had only two dresses, one of them serving for daily use. She did this not because she could not afford any more, but merely to curb her desire to be well dressed. In her notes she states that in spite of her efforts to conquer pride, it yet asserted itself, so that at times she took pleasure in thinking of her fine figure and wished to dress well. Without doubt she banished such thoughts immediately; still to root them out completely she sought voluntary humiliations. She went about very plainly dressed, bare of ornaments, but scrupulously clean and neat. Once when the tailor made her a rather fashionable frock she did not wear it until it was altered. She used to say that following fashions in small things would soon make one a slave to them. It did cost her to appear in poor attire among well-dressed companions, but to subdue every feeling of pride, she went so far as to wear a pair of slippers that looked ridiculous. In these heroic actions, Bartholomea shows that there is but one road to humility—that of voluntary humiliations.

Bartholomea's house was such as befitted a shop-keeper—modest and humble. Her own room was poor, fitted with bare necessities: a chest of drawers, a table and a chair. She sometimes desired to have more elegant furniture particularly when people made remarks on the poverty of her home. Her close acquaintances alone knew her home-conditions; but strangers judging from her fine exterior, believed her to be of gentle birth. Bartholomea lost no time in undeceiving them. She conducted them to her little home and introduced them to her parents.



Bartholomea was of a rather delicate constitution, probably on account of the hardships she had endured. Another in her place might have taken all the more care of her body; Bartholomea only increased her austerities. With regard to mortification she drew up the following resolutions:—

1. I will neither ask nor refuse anything that concerns my bodily needs.
2. My food and rest will be taken only in accordance with obedience.
3. I will willingly accept bodily indispositions and not speak of them except when necessary.
4. In matters pertaining to my health, I will follow the orders of my superiors.

At the outbreak of an epidemic in the town, Bartholomea grew so ill that her life was despaired of. On her part she made a whole-hearted offering of her life to God, but He saw it was not yet time to accept the sacrifice. After a long convalescence she was once again strong enough to resume teaching, but the effects of the fever continued always in the shape of stomach complaints. Ever since, her health was not normal. Each time she mounted the stairs or walked a little too much she felt exhausted. God was only refining His chosen handmaid. He always looks to the weak ones of the earth to fulfil His designs.

## Covenant of Love.

WE find the following sublime lines among her many resolutions: "Charity towards my neighbour will be the object



of my special attention. I shall not tire helping others, tending the sick, and praying for sinners and the souls in purgatory. Whenever I am weary or cast down, I shall glance at the Crucifix and reanimate my courage with the thought of Jesus who died for souls."

She once wrote to her confessor: "In all simplicity I wish to tell you, that I feel moved by a special impulse to make a vow to devote myself to others, but I dare not make it without your consent. I beg of you to let me know how I may satisfy the longing of my heart." Her confessor gave the required permission. Bartholomea when she saw the misery, want and suffering around was filled with a yearning to work for the good of others. Her large heart would fain embrace the weak and the fallen, and sacrifice her very life-blood to assist them. Moved by such considerations she threw herself before a Crucifix and prayed thus:—"O my good Jesus, I know that my love for Thee must be inseparably united with love for my neighbour; therefore I vow under penalty of venial sin to give myself up to the work of relieving the spiritual and temporal wants of my neighbour. My thoughts, my actions, my health, my goods, my very life, all that I am and have, I will use for their welfare, to the best of my power. For sinners, I will offer up my pious practices, my prayers and penances, and I will importune Thee so strongly to grant their conversion, that Thou wilt not refuse it. I promise to do all I can to prevent sin. Do Thou O Lord, strengthen my weakness. I will make it my special care to watch over young girls who have strayed from Thee, and I will follow them till I have brought them back to Thy love. I will spare no pains to instruct the ignorant with patience and kindness. To alleviate the sufferings of the souls in purgatory I will take up certain devout practices, and offer all the good works I perform on Mondays—the day I have consecrated to them.



The care of the sick will be my delight. I will assist them by word and action no matter how repugnant their disease might be, and when obedience allows, I will stay by them to help them in the hour of their death. On the poor and needy I will bestow a large share of material help, sparing from my own food and clothing to give them, and even suffering real want myself in order to minister to them. I shall not be ashamed to beg for them. To do all this I trust in Thee alone my God, for Thou must strengthen me. Confiding in Thee I shall courageously work for others leaving myself to Thy care, in all dangers and necessities."

Such a life as hers, so pure and spotless, so full of activity, was in itself a perpetual praise of God; but this did not suffice for the ardent love of Bartholomea. She wished that every throb of her heart, every breath and every act, should redound to the glory of God, and that thus her whole life should be a perpetual hymn of glory to God. Not only did she frequently raise her thoughts to God by little ejaculations, but she made a covenant which she renewed every week, offering everything, even her most involuntary actions, to her Heavenly Father. "My God, my Creator and my all, Thou knowest the desires of my heart. Its groans and sighs are not hidden from Thee. I desire to praise Thee every moment, to increase daily in Thy love, to bewail my sins continually and to do penance for them. But my daily occupations and the duties of my state, however holy in Thy eyes since performed only according to Thy Will, do not permit me to think seriously of Thee, my God, nor to praise Thee with that continual application which my heart desires. Therefore that this holy desire may not remain fruitless, and that I may allow not a moment to slip by fruitlessly, I make this loving covenant with Thee for the whole of this week. I consecrate irrevocably to Thee,



O Lord, all the movements of my heart and body. I beg Thee of Thy infinite goodness to be pleased to accept this consecration, through the merits of my Lord Jesus Christ, so that it may tend to Thy greater glory, and the good of my soul.

As often as I shall breathe in the course of this week, I intend each time to offer Thee my God, the life, the passion and sorrowful death of my Saviour, the sufferings and merits of Mary most holy, and of all the Saints, for greater praise and glory, and in satisfaction for my sins and those of the whole world, for the salvation of all souls, for the exaltation of the holy Catholic Church, for the spread of our holy Faith, for the preservation of the Sovereign Pontiff, Bishops, Priests and all zealous souls who work indefatigably to spread Thy kingdom, for peace throughout all Christendom, for the concord among Christian Princes, and for the conversion of sinners, heretics, and infidels throughout the world.

As often as I shall raise my eyes to heaven, so often do I intend to congratulate Thee and rejoice with Thee O Lord, for Thy infinite perfections; to thank Thee for all the privileges bestowed on Mary, and for having given her to me as my Mother. I beseech Thee most earnestly to grant me a true devotion to her, and the grace to imitate her virtues.

Each time I open or close my eyes, I intend to praise and approve, with the greatest gratitude, all the acts which Jesus, His most holy Mother, and all the Saints and the just have done, or will ever do, to the end of time. I wish and intend to share in their merits, uniting myself with their intentions and their actions, as though I myself were acting in them. I pray, that all the good desires of my heart may be as so many acts of desire to please Jesus alone, to sanctify my soul and to obtain for me life everlasting. May they also be so many acts of Spiritual Communion, of resignation, and perfect conformity to the will of God. Whenever I shall



employ myself for the spiritual or temporal welfare of my neighbour, I intend to make reparation for all my defects, as well as those of others, in point of charity. I desire also that they be not committed any more in the future.

Finally as often as I shall move my hands or my feet, I intend to make so many perfect acts of love of Thee my God, to abandon myself entirely to the dispositions of Thy Fatherly Providence and to resign myself in everything to Thy most Holy Will, desiring that Thou shouldst dispose of me according to Thy good pleasure.

To the end that this covenant may be immutable, as far as my will is concerned, I seal it with the Blood of Thy wounds O my Jesus. I hold, and shall ever hold it to be, as I now wish and declare it, valid, binding and constant, even I were to forget it. Each time I repeat the words: "My God guard me," I intend to renew and confirm it in Thy presence.

O my God whom I adore, love and fear, I implore Thee to grant me the necessary grace and strength to love, praise and adore Thee at all times, as I hope to do eternally in paradise, through Thy infinite goodness—Amen."

Thus was Bartholomea's soul like a harp, continually vibrating at the touch of the Divine Musician, and sending forth sweet harmonies in His praise. Her whole life was one long hymn of glory, such as God alone can understand.

## New Resolutions.

**B**ARTHOLOMEA tried now to regulate every action of the day, so as to keep herself constantly in the presence of God.



She fixed upon certain practical exercises which would turn away her thoughts from earth and lead them to heaven. This is how she planned out her method:—"On awaking in the morning, I will picture to myself Jesus, before me, calling me to keep Him company. All through the day I will imagine Him following me, not to reprove and punish, but to console and preserve me from danger, and give me a constant proof of His love. With the purpose of never losing sight of Him, I entrust myself entirely to Him. I will put away every profane thought, and think that only we two exist—Jesus and I. I will confide all my temporal affairs to Him, and act always for Him, and as ordained by Him. Before leaving my room, I will cast myself in the arms of Divine Providence, and try to accept willingly all that may happen, and be ready to suffer even martyrdom if necessary. The thought that God never abandons me will be my consolation. On my way to church I will occupy myself with the thoughts of the day's meditation, and on entering the church begin my meditation after having recommended myself to God.

To merit this grace of union with God, I will recall to mind my defects, and persuade myself that if God had not sustained me I might have been the greatest of sinners. I will never make a show of my abilities but rather seek the lowest place, and that without affectation. I will take pleasure in being despised, offended, forgotten, and never justify myself if found fault with. I will prefer to be looked down upon by all, in order to be dearer to God. I will try to acquire the habit of perfect control over myself—never to raise my eyes, or speak a word, or listen to a conversation, or take a step unless it be for the glory of God. I will check my inclinations, giving vent to them only when they serve to honour God. I will accept all that is given to me with regard to food and clothing, as coming directly from the Hand of God. At table



I will mortify myself both in the quantity and quality of food taking only what is absolutely necessary to support me in the service of God.

I will imagine that it is Jesus who is with me at prayer, and when it is over, that it is His voice again that bids me go to my household duties, assuring me of His close union with me, and commanding me to do all for Him. On my way home from church, the thought of Jesus will keep me recollected. At school He will be my helper and teacher, infusing into me His zeal and charity, and comforting me in my weariness. I will frequently call on Him to enlighten and strengthen me. His presence will keep me from danger, and enable me to serve my neighbour in a true spirit of charity and peace. I will renounce all earthly affections, and make Jesus the beginning and end of my thoughts, words, actions, and intentions. I am here only to love, serve and please Him. But I will rejoice equally at being hated, offended or calumniated, and tell myself that I deserve even worse treatment. Should God wish that I labour for the spiritual or temporal welfares of my neighbour I shall do it generously. If on the other hand He thinks it best that I lead a quiet life in isolation, I shall no less readily accept the opportunity of spending my time in prayer and recollection."

In one of her letters she remarks to a friend: "My various occupations take up the time that I fain would spend in prayer. This makes me cold and distracted at prayer. Let me know how you manage to keep yourself recollected, and in the presence of God, even though busied in works of charity." Meanwhile her confessor asked her to enter into the recesses of her soul, and inform him as to how long a time she had spent unmindful of God. Her answer was: "A quarter of an hour, in the course of the week." Happy we, could we but say that with us it was a quarter hour for a day. Bartholomea

so closely united with our Lord could not rest satisfied until every part of her day, and each day of her life was wholly given to God.

### Extraordinary Vow.

So great was Bartholomea's ardour, that were it not regulated by obedience, it would have gone to excess. In spite of having bound herself by so many vows and resolutions, she aimed still higher. "I wish to be a Saint,—a real Saint,—not for a day, or a month, but all my life." This had been her longing and to facilitate its attainment, she now made a vow to do always that which was more perfect. "I am here, all trembling in Thy presence O my God, to give Thee a token of my sincere wish to love and serve Thee to the best of my ability. Therefore I vow, under penalty of venial sin, to try to do what is more perfect, in all my thoughts words and actions. By this vow I oblige myself to lead henceforward a mortified life, both interiorly and exteriorly. As to the exterior I bind myself to seek nothing to relieve my body, choosing always the most painful things for myself, and embracing all sufferings willingly—in a word, to attach myself to the Cross, loving whatever it presents to me. With regard to the interior I oblige myself to mortify all my passions and to practise every virtue to a high degree, particularly the virtues of humility, obedience, purity, patience, recollection, self-denial, charity, poverty and meekness. I intend to make special vows for the better observance of each of these virtues. Lastly I oblige myself to a close imitation of Thee, my crucified



Lord, specially in seeking humiliations—not merely by having a low opinion of myself, but by procuring opportunities to be despised, forgotten and insulted. My good Jesus, I promise to love Thee alone.”

Her confessor thought the fulfilment of the vow difficult, almost impossible, so he gave her permission to observe it for a fortnight only. At the end of that period seeing how faithfully she had kept it he allowed her to make it for life. Every year she renewed her vow, saying to herself: “Bartholomea, you are now no more your own. You have surrendered yourself entirely to God. Remember that for love of Him you are strictly bound to live a perfect life. You are to mortify your own views, however lawful they might be, and never to think of yourself. Do not forget that one day you will be called upon to give a strict account to God, if you are not true to your promises. Divine love sweetens everything, therefore whatever you do out of love will not be a burden.”

A certain priest who knew Bartholomea's interior life wondered at seeing her so unconstrained and simple in spite of what seemed to him to be so many restrictions. To Bartholomea however, her vows were no drags. “My vows”, she would say, “are dear golden chains—Dear Jesus, these chains far from frightening me only console and comfort me. Make me all Thine, and bind me wholly to Thee. Let me not be mistress of even a single thought of mine. All I desire is to be pleasing to Thee.” In this Bartholomea teaches us that true liberty is not to be found in freeing oneself from obedience to rules: that man is most free who has trained himself to submit easily and with pleasure to all that goes against nature. Herein lies the difference between the blessed in heaven, and sinners on earth; they are serving God no less than we, only, what is a pleasure to them is a pain to us because of degraded human nature.

The thought of Paradise, urged her on to observe her holy vows with greater love. "Let worldlings keep themselves all that is mundane; as for us let us look up where God awaits with complacency those who have faithfully served Him;"—this is what she wrote to one of her friends. In her meditations she was lost in the thought of heaven. Speaking of one of them she says: "I fancied myself at the gates of that Eternal Home, and in spirit saw multitudes of angels and saints coming forward to receive me. Here was St. Aloysius, hastening to bid me welcome, and my heart beat with joy at the thought of meeting all those near and dear to me, in particular my spiritual sisters. Those whose steps I had directed to God, advanced to thank me, and tell of their supplications on my behalf. Then St. Aloysius and my Guardian Angel conducted me to the throne of Mary. To see her was heaven itself. As I devoutly kissed her, I suddenly realised her deep love for me, and the many graces she had won for me. How happy I was to think that in life I had done something to honour her! But my greatest delight was to see my Jesus, to gaze on Him, to acknowledge Him as my Saviour, and to be crowned by Him as His faithful spouse."

Bartholomea would often incite her friends to work for Heaven where they would be forever united in unending bliss. Many a time was she heard exclaiming: "Whether you will or not my God, I want to come to Paradise."



## Her Father's Death.

HER father's life had been cut short by his excessive use of alcohol. At the age of sixty he fell ill. He recovered, only to get a relapse which proved fatal. During this period of anxiety Bartholomea herself suffered from pains that forced her to keep in bed. As soon as she could gather strength enough, she forgot her own suffering to watch beside her father. So attentive was she to his every need that she proved a veritable ministering angel. She eagerly alleviated his pains, comforted him, and suggested little acts of love, contrition and resignation which he repeated after her. With true sentiments of sorrow, he asked to make his general confession. He wished Bartholomea to keep beside him and help him to recall his sins. With a painful expression he told her she knew all the wrong he had done, and begged her to help him to examine his conscience. Respectfully the child answered: "Father, there is one who can do it better than I—the priest."

On the 17th October, 1835, God called the poor man to Himself. He died acknowledging God's infinite mercy. This was not the first time that there had been a death in that household—other young souls, had already gone to God, but never did Bartholomea feel the loss so keenly as when her own father was borne to his last resting place. Still she found sufficient strength to console her bereaved mother, her brothers and sisters, sustaining them with the thought of the eternal union in heaven, where there will be no more separations.



She could not now assist her father materially, but she was unceasing in her efforts to procure suffrages for him, praying earnestly for his soul and entreating others to do the same. There was a void in that home ever after, — faith alone could in some way bring relief.

### Development of the Institute.

“ALL things on this earth pass away, however dear they may be to us; all pleasures pass away, — one thing alone remains — the good we have done. What is life worth if not entirely dedicated to good works.” — thoughts such as these urged Bartholomea to leave the world, and enter a cloister where she could attain perfection by leading a life of prayer and solitude. As a child she had desired to be a teacher, and felt called to join the Poor Clares, but as her parents wanted her at home, her wishes were frustrated. The desire had been too deeply felt to be so easily forgotten, and many a time it recurred to her mind. “I feel in my heart,” she said, “a call to the religious life. A voice warns me against prolonging my stay in the world — the camp of the enemy. If I wish to be a saint I know I must leave the world. — My God I wish to do Thy will, but where shall I go?” This was the difficult problem that troubled her. At times it seemed to her that she should seek the silence of the cloister, and there in retirement imitate her Jesus by a life of prayer and immolation. But how could she in the seclusion of the cloister perform works of charity, educate youth, and live the life of an apostle for which she had a predilection? The sisters sometimes



asked her when she would come to them, but Bartholomea gave no definite answer as she had not made up her mind. She once confessed to a friend that the life of the Poor Clares gave no scope for the exercise of charity, as their life was mainly devoted to personal sanctification. After one of her meditations she made the following entry: "I perceive that the Lord calls me to an institute devoted to works of mercy." She submitted this idea to the guidance of her confessor. He advised delay and tried her for a long time. This made her feel that perhaps after all she ought to go to the Poor Clares. Here again her confessor kept her back, telling her she had not the necessary qualifications. Troubled by these thoughts she cast herself on her knees before the crib for it was Christmas eve, and entreated the Divine Babe to make known to her her vocation. "If this grace does not come to me through Thy little hands," she added, "I shall be forced to use violence."

## Novitiate in the World.

HER confessor delayed long before giving his decision. Finally, enlightened from on high, he suggested, as coming from Providence, that she should make her novitiate in the world, performing her daily actions as though she were in her convent. Until such time as God should inspire him further, he bade her observe the following rules:—

"Put far from you all that savours of the world such as honour, riches, pleasures, useless friendships etc., and never think or speak of them except when absolutely necessary. All who come in contact with you must feel they are dealing with



a religious; therefore treat everyone with gentleness, love and charity. Above all be very strict about obedience. Consider everyone above you as your superiors and yield them due respect and submission. Make yourself the least of all and be ever ready to perform the meanest offices. Keep a careful guard over yourself, and tell your defects in all sincerity to your confessor, that he may guide and instruct you. Adhere faithfully to your vows, and frequently renew them. Daily after Communion recall your rule of life and resolve to practise it in its least detail for the day. Like a religious depend wholly on your mother and your superior in everything you do, no matter how small it be—this alone will bring you success. Never in the least show that you are tired, or that you dislike a command even when it comes from an inferior. Above all abandon yourself entirely to the will of God, and accept with pleasure all that He sends. Keep yourself self-possessed when you have to submit to views contrary to your own, for Jesus permits everything for your greater good. Never complain of anything nor allow vain thoughts to disturb your peace of mind. Never indulge in unnecessary conversations. Every month request your confessor to assign you tasks without restriction for the welfare of your neighbour.”

Bartholomea readily consented to abide by the decision of her confessor, nevertheless she longed to receive a final answer to her prayer. “I look up to Thee, O Paradise,” she exclaimed, “but I understand that before I reach there, Jesus wishes me to pass through a period of tribulation on earth, and that love should sweeten all that is bitter. My God, I willingly obey my confessor, but do Thou make known to him Thy will. I am sure I shall never err in following his advice even should he bid me remain in the world.” With entire resignation to the divine will she daily prayed God to accomplish her heart’s desire and to lead her to a life in which she could combine prayer with apostolic works.



Bartholomea from her childhood longed for the convent. With a will that dared to do everything, and a heart strong in good, she made her plans for her future life. From year to year she fostered these holy desires and at last revealed them to her confessor. Later she inspired her friends too with similar aspirations, so that they were ready under her lead to start an institute which would devote itself to prayer and works of charity. Her intercourse with children had often made her bewail their neglected condition. All she could then do to make life pleasant for them was to love and instruct them. They seemed to her like so many flowers growing by the wayside, covered with dust, and trampled upon by the passer-by. She longed to transplant them into a garden, where they would grow up healthy and strong to love and serve God. In this well-protected spot, with kindly hands to care for them, the whiteness of their souls would be preserved.

In her hospital she had her sick. To Bartholomea they were the suffering members of Christ. But they were so few! Her thoughts went out in pity to the many who had no tender hand to soothe their sufferings, or assist them in their last moments. These ideas kept working in her mind and she longed to band her spiritual sisters together that they might work unitedly. By degrees her plans shaped themselves till finally she was able to realize them, and today the fruit of her labours stands as a grand and lasting memorial of her unselfish life.

Her confessor who gave a sympathetic hearing to all her schemes, approved of them; but while he refrained from consenting to them he did not discard them as impossible. He left the whole matter to the care of Providence which he said would smooth the path for them. Meanwhile Bartholomea tried to see how she could further the good works



she already had in hand. The little hospital directed by her was working successfully, but it had only ten beds. It struck her that she might work to enlarge it. Further, she intended asking other friends to help as nurses. Another idea soon cropped up. Why not add a little asylum for orphans, at least for such as were destitute? Bold schemes they were, but then came an unsurmountable difficulty—what about the means?—Many a good work has been nipped in the bud for want of money. If only the rich who waste their wealth on personal pleasure, did but give a thought to these needy brethren and sacrifice of their superfluity!—Bartholomea however, continued to hope on. “The work is God’s,” she said, “and it must succeed.”

On the eve of the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, Bartholomea, her heart brimful of good desires, wrote thus to the Infant: “Dear Babe, I recommend to you, our Institute. Have mercy on me and look not at my unworthiness. I beg of you the grace to end my days in a religious house even though I do not pass the greater part of my life within its holy precincts. My hopes are all in you, dear Babe and Mother. At the foot of your cradle, I first learnt to love and serve God faithfully, to keep from sin, and to aim at sanctity—do not now abandon me. I commend to your protection, my confessor, my parents, my relatives, the associations of the young, all Christians, sinners, and the souls in Purgatory. Raise your baby hand and give us your holy blessing.” Surely the little hand must have raised itself, for in her own special way, Mary heard that prayer, and helped in founding the Institute of which she became the Queen and Patroness.





VENERABLE SR. M. VINCENZA GEROSA



## Catherine Gerosa.

IT was long before Bartholomea succeeded in overcoming obstacles. The best helper at this time was the timid and humble maid, Catherine Gerosa by name. Although not so learned as Bartholomea she was yet gifted with a fund of good-sense which enabled her to manage her father's shop. She put together her little savings and offered them to Bartholomea. She had already given up one of her houses as an oratory and another as a hospital. She was willing to give up even more, so ready was she to co-operate in the glorious work. Catherine esteemed Bartholomea as a saint, but she could not for that fall in with all her views. To her retiring nature they seemed much too comprehensive. She preferred that they should open a hospital and orphanage on a very modest scale, and with the help of a few friends. The workers could form a congregation enrolled in the Third Order of St. Francis. She humbly repeated: "We are good for nothing." But Bartholomea was of a much more enterprising nature. Her ideas were extensive and her ardour as intense. "I am convinced," she said, "that I am good for nothing, but I look to God for help. If it is His will that we close this house; it shall be done without any regret on my part; but should His pleasure be different then let us heartily thank Him."

A new difficulty now arose. Catherine's aunt being entitled to a share in the interest of her property, obstinately opposed her niece's decision. She went further and accused Catherine of heartlessness, repeating often that the girl would



deprive her of all things and force her to end her days in beggary. To this daily grumbling from her aunt was added the reproach of the servants. It became impossible for Catherine to use her house for Bartholomea's project. Her timid nature shrank from this continual martyrdom, and she repented of her decision. But an interior voice urged her to continue bravely the work she had already begun for God. Then followed a period of silence, an anxious time for Bartholomea. Finally, however, the old aunt seemed to come to an agreement, but only on certain conditions. If Catherine agreed to her terms, quite an insufficient sum would be at her disposal; if she did not, it would entail another long delay. Bartholomea was content to wait even a century, if such were God's will; however, she had a presentiment that she would be able speedily to execute her plans. She was already filled with joy at the thought of the good she would accomplish, but she was troubled at this frame of mind which she called pride. "I feel inclined to bury myself as a servant in some distant convent, where I shall be totally unknown. This, it seems to me, is the only remedy against my pride." At times the prolonged delay made her feel impatient. "Every day seems to me a century," she said, "so much do I yearn for the starting of the Institute." But she consoled herself by a strong reliance on God, who, she knew, would provide other means even if Catherine's property failed. It was now the month of May. Bartholomea's pupils prayed unceasingly for their teacher's intentions. Firmly hoping in the prayer of these little innocents, Bartholomea anticipated the joy of the coming triumph. "All day and night, the Institute is present to my mind and I flatter myself that I shall at least have the lowest place therein. I cannot check the tears of consolation that fill my eyes."

In the midst of the joyous expectation of her approaching victory, there came a moment when Bartholomea felt herself



alone and desolate. She found it impossible to carry out her enterprise. Don Bosio, who had been her guide and support in her plans, was transferred to the seminary of Brescia. The good old parish priest to whom the loss of his assistant was a keen blow, represented to the bishop his utter helplessness without Don Bosio's aid. Meanwhile Bartholomea was losing hope. Quite disheartened, she wrote: "The work may fall flat,—it is all my fault, and God is punishing me, but I have already made a sacrifice of it to God. I am in a predicament, without the means to carry on my design, nor the health to join any religious order." Then a strong light from God showed her that she was mistaken, for though Don Bosio was a real help to her, he was, after all, only a man. He came from the hands of God, appointed by Him as His instrument in this matter. Could not the omnipotent God work unassisted by His creatures? She exercised her spirit of faith and firmly believed that all was for the best. Immediately help came. The ecclesiastical authorities, on reconsidering the reasons put forward by the parish priest of Lovere, decided that Don Bosio's transfer should be cancelled. Bartholomea's joy was all the more intense for her ready acceptance of the temporary trial. She set about with renewed enthusiasm to accomplish her cherished plans. For sometime past she had set her heart on acquiring a small building facing the hospital. It would form a good beginning for her orphanage, without hindering her duties towards the sick. While begging alms as material help, Bartholomea sought with greater earnestness for spiritual aid through prayer, that she might be rightly directed in the steps she intended taking, and that willing souls might offer themselves to form a sisterhood with her. She persuaded Catherine to take courage and remain firm with regard to the disposal of her property. Finally with the approval of her confessor, a contract was signed in 1832 and the much longed-for house



was secured. It was chosen to be the hallowed foundation and cradle of the Institute. Bartholomea could hardly restrain her sentiments of joy.

## Plan of the Institute.

THE young girl now disclosed to her confessor, in detail, her designs with regard to the Institute. Its aim was active charity, especially towards the young who are exposed to so many dangers. The Institute would make no exception as to their character or condition, but bestow spiritual and temporal aid on all in need. It would maintain poor orphans in the house until they were old enough to earn for themselves, and would look after the sick both in the hospital and in their own houses. In general, the sisters of the Institute were to embrace whatever works tend to the welfare of their neighbour. They were to undertake, besides, the care of church-vestments and altar-linen. As for the contemplative part of their life, a sufficient number of hours was set apart for prayer and spiritual exercises, but those to be recited in common were few so as not to prevent the religious from answering the calls of charity. Each member was to look to Jesus as a model and act so as to please Him alone. They would be bound by the three vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. There was to be no enclosure. Their characteristic virtues were to be *charity, sweetness and humility*. Bartholomea was but twenty-four when she traced out the rules of the Institute, yet they are full of wisdom and prudence.

Generous souls were required to practise so holy and beneficent a rule. Bartholomea expected of them solid piety,



singular virtue and a love for the young, but did not count material requisites as necessary for admission. The Constitutions of the Institute, besides being imbued with holy aims, were quite in keeping with the demands of modern activities; yet just because it was a new start, it was difficult to get the approbation of the authorities. After mature reflection, prudent persons thought it better that the rules of some already approved order be adopted, with only minor adaptations such as differing circumstances might require. Bartholomea's experiences were painful; but so great was her sympathy for the sufferings of others and so eager was she to alleviate them, that she adopted the rules of the Daughters of Charity of Vercelli, dependent on the Superior-General of Besancon in France. When she received the rules, she reverently kissed them and wept. At that moment she did not foresee that never would she have the joy of being a religious herself. She initiated a work, the fruit of which others would reap. Hers was all the labour and the suffering—the lot of God's elect. Before an earthly reward could come, she took her flight to heaven.

## New Obstacles.

AT first the new Institute heard subdued and occasional grumbling against its work; soon there was a burst of public disapprobation:—"What are they doing? An Association?... A new convent! Have we not enough of these?" As usual it came from those who neither understood nor inquired into matters, but thought it their duty to carry down any good work



undertaken. They remarked that Bartholomea who had done wisely so far, was making a mistake now. Everyone was ready to offer her advice, most of all those who knew little of her or her great work. Bartholomea paid no heed to the charges brought against her. What proved a harder trial to the young girl was the thought of the parting from her family. She dreaded lest her affectionate heart might feel the pain too keenly and either not have the courage to stand the separation, or perhaps look back after she had put her hand to the plough. She armed herself against any such dangers by a special vow to this effect. "That I might overcome every repugnance, every obstacle, every possible temptation on the part of my parents, friends or my own affections, I resolve here and now, no more to consider myself as a member of the family, nor as mistress of my own will."—Thus did she heroically surmount the weakness of poor human nature.

Bartholomea's mother and sister knew that sooner or later she would leave them. Consequently they raised a number of objections, showing themselves quite inconsolable. They told her that if she left, there would be an end to the peace and happiness she had brought to the home. The mother thought it impossible to get on without her daughter on whom she relied for everything; nor could she bear the idea of Bartholomea having to face a life, the course of which would be difficult and the issues uncertain. She feared lest one day the child should return disappointed and broken down, for even as matters stood, she already had cause to fear for Bartholomea's health. Further what assurance had she that Bartholomea would have the strength necessary to resist the many trials that would undoubtedly present themselves? Meanwhile a painful struggle was going on in Bartholomea's heart, a struggle between two most holy sentiments: the sacred love for her mother, and the even more sacred love for God.



## Farewell to Home.

THE new house was ready. It was time for Bartholomea to depart. The suffering poor were awaiting the touch of her gentle hand; the abandoned children, with pitiful glances were yearning for a mother's affection; above all a saintly soul was required to preserve the innocence of the young and prepare them for their heavenly home, and Bartholomea must needs leave her home—the home that had been the witness of all the good she had done in secret. It nearly broke her heart to say good-bye to her mother to whom she had brought so much happiness; to her sister who had grown to be one with her, and with whom she had shared her joys and sorrows. To detach herself from them she tried to think all through those days, only of her beloved. Gradually she prepared the dear ones by the many letters she wrote while the tears flowed freely from her eyes. The last ones were as follows:—

“ My most sweet and dearest sister,

Please hand over the enclosed letter to mamma. From her you will learn the day fixed for the sacrifice. My sister, make it willingly for me, and let us pray God to give us strength for it. It costs me, dear, to leave you all—you know how tenderly I love you. But there is one above all others and for Him I must sacrifice all else. Try to console yourself and be a comfort to our good afflicted mother. The pain I give you makes the parting all the harder to me. I would fain say much more, but I am choked with tears and can hardly write. Do forgive me all the displeasure I have caused you. For my part I will not forget all you have done for me—you have my



heartfelt gratitude for it. Remember that I want you to call on me whenever you think I may be of any use to you. I shall always be at your disposal. According as you will make use of this request I will measure the love you bear me.

I recommend to your care, our dear mamma. Do for her all that I would have done, for she deserves all our love and care. Do not forget also our good grandmamma, and our kind friend Flaminia with whom I wish you to take my place. I shall always rely on your prayers for me.

With a thousand kisses I place you at the foot of the Cross, there to become a saint."

With the letter to her sister was enclosed one for her mother which read thus:—

"Most dear and very loved mother,

At the call of duty, though against my natural inclinations, I take this step, which is most painful to my heart, and which will pierce yours too. My superiors have arranged that on Monday next I start work in the school newly put up. I must therefore leave on Wednesday with my companions, that we might keep everything ready. We have been working hard to establish this Institute which we hope will benefit society. I know this news will inflict a wound in your heart on account of the love you bear me. The respect and obedience I owe you, prompt me to impart the news to you before any one else knows of it. I pray you to give me your blessing.

Your affection weighs on my heart, and were it not for the grace God gives, I should not have been able to bear the separation. If it had not been His will, I should certainly have not attempted this work of my own accord, no, not for all the riches of the world. God is our supreme master,



who alone can claim all, let us then, my dear mother, make this sacrifice: you, of a daughter whom you have so loved; I of a mother for whom I cherish a very special love, respect and veneration. God will accept our sacrifice and reward us for it. May Jesus and Mary console you and may my dear sister be your comfort.

With deep sorrow I beg your pardon for all the trouble I have ever given you, and for my want of obedience to your wishes. Mother dear, please forgive everything, and do not love me less in future. With a heart full of gratitude I thank you for all you have done for me. Would that I could prove my love for you, even at the cost of my blood. Remember that I am still yours, and be assured that it will always be a great pleasure to me if I can do anything for you. Our parting is painful, but just because of our sacrifice, our meeting in heaven will be all the more consoling and joyous. Kissing you a thousand times I beg your blessing and your prayers."

Your aff. obt. humble daughter,

16 Nov. 1832.

BARTHOLOMEA.

Her mother and sister were convinced now that there was no more hope of changing her plans, and each time they met her, they burst into tears. Bartholomea tried her best to check her emotion, and to hide by a smile her own suffering. While on the one hand the agony of these hours was great, on the other hand a secret joy comforted her—the joy of seeing the accomplishment of her long-cherished hopes. The mother and sister tried to resign themselves to the inevitable, still hoping against hope that at the last moment something may yet prevent their loved one leaving them.

The night preceding the Presentation, the young girl threw herself at the foot of the Crucifix and remained long



absorbed in prayer. A few hours before the parting she wrote :  
“ Most amiable Jesus, I have at last reached the moment of my sacrifice. Today through the hands of Mary I have the happiness of consecrating myself irrevocably to Thy glory and to the service of my neighbour. Now and henceforth, Thou art my only support. I know that of myself I am unworthy and incapable of anything, but with Thy grace I can work even wonders. I do not know what exactly I shall have to do, but I promise Thee to do willingly all that shall be commanded me by those holding Thy place for me. I will do all that is repugnant to self-love, all that tires, all that others have failed to do, —and this readily and joyfully. O my God, with my whole heart I make a sacrifice of my desire for a life of quiet recollection, in order to apply myself more devotedly to the good of my neighbour. That I may do all Thou wilt wish of me, I will sacrifice my devotions and prayers, and if need be, even my Holy Communions. I am all Thine, completely and in the manner that Thou wishest me to be, for I have nothing more of myself. I accept willingly whatever sufferings Thou mightest be pleased to send me in this life. From this moment I undertake to desire nothing but Thy Cross, Thy will and the good of my neighbour. I offer my mother to Thee. Thou knowest how much I love her, how much it costs me to leave her. Accept this offering and be Thyself her consolation and help. I confide my sister to Thy care. Do make her a great saint. Give her dear Lord, the precious gift of virginity as secured only in a religious community. I recommend to Thee all my relatives, my friends and benefactors —help and save them all. I place in Thy hands the little property I possess, that it may be used for the benefit of the poor. I was always poor and wish to remain so to the end. Assist me with Thy grace, and grant me the virtues necessary to preserve constantly in my heart,



joy, confidence in Thee, diffidence of myself, union with Thee and a holy courage in pursuing all the works tending to Thy glory. Dear Jesus, I recommend to Thee our house. I hope for great things from Thee. If necessary I shall not hesitate to ask even for miracles, and I am sure Thou wilt work them. I beseech Thee, Sweet Jesus, not to leave us long without the company of Thy sacramental presence. Let the church be built soon, and if a miracle is required for this I now ask it of Thee. I pray also dear Lord, to send us more companions after God's own heart—send them soon to us for we are sorely in need of workers. Finally, Sweet Saviour, I sacrifice all things to Thee, for I want nothing for myself—I will do everything in Thee, and live wholly and only for Thee."

Before break of day, Bartholomea had already put in order the little room that had known her for so long. Everything about it was arranged as though ready for a guest. She turned back for the last time to cast one long lingering look at her room and then hurried out to make for the church unseen. Her mother and sister were however already standing at the threshold. A conclusive sob was heard, followed by a burst of tears. Without a word they embraced each other, and Bartholomea tore herself away from them. She walked alone to the church, her mother and sister following at a distance. On arriving she found Catherine, waiting for her with Don Bosie and the parish priest. Before the altar of Our Lady of Sorrows, Bartholomea and Catherine knelt in prayer. The parish priest then celebrated Holy Mass at which they communicated. Several outsiders too were present. Mass over, a little band consisting of the two priests and the two maidens wended its way to the new house, named "The Little Convent."



## In Her New Home.

WITH hearts overflowing with joy, Bartholomea and Catherine took possession of their new home. In a humble room before a picture of the Blessed Virgin, the sisters lit two candles and knelt down to make an irrevocable offering of themselves and their possessions, vowing to consecrate themselves to works of charity for the benefit of the poor, the sick and the young. The world had no more any claims on them. They were now in God's own house to work only for him.

Bartholomea's mother and sister returned to their home. Bartholomea stood the last farewell with great fortitude though her heart was wrung with sorrow. Catherine was obliged to go home that very day, to attend on her aunt who was dangerously ill. So Bartholomea was left on that first day to work single-handed for the Institute that had been her life-long hope. Strong in her purposes and courageous, she determined to continue at any cost the work that had developed under such adverse circumstances.

Immediately she went to the hospital and with an angelic smile repeated to her patients: "I am with you now, and henceforth I shall always be with you." Full of joy the patients gave vent to exclamations of delight. This done, Bartholomea set herself to see to the furnishing of the new house. It had barely the absolute necessities. She improvised a rude bed and made for the hospital near by, to procure some crockery and cooking utensils.

No sooner had the school been opened than a group of lively children came trooping in, asking for admission. Their



elders followed behind, and having gone round the house, asked Bartholomea for some kindly guidance. Providence was indeed watching over this new cradle and had at the very outset given tokens of its special protection. Before night-fall Bartholomea said to one of the orphans: "I am quite alone, come and be my companion to-night." With an orphan by her side and the sick about her, she fell asleep that first night in her new home—the ardent vows and longings of her youth were thus fulfilled.

Joy was the characteristic note in this period of Bartholomea's life. She was with the sick and poor, but she felt a happiness she had never before experienced. In this connection she wrote to one of her former teachers, Sr. Maria Francisca of the Poor Clares: "I am most happy to be in the house of God. Though He has permitted that I should be alone in the very beginning of the work, His presence and that of my dear Mother Mary are all in all to me." Some time after, Catherine returned to the little convent. Animated with the same pious desires, they daily studied their rules together and settled their mode of life.

A holy strife arose between them, for neither would allow herself to be considered as superior. Bartholomea looked upon Catherine as such and sought her advice in everything while Catherine humbly disclaimed that honour. "You are well instructed and rich in virtue. I am good for nothing except to be the servant of all," Catherine would say. The general management of the house however was laid on Catherine.

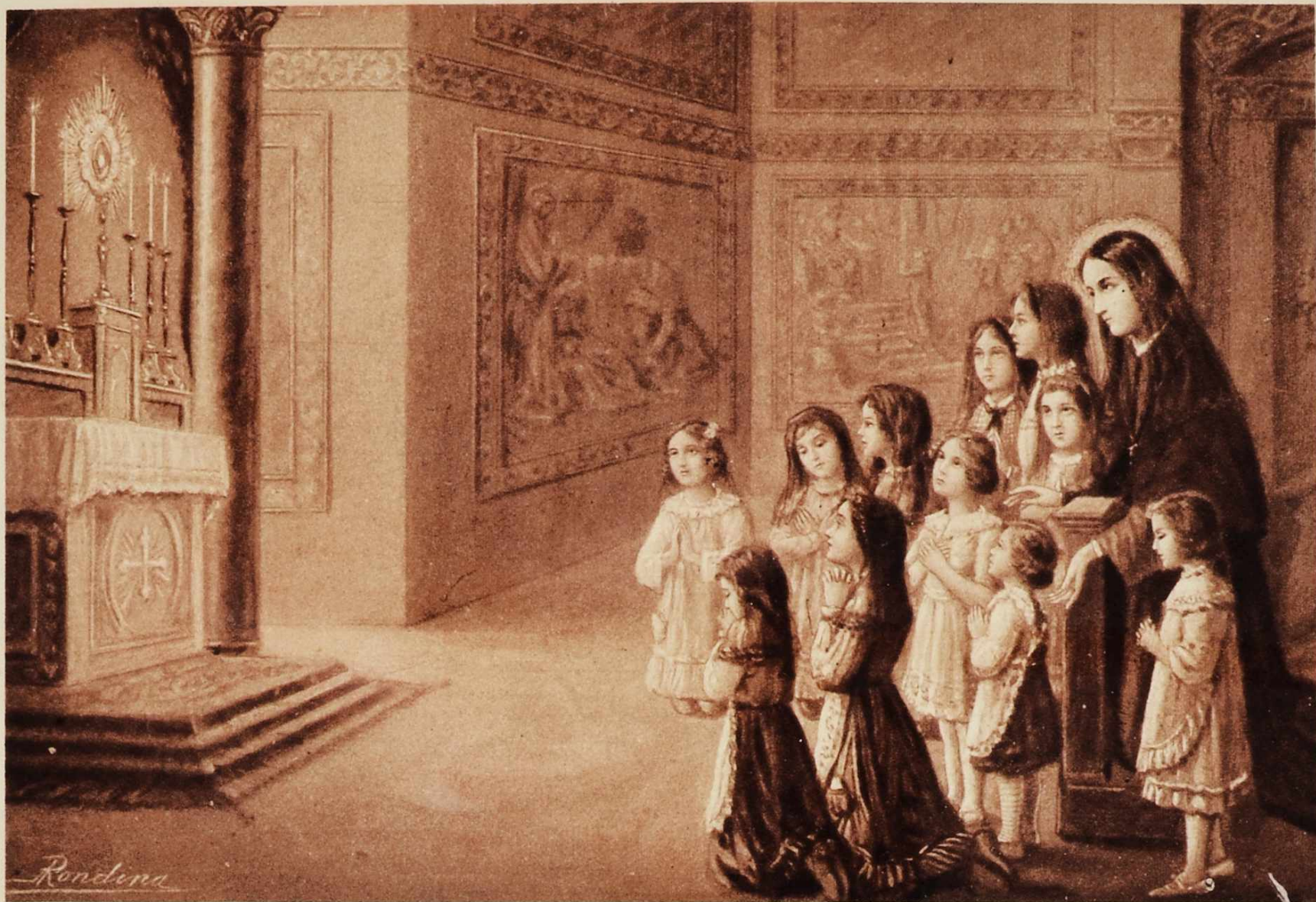
A chapel was needed in the house for, the church being at a good distance it was necessary at times for them even to miss Holy Communion when attendance on the sick required them at the hospital. "If only the good God would stay with us," Bartholomea often exclaimed, "then all our fatigue would be lightened." It was not long before Jesus satisfied this holy



longing, and with this great favour He granted her another as well. She had long prayed for a companion who as she well knew was animated by the spirit of the Institute. Her prayer was in time heard, and Magdalene Guidici offered herself as their servant. Her arrival brought much relief to the hard-worked 'Sisters.' Freed from the burden of housework they were at liberty to devote their time to more useful and pressing activities.

With an energy born of determination and self-forgetfulness Bartholomea set herself to work out the far-reaching plans she had in view. She opened a free school for children of about the age of twelve; there were over 50 boarders in the house. For younger children she still conducted the little school she had started while at home. Further 10 orphans had already been received and everything was being provided for them. These various occupations did not make her forget her old organizations. She was still the life of the oratory and of the pious congregation of the village. Her house was open to any who sought her help or counsel. Something about her led people to confide in her easily, simply and candidly. At times she took the first step in approaching one who had either grown lax, or was already treading the downward path. Tactfully and gently she brought these straying sheep back to the safe shelter of the fold. She went about frequently visiting the sick in their homes, bringing them to the hospital when they had no one to look after them. Many a soul blessed her name, for the alleviation she brought them in their suffering, and above all for the consolation she procured for them in the last moments of their lives. Seeing the good she was effecting, her critics finally withdrew their former condemnation and admitted that the work was indeed beneficent. To them Bartholomea was in very truth a saint!





THE LAST ADORATION



## The Summon.

MEANWHILE Bartholomea was herself preparing for heaven. The heavy work she had accomplished within the space of two short months was too much for her. The late night watchings and the constant fatigues of the day told seriously on her health. However the success God had designed to grant her made her overlook her own weariness. At this time she wrote to a friend: "I am at last in the house of God and my joy knows no bounds. Life is now a continual crucifixion, but my most amiable Spouse sweetens it for me, and I would not exchange this cross for any consolation whatever. The assurance that I am doing God's will makes me truly happy." It was the last time that she wrote. Her frail body was exhausted; it could endure no further, and Bartholomea was forbidden to take up her pen any more.

The command to cease work came too late—the breakdown was at hand. On April 1st 1833 she accompanied the children for their hour of adoration at the forty hours devotion. All the visit, she read several prayers, and led the singing, then returned as usual. Her face looked drawn with suffering despite the effort she was making to conceal it. Catherine feeling her pulse knew she had fever, and putting it down to the day's exertions accompanied her home with sisterly affection. On the way, forgetting her own sufferings, Bartholomea turned away from the direct path, to visit a poor young woman who had been ailing for some time. Bartholomea could hardly keep on her legs yet she overcame herself so far as to talk affably to the



patient, whom she consoled with the thought of the preciousness of suffering, and of the eternal rest to come.

Once within the house, she was urged to go to bed. Bartholomea had a presentiment that her end was nigh. Her face was unusually flushed, while the tears filled her eyes. Immediately she restrained them, trying to smile bravely through her tears. Then with bowed head she retired to bed; her strength could carry her no further. The doctor on examination, declared her attack to be inflammation of the lungs. Soon, he added that bronchitis had developed into galloping consumption. When this was announced to Bartholomea she was not in the least disconcerted. Silently she raised her eyes to heaven with an expression that seemed to say: "I willingly accept whatever the hand of God pleases to send me." On her bed of sickness, her yearning to receive our Lord was intense and she had the opportunity of communicating frequently. A continual low fever gradually consumed her delicate frame. No remedy proved effective. The news of her illness spread far and wide, and everywhere, on the roads, in houses and in shops, friends and acquaintances inquired after her. Many to ascertain her exact condition went direct to her house only to find their worst fears confirmed. The children who had known and loved her so dearly felt the affliction most keenly. Her pupils and the orphans, who had no one now to take them at school, repeatedly asked "How is teacher," and on receiving no encouraging news burst out weeping. There were found lingering here and there in corners, eagerly awaiting some more hopeful tidings. Their little hearts were to learn the bitter lesson of two of life's hardest experiences: sorrow and death.

Meanwhile Bartholomea desired her room should be open to everyone, her children above all. It would not make her worse she said, rather she found it a relief to gather them



around her bed and give them her last instructions. To her one-time pupils these were enviable moments doubly blest because spent close to a bed of suffering.

Adults too were often drawn to visit her, attracted by the Christ-like manner in which Bartholomea endured her pains. Her tranquillity and serenity were a matter of wonder to them. The secret of it was that Bartholomea never once held out any false hope of recovery to herself—her one thought was to prepare herself for death as holily as possible. She did not so much as ask prayers for her cure. When friends told her that they prayed for the alleviation of her sufferings, her reply was: "I suffer only a little." When asked how she was she answered: "I am not seriously ill." If any one sympathized with her, she stopped them saying: "My suffering is almost nothing, rather those who are attending on me have to suffer and they need your sympathy."

Through all these calm days only once was she visibly disturbed. At first she appeared sad and silent, then found relief in tears. When her attendant asked her what was wrong, she made answer: "Bear with me in my want of endurance. God has withdrawn His grace and left me to realize my own weakness. Of myself I am incapable of any good, but I accept this desolation and offer it up that I might be allowed to suffer more." She was evidently undergoing a severe temptation or God must have been trying her. We can only guess at the nature of her affliction. Perhaps there was a momentary yearning for life—she was only 26, with her work yet lying before her, or perhaps the pang of separation from dear ones, who would themselves be crushed by the blow, weighed on her too. Above all the thought of the newly started Institute might have been constantly in her mind. Poor human nature can only be held in check, it cannot be killed, and while life lasts it repeatedly tries to assert itself.



During the four months of her illness, Bartholomea's mother and sister watched over her with tender affection. If a miraculous cure had depended on the care they bestowed on her, they surely would have had obtained it. It pained them deeply to see her suffer so much, and the thought that her young life was so soon to be cut off entirely was an additional torture to their already burdened hearts. Bartholomea perceiving the grief of the others on her account, did her very best to conceal from their watchful eyes her own pains, lest theirs should increase. One day when her heart could no longer stand her mother's tears, she lovingly called her, and whispered touchingly: "Mamma do not take it so to heart, try to be resigned. Some day or other I must die, and after all I could not have lived for a very long time—forty years at most. Suppose during that time I were to forget God and lead a sinful life, then would you not have preferred that I should have died young? Is such a thing impossible? It is God who is calling me to heaven, so do not grieve, rather thank Him." At these words the poor mother bent her head low. Under heavy trials when nature is crushed beneath some affliction it is hard for reason to keep its rightful place, and as for Bartholomea's mother, she could not even imagine that were her daughter to live for even a hundred years, she would ever stray from God. But faith conquered, and the stricken mother humbly repeated: "Thy will be done."

Meanwhile the work of the building proceeded. Beneath her room the masons were busy, and little by little the new chapel reared its walls aloft. Frequently the noise disturbed Bartholomea's slumbers, and her attendants were full of anxiety. They intended deferring the work for a time, when Bartholomea hearing of it, prevented them from carrying out their designs. She added that it was a pleasure, even a relief to her, to hear them hammering at the timber, for each stroke



told her that her cherished work was progressing. She tried to picture to herself how the chapel would look, and desired that the statue of St. Aloysius be placed in a prominent position, for to his protection she had entrusted the house. For a moment the desire crossed her mind that she might live to see the building completed, but immediately she banished it entrusting all to the care of Providence.

To the onlookers the work seemed a mere folly. To their earth-blinded eyes it was evident that once finished, it would be of no use, were Bartholomea to die. How could the Institute, which was to be the centre of a vast organization, maintain itself without the moving spirit that had begun it? In their opinion Catherine was incapable of the task. They little knew that God has no need of man's help. He only deigns to make feeble man His instrument and the weaker the instrument the better is God's glory furthered. Bartholomea had never doubted that God would take care of the Institute. With her last feeble breath she encouraged Catherine animating her with hope, for with God all things are possible and nothing is difficult. She consoled Gerosa with the thought that from heaven she would help her much more than she could have possibly done on earth. Even on the bed of suffering she did not forget business matters, and worked to get the Institute recognized by the Civil Authorities. She sent the necessary documents to various offices, declaring that she as well as Catherine had willed all their property and their labours to the Institute. Never more was the pen seen in her hand.

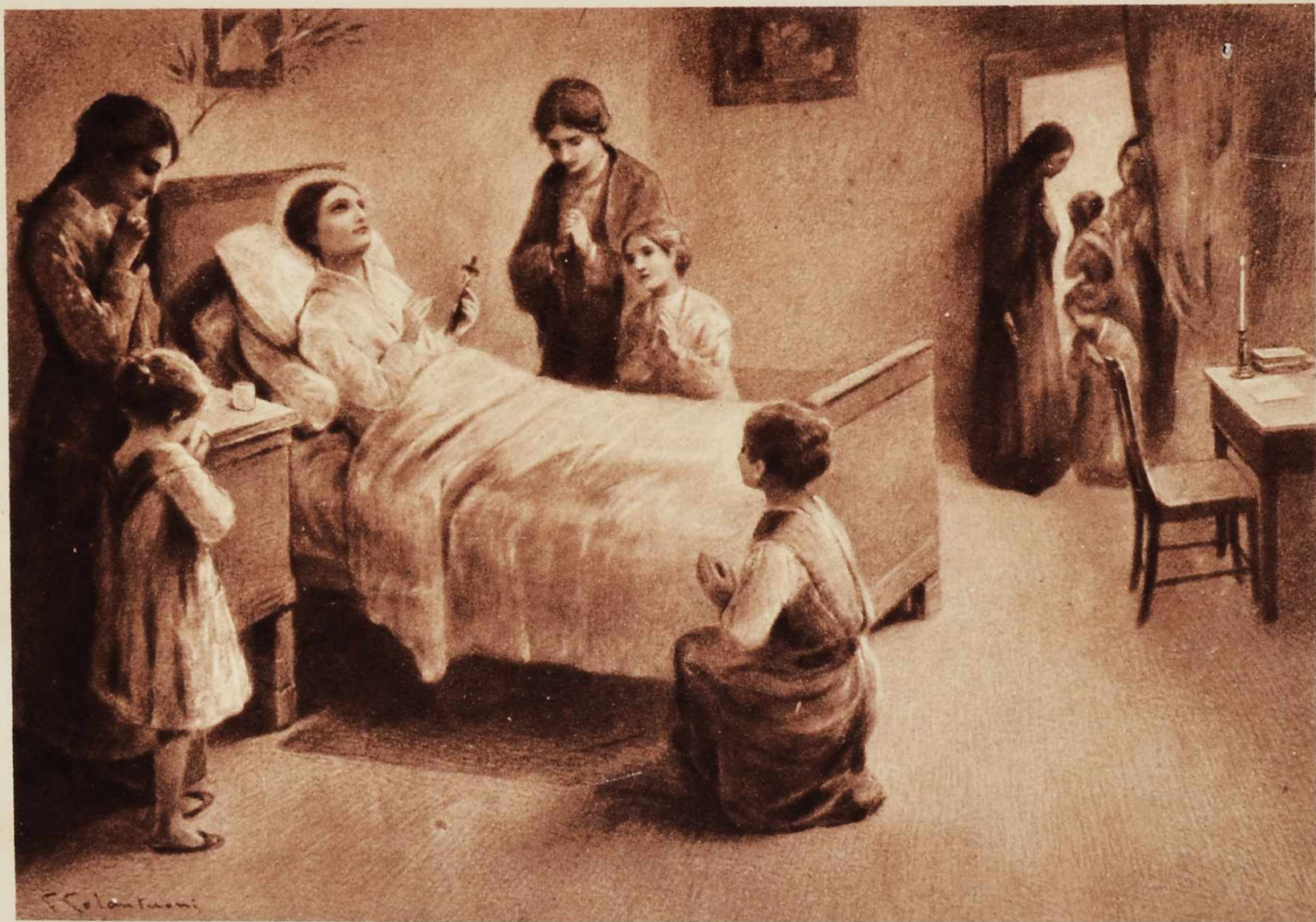
On the feast of Corpus Christi, Jesus passed in procession close to her house. Bartholomea was very ill at the time. When later her friends came to visit her they found a look of extraordinary happiness on her face. On being asked the cause, she replied that when Jesus had passed by He had



promised to take the Institute under His special protection. It was almost the last greeting of her dearly Beloved. About this time another message came to console her—a letter from her dear teacher Sr. M. Francisca. When years back Bartholomea had left school her teacher had feared for her, knowing she was entering into a life beset with dangers. Her parting wish had been: “I leave you in the Heart of Jesus and under the mantle of Mary; remain always in these safe shelters until you have reached Paradise.” Now the good teacher had to come to hear that her dear pupil was on her death-bed, awaiting her entrance into heaven. She remembered her last words and filled with delight at the thought that Bartholomea had kept true, hastened to send her expressions of joy. The child she had known, had been indeed preserved in an atmosphere of sublime love, blessed and guarded by Mary herself, and had kept a spirit of true piety which only increased while the shades of death drew closer. Sr. Francisca’s wish could not have been more fully realized, for the best compliment that can be paid to a dying soul is “Well done thou good and faithful servant.”

When she was informed that death was near, Bartholomea was filled with holy joy. To the friends who approached her and above all to the children, she declared that she would soon be in heaven from where she would pray for them, and be of greater help than she could, with all her good-will, ever have hoped to be on earth. She ardently longed to go to Jesus and Mary, and bade good-bye to her friends in turn. Those who mourned for her said they could not help envying her. The little ones could not comprehend the profound meaning of the smile that played on her face all through the death-struggle. But they were old enough to keep in memory throughout their lives the last words uttered by that feeble voice. Often they came out of her room sobbing bitterly: “We shall see her no more, we shall see her no more!”





HER DEATH-BED



Bartholomea herself was so calm; she said she could not understand how those who had served God could fear death. To her, to fear death seemed an offence against the infinite goodness of Jesus, who had done so much for her.

Soon Bartholomea was too weak even to press the Crucifix to her lips; she struggled so hard for breath that the bystanders thought her last hour had come. Gathering up her remaining strength, for she was conscious to the last, she prayed aloud that she might die as Joseph did in the arms of Jesus and Mary. She then asked that her straw mattress might be removed, so as to enable her to lie on the bare planks, as Jesus had lain on the hard wood of the Cross. Her confessor as well as Catherine, were obliged to use all their authority to make her restrain her ardour for suffering. At her request the last sacraments were administered. A procession of friends, all weeping had been formed, while the Viaticum was carried to her beside. The touching prayers for the agonizing were recited to which she responded fully. Then uniting herself with Our Lady, she remained absorbed in prayer, renewing her offering and vows, conversing with God, and apparently in an ecstasy of love. While Extreme Unction was administered she followed every part of the ceremony. When the words: "Go forth O Christian soul....." were pronounced she made a sign intending to signify that she understood the words. Finally the Papal Blessing was given her. When at the end her confessor asked her whether she wished to go to paradise, she summoned her failing breath to make answer that if God so willed it she was ready to continue in her suffering state until the day of judgment.

While Bartholomea was in her long agony, Catherine went with the orphans to the church to hear a mass which was being offered up for Bartholomea. As soon as the outsiders came to know for whom the Mass was being said,



they rushed in crowds to offer their fervent prayers as well. On returning home Catherine found her dear companion's body motionless, though her mind was still clear and she could recognize her friend. To Catherine she looked like an angel stretched on her white bed, with her Crucifix and a picture of the Blessed Virgin pressed against her lips, while in a low voice she whispered the sweet names of Jesus and Mary. In a short while she lost the use of her senses, and lay still awaiting the angel of death. Thus silently she passed away to the arms of her beloved in heaven. There was not even a last struggle. She had indeed fallen asleep in the Lord.

The bell tolled mournfully three times announcing the sad news which spread rapidly through the silent grief-stricken valley. From the lips of one and all rose the cry: "A saint is dead!" Their tears flowed freely, for their hearts were inconsolable. From every side one heard only Bartholomea's praises. People came in crowds to visit the house where her body was laid out. With bowed heads they prayed beside the dead form of that much loved apostle of charity. For two days the stream of visitors continued and everyone was deeply impressed by the calm beauty of her face in death. The little ones tenderly kissed her hands; the older girls reverently pressed their lips to her forehead, weeping bitterly. Many of them thought it unnecessary to pray for her, they instead prayed *to* her, beseeching her to look on them from her heavenly home and to continue to love and protect them. Several cut off locks of her hair or pieces of her garments that they might preserve them as precious relics all through their lives. Her innocent pupils who could not understand what death was, waited curiously to see what their teacher would do after this grand strange feast was ended.

On the second day at about sunset an extraordinary crowd gathered on the roads. A mournful procession accom-



panied the dear remains to the chapel. The clergy took their places near the coffin. The parish priest commenced the ritual prayers. No sooner had he raised his hand to sprinkle the still white form with holy water, than a sob shook his frame, and he burst into tears. At this, those present too could not restrain their tears. When they could sufficiently control themselves, the funeral obsequies were continued. Some of the older girls in white frocks and veils carried the coffin which was also draped in white. Two long lines of mourners formed the funeral procession. The poor, the old, the sick, parents whose work she had done in their stead all came in numbers, their eyes red with weeping. To each and every one of them she had been a dear friend, a true sister. At the head of the procession walked a group of girls carrying flowers in their hands. They were followed by all the confraternities and associations headed by their respective banners and crosses, while each member carried a lighted candle. Even representatives of the civil authorities, military officials and several seminarists formed part of the cortège. The whole impressed one rather as a scene of triumph than one of mourning.

The funeral procession reached the church and the crowd filled up the edifice to join in the last prayers recited over her whose loving memory was engraven on their grateful minds. The parish priest ascended the platform for the funeral oration. As he gazed on the bier surrounded by the mourning children he began: "Tears of gratitude at the remembrance of the spiritual benefits we have received from her, and of sorrow at our great loss, rise to my eyes, but I do not weep. 'Let him weep who has no hope,' said the great St. Paul to the faithful of Jerusalem. We may shed tears over those who after an unhappy life pass to a place of suffering but let us not weep over her. . . ." He had scarcely uttered these words, when an irrepressible sob choked his voice. He tried to proceed, but



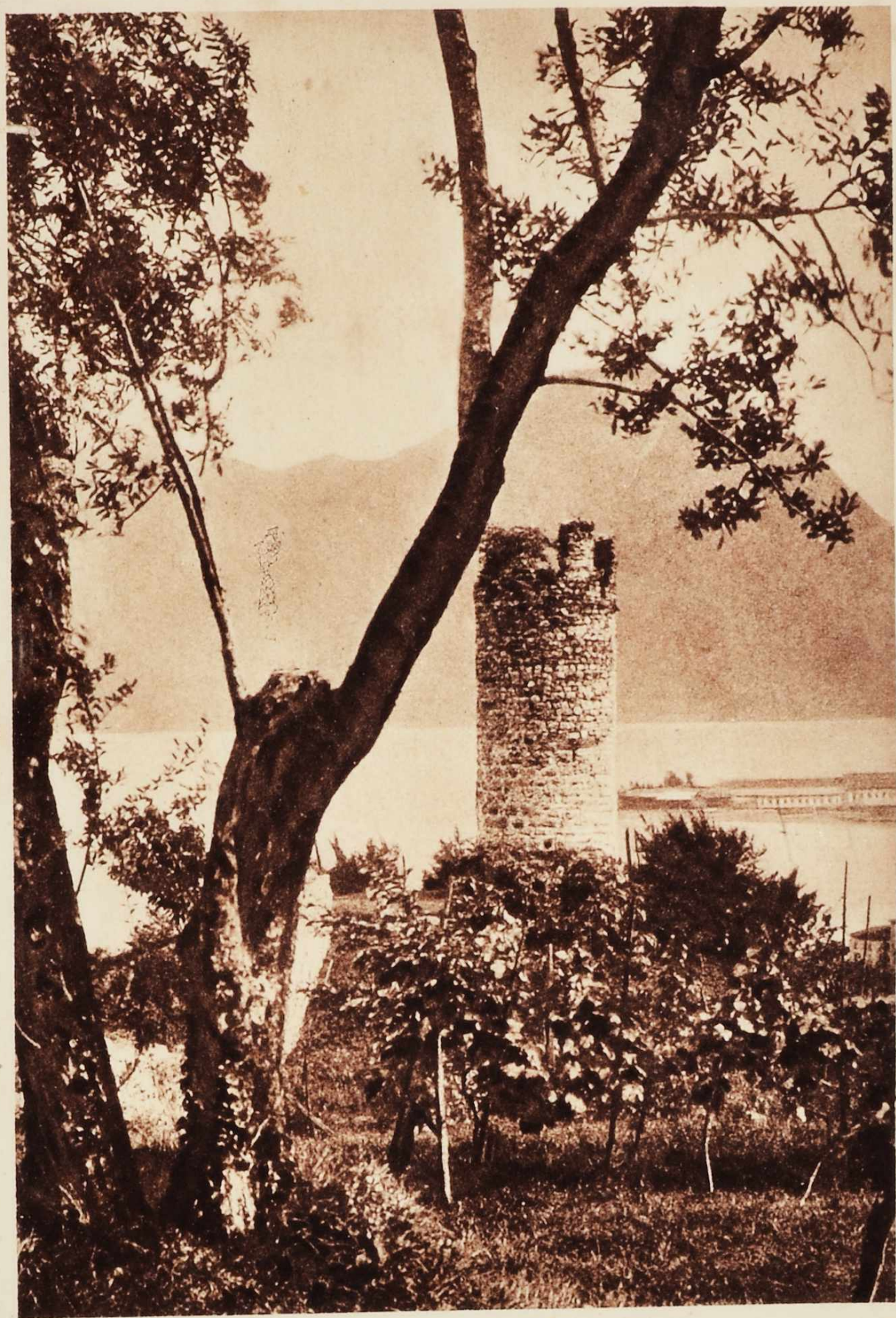
the fast-falling tears would not allow him to speak distinctly. His words were, no doubt, unintelligible to his audience, but they understood full well the feelings of his heart that found vent in tears.

The sorrowful train then wended its way to the cemetery, reciting prayers. There in the centre a common grave had been dug and into it was reverently lowered the simple coffin bearing her plain initials B. C. The numerous pupils, friends and acquaintances present paid the last tribute of love to their beloved benefactress and then in tears, dispersed to their homes. The little ones who scarcely realized what had taken place, looked at one another in astonishment, as if to say "Is this strange feast of our dear teacher over." ? Sadly the people returned to their homes, saying that if heaven were not for such like Bartholomea, no one else could hope to get there. The mother and sister lingered long near the hallowed spot. This most ordinary grave was marked by a plain slab surmounted by a simple cross.

## Providence Watches over the Institute.

PEOPLE passing by the Institute were now wont to say: "Here lived a saint so good to the young and the suffering." It was evident that after Bartholomea's death the work she had commenced must end. The patients in the hospital grieved deeply, and found it hard to live without the cheering smile of Bartholomea who had been like healing balm to them. The little children could not at first make up their minds to





'THE "CONVENTINO" WITH THE OLD ROMAN TOWER



go back to school. In a few days, however, some of them returned, but with a void in their hearts.

The good Giudici went to Catherine to ask her what they should do, adding that she had better return immediately to her factory at Sellere. The poor orphans felt they would once more be abandoned. The prospect of having to return to their old tenor of life was far from being attractive, after they had tasted the love and care of a mother. Catherine could not think of carrying on the work alone. Sorrow and discouragement did their part and she quite made up her mind to close the Institute and return to her former way of living, where unknown to others she would try to do what good she could.

She would have carried out these intentions had not God's special providence intervened. A prudent priest, perceiving the turn events were taking, reproached Catherine with her want of trust in God. Other priests, too, spoke in the same strain, and counselled her to persevere. Then Catherine who was on the point of telling her companion that they had better go home, since God had taken away the one who was their hope, changed her mind. Strengthened by a spirit of faith and confidence she said: "God wants to be the prime mover of our enterprise; let us go on, not minding our weakness but trusting in His strength. Let us be His humble instruments and allow Him to act as He pleases, through us." Within herself she thought: - "They hope for great things from us, I neither see nor understand how their expectations are going to be realized, but I submit without any further thought of self."

Amid her new difficulties Catherine had forgotten Bartholomea's dying promise to see to the welfare of the Institute from heaven. The saintly foundress however, kept true to her word. Shortly after her flight to heaven, there arrived the decree from the civil authorities for which Bartholomea had been working to the last. It approved of the Institute



and declared its work praiseworthy. Shortly after, came the ecclesiastical approbation which was a source of new hope and courage.

Meanwhile the little chapel had been completed, the sick in the hospitals regained their old hopeful spirit, and the poor school was gradually filled again with children. Other choice souls, friends and pupils, formed after the example of Bartholomea, came to consecrate themselves to the noble work of the newly founded Institute. Catherine was high minded enough to accept only those suited to the life and well-grounded in piety; as for material considerations, she exacted no dowry. Her principle was that one who knew the Crucifix, knew everything and had everything, whereas one who had not studied the Crucifix was poor indeed. Camilla, Bartholomea's sister, joined the community and excelled all in virtue and simplicity. A poor old woman asked to be admitted in charity to the lowest place. All she was able to do she confessed, was to spin, to weep and to rejoice. She went by the name of "*The perpetual spinner*," and was none other than Bartholomea's own mother, who wished to spend the last years of her life in the Institute founded by her beloved daughter.

When the number of members amounted to six, they adopted a uniform dress consisting of a greyish black habit, a shawl and a black cap, with the rosary suspended by the side and a Crucifix worn on the breast. The Sisters of the new Institute first made a name for themselves when an epidemic of Cholera broke out in 1836. Amidst the dangers and terrors of the fell disease, the brave band of Bartholomea's disciples attended on the sick in hospitals and private houses, seeking them out and even burying the dead when necessary. The renown of their heroic charity spread far and wide and several places expressed a desire to have them. They were asked to



take charge of a home for destitute girls at Bergamo, but Catherine declined on the plea that already they had more to do than they could manage. Besides, she was not ready to send out the young sisters to fresh openings so soon. After five months of insistence, she received a positive command to take up the work and she was obliged to comply. Two sisters from Lovere were sent to work in the new field. From this beginning, the Institute founded by Bartholomea, spread far and wide, under the name of "The Sisters of Charity."

On the 29th June 1847, Sister Vincenza Gerosa, as Catherine was known in religion, closed her saintly life with a holy death. For fourteen years she had been the humble instrument in the hands of Providence for the secure establishment of the Institute started by Bartholomea. She is, then, rightly considered as its beloved co-foundress. At her death the Institute numbered 243 Sisters grouped into 24 communities.

In 1836, the Sisters nursed the Cholera-stricken at Bergamo, with complete self-forgetfulness. Some of them caught the infection and died victims to charity. In 1848, 1849, 1859, and 1866 they found it necessary to tend the wounded on the battle-field. They could expect but rough company among the soldiers, some of whom were disrespectful towards the Sisters; nevertheless the majority appreciated the devoted work of these good "Ministering Angels."

The year 1860 saw the Sisters extend their field of labour to India where they engaged in direct missionary-work. The Institute established its Provincial-House at Krishnagar, Bengal, with branches in Mangalore, Secundrabad, Kentung (Burma), Calicut and Ernakulam. There are, in all, 80 sisters, of whom 10 are indigenous, employed in their charitable work in those different stations. In April 1923, took place the clothing of the first members of "The Catechists of Mary



Immaculate," Indian Religious attached to the Sisters of Charity, at Krishnagar.

In America the Institute has several hospitals, orphanages, boarding-schools and day-schools at Albert and Lincoln in La Plata and in Buenos Ayres. The Sisters began their work in the New World in 1909 and have ever since been doing much for the cause of Christian charity.

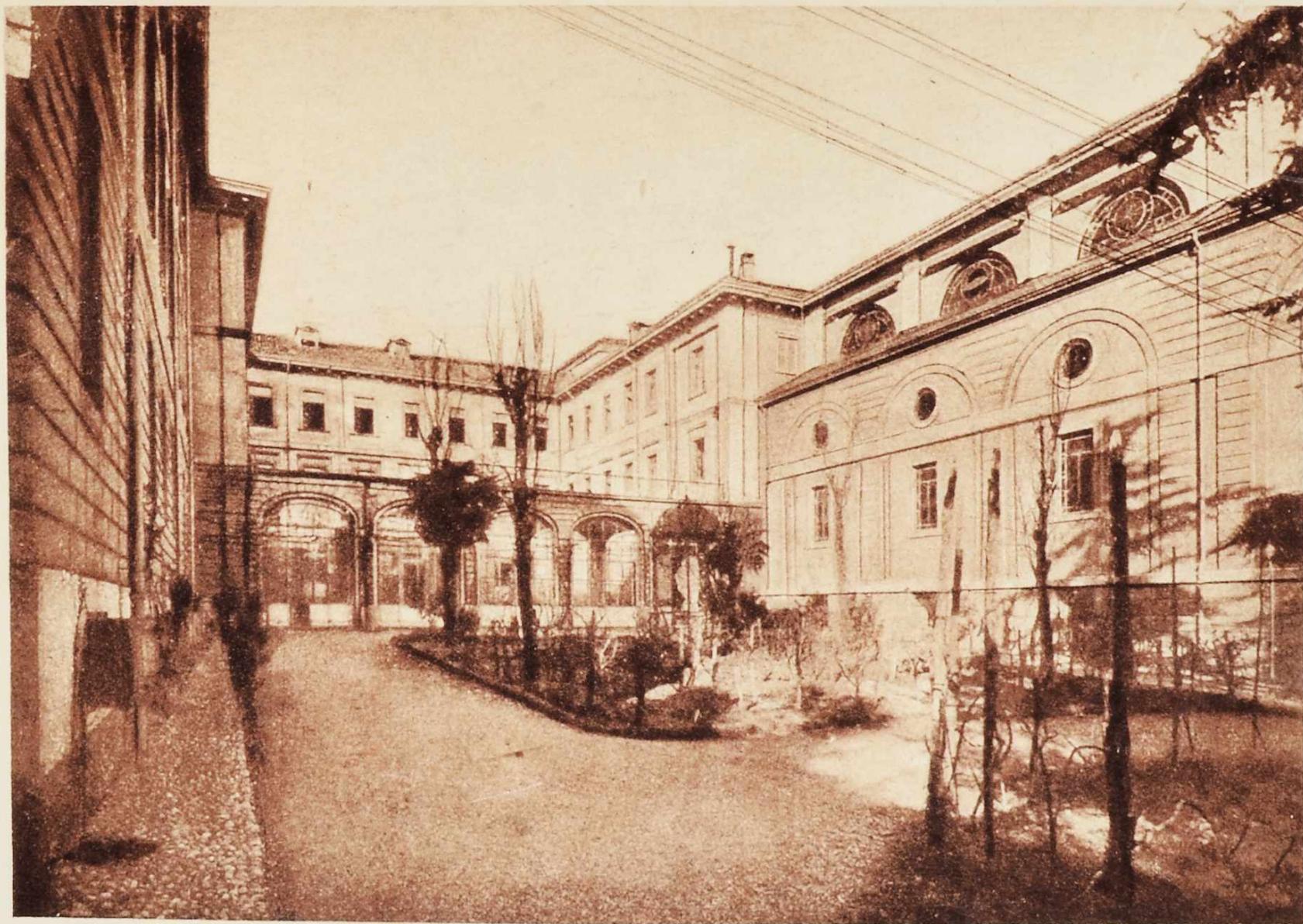
Meanwhile, with the rapid spread of the Institute, it was found necessary to transfer the Mother-house to Milan to facilitate communication with the various houses in Italy and abroad. This was effected in 1876.

During the great European War, the Sisters of Charity founded by Bartholomea served in 110 Military Hospitals, tending on an average, 13,500 patients daily. They underwent great hardships. Several were taken prisoners and were obliged to remain with private families or wherever they could secure lodging, all through the years of their imprisonment in Bohemia and Moravia. Others suffered with Christian fortitude, hours of extreme agony, exposed to the bombs of the enemy, but still faithful to their posts.

At present the Institute numbers 5,730 members divided into 15 Provinces. They conduct 516 different establishments scattered in various parts of Italy, viz: 134 Hospitals, 100 Asylums for invalids and the aged of both sexes, 8 Lunatic Asylums, 8 Nursing Homes, 12 Foundling Homes, 1 Jail for female criminals, 1 Institution for blind girls, 80 Orphanages, 27 Homes for destitute girls, 3 Homes for fallen or "Penitent Women," 19 Boarding-houses, 43 establishments to help in Seminaries and Boarding-houses for boys, 30 Soup Kitchens, 290 Schools with the direction of Sunday Oratories, etc.

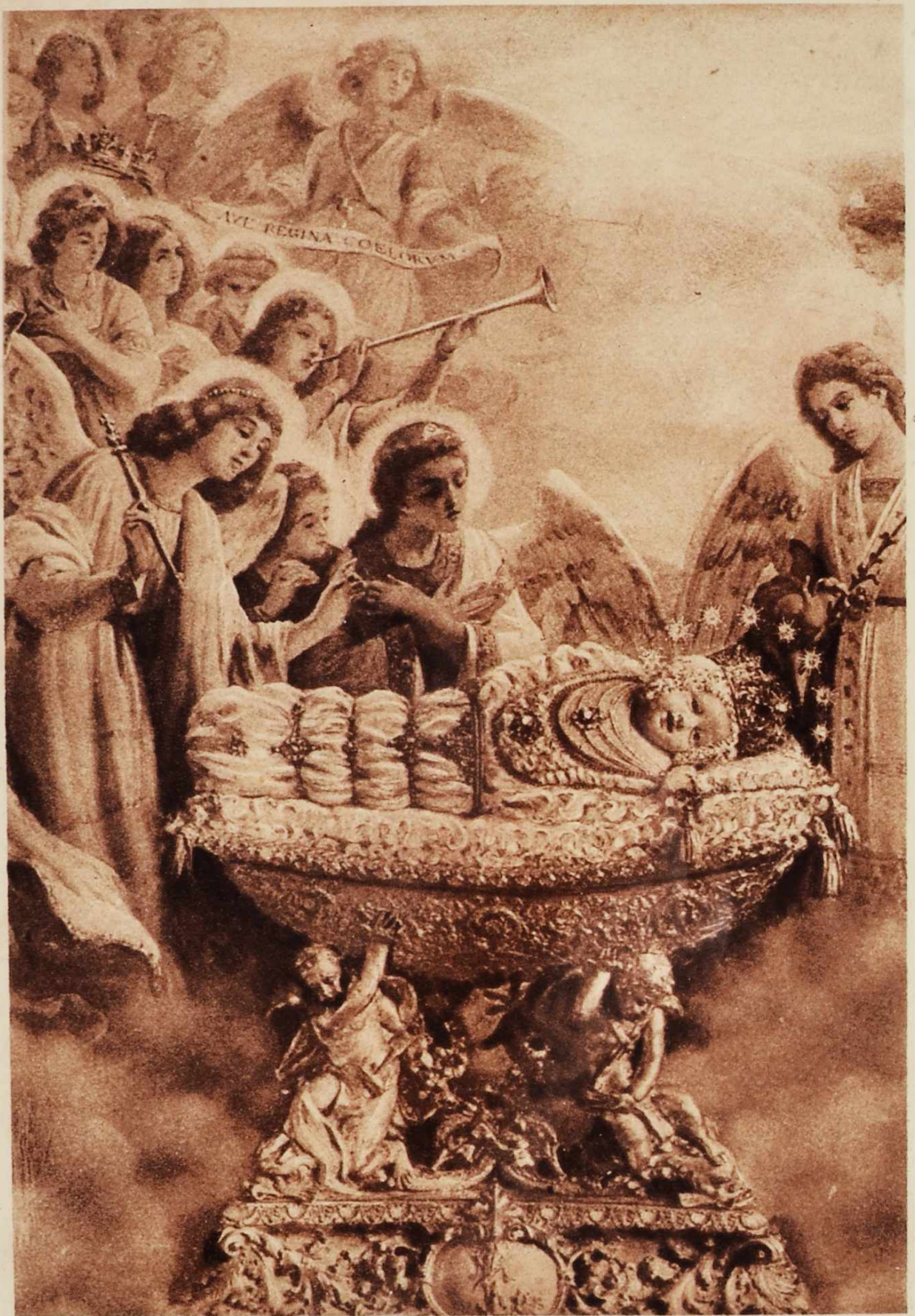
Besides the Novitiates of Milan, Venezia and Trento in Italy, that of Mangalore in India and of Buenos Ayres in America for indigenous postulants a new novitiate was opened





THE MOTHER-HOUSE AND NOVITIATE





HOLY INFANT MARY



at Bergamo in 1925. It is destined primarily to foster vocations to missionary life.

Through the many vicissitudes experienced by the Congregation, it continually saw the special protection of its heavenly patroness, the Holy Infant Mary. An artistic image of the Holy Infant Mary made by the Franciscan Sisters of Todi had been given to the Bishop of Como in 1735. When dying he left it in charge of his brother who handed it over to the Capuchin Sisters of St. Mary of the Angels, at Milan. The Capuchin nuns having been dispersed at the time of Joseph II, in 1782, the image passed into the hands of the Augustinian nuns who were also expelled under Napoleon. One of them when retiring to lead a devout life with some companions took the image along with her, for fear it might fall into irreverent hands. On her death-bed she entrusted it to a priest to be presented to any religious institute of nuns. He made a gift of it to the Sisters of Charity, for their novitiate which was at that time at the Ciceri Hospital in Corso Porta Nuova. When the novitiate was transferred to Santa Sophia, the statue too was taken. It was placed in a little room, where in course of time it lost its beauty and was put aside.

In 1884 on the feast of the Nativity of Mary, a sick Sister desired to have the statue by her bed in the infirmary. The next morning, the Rev. Mother carried the statue round, to be kissed by all the sick Sisters. One of them who was seriously ill, immediately recovered, crying aloud with joy: "I am cured!" After this miracle many favours were obtained through the intercession of the Infant Mary. Devotion to the miraculous statue brought such crowds of people to venerate it, that the infirmary was soon transformed into a beautiful chapel. It remains a real jewel of beauty. The little Bambina is placed in a precious cradle whence she smiles lovingly at her clients, consoling and



blessing them. Never once has she failed in her protection of the great work started by Bartholomea.

## Her Glory.

BARTHOLOMEA'S life had come to an early close, but it was not destined to be forgotten. Before long Holy Mother Church was to set her seal of approval on her heroic virtue. Her mortal remains which had been laid to rest in the cemetery of Lovere, were thence transferred to the little chapel constructed during her last illness. A marble slab marks her grave, bearing the following inscription: "Here lies Bartholomea, in the secure home she had sighed for so much. She was distinguished for her humble-minded disposition, sweetness of manner and beneficent charity."

But the unanimous voice of the people, proclaiming Bartholomea a saint, did not cease after her death. On the contrary, as a treasure valued more when it is lost, her virtues appeared even more resplendent than during her life, so that people used to say: "Surely with her virtues she must have reached a high place in heaven." Her life was held up as a model by preachers in the pulpit, and the praises of her virtue spread far and wide. Persons in authority now put together these sentiments of popular admiration and approached Don Bosio with the request, that as time had come to introduce the cause of her canonization, he should take the necessary steps. This duty naturally fell on him who had been Bartholomea's confessor for so many years and who knew better than any other, every light and every shadow



that had crossed her soul. He accepted the task and on the 17th July 1843, addressed to the bishop of Brescia a petition to begin the diocesan process enquiring into Bartholomea's virtues. Father Carlo Felice of Milan, a Capuchin friar, was accordingly appointed Postulator of the cause. On the 3rd August 1857, the ordinary process was begun in the curia of Brescia, lasting till the 31st July 1858.

Numerous bishops sent letters of postulation to Rome, in favour of Bartholomea, beseeching the Holy See to raise her to the honours of the altars. Besides the praises of the foundress, these letters contained a warm tribute to the work of her daughters. They were presented to the Sacred Congregation through Rev. Father Amedeo d'Orvieto, who had succeeded to the office of Postulator on the death of Fr. Carlo Felice.

On the 8th March 1866, His Holiness Pius IX, signed the commission for the introduction of the cause. Three years later, the inchoative process—*ne pereant probationes*—took place in the curia of Brescia by Apostolic Authority. Fifteen witnesses were examined in this process. In 1890 the process, presided over by Bishop G. Corna-Pellegrini, was completed. The Sacred Congregation having discussed the depositions and examined the acts of the process, at the petition of Mgr. Cavagnis, Postulator of the cause, and Cardinal Parocchi, the Relator, issued on the 25th February 1896, a decree attesting the validity of the foregoing ordinary and apostolic processes. The decree was confirmed on the 9th March following, by the Holy Father Leo XIII.

Three times the question regarding the virtues of the Venerable Servant of God was taken up and discussed,—the first time on the 6th November 1900, in the preparatory assembly held in the palace of Cardinal Parocchi, Relator of the cause; again in the assembly convoked in the Vatican



on the 28th May 1901, and finally in the presence of His Holiness Leo XIII in the plenary assembly of the 26th November of the same year. At this meeting the question being raised whether it could be proved that the Ven. Servant of God, Bartholomea Capitanio practised the Theological Virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity towards God and her neighbour, the Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance and other virtues connected with them, in the heroic degree requisite for her Beatification and Canonization, each of the Cardinals and Fathers assembled, gave their vote in reply. The Holy Father on hearing their judgment, willingly recognized in the Venerable Servant of God, Bartholomea Capitanio the excellence of every virtue and her special and praiseworthy merit in the education of the young. His Holiness exhorted them all to rejoice and to thank God for His work in her; adding that amid the materialistic times in which we live, when the world is so ingenious in seducing the young, nothing could be more consoling than that there should be souls, who, drawn by the impulses of the Holy Spirit, lead lives of striking virtue even as did the Venerable Bartholomea Capitanio. For the rest, as is customary with Rome, His Holiness deferred any further steps in the declaration of her sanctity, until God should be pleased to give unmistakable proofs of it.

On January 6th, 1902, in the presence of Cardinal Ferrata, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites; Cardinal Parrocch, Ponent of the Cause; Father Lugari, Promoter of the Faith; and Mgr. Panici, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation; the Holy Father solemnly proclaimed that the Venerable Servant of God, Bartholomea Capitanio had practised to a heroic degree the Theological Virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity, the Cardinal Virtues, Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance as well as all the other virtues that are necessarily connected with them.



Mgr. G. Biasotti, Postulator of the Cause, then thanked the Holy Father in the following words: —

“ Most Holy Father, with a heart full of joy and emotion, I approach the throne of Your Holiness to attest my most humble and deep sentiments of gratitude for the very high honour bestowed this day on the Institute of the Sisters of Charity of Milan, by the solemn proclamation of the heroic degree of virtue attained by their chief foundress, the Venerable Bartholomea Capitanio. The words of Holy Scripture: “*Consummatus in brevi explevit tempora multa*” are perfectly applicable to her. What deserves more admiration is that she spent the few years of life given her, not merely in perfecting her own soul, but also in doing good to her neighbour; so much so that the saying of Holy Writ: “*Dilectus Deo et hominibus*” is indeed true of her. An unceasing assiduity in prayer, daily meditation on the Gospels, a devoted study of the lives of the saints, and above all constant self-sacrifice had taught her to surrender herself wholly to God whilst her compassionate nature urged her to consecrate her entire self to the welfare of her neighbour, particularly to the young and the suffering. Such a life is an ideal, comprising in itself simplicity and sublimity, and though accessible to all, yet for the most part incomprehensible to the generality of mankind. The Venerable Bartholomea Capitanio was not deeply versed in social or pedagogical sciences, but the far superior light of the Gospel enlightened her as to the true end of human life, namely a continual forward march in the path of faith and charity, on earth, and an indissoluble union with God hereafter. For our own times we could not have had a better example for imitation, than that which Your Holiness has proposed to us. The Daughters of the Venerable Bartholomea Capitanio who had tried, to live up to the spirit of their Saintly Foundress, will



no doubt be strengthened by the words pronounced by Your Holiness, and endeavour to imitate her yet more closely while striving to carry on the work begun by her."

His Holiness then addressed his audience as follows:—  
"As has just been said, the Venerable Servant of God, Bartholomea Capitanio carried out successfully in a short space of time, a variety of works for the benefit of the young and the relief of the poor. Perhaps we might find the guiding principle of her life in the saying: "*Ama Nesciri*" (love to be ignored). These words reflect admirably the hidden life of Our Lord Jesus Christ and should inflame us with an ever increasing charity. Those who succeed in imprinting this motto deeply in their heart, and strive ardently to realize it, may be in truth called prudent and blessed. It is souls like these that are dear to the Divine Majesty, and are the fittest instruments for the advancement of His Glory, for God chooses the weak of the earth to confound the strong. Those only are fit instruments in God's Hands who, with true humility withdraw from the gaze of the world and shun its praises that God alone might be glorified. Rightly then do we call to mind the example of Bartholomea Capitanio and propose it for the imitation of all. We know only too well that it is just such examples that are despised by the lovers of the world, whose ears are open only to the seductive and fleeting calls of vain glory. None the less, it is lives like these, hidden from and contemned by the world, that are glorious in the sight of God and men, glorious with a glory that does not fade with time."

After an accurate examination of the virtues and writings of the Venerable, the Cardinals passed on to the approval of her miracles. On the 15th December 1922, was commenced in the curia of Brescia, the apostolic process regarding two



of the many extraordinary miracles wrought by God through the intercession of Venerable Bartholomea Capitanio.

The following is an account of two extraordinary incidents approved as miracles worked through the intercession of Venerable Bartholomea Capitanio:—

### *First Miracle.*

Sister Sanctina Rizzi had enjoyed very good health up to her entrance into the Institute founded by Venerable Bartholomea. She was then eighteen years of age. After five years of religious life, she sickened for Gastro-enteritis, accompanied by high fever and vomiting. She regained her normal condition after several months of medical treatment. She resumed her former duties, but a few months later, she had to return to the infirmary, her kidneys being affected. A year after, she caught the typhoid with an attack of Peritonitis also, which confined her to her bed for full six months. Though she recovered at last, she still suffered from the painful effects of her ailments. In 1906, the pains in her stomach increased to such an extent, that she had to be taken to the Sisters' Infirmary at Milan where after a careful examination the doctors declared her case to be Entero-colite with gastric ulceration. She was removed to a clinical hospital in Bergamo, where she remained for forty days, under careful treatment, but was then dismissed as there was no hope of cure.

The sister passed from thence to a sanitarium where she continued in a very bad and exhausting condition, till a serious hemorrhage in January 1918, brought her to death's door. She was carried back to the clinical hospital. Her sufferings were so acute, that, according to her own statement, she cried out with pain at the slightest touch. Strengthened with the Last Sacraments, she underwent a surgical operation



for Fibroma. It could not be complete owing to the peculiar nature of the tumor. Anyhow she was somewhat restored in health, when another and a worse hemorrhage, made death imminent. "I passed eleven months," she says "in this state of infirmity and general exhaustion. A more serious hemorrhage then forced the doctor to try another operation, the simplest possible just to keep away a crisis as they said. A new attack of Peritonitis increased my fever and vomiting. It is impossible to describe what I suffered all through those days. When the Very Rev. Mother General asked the doctor's opinion as to my condition, he replied, 'She is nothing but a complication of diseases. She is destined to pass the rest of her life on a bed of pain.' *Ten* years of suffering followed. At length in 1921, as I was completely exhausted and seized with new spasms, my superiors had me examined by Dr. C. Gavazzeni. He was surprised to see that life still held out in a body so affected by disease. Meanwhile Gangrene had set in and any surgical operation was now impossible. He held out only a few more months of life to me, on condition I refrained from any imprudent effort."

"On November 26th, 1921, I was carried to our Sisters' Nursing Home at Castegnato, where the doctor in charge, Luigi Ambrosetti, after a minute examination, confirmed the diagnosis of Dr. Gavazzeni. Unceasing prayer for my recovery had been ineffectual, but the continued state of suffering had taught me complete resignation, so that I no longer desired to pray for health, and resolved to live only from day to day, accepting the good pleasure of God in all things. But as our Mother General, before sending me to Castegnato, had given me an order of obedience to pray for my recovery, I thought it necessary to speak to the chaplain on the matter. The Father bade me make an act of perfect



abandonment into the hands of God, after Communion, and to pray in a spirit of obedience, according to Mother General's wish. I carried out his advice and at the very moment of making my act of self-surrender, I felt strongly inspired to make a special petition to our Venerable Foundress whom I had not till then invoked. For six months I received no sign of being heard, yet I persisted perseveringly in prayer and endurance. This grace I must have obtained from our Venerable Foundress. She loved the poor and the young tenderly, and I who had similar attractions felt a strong admiration for her virtues. What induced me most to turn to her was the thought that she who was so compassionate and liberal towards those in misery, would surely be moved by my extreme infirmity. What fitter object could she find to show her lavish mercy to, than a daughter of hers in so miserable a condition as I was. On May the 8th 1922, about 9 a. m. my very bed became unbearable. It seemed to me no better than a thorn-covered plank, but I tried to endure it without any complaint. Towards 11 o'clock I felt an invisible hand pushing me out of bed. I put my feet on the ground and found myself perfectly cured. The Fibroma, judged by Dr. Ambrosetti to be no less than 10 lbs. in weight, had totally disappeared. There was no pain whatever in my body; instead, vigour and the fulness of life seemed to course through my veins. Picture to yourself my joy! Falling on my knees, I thanked my Benefactress. Then I dressed myself and sent for the Sister in charge. She could not believe her eyes. Together we made for the refectory where the Mother Superior and the community were assembled at that hour. The first burst of general rejoicing over, we directed our steps to the chapel to render thanks to God and to our Venerable Foundress.

Then for four consecutive hours, I walked the length of all the wards, stopping at the beds of my companions in



suffering, who were eager to verify the wonder and to rejoice with me. The following morning I awoke early and after my spiritual duties, I sat to work, touching up some statues with fresh colours,—all this without experiencing the least inconvenience.

Dr. Ambrosetti came over only two days later. Mother Superior thought it best that he should know nothing of what had taken place until he discovered it for himself, so that he could all the more spontaneously judge of and testify to the cure. On coming round to my bed, he began his usual examination, Mother Superior and the Sister in charge being present. No sooner had he touched the affected side than he cast an astonished and enquiring glance at the Superior and the Infirmarian. Without a word he proceeded to make a minute examination, then exclaimed: "I find nothing, absolutely nothing abnormal." Turning to the Sister Infirmarian he asked, "What has happened?" Promptly came the reply: "She prayed to the Venerable Bartholomea Capitanio of Loreto." "I understand," was the doctor's rejoinder and clapping his hands he added, "It's a miracle, a miracle."

From the 8th of May I have never felt the need of any medicine or attention which the convalescent usually require. I resumed all the exercises of community life and asked for no dispensation whatever as to food or rest. Nor had I the slightest reminder of my past sufferings in the shape of any pain. I have enjoyed perfect health ever since the moment of my cure. Under God, I offer my heartfelt thanks and praise to my Venerable Foundress, Bartholomea Capitanio, through whose intercession I was cured."

We conclude the narrative, which to satisfy the devotees of Blessed Bartholomea, we have described at length, with the medical certificate provided by Dr. Ambrosetti who having seen the almost dying condition of Sister Saretina



Rizzi, attested two days after, that she could be put to any work. The local Superioress of Castegnato, however, retained Sister Sanctina Rizzi for some time at the Nursing Home, under her personal observation. No symptom of the disease ever appeared, and in the very house where she had been so long the object of such care and attention, she now spent herself in tending the sick with the same zeal and charity that others had shown her.

#### MEDICAL CERTIFICATE

The undersigned doctor declares that on the 21st November 1921, having examined Sister Sanctina Rizzi aged 51 in the Sisters' Nursing Home at Castegnato, he pronounced her to be suffering from a Fibroma that could not be operated upon. It was no less than 10 lbs. in weight and affected all the abdominal organs. The general condition of the Sister was such as to allow no hope whatever of recovery. With the sole aim of relieving the patient a little, I suggested injections of colloidal copper, which being given regularly according to my directions produced a slight improvement. All the same the Sister was entirely confined to her bed, unable to help herself or to move in the least. This state continued till the 8th of May.

On May 11th, the undersigned having examined the said Sister, found her in such excellent health as to be obliged to testify to her perfect recovery, and to attest that it cannot be attributed to any natural cause.

(*Sd.*) DOCTOR LUIGI AMBROSETTI.

#### *The Second Miracle*

Maria Donadelli, daughter of the late Dominic and Rose Beltrami, of Merlino, in the province of Lodi, joined the Institute of the Sisters of Charity as a lay Sister in 1908. But 4 years later, while in Pavia, she suddenly took ill. As



she was unable to retain food, she was sent to the hospital at Milan, where Dr. Greppi, attested to an ulcer in the stomach. The treatment only increased her suffering, and the disease seemed to be making rapid progress. After a second examination, the doctor found that both her lungs were affected. Nine months later, the Sister was sent to the infirmary at Castignato where Dr. Ambrosetti but confirmed the diagnosis of Dr. Greppi. But within six months, the Sister improved so rapidly that her superiors, to satisfy her sent her to St. Mary's in Brescia to work. She had a death-like pallor and was far from being completely cured. During the second year of her stay there, two abscesses appeared on the neck. Fearing that they were suppurative glands of a tubercular nature, the doctor did not dare to lance them. But as the fever rose high and the Sister suffered extreme pain, the Mother Superior on the advice of the infirmarian consulted the surgeon of a regiment that was stationed at St. Mary's. He operated on her. Sister Maria felt great relief but as the abscesses were tubercular, pus was being constantly formed in her throat and mouth. She was just recovering from it when she fell a victim to the epidemic that raged. She caught the deadly fever "Spagnola" and hemorrhage set in. She recovered from the fever, but a strong persistent dry cough gave unmistakable evidence of Tuberculosis. Dr. Fattori examined her, and she was sent once again to Castignato, where she improved steadily and after a month's stay was sent at her earnest entreaties to a healthy hill-station to work there. But in a short time the symptoms of the same disease showed themselves and Sister Maria returned to Castignato. Dr. Ambrosetti seeing her exclaimed: "Back again, completely ruined! I suppose you won't think of leaving this place any more."

The sequel to this narrative is best heard from the Sister herself. "For three years and a half, Dr. Ambrosetti treated



me leaving no remedy untried, but all to no avail. My weakness daily increased, the cavities in the lungs grew wider, while abscesses burst over the body, calling for the surgical lance. The dressing of the wounds was extremely painful, and I was subject to frequent attacks of hemorrhage. But the unwearied patience of the doctor and my Sisters was admirable. Their kindness and attention never relaxed. It was at this time that our Rev. Mother General, while on her annual visit at Castignato encouraged us all to pray for a cure. God willing; if not to ask Him so to sanctify our sufferings that they may benefit the Institute. When our Mother came to me I said to her: "Oh mother, this is my last year on earth." Our Mother asked me if I wished for my cure, to which I replied: "Yes if it would be for the good of my soul and of the Institute." She bade me pray to our Venerable Foundress. Six times I commenced a novena to our Venerable Gerosa, but never once went through it, for I was more inclined to pray to Venerable Capitanio. Encouraged by our local Superioress to follow my inclination, I made 14 novenas to her. On the last day of the novena I was so ill that I begged for the last sacraments. But the chaplain, who would be away for a short time, promised to administer them on his return, for the doctor had given him hopes of my lingering a few days more. But a fresh attack of hemorrhage made me worse, and I kept repeating: "Oh my Venerable Capitanio, you too during your mortal life were subject to this same malady. If you do not wish to cure me, at least make me die soon." As I insisted on receiving the last sacraments, the Mother Superior promised me Viaticum the next morning, exhorting me to keep ready to go to paradise.

While I was making my thanksgiving after Holy Communion the next morning I felt my bed violently shaken. I turned to the Sister at my side and asked her if there was



an earthquake. She replied, it was my sickness that made me feel the strange sensation. A few minutes later I felt another shock more violent than the first and found myself pushed by an unseen power. I threw myself out of bed, realizing I was impelled by a supernatural force. Our Venerable Foundress had perfectly cured me! I dressed myself and hurried down the staircase. The sister Infirmarian who met me, thought me delirious, while the other Sisters were quite timid to approach me, for they had not expected me to survive through the night and thought I was a spirit come to ask for prayers. It took me time to convince them of my cure. At last, feeling sure I was no apparition, the Sister Infirmarian led me to the chapel where the community had assembled to hear Mass. I approached our Mother and told her: "Mother, I am cured." I knelt by her side on the floor and heard Mass. After that, I recited the "*Agimus tibi gratias*" with the community. The Sisters who were now convinced of the miraculous favour I had received, rejoiced with me. After this, I went to my bed, and Dr. Ambrosetti who knew nothing of the favour I had received was surprised to find me seated on my cot without any support. He examined my wounds on the shoulder and found them healed; my lungs, he found quite sound. He turned to our Mother Superior for explanation. He then said to me: "Well, continue in good health, and recruit yourself, that you may be able to work, since you so much desire it." Finally repeating the Scriptural words "*Ambula*" he left me.

No sooner did he leave me than I went from ward to ward, to see and cheer the sisters who were so full of joy at my cure. That day I partook of food at the common table and had a sound night's rest. I kept on improving steadily for full three months, following in every detail the community and resuming my work at St. Mary's in Brescia. I was sent



once more to Castignato for an authentic proof of my cure. Dr. Ambrosetti found me in perfect health. I had besides, gained 16 pounds in weight. After a careful examination he said to me: "A great miracle has been worked on you."!

## Approval of the Miracles.

THE two above facts were again examined in an antepreparatory congregation of the 15th December 1925, and in another preparatory congregation of the 20th April 1926.

On the 2nd May 1926, in the Consistorial Hall of the Vatican, their Eminences, Cardinal Vico, Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, Cardinal Bisleti, Ponent of the Cause, a large representation of the Sisters of Charity and eminent personages from among the clergy and laity being present, His Holiness Pius XI ordered the reading of the decree approving the miracles wrought by God through the intercession of the Venerable Servant of God, Bartholomea Capitanio.

### DECREE

Vicesimum sextum aetatis annum non ita pridem expleverat Venerabilis Dei Famula Bartholomea Capitanio, quum lento morbo absumpta ad caelestia regna migravit. Brevis quidem fuit eius vitae cursus; iure tamen asseri potest, ipsam in brevi consummatam explevisse tempora multa. Etenim a pueritia sanctitatis metam contigere statuit, moresque suos ad Aloisii Gonzaga, quem sibi in patronum elegit, exemplar componere studuit, meruitque ab Apostolica Sede veluti "*flos angelica puritate fragans*"



praedicari, quum anno millesimo nongentesimo secundo ipsam in virtutum exercitatione ad fastigium pervenisse declaratum est. Praecipuum vero opus, ex quo Venerabili Servae Dei singularis parta est laus, eiusque nomen celebritatem non modicam adeptum est, christiana puellarum institutio fuit, cui se totam ex animo devovit. Publice docendi iure legitime sibi comparato, saeculari habitu induta scholas agere in natali oppido suscepit, munusque adeo grave alacriter et assidue obivit, magno cum pietatis incremento, iecitque prima beneficentissimi Instituti fundamenta, quod Sororum a Caritate nuncupatum voluit, quodque in frugiferam arborem cito excrevit, suosque ramos ad finitimos etiam pagos et oppida mirifico extendit.

Neque hoc unum laborum palaestra extitit, in quibus Venerabilis Serva Dei vitam suam iugiter exercuit; sed alia plura pietatis et caritatis opera in deliciis habuit, quae ita recensentur in decreto de heroicis eiusdem virtutibus lato: "Diversari in hospitiiis, aegrotis curandis, hi ubi essent etiam privatis in locis obscurisque, eo-ipsa advolare, vicatim adire domos ut, stipe corrogata, indigentibus opem ferret, frangere esurienti panem suum: vinculis detentos invisere, aegros consolari, flere cum flentibus, afflictos erigere, adesse horae supremae decedentium ex vita, haud immemor certae sententiae: "*Melius est ire in domum luctus quam in domum convivii*" (Eccl. VII, 3). Quam Deo gratum foret sublime hoc sanctitatis exemplar, miracula prodiderunt insignia, quae post Venerabilis Bartholomeae obitum operari ipse dignatus est. E quibus duo dumtaxat ad cognoscendum exhibita sunt, quum plura non requirat causae indoles, directis probationibus copiose instructae.

Horum primum retulit anno millesimo nongentesimo vicesimo secundo Soror Sanctina Rizzi, variis ab iuventute tentata morbis, quibus expellendis nulla curatio par inventa



fuit. Immo, labente tempore, morbifera vis eius uterum pervasit, in eoque tumorem genuit, qui volumen non modicum est adeptus, ferro minime extirpandum ob deteriora quae, medentium iudicio, metuenda erant mala. Ingraescentis tumoris moles eiusque sedes de aegrae sanatione desperandum esse suadebant. Morbosa vero symptomata alia eiusdem conditionem miserrimam effecerunt, mortemque quasi proximam enunciabant, hoc ipsum medicis sentientibus et declarantibus. Supremae Instituti Antistiae consilium secuta, Venerabilis matris suae BARTHOLOMEAE CAPITANIO conciliare sibi patrocinium precibus studuit. Preces diuturnae fuere et constantes, quin morbus de sua gravitate quidpiam remitteret. Extemplo autem aegra, quasi interna vi compulsa, e lecto descendit, seque integre sanam deprehendit. Obstupuere sodales eius : medici vero fassi sunt, subitam adeo et perfectam illius foedissimi morbi depulsionem fieri non potuisse per naturae vires, neque per salutaris artis praesidia.

Eandem sortem, eodemque anno, nacta est Soror Maria Donadelli, teterrimo morbo affecta, qui, vel imperitis compertum est, quam curatu difficilis ac fere impossibilis sit. In eius enim excreatibus bacilli inventi sunt, qui *Kochiani* ab ipsorum detectoris nomine nuncupari solent, quique morbi naturam et malitiam satis indicabant; aegritudinis autem progressiones omnem praecisam esse valetudinis spem aperte significarunt. Aegrota soror fatalem exitum presentiens sacramentis muniri petiit, recedentibus a curatione medicis, qui operam suam prorsus inanem censuere. Sed quam homines, morbi indolem vincendi impotes, fato suo relinquebant, eam caelestis sospiratrix invocata sanandam suscepit. Jussa enim aegra soror ab Antistita sua, ut Venerabilis fundatricis BARTHOLOMEAE auxilium imploraret, ei morem gerens novendiales preces pluries continuo instaurat.



Morbosa syndromes in gravitate sua tota perstabat, quum quodam mane, post sacrum Christi corpus in viatici forma receptum, morientium oleum mox erat susceptura, lectum in quo iacebat bis concuti sensit. Occulta vi permota e lecto prosiliit, atque cubiculum percurrens se omnino fore sanatam clamitare coepit, mirantibus omnibus. Quo magis liqueret sanationem veram esse ac perfectam, adhibitus est medicus, qui opportunis experimentis rei veritatem confirmavit, idque insigne Dei omnipotentis prodigio esse tribuendum etiam periti iurati edixerunt.

Triplici de more disceptatione de horumce duorum miraculorum veritate inquisitum est: primum in Antepreparatorio sacrorum rituum conventu; deinde in Praeparatorio, ac demum in Generali coram Sanctissimo Domino nostro coacto die vicesima superioris mensis aprilis vertentis anni; in quo Reverendissimus Cardinalis Caietanus Bisleti, causae Ponens, dubium proposuit: *An et de quibus miraculis constet in casu et ad effectum, de quo agitur?* Reverendissimi Cardinales et Patres Consultores expedite sententiam suam protulere. Sed Beatissimus Pater, quamvis animi sui laetitiam haud obscure significavit, decretorium iudicium in alium diem remisit, post effusas preces designandum, quibus caelestis luminis copia a Patre luminum imploraretur.

Quum autem mentem suam declarare statuisset, hodiernam diem, Dominicam IV post Pascha, selegit. Divinis itaque piissime operatus, ad se acciri mandavit Reverendissimos Cardinales Antonium Vico, Episcopum Portuensem et S. Rufinae, sacrae Rituum Congregationi Praefectum, et Caietanum Bisleti causae Relatorem, itemque R. P. Carolum Salotti, S. Fidei Promotorem generalem meque infrascriptum a secretis, eisque adstantibus, solemniter decrevit: *Constare de utroque miraculo; de primo nempe;*



*“instantaneae perfectaeque sanationis Sororis Sanctinae, Rizzi ab inveterato fibromioma uteri, gravissimis stipato symptomatibus,” deque altero: “instantaneae perfectaeque sanationis Sororis Mariae Donadelli a chronica tuberculosi ad extremum gradum deducta.”*

Praesens decretum promulgari et in acta sacrae rituum Congregationis recenseri iussit, sexto nonas maias, anno millesimo nongentesimo vicesimo sexto.

† A. Card. VICO, Ep. Portuen. et Rufinae, S. R. C. Praefectus.

Angelus Mariani, S. R. C. Secretarius.

L. ✠ S.

### TRANSLATION OF THE DECREE

*The Venerable Servant of God, Bartholomea Capitanio, had scarcely completed the 26th year of her age when, wasting away through a lingering disease, she was transferred to the heavenly mansions. Short as her life has been, it may be rightly affirmed that, “Being made perfect in a short space, she fulfilled a long time.” For, from her very tenderest years she set before her sanctity as her goal, strove to regulate all her actions in accordance with the pattern given by St. Aloysius, whom she had chosen as her patron, and deserved to be called by the Apostolic See, “A flower fragrant with angelic purity,” on the occasion when her virtues were declared to have been heroic, in 1902. The chief work by which the Venerable Servant of God did earn deserved praises and acquired great renown, was the Christian education of girls, to which she had whole-heartedly consecrated herself. She qualified for the post of teacher by passing public examinations whereupon, dressed in modest and becoming secular attire, she started a school in her native town; of this responsible and arduous task, she acquitted herself strenuously and untiringly to the great*



advancement and increase of piety; she also laid the foundation of the most beneficent Institute of the Sisters of Charity, which eventually grew and developed into a fruitful tree, with branches reaching beyond neighbouring towns and villages in a wonderful manner.—This, however, was not the only field of activities in which the Venerable Servant of God spent her incessant labours; she delighted in several other works of piety and charity; these are mentioned as follows in the aforesaid decree which declares the heroicity of her virtues:—She visited hospitals to nurse the sick; she hastened to those houses, however humble and wretched, where the patients lived; she begged from door to door to help the destitute in their distress; she doled out food to the hungry; visited prisoners, consoled the afflicted, wept with the weeping, encouraged the depressed, assisted the dying in the hour of the tremendous passage, mindful of the scriptural sentence: “It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting.” (Eccl. VII, 3.)—How acceptable this exalted example of sanctity was to the Lord, is proved by the remarkable miracles, which God Himself wrought after the Venerable Bartholomea's death. Of these, two only shall be mentioned here, as two and no more are required for the purpose of beatification, if they are duly authenticated and proved. The subject of the first miracle was Sister Sanctina Rizzi who from her childhood onward had been afflicted with diseases which no remedies whatever could ever cure. In course of time, a tumor developed, which could not be removed by means of any surgical operation, as the removal would have caused greater danger still, in the opinion of doctors. The size of the tumor, the place where it had appeared, all this made the case to be hopeless, and the cure impossible. Still more serious symptoms appeared; the patient was reduced to a most pitiful condition and the



doctors declared that death was imminent. Following Mother General's advice, the patient earnestly prayed to her Mother, the Venerable Bartholomea Capitanio, invoking her aid. But in spite of prolonged and persevering prayer, her condition did not improve, when, on a sudden, the patient, impelled as it were by an interior force, left her bed and found herself completely cured. All Sisters were in amazement. As to the doctors, they declared that a cure so sudden and thorough of a disease so loathsome, could not have been caused by the force of nature, or by the means, of which medical science can dispose.

A similar grace, in the same year, was granted to Sister Mary Donadelli, who was suffering from a terrible disease which, as even non-experts know, is very difficult, or rather, impossible to cure. It was discovered that the Sister's body contained Koch's bacilli, a fact which revealed only too clearly the nature and the virulence of the disease; and as time went on, the course taken by the disease openly showed that no hope was left. The Sister foreseeing her approaching death, asked for the last Sacraments, and the doctors withdrew, as they were convinced that any further help was of no avail. But she, whom men in their helplessness relinquished to her fate, was cured by the heavenly patroness whom she had invoked. For, in obedience to the Mother General's order, the patient had made several novenas to the Blessed Foundress. The state of the patient was as bad as ever, when on a sudden, after having received the Holy Viaticum, and whilst she was preparing for Extreme Unction, she felt that her bed was twice violently shaken. Prompted by a secret impulse, she sprang out of the bed running to and fro in the room, and exclaimed that she was cured, to the utmost astonishment of all present. The better to ascertain that the cure was definite and perfect, the doctor



was called; he examined the case carefully and declared the cure to be entire; other experts have declared, under oath, that this cure was a miracle wrought by God's omnipotence.

As usual, a triple enquiry was made about these miracles: 1st in the antepreparatory meeting of the Sacred Congregation of Rites; then in the preparatory meeting; lastly in the general meeting held in Our Holy Father's presence on the 20th April of this year. On that occasion the Most Eminent Cardinal Bisleti, the Ponent of the Cause, proposed the following doubt for solution:—"Whether and which miracles are to be declared as having been proved in the present case and for the present purpose."—The Most Reverend Cardinals and the Father Consultors gave their vote on the spot. Our Holy Father however, though he unhesitatingly gave expression to his feelings of gladness, declared he would give his definite verdict later on, after having prayed in order to get further light from God, the Father of light. To declare his mind, he appointed this day 4th Sunday after Easter. After having, with great devotion, offered the Divine Sacrifice, he summoned to his presence the Most Eminent Cardinals Antony Vico, Bishop of Porto and St. Rufina, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites; and Cajetan Bisleti, Reporter of the Cause, as well as Reverend Father Charles Salotti, Promoter General of the Faith, and me, the undersigned Secretary. And in the presence of all these persons the Holy Father solemnly declared:—"That two miracles are proven; the first being the instantaneous and perfect cure of Sister Sanctina Rizzi, of an inveterate 'fibromioma uteri,' attended by fatal symptoms; the second being, the instantaneous and perfect cure of Sister Mary Donadelli of chronic tuberculosis, that had developed up to the extreme stage."—



*The Holy Father also ordered that this decree should be promulgated and filed in the records of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, on the sixth of the month of May, 1926.*

† *A. Card. Vico, Bishop of Porto and St. Rufina, Prefect of the S. C. of Rites.*

Angelus Mariani, *Secretary to the S. C. of Rites.*  
L. ✠ S.

After the reading of the Decree, Mgr. Biasiotti made the following address to the Holy Father:—

“Bartholomea Capitanio, the pure lily that was tended by the Poor Clares at Lovere, shed around her the perfume of her virtues, and particularly of charity, which inspired all her undertakings. In 1833, when only 26 years of age, she was ripe for heaven, and, young as she was, God called her away from this exile to her eternal home. On the day when Leo XIII of happy memory, solemnly attested to the heroic degree of virtues practised by the Venerable Bartholomea Capitanio, His Holiness made a short yet appreciative discourse, holding her up as a model for imitation, and taking for his text the golden words of the Imitation of Christ, ‘Ama nesciri’—(love to be ignored), words which in an admirable manner reflect the hidden life of Jesus Christ and inspire us to the practice of charity. ‘It was these words,’ said His Holiness, ‘that the Venerable Bartholomea took as her own, and made them the means whereby to attain a high degree of sanctity, proving in her enterprises, how true it is that God chooses the weak ones of this earth to confound the strong.’

The great Pontiff, in conclusion, affirmed that the example of Bartholomea, although hidden from and despised by the world, would, not only before God, but even before men, redound to her glory for all time.



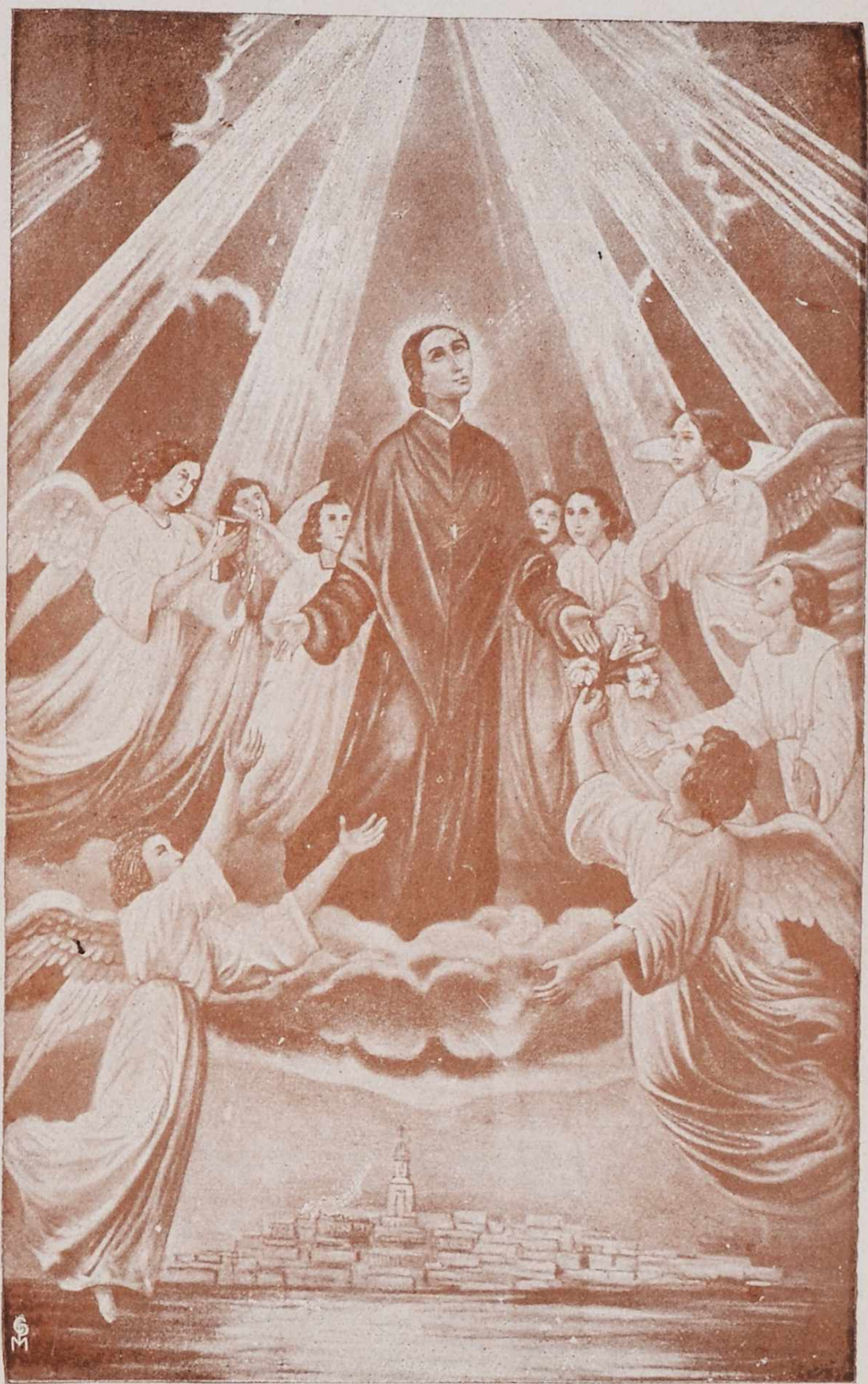
This solemn assertion of Leo XIII has in some measure been confirmed today, by the approbation given by Your Holiness, of the two miracles obtained through the intercession of the Venerable Bartholomea. These miracles testify how dear this humble maid is to the Divine Majesty, for she is thereby recognized as a powerful mediatrix before His throne. No higher reward could the Almighty bestow on His saints." —

## The Beatification.

THE Ecclesiastical Tribunal, presided over by Pope Pius XI met on May 7th, 1926, to consider whether it could proceed with the cause of the Venerable Servant of God, Bartholomea Capitanio, since her virtues and the two miracles she had worked had been approved. Mgr. Charles Salotti, the general Promoter of the Faith, declared that her virtues and miracles were sufficient to give her the right to the honour of Beatification. The Cardinals and Councillors present unanimously agreed to the proposal. But, the Holy Father deferred conferring the title of Blessed, till he knew with certainty the holy will of God.

On May 23rd, 1926, His Holiness after having offered the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, summoned Cardinals Vico and Bisleti and other zealous Prelates who had forwarded Bartholomea's cause, and declared that the Venerable Servant of God could be solemnly beatified. The decree of beatification was handed over to the Sacred Congregation to be preserved in its Archives, while Apostolic Briefs were despatched





THE BLESSED IN HER GLORY



announcing the solemn Beatification on 30th May, 1926, of Venerable Bartholomea Capitanio in the Patriarchal Vatican Basilica.

A large painting of the Beata surmounted the principal door of the great Basilica, while representations of the two miracles obtained through her intercession, were placed within. St. Peter's was in gala attire that day. Costly and artistic drapings, innumerable lights, flowers and festoons transformed the interior of the vast Cathedral into a veritable heaven. Crowds of worshippers thronged the Basilica, drawn by ties of love and gratitude, to pay their homage to their loved Bartholomea. Her daughters, the Sisters of Charity knelt close to the altar. Besides their Mother General and Mother Provincials from various quarters, even from India and America, there were present crowds of boarders, orphans and nurses from the Institutions in their charge. Convalescents came to petition for their brethren in their sick-beds. There were also bands of boys and girls from Lovere and other places with their respective banners and numberless worshippers from Br scia, Bergamo, Milan, Venice, etc., headed by their Bishops, encircled the newly beatified whose life had been spent in heroic sacrifice for her neighbour. It was a touching spectacle to see the immense spiritual good done by the self-denial and self-sacrifice and charity of such a young maiden.

Several Cardinals, many distinguished Prelates, a select group of Roman citizens, persons of every nationality who had flocked to the Eternal City, awaited in deep silence the solemn moment for the 'Halo of Blessed' to crown the brow of the Venerable Servant of God. The following Pontifical Decree conferring the title of "Blessed" on Capitanio was read aloud.



## PIUS P. P. XI.

## AD PERPETUAM REI MEMORIAM.

“Consummata in brevi explevit tempora multa” Venerabilis Dei Ancilla Bartholomaea Capitanio, quae, licet tantum sex supra viginti annorum spatio mortalis vitae curriculum concluderet, miranda tamen omnibus christianarum virtutum exempla prodidit. Luere in diocesis Brixien- sis oppido eadem nata est die XIII mensis februarii, anno MDCCCVII, e parentibus qui pistori- am officinam exercebant, eidemque, lustralibus aquis ablutae, nomina Maria Bartholomaea imposita sunt. Ab ore piae genitricis religionis rudimenta didicit, atque a teneris annis pietatis laude et singulari innocentia enituit. Vividum sortita ingenium, saepe in puerilibus nugis cum coequalibus puellis magistrae partes agebat; simul in templo sacris concionibus diligenter adstare, pauperumque inopiam industrio studio levare cupiebat. Sororum a Sancta Clara curis commissa, apud ipsas puritatis lilium et pietatis flos visa est; et cum sibi proposuisset sancti Aloysii virtutes imitari, abstinencia et poenitentiis compescuit carnem, oratione assidua ad divina- rum rerum commentationem spiritum erexit. Interea tantos in humanis quoque studiis progressus Serva Dei nacta est, ut vix quindecim annos nata, digna a monasterii praeposita fuerit habita, cui parvarum alumnarum institutio committeretur. Suavis, hilaris, misericors, iusta, puellarum simul soror ac mater, amorem discipularum omnium sibi conciliavit, ac mox praefecta renunciata, etiam maturioris aetatis adolescentulas, verbo et exemplo, humanas artes aequae docuit ac studia pietatis. Decimum septimum nondum vitae annum attigerat, quum, Agnum qui pascitur inter lilia sequi cupiens, virginitatis florem Deo devovit, et ante Virginis Deiparae aram in genua provoluta divino



Sponso totam se addixit. Attamen dum mundo omnino cogitat Ancilla Dei valedicere, genitorum iussu, frustra plorantibus Sororibus alumnisque, paternam domum repetere coacta est. Domesticos inter parietes parentibus subdita, angelus pacis apparuit. Genitor enim, rudis homo vinoque deditus, saepe ebrius conviciis et verbere in uxorem saeviebat, atque in cauponis et in crapula vitam agebat. Saepe innocens virgo, ut a iurgiis patrem revocaret, graveolentem tabernam subire non dubitavit, et eum, frustra reluctantem, domum adduxit. Vicit tandem pietas, et natae purissimae exemplo ac suavis monitis tactus genitor abstinuit vino et ad honestam vivendi rationem rediit. Tunc Bartholomaea ne praetermitteret christianam puellarum institutionem, publice docendi iure legitime sibi comparato, saeculari modestoque habitu induta, natali in oppido scholam agere suscepit, diligens magistra non minus quam apostola religionis. Et re quidem vera persedula parochi adiutrix nullos Ancilla Domini, ad maiorem Dei gloriam, detrectavit labores; pueros puellasque docuit catechesim, et deerantes per campos adulescentulas accivit secum in ecclesiam illasque ad Confirmationis atque Eucharistiae Sacramenta excipienda omni cura comparavit. Congregationem Marialem et societatem a Sancto Aloysio fundavit, ac tam in natali quam in vicinis pagis pios huiusmodi coetus constituit. Illis quidem annis alia Famula Dei patuit exercendae caritatis palaestra. Commissa enim illi fuit novi nosocomii cura, et moderatrix atque oeconomia electa, aegrotis assidere eosque solari in deliciis habuit; atque ut illis opem ferret etiam ostiatim stipem quaeritare non renuit. Voluit quoque Serva Dei, occasione data, panem suum frangere esurienti, in publicis vinculis detentos invisere, flere cum flentibus, afflictus ad spem bonam erigere, atque animam agentium horae supremae adesse.



Demortuo vero genitore atque a domesticis officiis soluta, nonnullis sibi adscitis sodalibus, Venerabilis Dei Famula, prima fundamenta iecit Instituti sui, quod cito in frugiferam arborem, Deo favente excrevit suosque ramos mirifice extendit. In oppidi natalis Luere parva coempta, penes nosocomium, domo die XXII mensis novembris anno MDCCCXXXII consedit Serva Dei cum primis sociis; atque haec fuerunt Instituti incunabula; in ea quidem domo, consuetis pietatis et caritatis officiis intentam, Venerabilem Dei Famulam mors intercepit. Etenim ipsa, gracili semper valetudine usa, dum in schola et nosocomio continenti supra vires insudat; dum ineunti Instituto, quod sub caelesti Virginis Infantulae patrocinio posuerat, firmando ac provehendo diu noctuque indefesso studio consulit, iamque novas foundationes mente molitur, poenitentiis, vigiliis ac laboribus fracta, ardenti febris et pulmonum tabe corripitur. Lectulo discumbere coacta, voluit ut cubiculum suum discipulis, sociisque pateret. Morbi dolores submisso patientique animo pertulit; imminentis mortis nuntium laeta accepit et, dissolvi cupiens atque esse cum Christo, Ecclesiae Sacramentis iterum iterumque munita, placidissimo exitu vicesimo sexto aetatis suae anno ad caelestis Sponsi nuptias convolvit, die XXVI mensi iulii anno MDCCCXXXIII. Illico periisse virginem sanctam conclamatum est; non solum oppidani, sed vicinorum etiam pagorum incolae turmatim ad cadaver, biduo expositum, suprema vice invisendum confluxere; vestium frustula et capilli, quasi reliquiae, certatim quaesita. Institutum autem Sororum a Caritate, vulgo a Maria Infantula nuncupatum, quod vix inchoatum reliquerat Serva Dei, post mortem eius convaluit ex insperato, aucto religiosarum numero novisque apertis domibus et scholis tum in Italia tum in longinquis orbis regionibus. Diffusum propterea est etiam pia



fundatricis nomen, illiusque sanctitatis fama percrebuit. Qua re penes Sacrorum Rituum Congregationem causa agitari coepta est de caelitum honoribus Ancillae Dei decernendis, et, per decretum die VIII m. martii anno MDCCCLXVI editum, rec. mem. Pius Pp. IX Praedecessor Noster introductionis Causae Commissionem signandam statuit. Dein probationibus iuridice sumptis riteque expensis, rec. mem. Leo Pp. XIII, sollemni decreto die VI m. januarii, anno MDCCCII obsignato, Venerabilis Servae Dei Bartholomaeae Capitanio virtutes heroicum attingisse fastigium sanxit. Postea quaestio suscepta est de miraculis quae, ipsa virgine intercedente, patrata a Deo ferebantur. Nosque rebus omnibus iudicio severissimo ponderatis, cum duo ex illis vera atque explorata fuerint renunciata, per sollemne pariter decretum sexto nonas maias vertentis anni editum de utroque miraculo constare declaravimus. Illud igitur discutiendum supererat num Venerabilis Dei Famula inter Beatos caelites recensenda tuto foret. Hoc dubium propositum est a dilecto filio Nostro Caietano S. R. E. Diacono Cardinali Bisleti, Causae relatore, in generalibus comitiis coram Nobis habitis die XI huius mensis atque anni, omnesque tum Cardinales sacris tuendis Ritibus praepositi, tum qui aderant Patres Consultores, unanimi suffragio, affirmative responderunt. Nos tamen in tanti momenti re Nostram aperire mentem distulimus, precesque iterandas esse censuimus, ut ad sententiam in tam gravi negotio ferendam caeleste auxilium Nobis compararemus. Quod cum impense fecissemus, tandem decimo primo calendas iunias vertentis anni Eucharistico Sacro rite litato, accitis adstantibusque venerabili fratre Nostro Antonio Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinali Vico. Episcopo Portuensi et Sanctae Rufinae, Sacrorum Rituum Congregationis Praefecto, et dilecto filio Nostro Caietano S. R. E.



Diacono Cardinali Bisleti, Causae Relatore, nec non delectis filiis Angelo Mariani, enunciatae Congregationis a Secretis, et Carolo Salotti, Sanctae Fidei Promotore generali, auctoritate Nostra, pronuntiavimus tuto procedi posse ad sollemnem Venerabilis Servae Dei Bartholomaeae Capitanio beatificationem. Quae cum ita sint, precibus etiam permoti tam plurimorum Episcoporum, quam universae religiosae familiae Sororum caritatis vulgo a Maria Infantula nuncupatarum, apostolica Nostra auctoritate, praesentium Litterarum tenore, facultatem facimus ut Venerabilis Dei Famula Bartholomaea Capitanio *BEATAE* nomine in posterum nuncupetur, et corpus eius ac lypsana sive reliquiae, non tamen in sollemnibus suplicationibus deferenda, publicae fidelium venerationi proponantur, atque imagines radiis decorentur. Praeterea pari auctoritate Nostra concedimus ut de ea quotannis Officium recitetur de Communi Virginum cum lectionibus propriis per Nos adprobatis, et Missa, cum orationibus propriis per Nos pariter adprobatis, servatis rubricis celebretur; sed tamen in dioecesi Brixienti tantum, nec non in ecclesiis sive publicis sacellis Instituti Sororum Caritatis, ab eadem fundati, ubique terrarum positis. Denique largimur ut sollemnia beatificationis Venerabilis Servae Dei Bartholomaeae Capitanio, servandis servatis, celebrentur in dioecesi Brixienti, nec non in ecclesiis sive sacellis publicis memorati Instituti intra annum postquam eadem sollemnia in sacrosancta Patriarchali Basilica Vaticana rite fuerint peracta.

Non obstantibus Constitutionibus et ordinationibus Apostolicis, ac decretis de non cultu editis, ceterisque contrariis quibuscumque.

Volumus autem ut harum Litterarum exemplis etiam impressis, dummodo manu Secretarii enunciatae Rituum Congregationis subscripta sint et sigillo Praefecti munita,



eadem prorsus fides in disceptationibus etiam iudicialibus adhibeatur, quae Nostrae voluntatis significationi, hisce Litteris ostensis, haberetur.

Datum Romae, apud Sanctum Petrum, sub anulo Piscatoris, die XXX mensis maii anno MCMXXVI, Pontificatus Nostri quinto.

*P. Card. Gasparri, a Secretis Status.*

TRANSLATION OF THE ABOVE APOSTOLIC LETTER  
PIUS XI POPE.

*To serve as a perpetual memorial of the fact.*

*In very deed the Venerable handmaid of the Lord, Bartholomea Capitanio, "being made perfect in a short space, fulfilled a long time," for, though she closed her mortal pilgrimage after only six and twenty years, yet, to all beholders she set a wonderful example of Christian virtues.— Born in Lovere, a town in the diocese of Brescia, on the 13th of February 1807 of parents who held a baker's shop, she was given at her Baptism the names of Mary Bartholomea. From her mother she learnt the first rudiments of religion; and shone forth, from her tenderest days, as a model of singular piety and innocence. Of a lively disposition, she often acted the part of a teacher when at play with her companions; at the same time she eagerly attended sermons, and showed a real ingenuity in alleviating the sufferings of the destitute. Having been committed to the care of the Poor Clares, she grew and blossomed in their midst, a lily of purity, a flower of devotion. As she had resolved to imitate the virtues of St. Aloysius, she used to mortify her flesh with bodily penances, and to lift up her mind to things celestial by means of assiduous prayer and meditation. Meanwhile the Servant of God, made also so great a progress in her studies that, although scarcely 15 years old, she was considered by the Prioress fit to take the charge of the little boarders. Gentle, cheerful, compassionate, righteous, a sister, and at the same time a mother to her charges, she earned the*



love of all pupils, so that, having soon been appointed to be the boarding mistress of the grown up girls, she imparted to them the knowledge, both of scholastic subjects and of religion, by word as well as by example. Scarcely seventeen years old, desirous to follow "the Lamb that feedeth among the lilies," she vowed to God the flower of her virginity and, kneeling before the Blessed Virgin's altar, she consecrated her whole self entirely to her Divine Spouse. However, whilst the servant of God was earnestly planning how to bid good-bye to the world for ever, her parents commanded her to return to her home, which she was forced to do, accompanied by the tears of the sisters and of the boarders as well. Within the domestic walls her appearance was that of an angel of peace. Her father, a coarse man, given to drink, often abused and, even beat his wife, and spent his time in grog shops. More than once the bashful maiden, unhesitatingly, entered the recking tavern to prevent her father from quarrelling, and brought him back to his house, in spite of his resistance. At last, Bartholomea's childlike love had the upper hand, and her father deeply touched by his daughter's example and gentle remonstrances, gave up drink, and took to a pious and Christian manner of life. It was then that Bartholomea, desirous not to give up the Christian education of girls, after having qualified for the teacher's profession by passing the government examinations, opened a school, adopted a semi-religious dress, and began to teach, shining forth no less, as an efficient teacher, than as an apostle of religion. She became a most valuable helper to the parish priest; she never shunned any, even the most exacting work, for the greater glory of God. She taught boys and girls catechism; she used to go in search of girls loitering in the fields, and by her charitable endeavours, caused them to receive the Sacraments of Eucharist and



*Confirmation. She was the foundress of a sodality of the Blessed Virgin, of a society of St. Aloysius, and other similar institutions, both in her town as in the neighbouring villages. The same year the Servant of God entered into another field of labour, namely, the care of the sick. She was given charge of a new hospital. She was to be the directress and dispenser. It was her delight to sit by the side of the patients whom she comforted and consoled. She went so far as to beg from door to door, in order to relieve the poverty of the hospital. Whenever occasion served she herself distributed food to the hungry; visited the prisoners in the gaols; she wept with the weeping, encouraged the crest-fallen, and did not leave the bedside of the agonizing before they had departed this life. On her father's death she was freed from all domestic cares. Wherefore, she gathered around her some friendly souls, and laid the foundations of her Institute, which soon developed and grew to be a fruitful tree, with branches wonderfullg spreading everywhere. It was in Lovere on the 22nd November, 1832, that the Venerable Servant of God settled, with her first companions, in a little house which she had purchased, situated near the hospital: this was the cradle of the Institute, and in that very house death cut off the holy career of the Venerable Servant of God, while she was wholly absorbed in her usual works of piety and charity. Behold! How Bartholomea, whose health had always been so delicate labours incessantly in school and hospital; working at tasks altogether beyond her physical capacity; how she bestows her whole care, by day and by night, in trying to promote and consolidate the infant Institute, which she had placed under the patronage of the Most Holy Infant Mary: how she plans new foundations; how she is seized by scorching fever and consumption of the lungs, she, whose frame was already*



*exhausted by penances, sleepless nights and bodily labour! Forced to take to her bed, she wished that her cell should be open to all her companions and pupils. With patient resignation and submission, she bore the sufferings of her sickness. At last, "having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ," repeatedly comforted by the reception of the holy Sacraments, she peacefully winged her flight to the nuptial embrace of the heavenly Spouse, in full possession of her own self, on the 26th July, 1833, being 26 years old. Immediately all exclaimed: "A holy virgin, a saint has passed away." Not only the townspeople, but the inhabitants, too, of the neighbouring villages, in their eagerness to see her a last time, thronged around the sacred body, which remained for two days exposed to public veneration. Many took away some locks of her hair, some shred of her clothes to keep them as relics. The Institute of the Sisters of Charity, (popularly known as the Sisters of Maria Bambina), which the Servant of God had left in a state of infancy, revived after her death, in a quite unexpected manner. The increasing number of religious, the new foundations have carried it, from Italy into remote lands. As a consequence, the name of the pious foundress has been made known far and wide. Wherefore the Sacred Congregation of Rites in due time began to deal with the process of the Servant of God's beatification, and on the 8th of March, 1866, Our Predecessor Pius IX of holy memory, signed the Commission for the Introduction of the Cause. The juridical proceedings having been regularly completed, Leo XIII, of holy memory, in a solemn decree dated January 6th, 1902, declared that, the Venerable Servant of God, Bartholomea Capitanio, had practised the virtues in a heroic degree. Whereupon the question was taken into discussion about the miracles which, as it was alleged, had been wrought by the Servant of God's interces-*



sion. Having submitted matters to a most rigorous scrutiny and seeing that two of these miracles were true and proved, We Ourselves, in a solemn decree, dated May 2nd, 1926, have testified to the truth of both miracles. One step more remained namely, to decide whether it would be safe to declare that the Venerable Servant of God is among the indwellers of heaven. This doubt has been proposed for solution by Our beloved son, Cajetan Cardinal Bisleti, the Reporter of the Cause, to the general meeting held in Our presence on the 11th instant: the answer of all the Cardinals belonging to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, as well as of the Consultors present was in the affirmative. However, We postponed Our own answer and in order to obtain from heaven the necessary assistance in a matter of so great importance, We ordered special prayers. Having prayed Ourselves with much earnestness, on the 22nd instant, after having offered the Divine Sacrifice, in the presence of those whom We had summoned for the purpose, namely, Our Venerable Brethren the Cardinals Vico, Bishop of Porto and St. Rufina, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and Cajetan Bisleti, Reporter of the Cause, as well as Our beloved sons Angelus Mariani, Secretary of the aforesaid Congregation, and Charles Salotti, Promoter General of the Holy Faith, We have declared, in virtue of Our authority, that the further necessary steps may be safely taken for the solemn beatification of the Venerable Servant of God Bartholomea Capitanio. Such being the case, as We have also been petitioned to the same effect by several Bishops and by the whole Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, popularly known as the Sisters of Maria Bambina, We hereby, namely, by the present Apostolic Letter, in virtue of Our Apostolic authority give permission that the Venerable Servant of God, Bartholomea Capitanio may henceforth receive the title of "Blessed," and that her body and relics,



not however to be carried in public processions, may be exposed to public veneration, and her pictures adorned with rays. By the same authority We allow that every year the office of the Blessed be recited, taking it from the Common of Virgins, with lessons approved by Us, likewise that the Mass of the Blessed be celebrated with the oration approved by Us, observing all the rubrics as prescribed; all this however, only in the Diocese of Brescia and in the Churches and public Chaples of the Institute founded by the Blessed Capitanio, wherever situated. We lastly grant that the solemn Beatification festivities in honour of the Blessed Bartholomea Capitanio, be held in the Diocese of Brescia and the public Churches and Chaples of the aforesaid Institute, within one year after the same festivities shall have been celebrated in the Sacred Patriarchal Vatican Basilica.

Notwithstanding all Apostolic Constitutions and regulations and other decrees relating to prohibition of worship, and any other enactment to the contrary.

We order that the printed copies of the present Letter, provided they are signed by the Secretary, and bear the Seal of the Prefect of the aforesaid Sacred Congregation of Rites, shall have no less force in judicial proceedings than would the manifestation of Our Will, as expressed in this original Document.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisher's Ring, on the 30th of May in the year 1926, of Our Pontificate the 5th.

Peter Cardinal Gasparri,  
Secretary of State.

At that time of great emotion, during the unveiling of the altar, there appeared from heaven, in a sweet vision,



with a graceful smile on her lips and in all the glory of the "Bernini" the angelic form of Capitanio. A choir of many a harmonious voice sounded forth the jubilant notes of the "Te Deum" mingled with feelings of gratitude and joy and prayer, which echoed and reechoed through the mighty dome of the Cathedral, in their swift flight to the throne of God Almighty.

The joy of the multitude was still more manifest when in the evening His Holiness passed through the crowd blessing his people. Shouts of unending applause burst forth from every heart.

Our Holy Father then knelt before the relics of the newly beatified, deeply absorbed in prayer. Once again a profound silence reigned, and every eye was fixed on her, who was now in glory, while fervent prayers and petitions, for the sick and the suffering whom the Blessed duly loved, for the children to whom she had been a mother, for the pagans still outside the fold, for the Institute which she had founded, were sent up to her, who now smiled on the assembled crowd.

"Through your intercession, O Blessed Bartholomea, may countless souls experience the influence of your charity and the Apostolate of your Daughters. May the bright example of your virtues attract the young to the path of perfection, and may hearts that thirst for sanctity follow in your footsteps."

But the happy throng raised their voice once more in intercession—"O God who hast given Blessed Capitanio as the model of youth, hasten the day, when she will be numbered for ever among Thy Saints. O Thou, who hast given us such signal favours through her intercession grant that innumerable souls may walk in her footsteps, imitating her



love for the young, the poor, and the suffering. Grant that her life, which is a sure guidance to sanctity, may become to many their rule of life; so that Thy reign may be established in all hearts, love and zeal for the faith strengthened, and devotion to the Holy Eucharist increased."

