

THE LETTERS OF SAINT JOSEPH MARELLO

Edited by Fr. Mario Pasetti, O.S.J.

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*To St. Joseph,
the Saint of faith,
and of silence,
the worker who served
Jesus and Mary.*

PRESENTATION

Following the biography of Saint Joseph Marello, Volume One of the Series of Marellian Sources and Studies, I now have the pleasure to present the LETTERS as Volume Two of this Series, which will be followed by a third volume of Marello's other writings.

The Letters have been collected and ordered by Fr. Mario Pasetti, who also prepared the various critical notes and indices which help situate them in the historical and spiritual context in which they were written.

The Letters are the surest and most vivid evidence of Blessed Joseph Marello's personality, for they allow us to gather individual instances of his precious life, as if to capture living scenes preserved for all times.

The Letters thus become the first ray of light emanating from Marello's person. This light reaches us and penetrates us without the tinsel of our own rationalizations: it is direct lightning, destined to accomplish so much good for those who are docilely open to receive and welcome it.

The Gospel, the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Virgin, and her husband St. Joseph appear herein as the immediate spiritual teachers. So too Blessed Marello, so personally present in the early letters of his youth with his spirit of friendship and involvement in the problems of his time, gradually withdraws from the limelight to become simply a Guide who takes us by the hand and leads us to the most intimate secrets of Christian living.

From him we can truly "Learn the language of the Saints."

In him we find profusely abundant words of faith, the secrets of virtue, and the examples of a life "hidden with Christ in God," in imitation of St. Joseph, the Saint of faith, silence, and active service of Jesus and Mary.

With him we gain strength for our own lives, so that "we poor children may walk safely down unexplored paths."

Rome, November 21, 1978
Fr. Severino Dalmaso, O.S.J.

P R E F A C E

On the occasion of the first Centenary of the Congregation of the Oblates of St. Joseph, we present the second edition of *The Letters of Blessed J. Marelllo*.

This is not a simple reprinting, but a work that is virtually new. The *text* has been carefully compared to the originals, checked for spelling, paragraphing, etc.

Careful study of content and comparison of various letters has allowed a *dating* of almost all those letters that were lacking a date. These dates are reported within brackets []. The letters that cannot be given a precise date are placed at the end of the Priestly Period (Letters 119-129) or the Episcopal Period (Letters 281-282), according to the period to which they belong.

Regarding *numerical notation*, this edition prefers the usual characters to the Roman numerals, since they are easier to read.

The *numerical ordering* has also changed due to the inclusion of certain unedited Letters (L. 84-bis, 129, 177, 226, 230) and the chronological reordering of some others.

Each letter is introduced by the name of the addressee and by a brief summary of its content.

The *explanatory notes* have been quite reworked and moved from the end of the book to the bottom of the page to which they refer. Simple reference notes are also offered in the hopes of providing opportunity for a more in depth study of the collection of Letters.

Finally, the addition of the *Appendix* of 39 Letters either addressed to Marelllo or written about him, together with the various *Indices* which close the volume, should prove very useful for a better understanding and use of the text.

To those who have encouraged this work and made it possible, I offer all my gratitude.

Fr. Mario Pasetti, O.S.J.

**CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE
OF THE LIFE OF BLESSED
JOSEPH MARELLO**

December 26, 1844 – Joseph Marello is born in Turin and baptized the same day in the Church of Corpus Domini.

1852 – Orphaned of his mother, he moves to San Martino Alfieri, his father's hometown.

August 15, 1855 – He receives Holy Confirmation from Bishop Philip Artico, Bishop of Asti.

January 9, 1864 – His clerical investiture.

December 21, 1867 – He receives tonsure and the four Minor Orders from Bishop Carlo Savio, Bishop of Asti.

March 28, 1868 – He receives the Order of Subdiaconate.

June 6, 1868 – He receives the Diaconate.

September 19, 1868 – He is ordained a priest.

September 20, 1868 – His First Mass at San Martino Alfieri.

December 8, 1869 – As secretary to Bishop Savio of Asti, he participates in the opening of the First Vatican Council in Rome and remains there for its entire duration.

March 14, 1878 – In Asti he founds the Congregation of the Oblate of St. Joseph.

February 11, 1889 – In the Consistory of Cardinals he is named Bishop of Acqui by His Holiness Leo XIII, who will later call him a "Pearl of a Bishop."

February 17, 1889 – At the Capuchin Church of the Immaculate Conception in Rome, he is consecrated Bishop by Cardinal Raphael Monaco la Valletta.

June 16, 1889 – His installation into the Diocese of Acqui.

May 30, 1895 – His holy death at Savona.

June 1, 1895 – Solemn funeral services in Acqui and burial of his venerable remains in the Acqui cemetery.

March 18, 1901 – Establishment of the Institute of Oblates as a Diocesan Congregation.

April 11, 1909 – The Holy See formally approves the Congregation of the Oblates of St. Joseph.

June 30, 1923 – Transferral and entombment of the body of the Founder in the Mother House of the Congregation in Asti.

1924 – Introduction of the Cause for the Beatification to the Diocesan Chancery Offices of Asti and Acqui.

1928 – Conveyance to Rome of the ordinary proceedings held in the two Dioceses of Asti and Acqui.

May 12, 1937 – Decree on the writings of the Servant of God Joseph Marello.

May 28, 1948 – Decree of Introduction of the Cause before the Holy See and consequent initiation of Apostolic Proceedings in the Diocese of Acqui.

March 17, 1954 – Decree on the validity of the Apostolic Proceedings.

November 25, 1977 – Cardinal Luigi Ciappi is named the new proponent of the Cause.

June 12, 1978 – Decree of Heroic Virtue, granting Joseph Marello the title of “Venerable.”

June 10, 1991 – Initiation of Asti Diocesan Proceedings *Super Miro*.

September 27, 1991 – Decree on the Validity of the Diocesan Proceedings.

April 2, 1993 – Decree on the miraculous nature of the healing of seminarian Aldo Falconetti through the intercession of Venerable Joseph Marello.

September 26, 1993 – Beatification Ceremony in Asti by Pope John Paul II, granting Marello the title of “Blessed.”

December 18, 2000 – Certification of the miraculous nature of the healing of Isila and Alfredo Chávez-León, in Ranquish (Pombabamba, Ancash, Perú), through the intercession of Blessed Joseph Marello.

November 25, 2001 – Canonization at St. Peter’s, Vatican City, by Pope John Paul II, granting Marello the title of “Saint.”

SEMINARY PERIOD

(1864 - 1868)

Letters 1-16B

1
TO SEMINARIAN STEPHEN ROSSETTI

*Transfer of the Capital from
Turin to Florence.*

Feast of the Holy Rosary.

Military conscription.

[San Martino Tanaro, after October 5, 1864]

From the hills of San Martino on the Tanaro¹
Sixth period of the autumnal Era
divided into six twenty day periods.

Dear Friend from Montafia²

The other day Riccio wrote me a terrible threatening letter, summoning me to render account of my strange behavior towards my friends. In your regard *he wrote* me that *you wrote* that I never *wrote* you. As you see I cannot free myself from this thicket of *writings* without *writing* my defense: *similia similibus curantur*³ says the medical proverb.

Well then, as an excuse I'll give you a view of my situation this past month. I will be brief because time is limited and I still have to send circular letters of my excuse to others including Riccio and Motta.⁴

From the first half of September my house saw the beginning of the parade of visitors from Turin wanting to enjoy the delights of the country – *more solito*.⁵ Now imagine what a strain it must have been for me to live amidst all the commotion these new people brought into my life. It was up to me to do the honors of the house. It was up to me to arrange for all those poor tourists to be satiated with the joys of the country, so as not to return to Turin bored and disappointed. So I had to accompany them to visit the town's points of interest, the trigonometric and the topographical points of the principal heights, in short the most noteworthy places of this microscopic village. And then add (cursed word⁶ – it slipped from my pen before I realized it) terrible news of the Capital's transfer to Florence that fell upon us.⁷ Oh this was ugly! Imagine disorder, scuffle, frenzy, anxiety, in short a Babel-like confusion, and you will not be wandering far from the truth in judging my situation in those days. From the Religious House of the Mission,⁸ Fr. Vandero frightened me with talk of the violent attacks, of nights of St. Sulpice, and of so many similar diabolical acts. My cousins from Turin made me nervous by mailing me the

¹ The letter is written from San Martino Alfieri (Asti), which was called San Martino Tanaro until April 12, 1898, when it began to be called San Martino Alfieri in honor of the noble family who owned the castle.

² The addressee of this letter, cleric friend *Stephen Rossetti*, was born at Montafia on August 31, 1843. Ordained with Marellò on September 19, 1868, he was Parochial Vicar at Cortanze (appointed November 22, 1868), much esteemed Rector of the Seminary of Asti from 1884 to 1901, and Canon of the Cathedral of Asti. He died on January 2, 1911.

³ Like cures Like.

⁴ Cf. Letters 2, 53.

⁵ In the usual manner.

⁶ Here Marellò refers to his usage of an antiquated word for "add."

⁷ The provisional transfer of the Capital of the kingdom of Italy from Turin to Florence (awaiting an opportunity for its definitive transfer to Rome) was decided on September 15, 1864, and effected a few months later: the Parliament held its first session at Florence on November 18, 1864. The decision provoked violent popular demonstrations at Turin, where on September 21 and 23 several were left dead or wounded.

⁸ The House of the priests of the Mission of St. Vincent in Turin on September 20 Street.

well-known booklets Rome and Turin – Is Florence Rome? – Osvaldo Osvaldi. My pastor's fears made me terribly apprehensive as he substantiated his feelings of terror by displaying the evidence of a dozen newspapers of every persuasion. Friends and relatives besieged me from all sides with letters portraying the carnage of the Provisional Government in the darkest possible light. Another cause for fear was the sight of my former teacher's⁹ signature at the bottom of the declaration made by the Committee of Public Welfare, on the level of the Parisian Revolutionaries of last century. Add to all this a little concern from my perspective as an owner of a house and land in Turin. Add also the madness of the politician in me which made me sweat bullets for fear of economic upheavals and then judge for yourself whether or not I was possessed by the devil in those crucial moments. Now the question of the Capital has been laid to rest, yet that has not brought me peace of heart regarding the economic future of poor Piedmont which has been sacrificed to an idea.

Let us now enter into another class of events which involve only local rather than national interests. I mean the arrival of certain gentlemen to San Martino: the Lawyer Arrò; the Canon Penitentiary,¹⁰ the Canon Spiritual Director, Bishop John Balma, secretary Guignonis, etc. But to honor what Saint are so many priests at San Martino, you will ask. Listen and learn.

I forget if some time back I already told you that my Pastor had prepared a most solemn spiritual celebration for the feast of the Rosary. Now let me tell you that the Honorable Arrò the lawyer came to grace the pulpit with his heartfelt preaching of a triduum to prepare the people of San Martino for the visit of the Prelate of Tolemaide¹¹ to confirm in the faith the young Christians of San Martino on the Tanaro. The two Canons came to lend assistance for the Bishop's pontifical service and to dispel for awhile the anomaly of having a Bishop without Canons and Canons without a Bishop.¹² This having been duly noticed, you should know that for the five or six days preceding the Feast of the Rosary, San Martino really looked like a Capital City preparing for the celebration of the Nation's holiday. All the Municipal, Ecclesiastical, Educational, and other Officials were in perpetual motion. The Pastor was in high gear preparing the Rectory, the Sacristan preparing the Church, the gardener preparing the triumphal arch, the municipality preparing the welcoming greeting, the pyrotechnicians preparing the fireworks, and the seminarian Marellò preparing the Inscriptions,¹³ the clergy preparing the people for Confirmation, the teachers preparing the students for the customary reception songs (parenthetically, excuse me for the huge ink blot that just now fell from the pen

⁹ Engineer Bechis under whom Marellò had done a practicum in economics in 1863.

¹⁰ Canon John Cerruti ordained a priest in 1842, Confessor of reserved Sins at the Cathedral of Asti and Pro Vicar General of the Chapter (cf. Letter 76). Canon Victor Molino was Spiritual Director of the Seminarists.

¹¹ Bishop John Balma resided in Turin and was Titular Bishop of Tolemaide. He arrived in San Martino the Saturday afternoon of October 1st and was received with great honor by all the Officials. The following day, Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, he celebrated the Mass of general Communion, pontificated at the sung Mass, and in the afternoon participated in the solemn procession. On Monday, he confirmed 207 young people from the town, Tuesday those from Govone, and Wednesday those from Antignano, Celle Enomondo and Vagliarano who had all come in procession to San Martino; that same evening he left from San Damiano of Asti where he was awaited by another one thousand candidates for confirmation.

¹² The See of Asti had then been without a Bishop for five years, and remained vacant until 1867, when Bishop Carlo Savio finally arrived to occupy it.

¹³ The following letter will also speak of these inscriptions on large posters ("rectangular boards" Marellò calls them). The inscription on the triumphal arch reads: "To Bishop John Balma, who taught eternal truths in inclement foreign regions and, now in the fatherland, a tireless zealot for the faith hastens wherever apostolic duties call him. From the people of San Martino." The one over the Church door was in Latin: "*Ingredere fauste feliciter o Pater o Pastor et nos laetitia gestientes fac beatos adspectu.* – Enter happily and fruitfully, oh Father and Shepherd, and as we exult for joy, make us blessed by your appearance."

in the great passion of my writing), all the town workers busy lending a hand with the wall hangings, decorations, ornamental works, etc. To give you an idea of the immensity of these various tasks, I will just say that the inscriptionist (sem. Marellò) had to work on his inscriptions until midnight for two consecutive days.

The festivities for the Bishop's arrival and during his stay were such that they can be better envisioned with the aid of the imagination than through written description. So I think it more timely to leave the details inside the inkwell and to move on to the third page.

However, I do not want to leave the subject of the San Martino festivities without telling you something about the civil persecution the poor inscriptionist had to undergo. God save you from ignorant people, and especially from the half-educated and know-it-all. After having composed the inscriptions for the triumphal arch and the church door, I was careful to submit them to the Municipal and Ecclesiastical Officials who had given me this commission, so that they might review them before I transcribed them in block letters onto the rectangular boards. Since they had nothing to say about them, I followed through with my task by writing them, assembling them and sending them to be set in place. What do you expect?

The town phlebotomist, accustomed as he is to sticking his blades everywhere, that is wherever there are boils to be lanced, had the amazing audacity to thrust his sharp lancets even into my inscriptions, horribly misinterpreting them. Imagine him persistently blabbing to the four corners of the earth and in his Barbershop headquarters, that the Arch's inscription was a battle cry for subversion, a subversive motto, a threat to the fatherland, and it was only a great act of clemency that saved the author from being branded a public outcast by the boorish commoners who swallowed the Barber's bait and took his words as Gospel truth. Oh you lazy phlebotomist! This is too much. You saw on the inscription the words *Fatherland*, *tireless*, and *zealot* and you dare to say that the Bishop was an enemy of the *defenseless*¹⁴ *fatherland*. Oh you people, you people were also crying "throw him to the wolves" and with your crude comments you joined in the chants intoned by that licensed beast... Oh Rossetti my friend, even now I am still panting and shivering for fear of undergoing martyrdom, a casualty of misunderstanding!

Now we come to the question of the draft. I seem to have bad luck in everything. Saturday evening I heard the rumor flying through town that the seminarian Marellò has drawn his number from the lottery... take a quick guess... number five.¹⁵ What anger – I go to benediction, and with poorly concealed smiles and badly feigned compassion everyone tells me that my number was five. This is really something. I go to sleep and dream five. Everyone in town drew over one hundred and I am the only one who has to swallow the bitter pill of five. Sunday morning I go to Mass – I go to a burial, I pass close to someone who hands me a little rolled up piece of paper. At first glance I think it must have something to do with a relative of the deceased passing me the offering, but raising my eyes I realize my mistake, for I am facing the Mayor who is handing me the ticket with my number. I barely have time to offer him cynical thanks for his wicked five... I shove the ill-fated ticket into my pocket and I go to the burial. I felt such abhorrence for that cursed number five that I didn't want to even see it printed on the ticket. On returning home that evening I was just about to throw it away, when I had the inspiration to look at it... Holy Mother of God...128... I rub my eyes convinced that I'm dreaming... Wow... one..hun..dred..twen..ty..eight. I guarantee you that at that moment I really fell out of the clouds... It could be... There is no other possibility: either it was a cruel trick

¹⁴ "Tireless" and "defenseless" in Italian are similar sounding words "*indefesso*" and "*indifesa*" respectively.

¹⁵ The law of that time dictated that those eligible for service (or the Mayor in their stead) draw a number by lot. Those allotted a low number were drafted while the rest were exempted. This is the origin of the Italian word *Tiraggio* used in Marellò's following letter: though its literal meaning is "lottery" it comes to mean "draft."

purposely spreading the rumor that I had drawn the five, or it was an even crueler trick of the Mayor to give me someone else's ticket. As I write to you, I still have been unable to resolve this tremendous dilemma. I pray God that this trick come from the people avenging themselves for my inscription!!!

I have really applied myself to study Theology and I will not stop until the day I leave here.

Thursday I will have the two Damiassis¹⁶ and Fr. Vandero here in San Martino. They come to repay my Saturday visit.

Do I have anything else to tell you? Yes. The main thing. I have to beg you to always keep your most precious friendship with me and to hold me excused for having put off until now my duty to answer your very kind letter of a month ago. I await a letter from Montafia bringing me news of your present state and telling me if you still continue to love your old friend with the same affection.

Your friend

Joe M.

I beg you to kindly overlook my poor and hurried writing – what counts is there – my heart, I mean.

Good-bye.

¹⁶ Seminary companions Giuseppe and Luigi Damiassi from San Damiano of Asti. Fr. Vandero was also from San Damiano.

2
TO SEMINARIAN JOSEPH RICCIO

Capital at Florence.
Feast of the Holy Rosary.
Military conscription.

[San Martino Tanaro, after October 5, 1864]

My Riccio, most dear and most pungent¹⁷,

...¹⁸ and so I offer you a million reasons. I've been lazy, it's true. I've sinned by neglect, I grant you. There is no satisfactory excuse I can offer – Here I make a distinction: an excuse that would be sufficient to totally protect me from your every censure, yes, but one that could be sufficient to gain me a tiny bit of compassion, no... So? So, without going into lengthy details along the lines of the scholastic and Socratic method, I will go right to the heart of the matter with an honest explanation of my past and present situation. Are you satisfied? Come on, quit being such a *rigidus exactor*.¹⁹ We always need a little compromise, and much more so when friends are involved. It's agreed then.

I received your first letter at the end of August. That was just when all the commotion began in my house. An interminable line of visitors then began to besiege me without respite. It was a continuous processing to my doorstep: Binelli, Vincent Marello, Marescotto, the soldier Molino, the seminarian Molino, uncles from Turin, friends of the family, cousins from the capital, the Parochial Vicar, the Theologian Elia,²⁰ Vandro and his cousins,²¹ etc. Add to all this an unending series of letters and newspapers coming from all over + the question of the Capital which filled my house with an enormous number of newspapers of every persuasion, booklets, newsletters, frightened outsiders + Binelli's Mass + the arrival of Bishop Balma, the lawyer Arrò the Canons Cerruti and Molino, etc... + being in charge of the inscriptions on the triumphal arch and on the church + the matter of the draft + a thousand other things which for the sake of brevity I'll leave in the inkwell. You'll say that this enumeration of disparate events smells of exaggeration even from a mile away. No, my dear friend, it is the unadulterated truth. The question of the provisional government was really a terrible double blow, striking both the politician in me and my personal self-interest – a politician and an amateur in political economy, I saw my theories of economic rotation thrown off balance – as the interested landlord of a house in Turin, I was burdened by fear of the reduction of rent rates. So as you see, the French-Italian agreement was a matter of considerable consequence for me; it was enough to keep me apprehensive for over a week until I received news of compromises and compensations. Binelli's Mass²² also played its part. For almost two weeks Bishop Balma's visit transformed the most ordinary and peaceful town of San Martino into a motion-filled city preparing for some type of centenary celebration. Everyone was busy doing his part– the Municipality drawing up the

¹⁷ He affectionately jokes about the surname of his seminarian friend, which in Italian means “chestnut husk.” The seminarian Joseph Riccio was born in Agliano (1842). He became a priest with Marello on September 19, 1868. He was parochial vicar at Costigliole of Asti and at Portacomaro, Pastor at Albugnano, and, towards 1900, Canon of the Cathedral of Asti. He died January 24, 1924. (Cf. L 40).

¹⁸ The letter begins with a meaningful series of periods.

¹⁹ “such an unpardoning collector”, that is, “so harsh and demanding.”

²⁰ The Theologian Elia from Turin.

²¹ The Italian specifies that the cousins are female.

²² Fr. Antonio Binelli of Artignano became a priest on September 24, 1864 and was assigned to the parish of Montaldo Scarampi.

welcome greeting – the Pastor preparing the Rectory – the Sacristan cleaning the Church – the Gardeners, the Masons, Blacksmiths, Hangers, Detailers to prepare the Triumphal arch and ornamental decorations – the Seminarian Marello to be the inscriptionist – all the clergy to prepare the people – the school officials to teach the children the customary songs. In short everything was in motion... The solemn celebrations were a stupendous success – imagine, the pastor’s dinners seemed just like the second revised and corrected edition of Apicius’s supper “in the times of the false and deceitful gods.” What spoiled the fun a little was a certain phlebotomist who came around trying to interpret my inscription in the same way he lances boils, and the lazy wretch lanced it for me in barbarous fashion. Lazy wretch! Go “shave beards and treat buboes” for that is your real profession, but stop displaying your extraordinary stupidity – you Beast! Because you read on the inscription the words *fatherland*, *tireless*, and *zealot*, you dare to tell the four corners of the earth that it is a battle cry, an anti-nationalist motto, a... You must be nursed by the devil or by a beast of burden. If you don’t know how to read, go back to grammar school and start trying the alphabet with the children again, but don’t come out with the asinine idea that the *fatherland is defenseless*²³ and that Balma is therefore an enemy of the fatherland... Let’s end this because my blood is beginning to reach the boiling point – in any case the storm has now blown over, the persecution did not draw blood, and thanks be to God, I slipped out of this without the crown of Martyrdom.

The question of the draft was not less complicated. Now I am at peace, but a few days ago I was still under the curse of not knowing the outcome of the lottery. Here too persecution was involved, and it was a persecution incited by that ugly stump of a phlebotomist who right from the headquarters of his boasting – his barbershop – had the audacity to make everyone (including me) believe that my Number for the draft was...5. Imagine my affliction... and for two whole days I was under the cruel deception that the Number drawn from the fatal lottery had been 5. Now I have found out the truth – my number has not fewer than three digits...one..hun..dred..twen..ty..eight – and that impudent wretch had the temerity to spread the story about five – May God save you from certain oddballs.

On top of all these things, add the visit of Vandero and Surra²⁴ – the fatiguing preparation for the upcoming theology examination²⁵ – my brother’s tertian fever and 100 other similar perplexities.²⁶

²³ Cf. note 14 on the previous letter.

²⁴ The seminarian Surra from Tigliole. He became a priest on September 21, 1867.

²⁵ The examinations for theology and Canon Law were held on November 3 and 4 on reentry into the seminary.

²⁶ The letter ends here, but it probably continued with one or more pages which have been lost.

TO SEMINARIAN JOSEPH RICCIO

*Vacation – Peace of conscience**Third War of Independence**In praise of the mail.*

[San Martino Tanaro, after June 20, 1866]

Dear Little Joe,

I hasten to answer your dearest letter after a period of some days – I didn't have any stamps – now I am well provided. So? By this time the decision must have been made already, and with what rectitude.

I have always known you to be inexorable and very firm in your resolutions; I suppose therefore that also in this new circumstance you have shown yourself in the fullness of that iron and tenacious will of yours. You have described to me in all their detail the particulars of the case. Even from a minute report of a matter which is so delicate, it is not really possible for a person far away and outside, that is, outside the situation in question, even with cognition of cause, to come up with a judgment. However, everything considered, it seems to me that the best way to avoid innumerable possibilities of unknown consequences, was exactly reasonable and dignified refusal.²⁷

Long live the refusals! The refusals, let us understand each other, of dangerous things, because if it is the case of a friend who tells you he will come for a visit after the threshing of the grain, oh, in this case things would change radically and one should rather cry out: Down with refusals and up with approvals. Ha! Ha! Ha! While I go about making a defense of your refusal, you may have been already conquered and convinced in Agliano by the brilliant and persuasive reasons of that lady and her daughter to abdicate from your resolve to refuse. If this is the case, I would still be well covered because, as I said above, the essence of the fact is entirely in the eventual concurrence of certain small circumstances which would render very opportune, indeed necessary, a conduct on your part different from that which you spoke of in your letter to me.

Enough. We will talk about it after everything is over. Besides, you are not the type of person to allow yourself to be fooled so easily. Keep your eyes open, use a little craftiness of the fox, a little prudence of the Christian: behold, these are the precautions you may use to protect yourself from all the eventualities, both present and future. And so I will now proceed to something else, with the hope that you will explain everything later in your next letter.

You tell me of the thing you did in the first day of vacation in Agliano. Here on my part is my story: having said “goodbye” to you at the gate of San Quirico,²⁸ I took note of the train schedule and returned to the Seminary. Oh how many memories – I visited once again the study hall; I gave once more a sad farewell to those silent corridors and to my little dear room, witness to so many things; I embraced once again some classmates who were still there; and I began to walk slowly and with a heavy heart toward the railroad station.

I had plenty of time and so I forced myself to enter a barbershop. I asked the “beard cutter” for his services, which he offered with the solicitude and especially with an ability which

²⁷ The first two paragraphs of this letter refer to a problem that Riccio was faced with at that time, but neither paragraph makes clear what the problem was about.

²⁸ A gate in the ancient wall that surrounded the city of Asti. This section of the walls was taken down to make room for the new railroad station and the gate did not exist any more in 1866. Therefore, Marelli uses the expression “gate of San Quirico” to denote the area where the railroad station was now located.

would have shamed a cutthroat. With a face red from the recent battle scars, I boarded the train, and made the trip to Vaglierano. From here, an old bus made me make an hour of solitary penance in its uncomfortable seat. At San Damiano I descended, and I had to swallow the bitter pill of a trip on foot in the sun for the rest of the way to the longed for San Martino.

Finally I arrived! The heart is filled with joy as we see our relatives in good health, our ancestral home, our private room, and all those thousand things that remind us of so many happy events of past vacations. In the midst of all these recollections, it was nice to remember you and all the other dear friends – imagining all of you here with me, anticipating with longing the time when I would actually enjoy the pleasure of your presence.

One thing that in the past years was a source of sadness or callousness, this year was instead a source of great consolation to me: to be at peace with my conscience.²⁹

And so it is: when in the midst of earthly joys we are able to bring in also a ray of light of the joy that comes from heaven, oh, then our hearts are certainly more satisfied and our happiness more complete.

Last Sunday (the first),³⁰ we did nothing less than a military march in search of cherries. I will explain. The Superintendent of Schools, the Rev. G.B. Torchio, pastor of San Martino, extended a formal invitation to the teacher to take the students on a military excursion. The provisions of wine and bread came from the parish rectory; the goal of the trip, that is, the cherry trees to climb were designated and provided for by the assistant pastor (the same who tells me to thank you courteously for the service of your good inkwell which has helped him find, if not a parish of his own, at least a second best.)

Therefore, the clergy, the faculty representative, and the students in good order and perfect discipline made their march, performed scrupulously the maneuvers on those fortunate trees, exhausted the program which required a bellyful of good time, and returned triumphantly to town with songs and “hails.” I assure you, the thousand incidents of that wonderful trip have given me much joy.

In passing, in order not to cause you melancholy with unpleasant news, I will tell you in a hurry that if we had delayed for another day our departure, the Vicar General³¹ would have postponed it to the twentieth, according to the permission he had just obtained from the Ministry of Public Schools. We escaped by the skin of our teeth, didn't we?

We are at war.³² Who is able to predict at this time into what terrible sea we are embarking. May God grant that this may not be a war of ruin and of death for the poor king and for poor Italy. The fortunes of war so far hang precariously and uncertainly; courage and numerical superiority do help, but up to a point; and then begins that secret play of factors which are always hidden in the hand of God. Oh, may He not allow that this poor country of ours, after the sacrifice of so much material and of so much blood, be forced into a shameful peace. For, as bad as a government may be, it is never licit to wish that the government of one's own nation would pass into the hands of foreigners. Rather, we ought to beg heaven that, after the victory over foreign enemies, it may make us conquerors also over the dangerous systems which have been inaugurated by internal enemies – *“ut e manibus inimicorum nostrorum liberati serviamus*

²⁹ A reference to his qualms of conscience for having left the seminary. Cf. also Letter 9.

³⁰ June 17, the first Sunday of his vacation.

³¹ Mons. Antonio Vitaliano Sossi, Vicar General of the Asti Diocese. The seminarians left for their vacation on June 11.

³² The Third War of Independence was declared on June 20, 1866, and was concluded with the Peace Treaty of Vienna on October 3, 1866.

illi”³³ – Perhaps when you write me again this thing may have already taken a more determined turn; any prediction would be immature and too uncertain – therefore, until then, we shall not speak of it any further.

Now let us return to ourselves. Have you then started your vacation well also? And Aluffi, what is his situation? Assuredly it is not a beautiful alternative to have to choose between paying several thousand lire or having to march off to war with a rifle. You, also, poor guy, must feel the consequences of all this, since you will not have your dear and faithful vacation companion at your side any more. When shall we see each other? I hope that it will be possible this year to finally realize that so longed for and dreamed of reunion of the two continents, that is, of the banks of the Tanaro. Heck, they, don’t work any harder at the Isthmus of Suez³⁴ to cut a way between the two seas than we here to join those two blessed shores, which awaits nothing else than a nod from us to embrace each other. About this we will make plans later. For now we ought to be satisfied with shortening the distance with writings and news.

What great thing is the mail! It makes us pass heavenly hours together; it joins us in spirit with our most dear friends; it gives us the opportunity of speaking to them at our own leisure the sweet and gentle words of friendship; it gives a means of communicating all the sentiments, all the beats of our heart. Oh, let us often make use of this divine messenger, the mail; let us use it to communicate to one another the joys and sorrow, to laugh and to cry together, to share our hopes and our fears, to encourage and strengthen each other in the difficult path of virtue.

Now I feel a pain to have to say goodbye – but I have to put an end to this writing because I have to give time to other answers which require of me care and urgency. This is also the reason why I have answered you, as the saying goes, in apostolic manner. I am reassured, though, by the thought of having written it as one would write in the language of the heart – God be with you – Remember your Joe during the day and in the moments in which you raise your soul to God in prayer. I have done it and will continue to do the same for you, desirous that in heaven as on earth may be united the names of the two

Joseph

P.S. Remember me every time in the evening you look upon the Tanaro Valley.

³³ So that, freed from the hands of our enemies, we may serve Him.

³⁴ The towns of San Martino and Agliano are located on one side and on the other of the Tanaro River. In 1866 the two banks of the river were not as yet linked by a bridge. Work on the Suez Canal was begun in 1859 and the Canal was inaugurated on November 17, 1869.

TO SEMINARIAN STEPHEN ROSSETTI

*Reading of Fenelon-Trip to
Turin – Sickness – Collection of
notes – Bardessono – Recollections*
[San Martino Tanaro, August 1, 1866]

My dear friend,

I have received with the greatest pleasure your most polished letter written in the grand language – that is, in the worldwide language of France. Apart from French self-conceit, I have to tell you that this language pleases me and that having written to me in French, you have given me the satisfaction of reading four pages from a friend written in the clear and attractive style of the inimitable Fenelon.³⁵ You are smiling? Let me give you then a few words of clarification. I never could set my mind to begin reading this golden book, *Adventure of Telemachus*, but this is exactly what I did and, after the boredom of the first pages, I began to experience in my reading something which was not boredom any more and little by little this something was approaching the pleasure of enjoyable reading. By the end, my heart was full of emotion and my mind was inebriated with the story of those great things so ineffably depicted.

Oh, what richness of wisdom, what strength of counsel, what gentleness of love in that book! I bless the great French prelate who conceived such a stupendous poem of ancient greatness, but I also bless the French language which not always dresses itself in whose's clothing, prostituting itself in trivialities and does not always offer itself to be used to express the impudence and the aberrations of a shameless coterie of demagogues, but dressed in beautiful and heavenly splendor, sings of triumphs of virtue and magnificently expresses the counsels of wisdom...

Allow me then to tell you that, in reading your opinion of Michelet,³⁶ the mind still excited by the beautiful pages of *Telemachus*, I felt like I was reading one of those beautiful passages of the French novel in which the great writer with the powerful flight of an eagle rises to meditate upon the various contingencies of the human family. If you have not as yet suspected it, I may now tell you the reason for which I do not answer you in French... Everything considered, if by writing to you what I am writing now will take me a couple of hours, by writing to you in French, it would take me at least two days. I am not far from the truth, am I? A couple of days ... and then? And then I would not be able to say everything I wanted to, nor half of it, ruining, corrupting, abusing a language in which I am worse than a beginner... Let us not waste time: let's go on. It is ten thirty p.m.; I am writing in my little bedroom while the others are asleep in the placid sleep of the night. The shame of having delayed, as you have done, to write to a friend giving him the latest news, has forced me to answer you immediately as soon as I received your letter, without wasting any time. The reason why I did not write to you are the following. The fundamental reason: chronological summary of all the things that happened after our separation at Villafranca: arrived in Turin; met Motta; on Thursday met Gay; on Friday,

³⁵ Francois Fenelon (1651 – 1751), French writer, prelate, and liberal Theologian whose theories and publications became the basis of profound political and cultural changes in France. *The Adventures of Telemachus* (1699) is a political novel expressing the concept that the king exists for his subject. This book for which Fenelon is best known also expresses an ardent denunciation of war and a belief in the fraternity of all nations.

³⁶ Jules Michelet (1798 – 1874), French historian. An incisive and prolific writer with republican and anticlerical tendencies, he was widely read during his lifetime.

Vandero, Faggiani, Lusana, etc.,³⁷ on Saturday, the departure of Motta; on Sunday, did not see anybody; on Monday, departure of Lusana, visit to Elia and general confession; on Tuesday, sickness which obliged me to defer my departure to Wednesday; departure and arrival at San Martino after various travel incidents; sickness; visit to the doctor and prognosis of a relapse of typhoid fever; eight days of strict medical care; peace of mind, water and diet; get well visits, other formalities and various annoyances, etc., etc. So this is my fundamental reason. After my recovery I was unable to write immediately to my friends (you are the first) and I tried first of all to fill that great moral void in which my sickness had left me and the disconcerted feeling of having left Turin without having been able to say goodbye to anyone. Let's not even speak of the physical void because it was just horrible. It took me no less than a week of jaw work to get over it and during this time I dismantled almost a kilo of bread a day.³⁸

You should also know that the absolute rest from any mental occupation during that one week period made my poor brain wander continually in some state of semi-consciousness dreaming of friends, trips, conversations, plans, hopes, doubts, uncertainties, difficulties, emotions, sorrows, and vicissitudes of this wretched human life.

At time this lethargy was complete, and the sleep which would come to lift me out from this semi-consciousness would hurl me into a vortex of visions more fantastic and more strange than the first. I was dreaming about being with Motta; we were talking and then we would go far, far away, as the words faded, the eyes became brilliant and seemed to reveal the harmonizing internal light of our thoughts. I dreamed I was with you on top of the highest mountain gazing into breathtaking depths of the abysses, and all of a sudden we were seated next to our beds late at night. Our voices were animated and our hearts were beating hard in the allurements of golden hopes in a future not too far away... And then you would disappear from my side, I was alone, the solitude would increase even more; everything would fade, I would hear nobody anymore around me, I would feel no need for anybody; and finally I would fall into a peaceful and tranquil sleep until I would wake to make an inventory of the visions I had dreamed.

You can easily imagine therefore, how difficult it was to get back to my books, to old habits, and to regain my former state. How many difficulties! I didn't feel like doing anything. I had planned to do some reading in French, Ah, I was not able to get started in any way. I had planned to make an inventory of all my papers and to put them in order, but I did not have any stomach for this either.

I had brought with me from Turin a new French book in six volumes on the spirit of history and on the method to study it (if you want to read it... Do I have to tell that it is at your disposal?). It was like trying to make a hole in the water: over one simple page I distorted my mouth in a hundred yawns and I finally put it in a corner of the bookshelf so that I would not have it under my eyes any more.

³⁷ For C.E. Motta, cf. Letter # 53; for Vandero, cf. Letter #1. Anthony Faggiani from Villafranca d'Asti, a friend and classmate of Marelo, ordained on September 19, 1868. Assigned as an associate pastor in Frinco, he became later pastor of Chiusano. Bishop Marelo appointed him to be his representative for the spiritual taking possession of the Acqui diocese on June 18, 1889 (Cf. Letter # 152). Severino Lusana, from Viarigi, was ordained priest on December 22, 1866, and later became pastor of Scurzolengo, James Gay, ex-seminarian from Tagliole d'Asti, became professor of literature in Asti.

³⁸ Marelo had already contracted typhoid fever in Turin in December 1863 after he had left the seminary. This sickness had brought him to the brink of death and he recovered only through a special intervention of the Virgin Mary after which he had committed himself to go back to the seminary. The trip to Turin, the relapse and recovery that he talks about in this letter must have occurred in the three last weeks of July.

Vandero used to send me regularly *The Turin, The Emporium The Illustrated, The Devil* and sometimes *The Cavour, The Ass*, etc. ... No sir, there was no way I could get interested in anything. Do you know where all my pleasures were? I'll give you a hundred guesses... They were in my bed, sleeping like a log. I spent some days in this state of pure and sheer vegetation and then to ask myself "Oh, my Pinottino"³⁹, what game are we playing? If you have in mind to spend your life by doing nothing you are greatly mistaken; this is a novelty which must have its end. Now then, take courage; you have to do something – make your choices but hurry and start doing something. From a small beginning greater things will come; what is important is that you begin..." And I began and I succeeded: I have already read *Telemachus* and many other books and now I am working full speed on more important things; you have read Michelet and I am now gathering notes for a project of which what the French philosopher and historian is treating is only a part and a single episode.⁴⁰

I expressed myself badly by saying that I am now gathering, because actually I have already gathered the notes for a long time. See, the last three years, I have been examining the ills of society and now I am only coordinating these notes into a great principle, into one fundamental idea which should be like the soul, like the center of the canvas.

When I went to Turin, I gathered the last notes which are connected to the first of two years back. Therefore, by the end of this vacation I hope I will be able to complete my research on this matter and have a finished work, if God will give me strength, courage and patience.

Now I will give you some news from Turin. Gay passed two of his exams successfully: those of college and those for his license – lucky him. I met Parruccati⁴¹ and, interpreting your wishes, I gave him your regards. I went to listen to Bardessono⁴² the courageous, the terrible Bardessono, the oracle of the ladies of Turin. Your eyes are wide open... Then let me tell you. Bardessono is a young priest, noble and good looking; noble not of a first class nobility but yet of that kind which is sufficient, conjointly with his ministry, to give him an opening into the best families of Turin; handsome with the beauty, as they say, of youth: freshness and liveliness. His conferences have a mixture of Lacordaire⁴³ (from whom he has adopted the name of conferences), of the Dominican Romanini and of Giordano⁴⁴; add to it a little touch of studied rhetoric, delivered with courage and energy.

He describes in true colors the life of the high society (since he preaches to the high society). He moralizes like a Savanarola⁴⁵ and castigates the vices of the present generation with a frankness which is quite original. If you would have heard him when he spoke of calumny (I heard him preaching this sermon)... – He depicted it as the terrible subverter of public peace and turns on the calumniators threatening them with the tremendous responsibility of their evil whispered words – oh, you would take him for the terrible friar of Florence when he was turning the people away from their vices with the threat of the wrath of God.

³⁹ Another popular name for Giuseppe (Giuseppino...Pinottino).

⁴⁰ It was Marellò's plan to write a book that would bring together political, historical, and economic elements. The following paragraphs give a more detailed description of his plan for the book. The book, however, was never finished and the notes for it have been lost. Cf. Letter # 9 also.

⁴¹ Ex-seminarian James Parruccati was native of Villa San Secondo.

⁴² Cf. also Letter ## 35 – 36.

⁴³ Jean B.H. Lacordaire (1802-1861), French Dominican priest, the greatest Roman Catholic preacher of the day.

⁴⁴ Romanini and Giordano, the greatest preachers in Piedmont during Marellò's times. Cf. also Letter # 35.

⁴⁵ Jerome Savanarola (1452 – 1498), Italian Dominican preacher and reformer, whose zealous attempts to uproot corruption in Florence ended in being burned at the stake as a heretic.

But, when you see him, all sweetness and honey, appealing to endearing words for the ladies' self-respect, begging them to donate their pendants, bracelets, and watches to adorn the church (he collected from them once in rings, bracelets, watches, etc., more than five thousand lire); when you see him from time to time move his intense and penetrating gaze from place to place and touching on his breast the tassel of his stole to show that delicate and well shaped hand of his, oh, then you too would say that the exalted and spiritualized minds of the female sex have to sympathize with that beautiful creature, who, from that pulpit with those moving and warm words makes their breasts beat with the emotions of everything that is good and beautiful. Things have gone so far that the gentle Turinese ladies in the last day of the month of Mary in the church of the Martyrs⁴⁶ had the parapet of the pulpit covered by thousands upon thousands of sweet-smelling roses patterned in a beautiful harmony of colors and alternating at intervals with roses of greater size.

Oh, gentle thought to make sure that that delicate little hand would not rest on the rough wood but upon a soft pater of intertwining flowers put together with long labor and great love by his adoring listeners. Things went so far that one day, to honor our Lady, at one point in his talk he commanded everybody to kneel and he was obeyed; on another occasion he commanded all to bring with them to the sermon on the next day a rose and he was obeyed – on another time he commanded that for the feast of Corpus Christi all the families of Doragrossa street must put out [on their windows and balconies as a sign of festivities] their tapestries and woe to those who did not; he would have had them shamed in public, and he was obeyed. To such a point did things come that under the porticoes are displayed his pictures portrayed in large and small sizes, in one pose and in another, in color and not in color. Do you have enough of this little piece of history? The time passes: it is now sometime since the eleventh hour has struck slowly through the space which separates the hill and the belfry of Govone⁴⁷ from my little room; from my mouth has exhaled little by little the smoke of a cigar which reminds me of the brevity of time in which fate unrolls the thread of our life. From the room next to mine comes the light sound of breathing of one sleeping there... I go to the window and I see nature, or rather do not see nature, tacitly intent on her work of vegetation, of the great gestation which takes place within her womb.

Rossetti, let us come back to us. Your letter reminds me of something which I consider as one of my most beautiful remembrances.

Some months back at this time we were working under a little light encouraging each other to patiently put up with and face the hardship of our lack of rest. At times we talked for awhile; at other times we were lost in our thoughts.

Oh, those talks and meditations were not useless! I treasure within my heart all the words which are said between friends and I will print them there so as never to forget them.

Now God be with you, my dear friend; I will not say good night because it is too late for that and I'm allowed to think that by this time your head is already resting on the pillow of repose; I will await that your eyes will open to the kiss of the morning; I will say "good morning" and I will wish you a good beginning in the tasks of the day. Goodbye. Write to me soon and open to me confidently your heart because you already know that the letters of Rossetti are always well received as messages of peace.

Your Devoted Friend,

⁴⁶ The Church of the Holy Martyrs in Turin, Doragrossa Street (now Garibaldi Street).

⁴⁷ The town of Govone is the nearest to San Martino.

Joe

P.S. Forgive me if I have made any mistake and perhaps did not make any sense at times. I hastily put down on paper the string of the thoughts that were crowding my mind in a confused manner. I will write soon to Faggiani and we will make plans for the outing; I will bring then the volume of Assedio.⁴⁸ Say "hello" for me to those whom you will see. Write right away and at length. Goodbye. I received your letter on the evening of August 1st – I have not received yet the books which you say you have mailed with the letter; I believe, however, that this is only a postal delay.

TO SEMINARIAN STEPHEN ROSSETTI

*Humanitarianism and Catholic
Apostolic – Vacation news – The
Christian woman – Reading of the
Bible and of Balbo.*

[San Martino Tanaro, after August 2, 1866]

⁴⁹...Having given up being for God, I began to live for an idol of flesh and then for another more jealous and demanding end – ambition. The seductive images and caressing promises of this deceptive goddess had led me to the point of not thinking and not desiring anything else but one thing: the humanitarian apostolate (note what kind of big words the inventive imagination of ambition can come up with). In this regard the intellect had a great master-plan to develop, the will had its own faith to put forward, and the human person a great work to put into action.

The first step would have been journalism; this would have been followed by the step of public exposure; and then doctrinal proselytism followed by the practical one which would be the last phase of propaganda and the beginning of the new system of social organization. Prince Napoleon, on May 15th, 1865, proclaimed solemnly this system in Ajaccio perhaps in spite of and perhaps with the connivance of his cousin.⁵⁰ The same Prince, in July 1866, stated in Paris: “France must be the support of Prussia, the Fatherland of the great Luther (sic), which attacks Austria with its arms and its ideas.”

The Baron Ricasoli,⁵¹ still dictator of Italy, in July 1866, published a letter addressed to the humanitarian associations, calling them the mirror and the reflection of the sentiment of all the Italians. As you can see, having to do with this kind of people, it is easy to propagate revolutionary doctrines. Priests and friars in jail, liberal thinkers elevated to the status of heroes. Guerrazzi⁵² never knew how to find the beast “monk” in any natural history, the beast “monk” in deference to the Guerrazzian affirmation, was erased from the list of the other beasts as an empty name. Civinini⁵³ calumniated evangelical morality as contrary to the warlike spirit and to the pursuit of heroism. By now in the Italian army the things used for worship have become useless junk in the ambulances of the medical corps and the chaplains have become social entertainers of officers.

Jurists of the new school declared the state a moral entity without religion; the King as the personification of the state, in his appeal for the national war, reviews all the elements of

⁴⁹ The first and last pages of this letter are missing.

⁵⁰ Napoleon III, emperor of the French People (1852 – 1870). Prince Napoleon (Napoleon Joseph Bonaparte) was the son of Jerome Bonaparte, the former King of Westphalia, cousin of Napoleon III, and a Corsican Deputy to the French National Assembly.

⁵¹ Bettino Ricasoli (1809 – 1880), Italian politician and Prime Minister (1860 – 1862, 1866 – 1867). He is here called “dictator of Italy” as a reference to his personality and to the fact that he had been the dictator (Prime Minister of the Archduchy of Tuscany with dictatorial powers) during the turbulent years 1859 – 1860 that led to the unification with Piedmont for which he was instrumental.

⁵² Dominic Guerrazzi, Italian politician and writer. He considered the Pope and the Papal States as an obstacle to be eliminated in order to achieve Italian unity.

⁵³ Joseph Civinini, journalist and politician. He was the editor of *The Nation* of Florence and a deputy to the Italian Parliament.

human power and leaves out the greatest power of all which is God. Cialdini,⁵⁴ the thunderbolt of war, the first soldier of Italy, gives to the press a communiqué in which he declares he abandons himself into the hands of destiny. Garibaldi,⁵⁵ who is called “the heart of Italy” by the best expression of Italian adulation, declared that he adores God in spirit and truth under the vaults of heaven, but hates priests to the death (what a tender little heart!). Mazzini,⁵⁶ the personified wisdom of Italy, the inspiration of youth in their twenties, proclaims himself the Apostle of the idea (an idea very complex!). Napoleon, the political sphinx of Europe, in 1866, declares solemnly in France his determination to develop to the fullest the principles of '89.⁵⁷

Now you can see how many theoretical supporters my master-plan had, how many assurances of growth and of diffusion. Prescinding from the decrees of God, all human circumstances smiled upon our hopes: free speech, freedom of action, rather encouraged the one and the other, the crowds ready and easily swayed, the open road ahead leading toward a very attractive goal. I said “prescinding from the degrees of God,” because in this alone the men of good will should put their trust now, because humanly speaking they are totally unable to stop the ever growing wave of irreligion and license.

I have given you a resume of all the resources which the revolutionary system may gather for its purposes and I have described to you the social question from studies made of actual facts. Oh, that God would grant that, as I was full of energy and shrewdness in carefully studying and running the ways of iniquity, so now I would have the will and courage to put into action all the counter-projects; to devise a counter-attack; to destroy that which I have built; to build that which I have destroyed; to look for new ideas; to change, to cut, renovate, purify, in order to rise again all at once afterward to new and more solid convictions, to a faith more beautiful and vigorous; to the apostolate par excellence which is humanitarian as no other can be (because Catholic) and more than any other conducive to the liberty and prosperity of the people, to the great apostolate which for eighteen centuries has been proclaiming from East to West, from North to the South: the alliance of nations, the principle of free association, the emancipation of the masses, the equality of the races, the practical toleration (not doctrinal, that is another thing), the equitable distribution of riches, the priority of personal capabilities instead of the privileges of birth (for example, the ecclesiastical hierarchy), the equality of the powerful with the weak, the monarch with the subject before the fundamental law of the justice truth, the rights of nationality and of race (recognized also in the liturgies and rituals), the cooperation among all the nations guaranteed by one principle of authority (the teaching Catholic Church), the progress of human intelligence, the apotheosis of heroism and of sacrifice (“This is my command, that you love...There is no greater love than that of laying down one's life for his friends.” St. John, the Evangelist.)⁵⁸.

The humanitarian program of the Christian Religious, without considering that it is a little more brilliant than that of the associations set up just for this purpose, has also the advantage of antiquity over the latter and the merit of having applied it on a vast scale, a scale

⁵⁴ Henry Cialdini (1811 – 1892), general and diplomat, head of the armed forces after the defeat of Custoza in 1866.

⁵⁵ Joseph Garibaldi (1807 – 1882), Italian patriot and general. He and a “thousand men” conquered Sicily and Southern Italy bringing them into the Kingdom of Italy under the Savoy House of Piedmont.

⁵⁶ Joseph Mazzini (1805 – 1872), Italian patriot and theoretician. He was an untiring revolutionary writing extensively for the cause of Italian and European unity. He even conceived the idea of a “universal religion” incorporating the tenets of Christianity and the common elements of other religions and secular ideas of brotherhood of all men.

⁵⁷ 1789, the year of the French Revolution.

⁵⁸ John 15: 12 – 13.

with which nobody in the world will ever be able to compete. Oh, enslaved liberal thinkers who pass yourselves for the delight of the human race and are rather its greatest shame. Oh, you parasite bugs who so generously go about sucking the marrow of poor humanity, tell me if you please, for how much is your apostolate for sale? Your party is legion, but tell me how many in this legion of yours, by assuming the priesthood of truth, have made the oath to conquer the terrible enemies of truth, error and human passions more with word than with example? Oh, go away, because if ever the masses whom you wish to instruct would follow your example just for a moment, Europe would find itself immediately in the hands of the most powerful. European civilization would certainly have more to gain if you would yield it to an invasion of Japanese monks who, although they preach a doctrine obscured by error, teach, however, a morality a thousand times more pure and closer to perfection than yours, oh, you native propagandists.

Oh, yes, go also into the regions of the East to teach and promote the emancipation of women, to cover them afterward with the shame of your lewd conduct. Go there to teach the redistribution of wealth which for you always means a new way of getting at the purse of the poor. Go, go and proclaim the right to work, the supremacy of personal abilities, the freedom of production, but at the same time continue as well to live off the sweat of someone else, take advantage of someone else's work, and to become the manipulators of public opinion. Would that instinct of self-preservation be able to suggest to you counsels of prudence and of self-reserve in the midst of these people who, perhaps, would not surrender themselves immediately to all your subtleties; would that the courage of precipitous flights save you in the hour of danger from the rods and clubs of those people without education.

These are my wishes for you leaving everything else up to the judgment of God who in His mercy is able to make grace super-abound where the sin is greater and who may have, perhaps, decreed that you, persecutors of Damascus, will become the martyrs of Rome.

Beloved friend, forgive me for all these long-winded discourses which help me to counterbalance the rigid solitude in which I find myself. I have no one with whom I can exchange a few words, and now that I can do it, I may abuse it. But you are so good that you'll put up with me and will understand that the in special conditions in which I find myself there is indeed a need to lift the imagination with beautiful and comfortable thoughts. The great Beccaria⁵⁹ wrote that the souls of men, like fluids, always put themselves at the same level of the objects which surround them. This truth describes my situation perfectly: talking about good and useful things I feel in me as it were a force which draws me up and up in a region more serene and pure than this earth of ours; I feel an instinct, I dare say, of progression, a desire of perfection, an aspiration for heaven.

Therefore, if by speaking, writing and meditating about beautiful things, our soul also is embellished and becomes better, why not to speak or write or meditate always, no matter how, even at the cost of violating the law of aesthetics and of provoking the censures of rhetoricians and the idle talk of pedantic grammarians? Yet there are many hours in the day and perhaps even many days in the week in which we find ourselves in such a cold and dull mood of sloth that all the faculties of our soul become hardened. We are really fortunate if, when reading or writing a letter the first noxious vapors of sloth appear, we are able to dissipate them and thus avoid a lowering of temperature which is always harmful to our moral vegetation (if I am allowed to use this expression).

⁵⁹ Beccaria Cesare (1738 – 1794), Italian criminologist, economist, and jurist. In his *Essay on Crimes and Punishments* (1764) he argued against the abuses of criminal law, especially against capital punishment and torture. His views inspired reforms in the penal code of many European nations and the U.S.A.

Now, I will pass to some more contemporary things. My vacations are going by very fast. I have received from Severino⁶⁰ a short letter which was like a humble traveling companion to a great and long letter from Motta. Even Perruccati has written to me a long letter before crossing the Po River. Riccio has not written to me anymore. Probably he is in the process of attempting a great moral revolution which will correct him of all those weaknesses that you well know. Oh, if it were possible to send a petition to the Father who is in Heaven so that He would remove from the earth that evil beast which is called selfishness, it would be beautiful to live here. But, if God does not allow us to kill this monster, he does not refuse us, however, the strength to free ourselves from its venomous bites when it attacks us.

I hope that Riccio as he grows all the more in his good resolutions will be able to value all the more also that supreme duty of charity by which we ought to love each other and to love each other with a growing measure of affection according to the requirements derived from sharing the same vocation and from the homogeneity of behavior which come from sharing the same age and the same common life. I stayed at the home of Vandero for two days: he came up from Turin alone and with the task of checking if everything was ready for the trip to the country by all the family. Now he has gone back to Turin and will come with the family later. The Professor Elia has already arrived with his mother and sister.⁶¹ The latter is truly an angel from paradise for her beautiful qualities of mind and soul. Even at the time when I used to look at women more like a George Sand would than a Silvio Pellico, it never crossed my mind to call her a pious humbug, like I used to call many other women. That aura of reserve that radiates from her face, that gentle and tranquil look of hers have always aroused in me whenever I saw her a feeling of veneration as to a superior being. As in the past, so also now I'm reminded of the truth of those words of Dante.⁶² "just by looking at them I myself am lifted up."

Oh, virgin fortunate, may God in heaven give you credit for all the good thoughts which your reserve has always aroused in my mind. Every morning, whenever I see you at church in an act of profound prayer, I ask the Lord to be able to possess a pure heart, a humble and faithful soul as your, and I wish our country's women were like you in the observance of the most difficult duties and in the pursuit of the most lofty virtues. The moral decadence of Italy comes in great part from the lax status of women in society. Let there be born again in them in an instant the consciousness of their ancient dignity and with modest young ladies, with faithful spouses, with mothers dedicated to teaching their children, will come a generation of serious and well-behaved young men, of temperate husbands dedicated to their homes, of model fathers of families.

You ask me what books you should read. My poor opinion is this: few but good. The effects of what we read are not immediately felt and this makes us many times doubt the fruitfulness of our reading. Let us persuade ourselves that everything we read with conviction and with love imprints itself indelibly within us and will never be erased. Let us not be disturbed if, in trying to trace the origins of our ideas, we are not able to find their original form. The seed is transformed and produces a fruit which does not at all resemble the first embryo. If we are capable of carrying on a thought pattern with synthesis, analysis, induction, and analogy, we ought to be grateful to those good books which have given us the know-how.

⁶⁰ Cleric Severino Lusana (cf. Letters #4); for Motta & Perruccati, cf. Letters #4 also. For Riccio, cf. Letters #2.

⁶¹ Virginia Elia. The family had received a special permission from the Holy See to keep the Blessed Sacrament in the house where they stayed, "even against the wishes of the Pastor." (Cf. Letter #118.)

⁶² Dante Alighieri (1265 – 1321), the greatest Italian poet and the "father" of the Italian language. His *Divine Comedy* is a classic of world literature.

Would you know to which book, to what kind of books specifically you owe your debt of gratitude for this progress? All of them and none of them. Time makes possible the aggregation of many vagrant atoms and the result is a body. Which atom can call itself the progenitor of the whole? Every book which we read is an atom we aggregate to the whole. Credit should be given to time or better to God who makes the assimilation fruitful. Coming to the concrete: read the Bible which is an inexhaustible fountain of truth. Oh, if everybody⁶³ would read it, there would not be such petulance in the learned who know so well how to mislead people.

Become familiar with the thoughts of Balbo⁶⁴ who will give you good criteria for judging many questions which are debated today. Here is the very reason why we should not be discouraged if there are no immediate effects. There are seeds that rot for a year in the ground and then sprout without anybody knowing how.

If you find in the rectory other books which treat of contemporary questions with authority and depth of judgment, put yourself to the task of studying them thoroughly. I don't have to prove to you that it is our duty to always keep the supernatural sciences on the same level as and in concordance with the natural sciences both experimental and speculative.⁶⁵ I do not know Wiseman,⁶⁶ but he cannot be but good under this point of view.

I recommend to you above all to write out on paper the reasoning you develop in your mind.⁶⁷ Our intellect is like one of those phenomena which we observe so many times in the animal order: the more we take from it, the more it wants to give and the more production is increased....

⁶³ Here Marelo is a forerunner of our present day emphasis on the reading of the Bible encouraged and recommended by Vatican II.

⁶⁴ Cesare Balbo (1789 – 1853), renowned Italian historian and politician.

⁶⁵ Here Marelo enunciates a principle that has been incorporated in the Oblate Constitutions (1981) art. 109.

⁶⁶ Wiseman, Nicholas (1802 – 1865), English prelate, first Cardinal of Westminster (1850) when Pius IX reestablished the Catholic hierarchy in England.

⁶⁷ For an example of Marelo's notes on his readings, see *Scritti e Insegnamenti* pp.13 – 19,34 – 39 and spanish *Escrito y Enseñanzas*.

TO SEMINARIAN STEPHEN ROSSETTI

*Pascal, Chateaubriand,
Massillon; In praise
of Manzoni.*

[San Martino Tanaro, August 20, 1866]

⁶⁸...But, let the will of God be done Who, as St. Paul says, will not let you be tested beyond your strength. Along with the test He will give you the strength to endure it.⁶⁹ So pray for me.

Concerning my third driving thought, Riccio is at the root of it because for two months he has not sent me any news at all. As you can tell, my friends keep me on my toes. In seventy days, four correspondents of your caliber have sent me four letters in all. And I instead, during the same period of these four letters, have sent bravely double the amount. Ah, I understand the irony of it, you want to make me pay in kind my past year's negligence. If this is the case, I will bow my head mumbling that I deserve it. But, getting back to Riccio, he is a special case. To write to me eight days after the departure and then not to write me at all in two months smells a little of a mystery. Anyway, I want to interpret everything in the best light and I wrote him a very long letter which will stir him, I hope, from his two months' lethargy.

Free from these three stones which were weighing heavenly in my stomach, I will tell you about some other little things of secondary interest. Do you remember when we met Borio⁷⁰ under the Pogliani colonnade⁷¹ and he told us he would come to see me one day? Well, he did come the day before yesterday on his way to Govone. I stayed with him no more than half an hour, but with all my best attempts and skirmishes to force him to open up I did not succeed in making the slightest breach in him, so valiant is he in fending off the rapier-thrusts of the curious. I saw him go as he came, leaving me behind in a total ignorance of his past, present and future activities.

I am turning over in my mind the *Pensées* of Pascal.⁷² How correct and truthful is the portrait which Chateaubriand⁷³ gives us of this immortal son of Catholic France! How consoling it is to see a man, so well versed in all the sciences, exclaim at the age of thirty – five the biblical saying “vanity of vanity...”, and give himself with childlike simplicity to the study of Scriptures. The Engineer, Mathematician, Philosopher, and the man of letters senses in a flash the tremendous truth that our life is an expiation of an ancient sin and withdraws into solitude, there consecrating himself to the love of God and to the service of his neighbor; there he conceives the plan of a book which ought to compel by way of persuasion and of love all those who in good faith misbelieve to enter into the bosom of the Church, he prepares the material by writing on pieces of paper his daily thoughts, and he dies at the age of thirty-nine with the regret of having left only a rough draft of his work, but happy to go to heaven to receive the reward of his long sufferings. On reading the thoughts of Pascal one has the feeling of visiting the ruins of

⁶⁸ In this letter also the first and last pages are missing.

⁶⁹ I Cor. 10:13.

⁷⁰ Probably an ex-seminarian.

⁷¹ The Pogliani colonnade is on the East side of the Alfieri Square in Asti.

⁷² Blaise Pascal (1623 – 1662), French philosopher, mathematician, and physicist considered one of the great minds of Western Culture.

⁷³ Francois Chateaubriand (1768 – 1848), French writer and statesman, most famous for his *The Genius of Christianity* and his *Autobiography*.

eastern civilizations: a feeling of marvel and pain. Oh, when will a new vigorous and courageous mind come who will be able to pick up the heritage of Pascal and hurl a new challenge to our all-pervasive Rationalism?

I have also read the *Martyrs of Christianity* by Chateaubriand. Would you believe it? In the hundred times I have taken it up to read it, I have never been able to read more than a few pages at the beginning. But now I have read it with ever increasing satisfaction and I have come to agree with all the applause that the author of this stupendous Christian poem has received from everybody. I would like to encourage all those assiduous adorers of pagan literature to read it, all those people who have persecuted Manzoni,⁷⁴ the creator of that new literary school, who, making good use of both classicism and romanticism, was able to avoid the too liberal elements of the former without falling into excessive proclamations of the latter. Oh, may we see to it that the generation coming up would be able to recognize in Manzoni the man who found a happy medium between the two warring schools; may we see to it, as Gioberti⁷⁵ used to say, that he be recognized as the standardbearer of a new conciliatory school to put an end once and for all to the poetic worshippers of the wasteland of Venus and to the nebulous, vacuous utterance of a thousand Byrons⁷⁶ magnified a hundred times. These are the thoughts that came to me while reading the graceful pages of the French Viscount.

The other day, I had the opportunity of reading that terrifying sermon of Massillon⁷⁷ on the elect which made the audience suddenly stand up in panic thinking that perhaps the end of the world had already come. I found the sermon the most beautiful experiment in the efficacy of religious speech, dark and terrifying in the style of Isaiah, sad and mournful as in Jeremiah, ingratiating and persuasive as in all the biblical writers.

⁷⁴ Alessandro Manzoni (1785 – 1848), the most famous 19th century Italian novelist, poet, and playwright, author of the “*The Betrothed*”.

⁷⁵ Vincenzo Gioberti (1801 – 1852), Italian priest, statesman, and philosopher.

⁷⁶ George Gordon Noel Byron (1788 – 1824), English poet, one of the most important and versatile writers of the romantic movement.

⁷⁷ Jean - Baptiste Massillon (1663 – 1742), famous French preacher and Bishop. The sermons that Marellò refers to is the Lenten homily “on the Fairness of the Elect” delivered at the Versailles royal chapel in 1704 in the presence of King Louis XIV.

TO SEMINARIAN STEPHEN ROSSETTI

*Naval defeat at Lissa – Italian politics –
Communion in prayer – Invitation to San Martino*
[San Martino Tanaro, after August 25, 1866]

...⁷⁸ our vacations are quickly coming to an end. We had one hundred and fifty days of vacation and we have already spent half. What can we do? Peruccati wrote to me again saying that he is now near Cividale⁷⁹ in the mountains among the Slavic people and the Slovenians. Now I know that they had to evacuate the area because of political events there;⁸⁰ with little honor, and the poor Boggio had to drink a doubly bitter dosage of the waters of Lissa without being able to sing with the French poet: "...has lived too long who for the fatherland has died."

Now we have every reason to be satisfied. Dishonored already beforehand throughout Europe for our misadministration, for our bankrupt financial condition, for our diplomatic servitude, for our ill-advised political maneuvers, we were lacking yet this occasion to be dishonored fully, even in our military pride. Defeated on all fronts, in the mountains, on the plains and on the sea, the Supreme Command had to tell the king's Government that our army is not in condition to withstand the Austrian Army.

Oh, I feel rising within me flashes of shame just thinking about the dishonest language with which our newspapers and press not long ago were publicizing in shameful terms the political testament of Franz Joseph.⁸¹ Impotence is not contemptible except when it goes along with bragging as well. Italy knows all about it. I will not write any more about this sorrowful history, but if I were to tell the whole truth I would never be able to finish. Never mind. God has put a limit to the arrogance of the fool as to the violent waves of the sea: *ultra non preteribit*.⁸² Let us accept with humble brow the decrees of His Eternal Wisdom.

I have no news from our friends. I stayed with Vandero for two days at San Luigi⁸³ where I was on some business. His family is still in Turin. Torchio, the ex-cleric of the Penitentiary,⁸⁴ is a prisoner of war. Botto, the editor of the "*Turin Gazette*" has died. The political opponent of Ricasoli, Farini⁸⁵, the lunatic, has gone to rejoin his friend Cavour.⁸⁶ The same has happened to Senator Sforza Cesarini. Did your uncle pick up a good number (for the military service)? The armistice and the probability of peace are manna from heaven. There is no way one can instill confidence into these recruits, even by pointing out all the probabilities of a physical discharge. My brother trembles already at the thought of just passing the physical exam and calls upon God to free him from this great infamy (sic).

⁷⁸ The first page (or pages?) is missing.

⁷⁹ Cividale, a city in the Venetian Region in the Province of Udine, North-East of Venice

⁸⁰ The Third War of Independence against Austria (during the Prussian-Austrian War). The Piedmontese troops were defeated at Custoza (June 24) and at the naval battle of Lissa (June 20) where the journalist Pietro Carlo Baggio met his death on the Adriatic Sea, on the admiral ship. Since Prussia (Piedmont's ally) won the war, Austria was forced to cede the Venetian Region to Piedmont in the Peace Treaty of Vienna (October 3, 1866).

⁸¹ Franz Joseph (1830 – 1915), Emperor of Austria (1848 – 1915).

⁸² 'No trespassing.'

⁸³ San Luigi is a little town near San Damiano d'Asti where Vandero was born.

⁸⁴ Canon Giovanni Cerruti, Penitentiary of the Asti Cathedral (cf. Letter # 1).

⁸⁵ Luigi Carlo Farini (1812 – 1866), succeeded Urbano Rattazzi as Prime Minister and in 1863 started to give signs of mental illness. Cavour had died in 1861. For Ricasoli, cfr. Letter 5, No.3.

⁸⁶ Camillo Cavour (1810 – 1861), Italian Statesman. As Prime Minister of the king of Piedmont, he worked tirelessly to bring Italy under the rule of his king.

There is a thirty-month old child in the neighborhood who, because of the richness of his mother's breasts to which he is still very much attached, is so round, smooth, and ruddy that he looks like a cupid. When I pass by his house and I see him smile mischievously, a mischievousness that I interpret as a request for a search in my pockets (often the repositories of some well liked sweets) he reminds me of your Nicolaus (I was about to write "little Nick"). From what you tell me, he must be a carbon copy of our Petie (this is his name).

Spoil him a little bit for me and tell him that I am in love with his innocence and that I envy those beautiful years of his which once passed will not return anymore.

Here I end. The letter to Riccio and yours have exhausted my letter writing resources and I feel tired. Goodbye. When you offer your homage to the Almighty, remember also your poor friend.

The communion of prayer, after the Eucharist, is the most consoling truth of our Faith to be found in the Creed. All the others cause us to fear, but this one places in our hands the powerful means to do violence, so to speak, to the mercy of God. Oh, let's make use of it, my dear friend, let us interweave our prayers, and may the Angel of forgiveness keep count of it in that frightful record book of things to be expiated.

It is the season of joyful get togethers and I am happy in the hope of having you here for a few days with me among the joyful hills of San Martino Tanaro. Make sure that my hopes will not be in vain and at your arrival you will receive a million thanks.

I give you a sad farewell and I declare with my whole heart that I am your unending friend

Joseph Marello

Be mindful that our current accounts show a credit on my part of twenty pages. Send me at least a half of them. I insist on the invitation of your coming here to San Martino. How many things to see and to say! Write to me quickly and don't say "no."

TO SEMINARIAN JOSEPH RICCIO

*Invitation to San Martino – Desire for good –
Egoism and Christian unselfishness – Seminary news.*

[San Martino Tanaro, August 28, 1866]

My very good Riccio,

I am writing to you a few things in a hurry. I enjoyed your letter very much because I learned from it many things, and precious news. I admire and praise your great industriousness. Since laziness is the father of vice, so too is industriousness the mother of virtues. After having read many times the first page of your letter, I came to the conclusion that I could not understand anything about your correspondence with Rossetti. By the way: we have a nice opportunity to unravel the knot. I have invited Rossetti to come here for a get-together with Motta. He has accepted my invitation and has told me that (as long as Motta was agreeable) he would be in Asti on Monday, September 3rd, ready for his trip to San Martino. Why don't you set the date of your outing for Monday also? In this way we will bring together the same little gathering we used to have in your room at the seminary. The difficulty in finding a place to sleep would be no problem at all if you are satisfied with sleeping double and a little uncomfortable at night. What do you think of it? We will put together such a rambling caravan the like of which has never been seen. I do not want to influence your freedom in deciding about it. I leave you completely free in this regard.

If the circumstances would not allow you to change the plans you have already made, I will simply fall back on the status quo, that is, the promises made in your last letter. Is it alright with you? You tell me in your letter how difficult it is for you to understand how it is possible to write a letter like my last one. If I have well grasped the meaning of your words, you are amazed by the Christian devotion you seemed to perceive in a part of my writing. Oh dear! It is only too true that our heart in pouring itself out to friends opens itself to noble sentiments and makes the pen write in a language full of love, hope, and faith the most ineffable yearnings toward the great ideals of virtue. At the same time our will, weak and poor, does not know how to put into practice even minimally its sublime impulses, its own generous resolutions. Experience tells us everyday, that in our action we come up always short of what we have resolved in words.

Therefore, do not think of me more than what I am... Consider me as a miserable little Christian who aspires to his own betterment, but who walks forward with a vacillating and faltering step. What is the use of trying to cover it up? At every instant we find something to humble us, at every instant we feel stirring in us the evil tendency of our original sickness and are we to raise with haughty ridiculousness our proud brow? Oh why not confess rather our weaknesses when the Sacred Word tells us: *Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam...*⁸⁷

My dear Riccio, let us revive our faith; this is the flame which ought to open for us the new and difficult paths of virtue. May not the thought of our insignificance daunt us; it ought to give us instead a reason for greater trust in Him who is a help for everything and for all. Let us love each other. St John the Evangelist, old and unable to carry on his ministry any longer, used to have himself carried on the arms of his disciples and never ceased to repeat these words:

⁸⁷ “God resists the proud, but He gives His grace to the humble.” (Jas. 4:6; I Pet. 5:5)

*Diligite alterutrum ut salvemini.*⁸⁸ And St. Augustine used to say: *Ama et fac quod vis.*⁸⁹ All the distractions of this world tend to neutralize this heavenly sentiment of love and to replace it with the personal spirit rooted in the egotistical instincts which we carry with us from nature.

Our ministry, on the contrary, places continuously under our eyes the most splendid examples of abnegation and of love, beginning with the God-man, who sacrificed his very self as a victim of love, up to the little lady who offers to God her humble prayer interceding for her sinful brothers—*Ama et fac quod vis.*⁸⁹ Let us love and then, by all means, let us do what pleases us most. In this way, after having completed peacefully our humble career down here, we may be able to arrive to the glorious reward which God has prepared for us up there.

In your letter you give me a lot of important news. What you tell me about Professor Leone⁹⁰ has already been confirmed, that is, it was confirmed by the Theologian Elia, who, by all appearances, does not give me any indication he will soon follow suit. I am sorry about Canta⁹¹ who has wasted his time in the seminary: he did not take care of things when he should have and, *vice versa*, he should have provided for things when he did not. May God help him and keep him from evil. I heard, I have been told that Ciattino⁹² has been putting more irons in the fire than he can handle. Poor fellow! He could have taken care of his own affairs and “let the waters run down the river.” Instead, he gets mixed up in those accursed female problems which will end by ruining him. Poor seminary! How badly you reflect the purpose for which Charles Borromeo instituted you and the Bishop of Asti built you.⁹³ Satan has made his nest in you and corruption has erected its pulpit there for the diffusion of its evil teachings. Let us pray. Let us bear patiently the evils which God permits to conform us to his will. I repeat, let us purify our souls in love, in the love of God, in the love of friends... and also of those who hate us. My dear Joseph, goodbye, pray for your

namesake, who will in his turn remember you.

⁸⁸ “Love one another so that you may be saved.”

⁸⁹ “Love and you can do what you want.”

⁹⁰ Francesco Leone, ex-Carmelite, was professor of systematic philosophy in the Asti Seminary. Elia was professor of dogmatic theology.

⁹¹ Giovanni Canta, ex-seminarian, native of Villanova d’Asti.

⁹² What this seminarian had been involved in exactly is not known, but the following remarks of Marelli imply some kind of moral scandal.

⁹³ St. Charles Borromeo, (1538 – 1584) Archbishop Cardinal of Milan, is credited with the institution of Seminaries in Northern Italy after the decree of the Council of Trent. Bishop Paul Maurice Caissotti of Asti had the diocesan seminary built between 1763 – 1775 according to blueprints drawn up by Count Benedict Alfieri.

TO SEMINARIAN STEPHEN DELAUDE

*Plan for a trip to Rome – Combination of powers –
Ideals of the last six years – War against compromise.*

[San Martino Tanaro, July – August 1866]

Silence — with everyone —

*Scripta manent*⁹⁴ — words fade away, but what is put in writing remains. I have a thousand things to tell you, but since God alone has the prerogative of exhausting a subject at one time, I shall have to resign myself, like everyone else, to filtering my thoughts through time and space *successively and by degrees*. Now to jot down the points.

The trip to Rome⁹⁵ has brought to the surface many *chemical affinities* previously unknown. Here's what I mean: in our personalities there are many *points of contact*, a fact that will be clearly experienced once we have reduced our individual selves to a common denominator. Human *potential* is without limit. I'll spare you the proof of this, which is easily found in the S.S.⁹⁶ themselves. It all depends on the value of the *coefficient*, and for human beings every occasion, every event, however accidental it may appear, can constitute a good and beautiful coefficient. Happy the person who can reach under the shell of things. Arithmetic is a shell, it is the mysterious language of a science of which we have as yet penetrated only the material elements. Two *factors* that are multiplied, fused, and then transformed into a great Product: this indeed is a mortal phenomenon that can lay the foundation of a vast system — the system of *combined powers*. Here on earth everything is the work of combination; and were it not for fear of falling into heresy, I would say that God himself is a combination — the first and ultimate combination of all perfection that blend together, complete, multiply, and elevate each other exponentially, thus attending to an infinite value. But getting back down to earth: music is a combination of arid notes; and seven sounds combine by Rossini,⁹⁷ that is, seven factors of Rossini, result in a product that has the power to stir an entire people and to make this people burst forth into cries of enthusiasm that cannot find expression in any tongue. A little minium, carmine, sepia, etc. correctly mixed, that is, four or five factors handled by Sanzio⁹⁸ and you have a Madonna straight from Heaven. Some chemical agents when properly combined can produce the ferment of the entire earthly mass; and a few figures combined and recombined by a great person like Newton⁹⁹ can unfold the laws of universal gravitation. Hurrah for combination! Notice, God himself confirmed this great truth when He taught us to combine ourselves (as far as it is possible) with His very self by bonding us with His flesh. And Gregory VII,¹⁰⁰ the son of a poor barrel-maker, was able to shake up the world and found a new

⁹⁴ What is written remains.

⁹⁵ Marellò and other classmates were hoping to make a pilgrimage to Rome right after their priestly ordination. The plan did not materialize (cf. Lett. 15).

⁹⁶ Sacred Scriptures.

⁹⁷ Gioachino A. Rossini (1792 – 1868), Italian composer of comic operas most famous for his *The Barber of Seville* (1816). He was the most successful operatic composer of his times.

⁹⁸ Raffaello Sanzio (1483 – 1520), better known as Raphael, Italian Renaissance painter, considered one of the greatest and most popular artists of all time. Besides his many other paintings, Raphael decorated several rooms in the Vatican which go under his name.

⁹⁹ Sir Isaac Newton (1643 – 1727), English mathematician and physicist.

¹⁰⁰ Gregory VII (1020 – 1085). pope (1073 – 1085) and saint, one of the greatest reformers of the medieval church. He asserted the primacy of the Church over secular powers and led the papacy into open conflict with the Holy Roman Empire over the question of the investitures.

civilization over the ruins of barbarism; it was because he felt the power of this daily combination with his God, which gave him, human though he was, a mettle that you would call divine. Oh Paul, you before all others and better than all others have been able to express the needs of poor human power. You said that the universal combination of powers is necessary, and you added these words that I wish were written in letters of gold: *ut simus consummati in unum*.¹⁰¹ Delaude,¹⁰² did you understand? Instead of sticking to my points, I see I'm straying away from them. At any rate, did you understand? It is a question of fighting war to the finish against the spirit of compromise, which tends to infiltrate everywhere and it is the fatal solvent of the fondest projects and the greatest resolutions. *To will – always – and at all costs*. Each person pitted against himself. The good *ego* locked in struggle with the bad *ego*; the *ego* of a moment, a sublime moment, rising in combat against the *ego* of every hour, the *ego* of the past, the *ego* of the old system; the *ego* that makes an act of the will once and for all, and yet multiplies itself at every moment by that powerful act of volition; the *ego* which, like the *Phoenix*, destroys itself only to be born again out of its own ashes. Will power: that is our motto; but it must be the kind of will power that is entire, unflinching, effective. In Dante's words, it was this will power that

“...kept Lawrence on the gridiron
And rendered Mucius cruel to his hand”,¹⁰³

the kind of will power that caused the poetic vein to gush forth from that shiftless, eccentric aristocrat.¹⁰⁴

I have described to you the ideal that has been whirling through my mind for the past six years or more. This ideal has already undergone many changes, but I am aware that in its present form it can at any moment undergo a metamorphosis bringing it out of the chrysalis state and into the stage of realization. The ideal I had in 1861, when my dream of a future in society prompted me to cross the Rubicon.¹⁰⁵ The ideal taking shape in '62-63, amid the excitement of the meetings of Masonic Lodges (ss),¹⁰⁶ *political friendship*, work of preparation, etc.¹⁰⁷ The ideal during the two years of recollection and indecision, '64-65. The ideal finally emerging into reality in 66, when the fervor accompanying the rebirth of my religious feeling was followed by the calm state of conviction and the restoration of conscience as my competent court of judgment...¹⁰⁸ Now consider what a wealth of experience in so many vicissitudes! How many pages, how many notes, how many memoirs!¹⁰⁹ All material for a great, solemn inventory of the human heart. Poor youth! How easy it is to shipwreck! Happy the one who was tossed about on

¹⁰¹ “that we may be joined together as one.” Actually the quotation is from John 17:23.

¹⁰² The seminarian Stephen Delaude, born at Rocchetta Tanaro on September 17, 1844, ordained a priest with Marengo on September 19, 1868, was Parochial Vicar at Castell'Alfero and at Pievano of Villa S. Secondo (1878 – 1898); he died on March 5, 1898, at the age of 53. His personality was a little rough, but he was kindhearted and very intelligent. He especially devoted himself to historical research (cf. Lett. 22, 23).

¹⁰³ Dante, *Paradiso*, Cantico IV, Verse 83.

¹⁰⁴ Vittorio Alfieri, renowned tragedian, born in Asti, died in Florence in 1803 and was buried at Holy Cross Church, the resting place of many other famous Italians.

¹⁰⁵ At the end of the 1861 – 62 scholastic year, Joseph Marengo had left the seminary in Asti to enroll in Economic Studies in Turin.

¹⁰⁶ The (ss) is probably meant to urge Delaude to absolute silence about this. Belonging to or participating in meetings of the Masons had been forbidden by the Catholic Church since 1738 because of their anti – Catholic bias and for the revolutionary philosophy they were advocating during this period throughout Italy and Europe.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Lett. 5, 10, 23, 61.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Lett. 3.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Lett. 4.

the angry billows and returned to shore. And so it is true, Delaude, that we have certain points of contact and that we can be reduced to a common denominator. Hard work and good will, and the past can serve as a tool of the future. We must *coordinate* all our thoughts, all our affections, all our *potential* in a set plan. We must live that plan, elevate, sublimate, multiply ourselves in that *plan*. We must will always and at all costs. We must will with courage, with firmness, with constancy. We must make war on *compromise*; the one who compromises is lost. But first of all, if we want to have the power and the *strength* necessary for our resolution, we must profit by that couplet of the poet Prati:¹¹⁰

“Hold yourself together in Him, proud dust,
Strength comes from the Almighty, not from mortal flesh.”

We must draw our fortitude from above... Without faith there is no charity, without charity there remains nothing, absolutely nothing. So then: *renovamini spiritu*,¹¹¹ etc., let us be renewed in the spirit, every day, every hour. A human being can elevate himself like the fluids, because our power is in proportion to our will, and our will is in proportion to our knowledge. At the age of twenty Mazzini¹¹² toiled day and night at nailing into his heart and brain an idea that perhaps even then was strange and rested on sophism. So?... let us take a good look at history and say like those who were once in our shoes: *si ille, cur non ego?*¹¹³ I close this letter, which to tell you the truth, is a little disconnected and betrays a little too much the haste in which it was written. At any rate, this is only the beginning, and we shall have occasion to exchange ideas in every shade and tone. For the time being, it's a confessional secret. Everything I said must be kept buried. I've cast the die, and you will pick up in reply. Meanwhile, accept the wish of your comrade in arms: Win or die.

Yours through thick and thin,

Marello

¹¹⁰ Giovanni Prati, Italian poet, contemporary of Marello.

¹¹¹ “Let us acquire a fresh, spiritual way of thinking.” (Eph. 4:23)

¹¹² Joseph Mazzini (1805 – 1872), Italian patriot and revolutionary leader in the wars of independence (Cf. Lett. 5)

¹¹³ If he could do it, why can't I?

*Firmness in convictions –
The devil of concupiscence –
Plans for common work*
[San Martino Tanaro, August 1866]

I've just come back from the Sacrament of confession with a purified soul and with palpitating heart full of heavenly joy: therefore I send to you a word of love, of that kind of love which renders us, as I already told you quoting the Apostle Paul,¹¹⁴ *consummati in unum*.

I don't have the time to make a word for word commentary on your letter as I would have wanted to do; maybe another time. For now, I will send you only a few disconnected thoughts as they cross my mind.

Youthful enthusiasm like ether when left in an unsealed vase, volatilizes and disappears. Therefore, we ought not to confuse the passing whims which are temporary with the persevering will which is therefore also efficacious. He who wavers in his convictions is always weak and inept: and *vice versa*. We must believe always uniformly, logically, and tenaciously. The great geniuses are useless; the great men of character are the ones who stir the world. *Pico della Mirandola* is much less of a person than *Gregory VII*.¹¹⁵ *Descartes* is nothing compared to a *Vincent de Paul*.¹¹⁶ *Gioberti* does not even come close to the glory of *Pius IX*.¹¹⁷

Napoleon had a fixed idea which he used to call his faith. *Pius VII*¹¹⁸ also had his fixed idea which with greater reason he could call his faith. Let the philosophers say that man is able to do as much as he wants to do; we would rather say with the language of the scripture: Faith moves mountains.

A writer once said that every man in certain circumstances becomes pure power. Well, to think about it, men are like innumerable points on the periphery of a wheel and each one of them in turn reaches the highest tangential point. Using this truth as a basis, we can explain many things which would remain unexplainable in the conflict of human passions. I have a lot of notes in this regard but we can talk about it at length and at our leisure... We will then find the clue we need and see to it that the many potentialities which are out of focus or are simply wasted may come to produce their intended results. Be mindful of the fact that all comes down to mathematical precision and to the precision of a formula (of course, with the correct interpretations of the various relative values), and he who wants to sustain the contrary denies

¹¹⁴ Cf. Lett. 9, note 8.

¹¹⁵ Pico della Mirandola (1463 – 1494), Italian humanist philosopher, famous for his precocious and vast learning. For Gregory VII, see Lett. 9 note 100.

¹¹⁶ René Descartes (1596 – 1650), French philosopher, scientist, and mathematician, sometimes called the father of modern philosophy. St. Vincent de Paul (1581 – 1660), founder of the Congregation of the Mission, called Vincentians or Lazarists. His Daughters of Charity are also well known throughout the world.

¹¹⁷ For Gioberti see Lett 6, note 75. Pius IX (1792 – 1878), pope (1846 – 1878), whose pontificate, the longest in history, saw the promulgation of several dogmas and the loss of the Papal States.

¹¹⁸ Napoleon I (1769 – 1821), emperor of France, one of the greatest military commanders of all times. He conquered the larger part of Europe and sought to bring the pope to serve the interests of his empire. Pius VII (1740 – 1823), pope (1800 – 1823) who struggled with Napoleon to preserve the traditional prerogatives of the Church and its independence. Arrested by Napoleon, Pius VII was first kept prisoner in Savona (in the palace where Marellò will later die) and in Fontainebleau, France. When Napoleon freed him in 1814, Pius VII returned to Rome and dedicated himself to the restoration of Papal authority there and in Europe.

all natural, divine, and human laws which regulate with inalterable uniformity the created world which in substance is only a reflection of the Creator's mind.

My dear friend Delaude, remember that we have to fight a great enemy in our modern society, a Hydra with a hundred heads. Asmodeus, the demon of concupiscence, breaths in the midst of youth. The enticement to sexual pleasures are the plague of the 19th century. If I were to list all the devices, all the sophisms of science which prostitutes itself to the passions of the flesh... Oh, how many things: music, paintings, theater, etc.;... the chemical substances which act as stimulants... War, therefore, war to the death against Onanism, that is, the solitary sin, to plastic pictures in the human flesh, to photographic groups (made by the thousand and arranged in album form as one would in a progressive art course) to enervating and stimulating music, to lewd poems, to erogenous substances, etc. We can no longer point them out to public opinion for condemnation, since public opinion is affected by the same sickness. It is necessary to attack the malady at its roots. Oh, my dear, these things that I have seen with my own eyes and I can tell you about them through painful personal experience.

The time set aside for my studies is coming to an end and for now, I cannot tell you anything else. I am working on a program of common plans. I will tell you more and in detail about my convictions, my desires, and my hopes. But for now what is needed is faith, an unshakable faith, not an ephemeral but a sturdy will power, a strength of character which may resist all trials, all hardship. Serenity of mind which is above all passing annoyances, all the little inconveniences, all the useless occupations which through human weakness may come to worry us throughout the day.

When the goal has been set, let the world fall apart: We must keep our eyes on our goal always. Man is transformed by his will. Are we not aware of a certain divine quality within us that, in spite of the confusions of the flesh, lifts us up and sublimates us to the very core of our being? Don't we have in certain moments of moral discouragement the power of rising suddenly through the word of a friend or through an act of generosity admired in secret, the power, I say, of rising suddenly to new hopes and sublime desires? Remember the verse of Dante: "just looking at you I myself am lifted up."¹¹⁹

Let us take our inspiration from great models and let us act.

Goodbye. Pray, think, and love.

Your confrere, M.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Lett. 5.

TO SEMINARIAN STEPHEN DELAUDE

*Let us renew the apostolic times –
Christ, the infinite coefficient –
Invitation to Turin
[San Martino Tanaro, July 1867]*

My dearest friend,

In succinct, telegraphic style... What can I say, I waited until the last moment and then for unforeseen circumstances I was not able to master more than a few minutes before the mailing deadline. Let this be a lesson for the next time.

And what is new? We are really in bad shape. The political situation goes from bad to worse. The perfidious machinations of the man from Alexandria¹²⁰ are now beginning to show themselves in a shameful nakedness. Oh you men of expediency, the terrible time will come when the devil will take his opportunity and take you carcasses away. The Lord does not pay on the Sabbath.

What are we clerics going to do? Let us renew those beautiful times of old when the priesthood gained the respect of the people for its vibrant faith and profound charity. Today we have no more than a faint reflection of that apostolic faith and of that old charity. Saint Paul: Oh what a great and exemplary figure of Christianity! Delaude, let us embrace in the Lord and when we are about to become one with Him in the mystical union of the Eucharist, let us transform each other. Christ in our hearts is an infinite coefficient. We poor numbers of nothing will be able to multiply ourselves gradually to the heights of the infinite coefficients. Prayer, meditation, and violence; continuous violence against ourselves... and at every hour that passes let us cry out with Saint Theresa: "*Take courage, one hour less to fight.*" The knights of the Middle Ages were always on guard lest a moment's cowardice would deprive them of the glory they had acquired in long years. We also must keep on guard all around, our hand on the hilt and our eye fixed in heaven. Take courage, my friend, and remember the day of Saint Peter's celebration.¹²¹

All yours, Marellò

P.S. Barring unforeseen circumstances, Sunday I will be in Turin for a visit to the city of my birth. If you can come, we may meet for sure either at the High Mass in the Cathedral or at any other time in a public place. If not, I will have you with me in spirit as I'll offer my prayers at the Shrine of Consolation¹²² where the Mother of God receives the vows and strengthens the resolutions of her beloved children. Remember me in your prayers. Goodbye.

¹²⁰ Urbano Rattazzi, born in Alexandria (a city just south of Asti) in 1808, died in Frosinone in 1873. Twice prime minister of the Italian Government (1852 – 1867), he became famous for his anticlerical policies. The fears that Marellò expresses in this letter are well founded: on August 15, 1867, Rattazzi had Parliament approve a law by which many religious Orders and Institutes were abolished and their properties confiscated. The surviving religious institutions, except the local parishes, were taxed 30% of their income and assets. The Church reacted by threatening excommunication of anybody who bought these confiscated Church properties without express permission of the Holy See.

¹²¹ On June 29, 1867, the 18th centenary celebrations of the martyrdom of Sts. Peter and Paul were held in Rome. The newly ordained bishop of Asti, Carlo Savio, was also present.

¹²² The famous shrine of our Lady "Comfort of the Afflicted" in Turin, not far from the house where Marellò was born.

12
TO A SEMINARIAN FRIEND

Wedding of his brother Victor
[San Martino Tanaro July 28, 1867]

Dear Friend,

I am writing just a note to confirm what we had agreed upon: that I will be in Turin on Tuesday the 30th.¹²³ I am in a world of hustle and bustle and yet in full solitude. My brother is getting married: Imagine the consequences.¹²⁴

I never forget my friends and I hope they will not forget me either. Please remember me in your prayers and love me always as I love you.

All yours,
J. Marelllo

If we meet in Turin, I will tell you everything that I cannot tell you now. Goodbye.

¹²³ Cf. Letter 13,14,15. Marelllo was in Turin from Tuesday July 30th to Thursday August 8th.

¹²⁴ Vittorio, Marelllo's younger and only brother, was married on August 20, 1867, to Luigia Massano. She died on January 24, 1892, leaving no children (cf. Lett. 226). Victor was married again on June 12, 1894, to Decima Bianchi who gave him three daughters: Anna, Giuseppina, and Laura Marie. Victor died on October 27, 1927, after having been the Mayor of San Martino Alfieri for forty years.

13
TO SEMINARIAN JOSEPH RICCIO

Trip to Turin – Victor's wedding
[Asti, August 15, 1867]

Our Dearest Riccio,

There are three of us writing to you.¹²⁵ What a coincidence! If you were here also, it would be possible to make a square out of a triangle; we would then have two sides going to Villafranca, one side going to this bank of the Tanaro, and one side going to the other. Well, what do you think? Marello is speaking for himself now. Please, forgive him if he is late in writing to you. The family affairs, a business trip to Turin that lasted eleven days, have taken away, one by one, even without his noticing it, the forty – three days of vacation which have already gone by. Forgive him also in view of what he promised to do in the way of reparation in the future; but forgive him especially because the thousand headaches which the wedding of his brother has caused him has put him in such a state of abnormal behavior that, without forgetting his friends (heaven is his witness), he has not been able to write anyone. (Within parenthesis, the marriage of Victor will be next Tuesday. The bride is no longer the young lady of Vercelli. She has been replaced by a simple neighbor of ours. Enough, you shall see her.) It was just lucky to run into Rossetti in Turin and into both Faggiani and Rissone here in Asti. Motta,¹²⁶ good soul, will have to be as generous in forgiving as you will. Within twelve days from now he [Marello] promises to do his duty and inform you minutely of everything that has happened. Agreed? Now I will yield the pen to a friend close by who is urging me...¹²⁷

Joseph Marello

Faggiani – Rissone

¹²⁵ The letter was written and signed by the three seminarians Marello, Faggiani, and Rissone who were in Asti for the Bishop's solemn Mass on the feast of the Assumption (cf. Lett. 15). Faggiani and Rissone were from Villafranca of Asti. Marello from San Martino (on the Asti side of the Tanaro River) and Riccio from Agliano (on the other side).

¹²⁶ Cf. Lett. 53

¹²⁷ The letter is incomplete.

TO SEMINARIAN JOSEPH RICCIO

News about Victor's wedding
Trips to Turin – News of Asti
 [San Martino Tanaro, September 6, 1867]

My Dear Joe,

Now that the festivities are over, I may begin to relax. Could you imagine that in sixty-five days of vacation which are already gone by, the mailman has not delivered to me *unam quidem epistolam amicorum?* [not even one simple letter from friends?] This is the way it is. In the midst of so many headaches, which I may tell you were not a few, the words of friends would have been a source of comfort and of relief! Oh, if it were not wrong to take revenge... I would not be the first to write to the gentlemen Motta, Rossetti, Faggiani (who sent me a note from San Damiano a month ago and then nothing else). I received nothing! Absolutely nothing! Am I to believe that in the past, if I had not been the one to push them, the same thing would have happened to me as what happened this year? Because I was not able to find an hour of respite to write them, they considered themselves dispensed from writing too.

“O tempora! O mores!”¹²⁸

What a connived conspiracy of silence! Enough, let's not think about it any more... Otherwise, instead of one page, four would not be enough to complete my philippic “*Perge ad*”. [Let's proceed to:]

Res diei [Current news] – do you want me to tell you in brief the history of my vacation? Wake up from your boredom and listen: When I found out that the wedding of my brother would take place during my vacation, I went into shock. There came suddenly to my mind (Oh, not to have the opportunity to talk about it in person)...there came to my mind suddenly a thousand things to fear. You know that the dangers are already too many and who would have guaranteed...? Enough of this, I placed myself in the hands of Him who knows how to turn all thing for the best; you can be assured that the thought of my delicate situation weighed on my shoulders daily, though.

In the meantime, the tasks of preparation began: get the house ready, prepare the room for the newly wed, make provision for the gifts, get information about the wedding ceremony, think about the opportune instructions for my brother, rush to Asti to buy what was needed and to Turin for the same, dream up a way of making sure everything would come off smoothly, take care of the invitations etc., etc. How much money it took! It took eleven marenghi just for the nuptial bed! And all the other things: cabinet, wall decorations, water basin, mirror, etc....

After I had taken care of the basic things at San Martino, I went to Turin for the purchase of other things of great import. I stayed there for almost eleven days. On the second day I bumped into Rossetti and Rinaudi who were strolling in front of the university. I attended the degree ceremony of the latter who became doctor of letters and of two other clerics who were getting doctoral degrees in theology. I visited the Oratory of Fr. Bosco, the Palace of the king, the Ducal Palace, and the church of the Capuchins, the Cemetery, the new churches, Saint Ambrose Church, the Sacra [Shrine] of Saint Michael, etc., Rossetti had iron feet. I heard Passaglia arguing with Rinaudi, I saw Parato, Ghiringhello, Vogliotti. I attended the sermons of the two famous preachers Bardessono and Pampirio. I saw the boat race on the Po. I made the

¹²⁸ “Oh, what times, what manners!” Cicero (63 bc) made this statement famous in his invective against Cataline, who had plotted the overthrow of the Roman Empire. Marellò uses it to express his outrage against his negligent friends.

acquaintance of Father Francesia and Father Cagliero, Ropolo, etc. (what a confused mess I'm making!)

I was tireless: I was alternating visits and purchases with an inexhaustible energy which surprised me. From five in the morning to twelve: spiritual exercises and pastimes; from twelve to five in the afternoon: shopping; from five to midnight: joyful entertainment with the family. Placing all the expenses together of my father and mine we spent six hundred francs at the goldsmith, shops, knickknack dealers, stationary store, etc. Now you have an idea of what it means to prepare for a marriage! I came home and here I found more things to do: the sonnets, invitations, the banquet preparations. On the fifteenth of the last month I went to Asti. I wrote from there. Returning home we immediately began to prepare the pavilion in the midst of the courtyard and the necessary appurtenances for forty guests.

The out-of-towners arrive and they have to be lodged. The day of the wedding arrives: *hoc opus hic labor*¹²⁹ My father did not want to get involved in anything: the whole responsibility was on my shoulders, to direct the work of seven people who under my immediate supervision had the care of the wine, of the food and of the serving at tables, etc., etc.; to sing in church the *relinquet homo*;¹³⁰ ["man leaves..." Gen. 2:24]; to extol at the banquet the God of holy love to make compliments on one side and receive them on the other, to sidetrack equivocal conversations, to make sure everybody has a good time: behold my multiple role on the 20th day of the month of August.

On the 22nd of August, the guests at table changed, but the feminine party was not the lesser to *discumbentibus*¹³¹ of the two days before. We had out-of-towners for the whole week. Little by little things began to return to normal and now as I said I begin to breathe easier.

And you, how are you doing? The theologian Elia has told me to tell you that permission to read the books at the "index" is not granted except to priests: the clerics cannot have all the privileges of Juvenal, and he who does not have this privilege must tow the line. And your little university? Do you pupils respond well to your program? Did Mr. Aluffi bring you up to date about the various events of life in Turin? What about your good Pastor? your aunt, Father, Brother, and the many others whom you already mentioned to me by name? What about Tonio Vespa? Besides the clerics of San Damiano and those who participated in the Pontifical Mass in Asti, I have not seen anyone yet. I know though that Arisio is not in too good a shape. Poor fellow! May God preserve him for the needs of His Church which has such a scarcity of good priests.

Now I should spend a little time studying, but in a few days my relatives from Turin, both old and young, will fill my house and my head, for how long nobody knows, and I will be able to salvage only a few small pieces of time. You have already started to study, haven't you? You rogue, do you want to leave Bishop Savio speechless? All kidding aside – – I do not know how we will make out on All Saints Days. They say that the Bishop is strict; indeed they say that it is his intention to make us go through one or two tracts for every ordination in such a way that we shall have reviewed them all before we are ordained priests. By Jove! We sure don't need this one too, on top of everything else! We have always been the town's jackasses but now we will be doubly so. If there are roses they will blossom. [Let's wait and see.]

By this time the twenty-five or thirty candidates of the Cathedral parish should have heard their sentence. Who will be the chosen one among the Ciattinis, Bagnaschis, Marchisios,

¹²⁹ This is the day and here is the work.

¹³⁰ "man leaves..." Gen. 2:24.

¹³¹ the table guests.

Torchios, the Contis, etc.? Who will be the survivor in such a massacre? To which party will go the triumph? Concerning the dispositions of the seminary for the year 1867-68, I don't know anything yet. There will be some changes for sure, but for now they are kept *in pectore* [in the heart] of the master of the house.¹³² What is well known is that the opposing parties are locked in a dog fight and some day something will come out.

Now I will close and will keep myself for another time when the house will be able to say to you: come to me and, if you show me the way, we will take a trip together into the hills of Agliano (by the way, did you receive the greetings I sent you from the Brother of Father Virando, the pastor of Agliano?). I will be waiting for a letter from you which may open new horizons for me and may tell me a million new things which will lift a little my spirit so downcast and tired because of the past activities and sufferings. Will you be so cruel as to deny me this comfort which I have not been able to have from anyone as yet? Oh, I know for sure that you will never do this to me; I know that within a few days, the mailman will bring me a thick letter and within it I will find a treasure of many beautiful things; I will find the one who bears my beautiful and dear name:

Joe.

P.S. Regards to all who love me.

¹³² The bishop or the seminary director.

TO SEMINARIAN STEPHEN ROSSETTI

*News of Asti – Political situation
Victor's wedding – The upcoming
ordinations – Trip to Turin*

[San Martino Tanaro, September 16, 1867]

My dear friend,

Would you believe it? In two and half months of vacation I have received the miserable amount of four letters all extracted by pliers: one from Delaude two months back, one from Faggiani, one likewise from Vandero, and recently one from Motta. To think that my brain in past days was so much in need to be restored by a friendly word and not a soul was there to do me the favor of a few lines. To leave me alone and abandoned in the vortex of the secular world?¹³³ and with the most cruel cold – bloodedness? To know exactly all the gravity of my danger and the efficacy of their help and have the courage to turn their backs on me with an inexorable: “Let it be so.”? Now that, thanks to God, I have come out from the sea to dry land, I forgive everyone with my heart, but I cannot help looking back from time to time at the perilous sea in which friends of lazy hand and weak frame had left me for so many days.

What do you think of this tragic-comic philippic?¹³⁴ Do you think that this Homer's humor comes from excessive concentration? These are things which would cause one to cry if they did not cause one to laugh, eh?

Now I will tell you in a hurry all the news I know of. I found myself by accident at the pontifical mass for the Feast of the Assumption. Since they badly needed some altar servers, they picked me up in the market place on Wednesday, the day before. I feasted my eyes in contemplation of the beloved features of our bishop, always tranquil and always amiable.¹³⁵

I heard about the collision of powers between the cathedral's canons and the Bishop in regard to the nomination of the administrator of the cathedral. I heard of the twenty or thirty candidates endorsed by the two parties and I found out that they have all been eliminated from the race except one who is the pastor of Cerro, a certain Sardi of Rocchetta Tanaro. I know that Ratti has married and that within days he will bring her to Asti (if he has not already done so) to begin a teacher's career at the College. I know that the bishop is short of money and that it could happen very well to him what has happened to those rulers who allow themselves to be eclipsed [in wealth] by their subjects. Oh, a canon with four or five thousand francs can certainly be more generous than a bishop penniless and without resources. I know that Gastaldi continues to stir controversies. I know that today begins the annual retreat for priests, given by the bishop with the help of the Director of the Missionaries of Genoa.

Concerning the political situation then, I know that bankruptcy lies within a stone's throw of our door; that together with the ecclesiastical goods, the public fortune, the state, everything is in a state of liquidation (even this damned heat is in a position of liquidating our

¹³³ A humorous reference to the marriage of his brother Vittorio.

¹³⁴ A humorous reference to the famous oration by the great Greek orator Demosthenes (385 – 322 BC) against Philip, king of Macedonia. These orations are known as “Philippics” and the term has entered the Italian language to denote a bold and harsh invective or speech against someone who has wronged us. The term has assumed the same meaning in English.

¹³⁵ Bishop Carlo Savio who in 1868 will take Marengo as his secretary. Bishop Savio was born in Cuneo on June 24, 1811. Appointed to the Asti diocese in March 1867, he made his official entrance on June 9. He died on July 1, 1881, leaving behind a memory of his wisdom, piety, and charitableness (cf. Lett. 19,21,104).

poor flesh); that the congress of Malines and that of Geneva are in the forefront with their parallel programs to accelerate the era of peace: *Garibaldi* and *Falloux*, *Hugo* and *Dupanloup*, *Giulio Favre* and *Monsignor Verspergeu*. They say that all roads lead to Rome; in this case, though, I confess that I have my doubts. *Dupanloup* declares war on error, on passions, on the vices of society to give it that peace which she has lost. *Garibaldi* preaches pacification, toleration, the liberty of all errors, of all passions, of all vices so that the satanic war of egotism of the individual against the community, of the atom which attempts to disengage itself from the molecule and from the mass may continue to flourish. Hurray to the congress of Geneva which will write the paragraphs of peace with the point of the customary dagger dipped in blood. You clowns. The free thinkers and humanitarians, those who wish to create a religion based solely on brotherhood and on love (liars) flee from a bed of a brother who calls for help, for a consoling word, and they leave him to the priest who brings life and calls himself *Cardinal Alfieri*, *Bishop Charvaz*, etc.. I know a thousand other things which you know better than I or which you can at least implicitly understand.

Let us now talk about ourselves. First, however, I have to give you a summary report of our wedding. May heaven deliver you from the annoyances, the headaches, the chores of the situation in which I found myself. From five in the morning until midnight, I had to take care of everything, to speak to all, satisfy all. It is true that the job makes the man. To think about it dispassionately, I marvel at myself and I agree that the saying is true. Now that the affair is over, another one is getting started: the games that ladies and young people play who were not here on the great day; they will stay on, I may add, to make new friends, you may imagine with what pleasure of mine. Enough for now, I will tell you more when we see each other. Now let us pass to another time, to the future; the past has been stirred up enough.

Motta says he wants to be at Asti for the day of the ordination and invites me to do likewise. I extend the invitation to you and to Delaude: thus we will be able to find ourselves for a moment in a concentric point and place our orbits on the same plane. Is it not true? How many things to talk about: a kind of miniature congress, a small part of congress, four lost sentinels, if these words express what I would like to say. Concerning the next ordinandi, I do not know anything. I believe Elia is slated for Fenera, Bigliani for St. Peter's, Viale for Villafranca, Surra for who knows where, and Massa for his benefice. And we? Oh, we poor fellows who walk with the great strides toward the terrible day of our ordinations. May God inspire us and assist us because woe to us if we turn out to be inept soldiers on the battlefield! Oh, if the five ordinandi (without diminishing their merit) would be all simple souls as Arisio who perhaps... I pray daily to God that He may preserve that holy young man for the decor of the sanctuary and the glory of the Catholic army; but they told me, the poor man, that he is in deep waters. Give me more up to date information and less discouraging if you can.

And you, how are you doing? Do you think sometime of your friends? Do you remember the trip to the Sacra and the terrible siesta of St. Ambrose? Do you remember Passaglia, Levriero, Ghiringhello, Parato over seventy years old, Bardessono, Pampirio, Ferreri (sick to the point that they are making novenas for him in Turin)? In those ten days I have made such a collection of ideas and of impressions in my mind and heart that I have not been able as yet to sort out everything. The more one sees, the more one learns and life is a picture album full of photos in natural size. For example, what a beautiful view was that of "Giacon" in that solitary church of Sacra: I have talked about it to several people and all have felt exhilarated at the story; *Chateaubriand* would have written a beautiful page about it in his *Genius*. Be cheerful because one beautiful day when we will be priests we will take advantage of it by the banks of the Tiber, what do you think? Now it's time to close. I'll be awaiting one of your letters that will break up for a time the monotony of my life. I want you to know that in spite of the noise of kids and

women I keep myself invulnerable in my fortress with the drawbridges up and with flag unfurled.

Throughout the whole week, I literally speak to no one; on Sunday, I spend time with the pastor and his associate: this is the sum of my life. If I did not have out-of-towners in my home who come and go from Turin and take over the house, I would say: come up and stay with me for awhile. But, if we cannot spend some time together at San Martino, we have to admit that we have not lost everything: we have enjoyed each other immensely at Turin, and now we have to toe the line. Therefore, to conclude the conclusion, I remind you of your obligation of a long letter telling me many wonderful things including that of getting together in Asti on the Sunday of the Ordinations.

Love me always and remember me sometimes in your prayers. With all my heart I am your friend.

Joe Marello

Be patient if you find in this letter not a letter but a preliminary outline, a draft of a letter.

TO A SEMINARIAN FRIEND

*Trip to Savona – News of Asti –
Sweetness of solitary life*

[San Martino Tanaro, after Sept. 21, 1867]

I have taken a trip: Alba – Diano – Millesimo – Savona, which gives me so much to say: of the visit to the tunnel, of the Apennines, of the sea in semi-stormy weather, of the Shrine¹³⁶, of the birthplace of Julius II and of Gabriello Chiabrera¹³⁷. I was also in Asti: an increase of five francs for room and board, diminution of personnel, other changes are being considered. Viale is already in Villafranca¹³⁸, the assignments of the others are uncertain. I have no news from anyone, everybody is asleep. Goria is chaplain at St Carl's. I am doing very well: the festivities are over and I am enjoying the ineffable sweetness of solitude.

Forgive me if I have ruined your eyes¹³⁹. Do you want to know the reason? Because by writing a letter in a relaxed manner, I would not have been able to refrain from making the usual chitchat without end – Time is precious in these last days and I have already lost so much of it. Besides, within a few days we shall see each other – I hasten in desire that great moment. Stay healthy and always in the friendship of your

Marello.

¹³⁶ The Shrine of Our Lady of Mercy in Savona where he had gone on a pilgrimage as a child and where he will celebrate his last Mass on May 27, 1895.

¹³⁷ Pope Julius II (1443 – 1513), was born in Albissola (Savona). The poet Gabriello Chiabrera was born in Savona in 1552.

¹³⁸ Fr. Carl Viale, assigned as associate pastor at Villafranca d'Asti (cf. Lett. 15). Father Goria, a seminary friend, assigned as chaplain at St. Carl's in San Damiano d'Asti.

¹³⁹ The letter is written in minutest handwriting on two sides of a small piece of paper 2.4 by 0.8 “.

16B
TO HIS FATHER, VINCENT

*He stays in Asti with classmates to
prepare for ordination – He has been
requested as associate pastor but
Bishop has denied request – Will
visit Fr. Torchio soon – Request
for a change of laundry
[Asti, July 12, 1868]*

Dear Father,

Without even noticing it, we have already spent half a month of our vacation in the most healthy and happy atmosphere imaginable. We have total control of the twenty-four hours to sleep, study, carry on a conversation, pray, eat, and be free from any distraction. Everything is proceeding in the best way possible: The Bishop is happy because he has heard no complaint about us, the staff of the Cathedral is also happy because we go there every day to offer our services; and we too are happy because we can see that everything goes exactly as we had planned. The manager of our boarding house two days ago was transferred to a better job in the country side and we are now well settled at the seminary table with lunch and supper for the modest price of thirty francs per month. This is what we had hoped for: to be left totally undisturbed.

Binelli took possession of the parish last Wednesday. His pastor has come to ask the Bishop again to assign me as his associate pastor, but he was told that I would not be available. This caused all kinds of rumors, but nobody knows anything for sure.

The pastor of Scurzolengo has died. The parish is one of the sickest in the Diocese for reason of its endowments. Therefore, soon there will be another associate pastor's post available.

Our pastor, I suppose, should be back by now from his St. Ignatius' retreat. May I ask you to stop by for a visit, whenever convenient, to let him know why I'm not in town. Tell him I had hoped to see him as he was going to or coming back from the retreat and that I will pay him a visit very soon. Here there is no news except that the heat is making itself felt very fast after the last rain. I'm glad because it will do some good to the crops. I would like to ask you to send me by Wednesday by means of "putia" some bed sheets, towels, napkins, etc., to have a change of laundry. I don't think I will be able to see you next Wednesday because I suppose you will all be busy still with the threshing of wheat. In any case, I'll be waiting for a visit soon and it is not out of the question that I may make a short visit to San Martino myself. Don't forget to pay a visit to the pastor and then let me know about it.

I have to close because my classmates are waiting for me for the Liturgy of the Hours and I've already taken too much advantage of their patience. Everything that I don't have time to say now we will talk about in person although nothing has changed from twelve days ago. May I ask you not to divulge the content of this letter for reason we already discussed on other occasions.

Let nobody know anything until the facts are out in the open. One single word could stir up the curiosity of wanting to know what as of now is still in the hands of God. Therefore, please keep this letter under key as you would do for my previous one.

Now I close for good and saying goodbye with my sincerest and heartfelt affection, I remain

your beloved son
Cleric Deacon Joseph

I remind you again to send me some laundry because I am really down to nothing.

PRIESTLY PERIOD

(1868 - 1888)

Letters 16C-129

TO FR. STEPHAN ROSSETTI

*He met great souls in Turin.
Resignation during difficulties.
Obedience to Spiritual Director.
Writing at length.
Kindness of Bishop.*

[Asti, after Sunday, November 30, 1868]

Dear friend in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

*Veniam damus petimusque vicissim.*¹⁴⁰ I also come to you with a bagful of excuses to tell you that if I hadn't been away from home all last week, I would certainly not have forgotten to drop a line to the good assistant of Cortanze. Now I take the occasion of a little free time to reply to your overloaded letter of the 17th.

I have a thousand things to say about my trip with the Bishop to Turin and about the many wonderful things I saw and learned under the guidance of my superior. Let me only make this remark: The inner strength of the Church increases in inverse proportion to her external resources; and there are still great souls.... Thanks to God!

Let me tell you this: you have nothing to complain about. You have a Pastor beyond comparison; parishioners who are about the best; you're enjoying the kind of weather that permits you to visit friends; you have more time on your hands for hobbies than you could wish for; you enjoy progressively flourishing health; you have a thousand other little advantages that I don't mention – and still you complain. Now, that's really what I call indiscretion. I'm the only one that should be complaining, living as I do a life of contradiction: a life torn between protocol and solitude, happy moments of relaxation and long hours of bureaucratic rigidity, correspondence with friends and the cold routine of office work....

But now let's be serious. I realize I am holding a position that is beset with knotty problems and difficulties. Still, I am the jolliest and most peaceful man in the world. When you live with Bishop Savio, you can't help being content and resigned in everything. I wish I could share with you a particle of that courage which our beloved Bishop is so capable of inspiring me with; but I am unable. All I shall tell you is to reaffirm at the very moment your trust in the good God and to be convinced that He sometimes denies us the consolations of the spirit but never wants to deprive us of that resignation to His will which is the root of all merit. Find a good spiritual book, a good spiritual director (and God can raise up such a man to suit your need even in the person of the humblest country chaplain), and then take courage: Turn a deaf ear to the voice of the devil and listen only to the voice of God who speaks in a thousand ways to His faithful ones. We are unable to explore in its secret depth the great economy of Providence; yet we know from experience that faith daily works in souls the greatest miracles. How many, after the example of our Bishop, guided by their own Padre Carpigano, have achieved boldly, and with outstanding success what in their own judgment they would never have dared to attempt. Obey, obey blindly; do not rely on your own judgment in matters concerning yourself— there you have the secret of Christian living, the touchstone of sanctity.

Courage my dear brother. Let us be firmly convinced that all forms of inquietude are *ex parte diaboli*— let us renew our spirit at every moment; let us rest in the mercy of God who absorbs all the weakness of our infirm nature.

¹⁴⁰ Our giving and receiving of pardon is mutual.

Farewell, my dear brother. Remember me in the Holy Sacrifice, and preserve unchanged those ties of friendship that bound us together for so many years in the happy companionship of seminary life. I will pray for you and will always remain

Your most affectionate brother in Christ,
Joseph Marelo

TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

*Entered in the First Vatican
Council, Let us work as God
wants it, pray – Solidarity
of good deeds among priest –
Resources of priestly life
[Asti, after January 1, 1869]*

Pardon me if for lack of time I can only jot down a few words of thanks for your remembrance of me. *Paratus ad omnia*. (I am ready for anything). We are living in the year of great events. Let us not forget this for one instant. Pius IX, the pope of December 8, has told us to wait for the events and he seems to have reasonable hope to see that day which the Catholic world is looking forward to with prayers and good wishes.¹⁴¹ Let us all work in the manner and with the intensity desired by God. Surely He is able to fit our efforts to suit His designs. Let us pray. In these times prayer has become the greatest, the most powerful apostolate. Let us pray and have others pray. Oh, my dear Stefano, you enjoy the consolations that it is not in my power to enjoy. You are working in the very midst of the mystical vineyard. You are dealing with the great business of redeeming sinful souls. You are guiding the Lord's flock to pastures of life, while I remain here simply to carry out the will of my superior. Different positions means different possibilities for doing good, different ways of accumulating merit. May the Lord's will be done in all things. Amen.

I still have a fraction of free time to add an extra word. Remember me in your prayers. Consider that for us priests solidarity in good works is the only resource left to us in these times when our sphere of action is so limited. Farewell. Ours must be a spirit of combat, but a spirit of resignation as well. May we seek God's glory, but in conformity to His will; may we desire much, yet be satisfied with little; may we promote the triumph of the Church, yet without disowning our own personal defeats and the daily mortification of self-love. Such is life, and such must be our studied effort to live in union with our Divine Master.

Farewell. I wish I could say more, but I must stop for a number of reasons. Not the least of these is the thought that I would be doing a great wrong to that mind of yours, a veritable storehouse of all that is good and beautiful, were I to go on enumerating the needs and the resources of the priesthood.

Farewell. Remember me—ever yours in the sweetest heart of Jesus and under the protection of the mantle of our common mother Mary.

Beppe Marelllo

*Aut pati, aut mori. St. Teresa
Praebe mihi cor tuum, fili
Non mori, sed pati. St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi.*¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ On June 29, 1868, Pius IX published the bull of convocation of the First Vatican Council, designating December 8 as the opening date.

¹⁴² St. Teresa: Either to suffer or to die./ My son, give me thy heart./ St. Mary Magdalen dei Pazzi: Not to die, but to suffer.

[Asti, January 12, 1869]

My dear Stefanino,

I have many things to scold you for, and if you're ready to accept the rebukes in good spirit, I'm ready to rattle them off to you in short order on this sheet of paper.

I'm not inclined to believe what you say about your loss of energy in writing and your flagging spirits, as you complain in your latest letter. But if by chance what you tell about your lack of drive is partly true, for heaven's sake write at once and send me a more detailed analysis of your condition. Give me a conscientious description of all the antecedents of your ailment and I'll do whatever is in my power to find the prescription that suits your need. For goodness' sake, let no one ever say that the tireless, the mighty Delaude has lost his pep just at the time when the biggest job remains to be done and that he's failing in the hour of greatest need, when events are taking shape in an atmosphere that is charged with momentous possibilities¹⁴³ It cannot be. It simply isn't possible that this mind of yours that shone with so much brilliance has suddenly gone dark. That heart of yours, embracing in its marvelous span all the noblest and most generous aspirations – – it is impossible that in one moment it has frozen to the point of being no longer able to breathe life into the great projects designed by your pen.

Here is rather what I think of the situation: In the world of nature it happens that when some great phenomenon is about to appear, it is usually preceded by totally negative signs of a perfect silence. To put it more clearly: before the storm the sea is absolutely calm; before his death the patient experiences a moment of peace that looks like the beginning of his recovery. Anyway, this has nothing to do with your case. Before the examination the pupil is unaware of what is in store for him. This is the kind of silence that surrounds maturity, the solemn stillness that goes before action, the secret and mysterious recollection that sets the stage for a truly magnificent and stupendous production. Have I made myself clear? You are, I believe, precisely in this period of transition that leads by way of a profound silence to a splendid revelation. Courage then. Do not be disturbed by this passing phase of dormancy which points to an imminent awakening. In silence the soul prepares for that piercing cry that is to echo over the entire Catholic horizon.¹⁴⁴ In secret does the hero take shape, like the seed sprouting in nature. In silence are men of great character formed, just as in the humble sea shell is hardened the dewdrop that is changed into a precious stone that shall adorn the brow of the daughter of the king. And so again, courage.

Now to get down to details since we have already covered this ground often enough (without counting the four pages I'm not sending you and that I am keeping as a memo in my scrapbook). What are you doing with your twenty-four hours? How many of them do you employ in praying, hearing confessions, preaching, gathering memories of the past and notes for the future? How much time do you need to take care of your social and material needs? We'll discuss all this without my waiting for you to send me a categorical answer.

Prayer comes before anything else. Look at St Ignatius of Loyola. He carried the world on his shoulders, his heart and mind weighted down by the greatest of all institutions; and yet he prayed, I believe, seven hours a day. And how many fine things doesn't Liguori say about prayer! And Lacordaire! I can't help quoting here a passage from him: "Prayer is the queen of

¹⁴³ It refers to the upcoming celebration of the First Ecumenical Council, Vatican I.

¹⁴⁴ Referring to the First Vatican Council.

the world. Dressed in humble garb, her head bent low, her hands outstretched, she protects the universe by her pleading majesty. She moves continuously from the weakhearted to the stronghearted. The lower the level her pleading rises from and the greater the throne on which she leans, the firmer is her sway of empire. If an insect could plead with us as we are about to crush it underfoot, its prayer would move our heart to boundless pity; and since there is nothing higher than God, there is no prayer more victorious than the prayer that rises to Him. It is prayer, my friend, that reestablishes our relations with God, makes us aware of His action, and does violence to Him without infringing on His freedom. Therefore prayer is the mother of faith.”

So then there must be constant, lively, unremitting prayer: constant in all periods of the day, lively in its transition to various tones and semitones; unremitting in its singsong prolixity (which amounts to the repetition of aspirations). Well, it just occurred to me that it would be a waste of time for me to teach a cat how to climb. Delaude knows only too well the art of prayer and realizes much better than I the resources the priest has in prayer. Leaving aside confession, which it is not my business to discuss, I shall take up the third point: talking to the people, preaching. But there are so many kinds of preaching—preaching to visitors in one’s home, to healthy people in the homes of the sick, to children in the streets, to adults wherever one can. To everyone, everywhere, we can preach with eyes and lips, with our entire person, by virtue of the infallible “*imitatores mei*”¹⁴⁵ and “*luceat lux vestra coram hominibus*”¹⁴⁶ And since it would be a hopeless task to mention every variety, I’ll cut the matter short and go on. In the fourth place I mention to you the need to gather up memories of the past and notes for the future. This is the surest means to preserve the freshness of youth that keeps fading away under the increasing pressures connected with our state of life. Rejuvenate yourself each day with a good shot of the *acqua vitae* of memories, capped off perhaps by another shot of ratafia¹⁴⁷, of notes for the future, and your soul will always be as young and fresh as twenty-three. Next, I launch into a topic that we haven’t yet touched on. What books are you reading? Get rid of them all. Try to get the vicar of Bishop Dupanloup to lend you the notes he has written on St. Jerome or some other saint. Or, if you prefer, turn to so many other good French writers who have handled in good taste the lives of saints most suited for our times. Yes, the lives of the saints. Try it out and you’ll be able to tell me what you think about it.

We need to rise up to the level of great models; we need to raise the pitch of our moral diapason; we need to escape once and for all from the vicious circle of our resolutions and renewal of resolutions. A priestly soul is an object of greatness in the sight of the world, of the Angels, and of God Himself. Let us therefore soar above this low horizon of pygmies and take the place befitting us as ministers of the Lord. Oh, if you only knew! Something to make you blush to your hair roots. There would be no end to the discussion if I started. Suffice to say that while the economy of grace is on the one hand an incomprehensible dogma, under certain aspects it could constitute for a truly Christian soul a far-reaching science. There are many good people even among our common folk who have been initiated in this science, while the priest too often is ignorant of its most rudimentary facts.... There are young girls who remain fixed in prayer for hours after the heavenly banquet. There are matrons surrounded by all the comforts of their estate and all the abundance of their wealth, and yet they live in perfect detachment from earthly riches while bearing with a simple heart the weight of their social status. And so many

¹⁴⁵ As I am over the Lord.

¹⁴⁶ That your light shine before men.

¹⁴⁷ Cherry – brandy liquor.

other living examples! Courage, my dear deacon.¹⁴⁸ Let us return to the days of our first promises, to the beginning of our priestly life. How much time wasted! How many useless worries! How much self-love; how little detachment from the things that do not pertain to God; what a scanty measure of abandonment to the Lord; what little effort at conformity to the Divine Will! What dangerous freedom in spiritual exercises; what sloth, what self-interest, what vanity, lack of mortification, disorderly affections! Let us start over, let us start all over again. Let us invoke the Holy Spirit that He may enlighten us. Let us walk in the presence of God with the simplicity of a little child playing under its mother's gaze. Let us accept the consolations and the sorrows that God sends us in the spirit of deep subjection to His will...This is the way to live.

I urge you not to make any rash judgments on seeing me in such a mood for scribbling down my thoughts at random. One swallow does not make a spring. The main reason is that at this time the bishop is ensconced in examining the paper work of those who are competing for parishes, and as a result I am free as a lark with my friends. So, consider this merely as an expression of my good will and of my sincere desire to put it always to work, and not as the beginning of a round of correspondence along these lines. Now let us get back to our details. Realize that it is now two years since we consolidated our friendship.¹⁴⁹ How many happy memories! How many hopes, how many disappointments! The day before yesterday I completed the fifteenth anniversary of my second investiture.¹⁵⁰ Six years ago at this time I was wandering through the capital of Italy with my head full of political ideas and my heart overflowing with the most tender feelings for my country. What an illusion! Youthful fancies that have vanished, opening up in my soul a stream of sad disillusionments that still flows on! O unhappy affections that dilated my heart and exploited before its time the closed bud of life and lulled my spirit to sleep in an atmosphere of blighting skepticism! *Vade retro, Satanas.*¹⁵¹ Enough of these Arcadian frolics; let us get down to something serious. Only ten months and twenty-six days and we shall see the great Father of the faithful invoke the renewing spirit over troubled humanity: "*emitte Spiritum...et renovabis faciem terrae.*"¹⁵² Courage, my dear Stephen. That will be a great day for people of good will. The code of Freemasonry is completed by now. The struggle between the two princes is approaching: the apostolate of the dagger directed by the fiery Genovese; the apostolate of prayer animated by the angelic Pius. Already the two armies are encamped and facing each other, and from all sides war cries are being raised: "Down with religion, long live free thinking." "—Peace on earth, long live Jesus." O Delaude, Delaude, with steady nerve and sturdy heartbeat, our spirit soaring in prayer above the horizon of the future, we will fight on and keep dragging this mortal flesh amid the bloody conflict without uttering one bitter word or retreating one step from the path to martyrdom. The palm is waiting up there in Heaven for the man who can die victoriously...Jesus, Mary, Joseph, help us. How can we be strong in the fight without you? *Domine, Domine, iube quod vis, sed da quod iubes.*

It's time to make a halt. But first let me again urge you to pray and pray very much without worrying about anything else. He who is worried and full of anxiety in his work does an offense to God and does not say the Our Father from the heart. Let us accept purely and simply whatever God sends us, without being concerned or sad. I can't attend to the job, but you

¹⁴⁸ Marellò reminds Delaude of their Diaconal ordination of June 6, 1868.

¹⁴⁹ Marellò and Delaude signed together a common program of spiritual life on February 23, 1867. (cf. Lett. 9 and 29).

¹⁵⁰ Marellò's second investiture occurred in San Martino Tanaro, Saturday, January 9, 1864. As found in a letter written by Msgr. G.B. Torchio to theologian Paolo Elia dated January 11, 1864.

¹⁵¹ Get behind me, Satan!

¹⁵² Come Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

can: spend a few hours daily removing the dirt and rust, if any, from old projects worth being put to work; for instance, the distribution of good literature. Did I tell you that in Modena the Immacolata Printery printed one hundred thousand copies of St Alphonsus (say what you will, St Alphonsus is still the most popular book and the one best suited for the ordinary reader and even for the better educated) which are being sold by the hundreds at little more than three cents per copy containing 326 pages. Don't you think it's a good idea to subscribe to one newspaper less and circulate one hundred copies of Liguori among the people? With so much of waste in spending, would it not be better to spread among our families cards with Christian greetings or the eternal truths or short summaries of the rules of perfection...and other leaflets that you can get at eleven and a half francs a thousand.

Go on, then. Think up the projects; gather together the loose ends; pray to our Lord to give increase to our hopes; read the lives of the saints and send me your written comments on them; talk little and pray a lot; put your papers in order—clear, effective, aimed especially at our studious youth. In a word, multiply your activity as much as you can, because God did not give you those outstanding talents for work so that you might waste them on trifles, but for the good of the Church. Look at me—at this time I can only lend encouragement and prayer; I can assure you, however, that if my body is harassed by a thousand distractions, my soul is always with you in the presence of God, where we must all have recourse at every moment to renew our strength. When you are tired, raise your eyes, place your hands over your heart. You are in the presence of the Lord, you are with your friend, with Catholicity. The Communion of Saints is a great dogma. Speak loud and I'll hear what you will tell me: "Father, sons, brothers, one single current of love. Amen."

25
TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

*Agitation of the social mass-
mission to convey Jesus's message:
The catechism-
To meet each other in Rome-
Preparing in silence-
[Asti, end of January 1869]*

W.G.M.G.¹⁵³

Dear Brother in Jesus Christ,

I have no time for a long letter, only a few words but from the heart. How many events are taking place within our own microcosm, within our sphere of action, in our diocese, in our mother fatherland and throughout the European continent and I will venture to add throughout the entire pilgrim family of Adam (unless one wants to take in the whole vast horizon of the Church militant, suffering, and triumphant). Everything is on the move. "Mankind is astir, but it is God who is guiding it," was the cry of Father Ferreri from our cathedral pulpit a year ago. In the great social mass all our great personalities are in a state of ferment, all individuals, all classes, all nationalities, all races are being affected in different and mysterious ways in every part of the globe. It is time to take note of Napoleon's solemn admission to the French people of the necessity of affirming the great principles of Christianity. Ah yes, how well did Guizot put it: "Europe is suffering from a lack of faith, hope, and charity."

We must get back to the catechism, the book par excellence that has a truth, a counsel, a teaching for everyone. It shows kings the art of governing, it sets down for nations the principles of equality and freedom. It furnishes legislators with norms for lawmaking, guides administrators in the management of public affairs, and prints out to magistrates the paths of justice. It inculcates the moral law in the working man, assures the wealthy person of his right to private property and guarantees to the poor the daily bread of charity,... But who am I to talk of the catechism to one who handles it continuously by reason of his ministry and who should possess a much deeper knowledge of its spirit than myself. Ah, my dear Stephen, here is what we have to do: go back to the simple style, reduce things to the lowest terms, clarify what is obscure, simplify what is complicated. A priest according to the spirit of Jesus Christ must be furnished with great doctrine, and this doctrine he must communicate to the nations. The Divine Master transmits this doctrine to us through His Church. He teaches it to us when we are children, He develops it even in our schools, He simplifies it in our preaching, He translates it in all the actions of Christian living. This, then, is our mission to make the teachings of Jesus Christ known, loved, and practiced. That man is shallow indeed who charges this great book with being shallow. This book which reveals with marvelous effectiveness all the designs of religion and makes of a boy of ten a profound reasoner. He possesses all the great principles of true philosophy and is in a position to discuss at any moment the essence and attributes of God. He can speak without confusing the unity of the trinity of God, generation and procession, etc.. He knows about the origin of the world and the fall of man, the coming of the Redeemer and the necessity of grace, the means of transmitting it, the sacrament of reconciliation, the communion of prayer, etc., etc.. Surely no philosopher can ever compare with a Christian child in the exact exposition of the great truths that constitute the fund of our knowledge. The purpose of man, the

¹⁵³ Initials for Viva Gesù Maria Giuseppe, (Long live Jesus, Mary, Joseph).

social relationship, the bond of love, the necessity of law, and of sanctions, the right of ownership, etc., are all matters that form the object of catechetical conferences among the little folks, uneducated as they are and unschooled in scientific terminology.

I have a million things to say, but, I'll have to reserve them for days not far ahead, when we shall again have an opportunity to discuss in common our ideals and our hopes, as we used to in the past, but in an entirely different setting along the walks of Monte Pincio or under the arch of Titus or sitting on the ruins of Monte Cavallo or climbing up the cliffs of Tivoli—in a word, in the Eternal City. There we shall meet, a few months from now, to discuss the diocese of Asti and Christendom. We shall visit the Coliseum and we shall talk about the firmness of the priesthood that triumphs over all obstacles. We shall enter the tombs in which grew the first fruits of the Church. We shall pass in review the great monuments that bear inscribed the history of the Papacy. Everywhere we shall contemplate the power and the truth of those divine words: *Et portae inferi non praevalent.*¹⁵⁴ Yes, my dear assistant of Castellalfero, within ten months we shall shake hands in the square of Castel Sant' Angelo and together turn our steps toward...I am not too acquainted with the topography of Rome, so I'll just say it will be a memorable day when Rome will hold us within her walls (sic); not a day to be recorded in the history of great events, but one to be preserved in the book of our poor hearts.¹⁵⁵

...Goodbye. Pray very much. These are days of recollection. Let us prepare ourselves in silence as we await God's signal.¹⁵⁶ Everything is developing through the chain of time and time is in the hands of God.

Your comrade in arms,

Giuseppe Marella

¹⁵⁴ “The gates of hell shall not prevail...” (Matt. XVI, 18)

¹⁵⁵ Fr. Marella looks forward to his trip to Rome in the company of his bishop for the opening of the Vatican Council. While he expected his close friend, Fr. Delaude, to go with him, it does not seem that his hopes were realized.

¹⁵⁶ Much was expected from the Vatican Council.

26
TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

[Asti, ca. February 2, 1869]

.....This angelic priest (Fr. DeMastro)... an innocence and simplicity that enchant you; a graceful manner and kind conversation beyond reproach.... Here is ... an example who allows me to understand what a priest truly is.... Here is a model I would like to see reproduced throughout the entire Diocese (while respecting individual personality differences).....

.....our Felix Quaglino, friend to the perch.....

TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

[Asti, February 3, 1869]

.....This wild craving to epistolize by return mail.....

.....Yes, my dear Delaude, let us practice great courage in mortifying our contentious spirit, our rebellious flesh, this wounded nature of ours.....

28
TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

*Suggestions for setting up a
traveling library for the youth-
Regard for a kind word.
[Asti, February 5, 1869]*

Dearly beloved in Jesus and Mary:

Here I am at your service. The request you made of Felice is passed on to me. I accept it willingly, all the more since it gives me the occasion for a proposal that I have been wanting to make to you.¹⁵⁷ With all the books that we are sending you, and that, God willingly, we shall send, why could you not form a little library for the children? You could set up a little reading-room, with table, chairs, etc.. You could meet there on Wednesdays for your religious conferences and instructions for the youth of Castelalferese. And you will certainly find the occasion to invite the Catholic laity to broaden their religious education by reading good books. At this point you yourself can offer to lend them out (and keep a record of them) to those who ask. Once the project is started-and I don't think it is difficult to do so in Lent-you can find a way to collect funds to acquire new books of current publication, and in this way you will also be cooperating in spreading religious literature and encouraging devout readers. Work as hard as you can for the welfare of youth. Even the little we do is something, and the prevention of evil in our times is already a great good.¹⁵⁸ Courage, then, my dear Delaude. If you always do your job as a *grand gentleman*, you will draw the applause of Felice and all your friends. I must stop now, otherwise there won't be anything left to write about the next time. Thanks on behalf of Felice for the nice things you so kindly wrote him on that piece of paper. A good word is worth a treasure, and the Lord never leaves unrewarded the smallest action performed for His glory on behalf of our neighbor.

Goodbye. Always yours in the union with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary and Joseph.

J. Marellò

¹⁵⁷ Felice was the Bishop's handyman, while Father Marellò was the secretary.

¹⁵⁸ Unfortunately the anticlerical government of that time opposed the Christian education of youth.

[Asti, near February 20, 1869]

My dear Delaude,

...Let us pray very much to Him who according to his designs shall give increase to the work of His ministers. Let us plant, let us irrigate, but most of all, let us keep our eyes constantly turned toward the divine Sun from which descends the kind warmth that causes supernatural growth.

I suppose you are very busy these days: your youth center and catechism, preparation of your parishioners for Easter. So let me tell you what the Holy Father told the preachers in Rome: "Remember to look for the secret of eloquence in charity." Memorable words which I like to recall whenever I turn my thoughts to the great apostolate of the world in these times. I wish this words were stamped in letters of gold in the private study of all those who have the mission of proclaiming the truth of Christianity. You must know that I too have succumbed to this weakness by taking the assignment of teaching the catechism during Lent at Regio Convitto. I have more than twenty boys from different schools (industrial, high, elementary). They are very attentive and docile and so well-mannered that in the three sessions I have had with them (there are only three Lenten instructions a week) I feel deeply satisfied. Oh, poor young people, you are too abandoned and overlooked! You are a poor growing generation left too much to yourselves, and then slandered or at best harshly judged for your frivolity and misguided generosity, for your untapped need for activity, for wrongly directed affections that lead you astray through no fault of your own. Poor young people! Let us pray, and let us pray especially for you.

...Goodbye, my dear Stephen. There is more I would like to say if I had the time. But let it be revealed by God who reads our hearts and see how great is the affection that joins me to you by the twofold bond, natural and supernatural; an affection born out of our exchange of community life, strengthened by identical aspirations, nourished and now preserved by our common sharing in the priesthood in the shadow of the Cross. Goodbye, and let us always keep in mind St Paul: "*Vigilate, state in fide viriliter, et confortamini.*"¹⁵⁹

Affectionately yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Giuseppe Marello

¹⁵⁹ "Be watchful, stand manfully in the faith, and be strengthened."

TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

[Asti, after February 23, 1869]

.....Meanwhile let us pray. The times are getting more and more troublesome. Individual and particular interests must make room for the general interests of Mother Church. Like good soldiers let us also make our hour of sentinel duty and stand ready to sound the alarm when the enemy appears. For the time being, each one need only stand guard at his listening post. The hour of the field battle has not yet struck. Let us prepare our weapons, fortify our spirit, purify our affections. Let us train ourselves for every sort of combat, so that in the hour of need our courage does not falter and our strength does not fail in the clash with the foe. Choose some great personality as your model, and then strive to imitate him at all costs. And yet, in the fervor of our zeal let us keep in mind that we should not be disheartened if we run into those hidden reefs that jolt us into the awareness of our misery. Let us humble ourselves before God who wants it that way....

Your brother in Christ,

J. Marello

TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

[Asti, March 9, 1869]

I can only spare a few lines as I am on my way to the seminary for the conference. Motta has just left for Turin, where he is going to buy books for everyone.

Pray and keep on praying. I don't know what else to recommend because I know that the devil is tempting us more than ever and is assailing us from every quarter. There is no better way for us to be delivered from him. Every other means of defense can turn against us when we cannot make prudent use of it. Only humble and persevering prayer does not fail of its purpose. Let us pray much and from the heart. Let us pray even when we do not have a taste for prayer. Let us pray even in dryness of spirit. Let us pray to the good God that he will teach us how to love Him and will finally put an end to our lukewarmness.

Yours in the Most Sacred Hearts,

J. Marello

35
TO FR. JOSEPH RICCIO

[Asti, after the 13th of March, 1869]

My dear Namesake,

Always the same deplorable lack of time, otherwise you can imagine whether I would be satisfied with this wretched piece of paper to convey to you my inmost feelings on the occasion of our common Saint's Day. Patience. As I told you before, let's make up for our forced slowness of communications by the swiftness and fluency of our thoughts.

Now then, Friday is St. Joseph's Day: *anniversary* of a certain political banquet without toasts; *anniversary* that bears many fine memories of your aunt and your cousin and Mr. Aluffi, and the joys of our seminary years and our carefree youth and a thousand other things that it is not hard to recall; *anniversary* of the first recitation of the Divine Office.¹⁶⁰ That day holds for us too something that is still in the mind of God and that will form the object of the anniversary to be celebrated in 1870. O glorious patriarch St Joseph, do not forget us as we continue to plod along with our weak flesh in this hard land of exile. Next to the Blessed Virgin you were the first one to enfold in your arms the Redeemer. Be our exemplar in our ministry,¹⁶¹ which, like your own, is a ministry of intimate relationship with the Divine Word. May you teach us, may you assist us, may you render us worthy members of the Holy Family.

...With the preaching going on and winning so much favor, you should not find too heavy your task as a preacher in the pulpits of Castigliole, which men like Grandi, Marchia, Bagnasci, and so many other celebrities have held before you. Courage! Your diction is smooth enough, your gestures graceful, your eye contact sufficiently firm before the challenge of the thousand pairs of eyes inexorably fixed on you. And as for your soul, it is ever ready to receive and radiate the waves of melody that take form on the chords of your quick mind. So, if you have a heart for feeling, a mind for planning, a memory for learning, a pair of lungs for proclaiming, a pair of arms for gesturing, and an intrepid manner to put all this mechanism into motion, there's nothing else you need. Courage! A preacher who has the personal qualities and the mandate of his superiors, has also the help of God, with which success is insured.

...Let's break up this session as I have to get back to my office work. It's agreed, then, that on Friday we will remember that both of us bear the name of Joseph and that both of us will implore the patronage of our great namesake. And Saturday? On Saturday, too, as we say the Oremus in the name of the Church, we will recall at that moment the name we share, our common ideals, our shared hopes, our shared destiny. Goodbye, dear Beppo. See you soon.

¹⁶⁰ The obligation of praying the breviary (Liturgy of the Hours) began with the subdiaconate, which Marellò and Riccio received March 28, 1868, "*Sitientes Saturday*" (title from first word of Introit for Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent. Perhaps, in honor of their holy Patron, they nevertheless first began to recite the breviary on March 19, Feast of St. Joseph.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Letter 76.

[Asti, March 20, 1869]

.....My dear Delaude, what I told you two years ago I repeat now with firm conviction: Everywhere, at every time, in every condition a man has his row to hoe. Happy the man who succeeds best, I mean the man who can discharge his task as gracefully as possible. Or, to put it in a Christian form, let us say as Scripture has it: *Militia est vita hominis, etc.*¹⁶² Some are on the battle line, some in the command corps, some in ordinance. A variety of tasks, a variety of burdens, a variety of laurels. But the difference is only apparent. In substance, the difference in quality and quantity is in relation to the specific circumstances of each individual. When we come down to the facts, the business of bearing arms is always a burdensome one, and the day of one's discharge is always welcomed as a blessing. Courage! Let us serve our term patiently while looking forward to our discharge papers from Heaven which will entitle us to return to our native country, to our family, to the home of the Father who is in Heaven.

¹⁶² "Man's life on earth is a warfare" (Job).

[Asti, March 3, 1869]

.....(the French priests) put such total effort into it that the frightened engineer ... stopped the locomotive to check if an accident had occurred. The stop was so perfectly timed that the *prêtres Français* had time to leisurely sing their *Mag-ni-ficat* up to the final *Gloria Patri*, embellishing it with long, sonorous, wild: *viff* (*vive*, long live) *Pjii* (*Pie*, Pius) *Neuff*, *Pontiff et roàà* (*roi*, king)....

TO FR. GIUSEPPE RICCIO

[Asti, before March 28, 1869]

...How did you spend St Joseph's Day? I have a feeling that all went well. *Sancte Joseph, ora pro nobis*. The Easter season brings you a great deal of work. Poor boy! I imagine and I can suppose how much it weighs on you. Patience! God gives you a daily return of good health and an increase in good will and in the long run the consolation of doing good to so many souls to whom you distribute in God's name the bread of life. Instead I have the pleasure of serving my neighbor as myself and of not doing any task that bears with it the satisfaction of having done good to anyone. And so, your's are the consolations of Mary who deals directly with Jesus and shares in His discourses on eternal life; while I am buried in the anxieties of Martha who attends to temporal affairs and neglects perhaps too much the important affair-the "better part" of her sister "which shall not be taken away from her." You see, then, you have no reason to complain; you have a good job on your hands: *dispensator mysteriorum Dei*,¹⁶³ and you have a very strict obligation to pray for your friend Beppo and to apply some measure of your apostolic labors on his behalf as he is removed miles away from the honored and glorious hardships of the combat troops, and remains isolated amid the cold and cheerless duties at headquarters.¹⁶⁴

Goodbye, my dear Beppo. Time for the evening meal (it's 8:45). Have a happy Easter and be always joyful.

Affectionately yours,

Beppo

¹⁶³ Dispenser of the mysteries of God.

¹⁶⁴ Father Marello would have preferred pastoral activities to the routine work of the chancery.

41
TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

[Asti, April 11, 1869]

...(the people of Asti were) all actually plotting to take every measure to see that they keep their ancient claim to the title *civitas usariorum* — city of userers...

TO FR. JOSEPH ROSSETTI

[Asti, before the 15th of April, 1869]

Dear Confrere and friend:

Had I given heed to my feelings, I could have sent you a bulkier letter. But I let my time go by, and now I am forced to dash off only this wretched little note. Still, it will be enough to let you know that if you need anything from Turin, I'll be going there in the middle of April with the Bishop and I'll stop over for about eight to ten days, that is, from the middle of the third week after Easter to Sunday, April 25. Would you like to come along too? We'll talk about old times, we'll repeat some of our former walks, we'll relax our spirits worn out by daily routine, and with aspirations ever old and ever new we'll refresh our ideals... Goodbye. Is it possible? Not a moment's peace. Some other time. Pray for your friend in Christ Jesus.

Giuseppe Marelo

The man who is patient everywhere
Is a marvelous man indeed!

Let us be brave. Some day the struggle will come to an end, and the combatants will receive their reward...Let us strengthen ourselves by prayer and keep going forward. Every hour that strikes means one step less for us to take. Courage! May our good Angel be our guide.

60
TO FR. JOSEPH RICCIO

Shortage of time for writing.
Affectionate remembrance.
Christmas night audience with the Pope
[Rome, January 16, 1870]

Dear and Dearer yet, Joe,

If you were to find yourself here in my shoes, you would understand the validity of the excuses I have to present you for my long silence. Apart from the official and unofficial letters inspired from on high, it has been over a month since I've written a letter of any length. Yet don't let this lead you to imagine that I have cast my friends into oblivion. I have continually kept them in mind, and now more than ever, and especially my dear Namesake Riccio, whose image is daily before my eyes in the person of my table-companion to the right, the secretary to the Bishop of Pechino.¹⁶⁵ His lovable personality and his well-mannered and jovial conversation compound the resemblance and keep present to me the character he is representing. I mean I'm really fortunate amidst so many strange faces to find a nice and happy countenance who brings to life for me my dearest and nicest close Seminary Companion, my unforgettable Riccio. Forgive me now for ending this point and going no further. The Bishop is waiting for me and I don't know when I'll be able to grab another spare moment to continue this letter which seemed like it would be a little longer. The usual reason of shortage of time. Receive this small offering as a down payment for what I'd like to send you and what I'm reserving for another opportunity. I beg you pay my respect to the very kind Fr. Vicar,¹⁶⁶ and assure him of the feelings of esteem and distinguished regard with which I return the courteous words addressed to me in your letter. Greetings to our confreres when you have a chance to see them. Hold me in the same affection with which you are meant to be held in equal measure by your

most affectionately *Joe*

*Oremus ad invicem*¹⁶⁷

Praised Be Jesus on the feast of His Most Holy Name.

P.S. The marvels accompanying our stay in this Capital are beyond measure. Since they are simply too many to recount, I won't even begin, but with your permission will postpone them for later. For the Papal audience¹⁶⁸ alone, it would take me two pages to fully express the heartfelt feelings aroused by that blessed memory. I had the fortune of seeing, hearing, and touching him at my sweet ease, alone with my Bishop, in his private quarters, and what is most remarkable of all on Holy Christmas night! What most precious events are forever etched in my memory!! And then the Pontifical Ceremonies, the Churches, the Martyrs, the Catacombs, the Episcopate, the Church solemnly exercising its supreme authority¹⁶⁹ —Oh my dear Joe, it's

¹⁶⁵ This Secretary is mentioned again in Letter 63.

¹⁶⁶ Fr. Philip Abrate, Vicar Forane of Costigliole of Asti.

¹⁶⁷ Let us pray for each other.

¹⁶⁸ In that audience the Bishop presented Pius IX a letter from the Clergy of Asti pledging unanimous veneration and obedience to the Holy Father.

¹⁶⁹ By January 16, 1870, the Council had already held 11 General Assemblies and two Solemn Sessions.

impossible for me to begin this subject and say only a few words. Be indulgent with me and accept my pledge of a future letter. I send you a hug.

61
TO HIS FATHER, VINCENT

*Healthy in body and spirit,
Greatness of the Christian
Religion. Msgr. Torchio in
Rome. Greetings and
remembrances for relatives.
Audience and blessing of
Pius IX. Pray for the Council.
[Rome, January 31, 1870]*

Dearest Father,

I'm taking advantage of our Fr. Dean's¹⁷⁰ kindness to bring you up to date on my life and to let you know a little of how we're living here at Rome. I've been away from Asti for about two months and it seems like two days. Some rain these past days was a little bothersome, but otherwise I've felt much better here than when I was in Asti. My health is doing extremely well since I'm eating with plenty of appetite and am moving about a lot to cover the large distance separating one place from another. And then I'm also in good spirits here in Rome seeing, hearing, touching, enjoying all that is most beautiful, dear, and precious in this world. Here are the tombs and mortal remains of the greatest persons who lived on earth. Here one encounters at every turn something that moves and blissfully transports the heart of a Christian and especially of a priest. Here we are living among so many illustrious men who come from all over the world to gather at this center of the Lord's peace and blessing. Here one totally forgets all the troubles, deceits, and wickedness of our Italian countries, to live a true family life that really seems like the entrance hall to Paradise. Oh, each day I appreciate a little more how great and consoling our Christian Religion is, for it enlarges and purifies all that it touches. Apart from the splendor of its divine light, life is fraught with darkness, disorder, wretchedness and hopelessness. And I feel forming on my tongue a word of thanksgiving to the Lord who willed to save me when I myself was in danger of being counted among those unhappy people who separate themselves from the principles of our Holy Faith.¹⁷¹

I still have, so many, many things to tell you, but I'm charging the Fr. Dean to stand for me. He's been here one month and has been able to see much more than I have in the two months I've been here. Here's the difference: he has all his time for himself, while I'm bound by the duties of my office requiring my presence at the Bishop's side. So, have the Fr. Dean give you a live narration of every detail.

I trust you will communicate many nice things to those who love me, beginning with those at home: Victoria, Luisa, Felicita, uncle John, the Massano Family, the Mareello Family. I'm enclosing some commemorative medals of the great Council. Please distribute them among these good people so they may be reminded to say an *Ave Maria* for me. I think I've included enough for dear Catherine's whole family—also for the same purpose, so that the *mom* as well the *kids* not forget to pray for *Joey*¹⁷² once in a while, as he for his part wholeheartedly promises

¹⁷⁰ Msgr. John Baptist Torchio, Dean, Pastor of San Martino Alfieri.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Letter 9 and 23.

¹⁷² Mareello uses Piedmontese words for "uncle," "Catherine," "kids," and "Joey." Aunt Catherine had four children: Teresa whose married name was Ruella, Stephen, Angela whose married name was Castelli, and Carlotta whose married name was Barbero. For the other relatives, cf. Letter 58.

to do the same. If I weren't obliged to keep the packet of reasonable size, I should also like to send some portraits of Pius IX, this great Pope, whom together with my Bishop—in private audience and on the beautiful night of Christmas—I had the consolation of seeing, hearing, touching, kissing, and venerating prostrate at his feet in his personal quarters. As long as I live, I'll never forget such a great fortune, and I'll always pray that the Lord give that good Pope Pius IX a return of the blessing that he deigned to invoke upon me and upon my dear relatives on that memorable night.

May all try to have a good winter and may you particularly take care to stay in good health as your most affectionate and loving son hopes and prays.

With the most sincere affection,

Joseph

P.S. I can't keep myself from sending you a photograph of the venerable Holy Father, Pius IX, whom Providence has destined for the approaching triumph of the Catholic Church. I'm sending it also so you won't forget to pray that the Lord bring this Vatican Council to a good conclusion, assisting the Bishops and all others here in Rome in any way participating in this great Assembly. I send you another with total filial affection.

64
TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

[Rome, July 18, 1870]

....a new anchor of Salvation ... offering humanity hope of escape (from) impending
shipwreck.....

.....Long live Pius IX, infallible Pontiff!....

TO FR. JOSEPH RICCIO

[Asti, June 27, 1871]

....My state of health was, is, and will be as God wills, as you already know: analogous to that of a *cracked earthenware pot* which still serves as well as a *new pot* in withstanding the wear of household usage, as long as one is careful to treat it gently.....

*He proposes to the Canon
the formation at the Church
named Jesus of a Company
under the patronage of St. Joseph to
promote the interests of Jesus.
He presents an outline of the
Company itself and naturally offers
a first contribute of cooperation.
[October 25, 1872]*

Very Reverend and dear Canon:¹⁷³

As with young hearts we look forward to new and promising horizons, the possibility of your acquiring the spacious premises named Jesus has for a long time nourished our hopes of some day reclaiming for the diocese a beautiful church. No doubt this church, God willing, can gradually open up opportunities for developing a goodly number of cherished projects still in their initial stage and all those devout exercises that were already being conducted in the inadequate facilities of the tiny church of the Michelerio Institute till such time as larger and more suitable quarters would favor the greatest possible expansion of activities. Please give your kind attention to the plans that we have been secretly formulating in our minds in connection with the fact that, after experiencing so many difficulties, you have finally been blessed by God with success in your effort. First of all, I wish to state in all sincerity that whatever I have herein written is exclusively and respectfully submitted to your Reverence's judgment in the same spirit in which a dutiful and obedient son submits to his father's authority, with confidence and simplicity, his every thought, feeling, and desire, restraining himself from entertaining any judgments or feelings that are opposed to the principle of authority to which he pays his unqualified homage. At this point, I feel I must add by way of clarification that I have unwittingly given offense to your goodness by the very fact of my supposing there was any need to offer explanations and to preface my remarks with a statement of my feelings when there was really no such need. But how can I help it? When you have on the point of your pen an idea that is slow to get on paper, there are a thousand other ideas that, without your knowing it, gain expression before the important idea has a chance; and so you keep going around for a long time in a circle which is really a vicious circle, till in some way or other there appears on the circumference the tangent you were searching for. And here it is: I ask Your Reverence to kindly welcome me and several friends of mine as we unite in one common spirit under the patronage of St. Joseph to promote the interests of Jesus in your new church. From what little I have written in the following pages, you will understand that this desire of ours can take effect from this very moment, since it is purely a union of spirit and intention. As usual, then, be patient and give a hearing to the importunate:

Design for a Company of St. Joseph to promote the interests of Jesus.

¹⁷³ Canon Giovanni Cerruti and Miss Clara Michelerio in the 1860s founded a hospice for young orphans and abandoned children from Asti and surroundings. In 1873, Canon Cerruti procured from the Joint – Stock Company of the Kingdom of Italy the above mentioned hospice, originally called Jesus's Quarter, formerly a Franciscan convent. (cf. Lett. 1).

It has a sort of native right to reside in the house of and function in the church of Jesus. No special bonds among the Companions of St Joseph. —Only the spiritual bond of charity. —Each member draws his own inspiration from his exemplar St Joseph, who was the first on earth to look after the interest of Jesus; he guarded Him in His infancy, he protected Him in His boyhood, he acted as His father during the first thirty years of His life on earth.... Everyone can belong to the Company. Membership in this association is constituted by the secret resolve to share in its common interests. One who decides to participate in this Company must, however, promise in the presence of God to strive within his means to promote the interests of Jesus. It shall be the duty of the Company as a body, in a spirit of solidarity among all its members, to seek every occasion to make it possible for all to cooperate in its work according to the different abilities of each. There is neither time nor place in which some good cannot be done. Every word, every step, every wish, can be the raw material for the interests of Jesus. In a frightful variety of ways the kingdom of God is being brought to ruin. Let us strive in every place to do our work of restoring it with Heaven's help. Now, let us consider in what general way the Company must proceed at the beginning of its advance. *Simplicity* is a virtue that more than any other draws us close to the perfection of our Heavenly Father. The work of the Holy Spirit in our souls is essentially a work of *simplification*. The great majority of our actions lose their fruitfulness by reason of the multiplicity of their ingredients. The work of the Saints which the centuries have left intact were always marked by this trait of *simplicity*. Compare the prodigious results of this moving power which is none other than an unshakable faith in Divine Providence, a faith that stands free from all human preoccupations. Compare, I say, the results of this pure and simple faith with the skimpy contributions of human wisdom, with all the pomp of its riches and the security it rests on its own resources. You will then understand how much more effective is one charitable thought nurtured in the heart of our Cottolengo than a thousand philanthropical projects to be promoted at the cost of millions squeezed from the blood of the people. If every counsel dictated by human prudence is more of a hindrance than a help in the works of God, then let the foundation of the Company of St. Joseph rest on ground that is firm and stable, not by human standards, but according to the standards of faith. No reliance on wealth, backing, the esteem and the encouragement of the world. On the contrary, let everything proceed according to the dictates of faith, with boundless trust in the help of Heaven and an unending gratitude to God, and to Him alone, whether in abundance or privation, mindful that "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." These things can be achieved only on one condition. Charity is the bond of unity, and obedience is its safeguard. Every work, however good and holy in itself, can be a hindrance to the common good if it is not tested by obedience. There are a thousand ways to bring the devil into play, even under the appearances of promoting the interests of Jesus. The only infallible control is obedience. Wherever obedience does not hold complete sway, even the most refined systems of rules and precautions are of no avail, as experience shows. Obedience, instead can take the place of everything, with unending success. The lives of holy founders of religious orders are a most telling demonstration of this truth, a truth that can never be too strongly emphasized in institutions where many wills must be coordinated toward a common goal. Now then, the only foundation, the basic principle of the Company of St. Joseph is unlimited submission to authority, always conforming one's private initiative to initiative from above. Therefore, let no work be undertaken by the members of the Company that is not inspired by this spirit of submission to the guidance of superiors, a guidance which in turn is determined by a higher source of obedience and proceeds from one Mover toward which all wills converge. In this way, the Company might be at this very moment an established fact, having as its potential members as many as are the persons of good will in Asti and in the diocese. It would all be a question of gradually proceeding in such a way that the many good works performed

individually increase by mutual interaction and by reason of their unifying force. May God bless and multiply these good workers who can really glean a bountiful harvest if they use their energies harmoniously in prompt obedience to the Visible Lord of the Harvest and to the venerable persons who are to represent him, namely, the Bishop and his vicars. — *Sancte Joseph, Custos Jesu et Protector noster, accipe nos comites tuos in ministeriis quae in terris persolvere meruisti....*¹⁷⁴ Just to offer you right now my own modest contribution, I want to tell you that for the past several months I have been moved to find ways and means so that during this Octave of All Souls there will be an increase of prayers on behalf of the departed to be applied to those poor detained souls, and shall offer up my private prayers in union with those that you yourself may wish to offer for that same purpose, possibly through some morning or evening reading or period of adoration or other devout exercise in the new church of the blessed Bridegroom of those beloved souls. — Besides, I shall presume and interpret the permission of friends to offer, for the benefit of those who may be in need, some good reading material on loan, with the request that it be put into circulation. In keeping with this wish of my confreres, I would like to ask Your Reverence that with the help of Fr. Chistino and of others of your choice, you would kindly promote this circulation of good books which at this time numbers hundreds of volumes and which we have been gathering around the initial collection made about five years ago. Should you desire to form a book deposit in your own residence, we would appreciate your taking the trouble of distributing as you see fit copies for outright donation and books that are returnable, and to accept books donated by persons desirous of promoting this good project. And along with this, if it's not adding too much fuel to the fire, you might, in addition to books, holy pictures, medals, etc., start a store of liturgical articles, handmade items prepared by women for poor churches, churches linens, or at least inexpensive items essential for the Holy Sacrifice for needy churches and altars; in a word, anything (by way of a church goods deposit) that can in some way promote the interests of Jesus and carry on the work of St. Joseph, who was entrusted with the care and defense of His most sacred humanity. Oh, if only this Christmas, thanks to the help of devout helping hands, the Holy Infant could rest a little more at ease on many altars of our diocese!

Pardon me for keeping you so long over matters about which you are certainly better informed and zealous than I am. I have written as I have felt, and now I shall stop so as not to take advantage of the permission requested for a hearing and also not to render myself undeserving of a hearing in the future. I beg your prayers for this poor soul, still unable to actualize its many desires with the persevering practice of virtue. With every sentiment of the deepest esteem, I remain Your Reverence's most devoted servant in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Father Joseph Marello

¹⁷⁴ St. Joseph, guardian of Jesus and our protector, welcome us as your companions in the ministries which you merited to perform on earth.

TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

Jubilee Procession. Project postponed. Request for prayers during the month of Mary.
[Asti, May 10, 1875]

J.M.J.

Dearest friend *in D.no*,¹⁷⁵

*Quod differtur non aufertur.*¹⁷⁶ This coming week, the Bishop, the Chapter, the Clergy, and the People of Asti will hold the Jubilee processions. As you see our project is impeded on my end and will be impracticable until next June 6. *Tunc videbimus.*¹⁷⁷ During the intervening time we will be able to plan the thing better and prevent any other difficulty. I'm hurriedly advising you of this so it may serve as a guide for you in writing to Vespa.

Good-bye, dearest friend, and in your prayers to Our Blessed Mother during this beautiful month, never forget your old most affectionate friend,

J. Marellò

¹⁷⁵ In the Lord.

¹⁷⁶ What is postponed is not cancelled.

¹⁷⁷ Then we shall see.

85
TO FR. STEPHEN DELAUDE

Request for a volume.
[Asti, June 8, 1875]

Dearest friend. Among the books *quondam*¹⁷⁸...you must have (and if you don't, then Motta must, in which case I beg you to entrust this errand to him) the Moroni-Gaetano Dictionary of Eccles. Erudit... a many volume work in 8vo¹⁷⁹ and incomplete. If among the volumes in your possession, you should find those corresponding to the alphabetical letter F (ef),¹⁸⁰ please have them sent to me. But if the volumes for the letter F happen to be the very ones that are missing, then patience: send me still a note to that effect before too long.

Most affectionately yours, *J. Marellò*

¹⁷⁸ "of once upon a time." Cf. L.76 for these books, which had been used for a lending library.

¹⁷⁹ Octavo, page size resulting from cutting printed sheet into eight.

¹⁸⁰ Especially volume XXIV, that is twenty-four.

TO FR. JOSEPH RICCIO

*New announcement of opening.
Pray to obtain what is most beneficial.
[Asti, July 30, 1875]*

J.M.J.

Dearest Joe,

I'm hurriedly sending you a note as you wished to let you know that due to the arrival of the *exequatur*¹⁸¹ for the Agliano Parish and Fr. Surra's¹⁸² renunciation of the Corsione Par., an Opening is announced for applying for this Parish and for two other empty ones. The dates are set for next August 11 and 12.

Pray that the Angel of Good Counsel may assist you and that our Great Patriarch Joseph may obtain for you from the Lord *quod tibi expedit*,¹⁸³ or to put it more clearly, *quod melius expedit*.¹⁸⁴ Accompanying your prayers will be those of your most affectionate namesake always,

Joseph Marelllo

¹⁸¹ Official commission.

¹⁸² Fr. Giacinto Surra (cf. Lett. 15).

¹⁸³ What is beneficial to you.

¹⁸⁴ What is more beneficial.

[September 27, 1875]

J.M.J.

Dearly beloved in the Lord:

I have only a particle of time left to tell you that *Christus sibimetipsi non placuit*,¹⁸⁵ and that in this world we dislike not only the things mentioned in your letter, but others as well. It's just that everything, even the good, has to be done against our liking. You are the one to tell me that the more our works are done without a natural inclination and in the simple light of faith, the better we are able to fool the devil. So take courage, this natural aversion belongs to Adam, which wants to intrude itself under the guise of a greater good. Instead, it is better to do one's actions day by day as God sends them and deals them out (like a card player changing his hand), with faith in *permittente Deo*.¹⁸⁶

The Bishop has given you the mandate and upholds it. So cheer up and go with confidence and with freedom from all worry. What else can I reply to your letter? *Oremus. Dominus nos benedicat*, and so forth.

Affectionately yours,

JOSEPH MARELLO

¹⁸⁵ Christ did not please Himself.

¹⁸⁶ The will of God.

[Asti, September 1875]

Dearly beloved in the Lord:

With all the more pleasure do I take up my pen to write to you as I wish to share with you the blessing personally received from the Holy Father Pius IX, by whom it was solemnly bestowed in my recent trip to the Eternal City. It was not only in the presence of the Vicar of Christ that I remembered my dear ones far away, but also at the tombs (especially) of the Prince of the Apostles and of the Patron of the Youth, St. Aloysius. There (I had the good fortune to celebrate M.) I celebrated the Holy Sacrifice. In my visits to the tombs of the many martyrs and confessors of the faith which forms the treasure of that venerable city I recommended their spiritual needs (along with mine, also the spiritual needs of my dear ones. May God in his mercy receive those poor prayers of mine). Christian hope assures me that those poor prayers and so many heavenly intercessors will not be denied a hearing on your behalf, because of the infinite mercy of God who does not permit to go lost even one sigh that is accompanied by faith.

And now, with reference to one of your letters, I shall repeat what we should always keep present to our minds: the union of our will with the will of God must be, here on earth, our one and only task, the novitiate of that *perfect union* which shall be consummated in Heaven. Everything else must be subordinated to this task alone. And so, even our slowness in acquiring virtue should not cause us to fear, once we have understood that virtuous habits are the means, not the end, and that more truly united to God is the one who is continuously struggling with his disorderly inclinations, deploring them in his heart and humbly pleading for victory, than the one who is already in possession of many virtues and forget perhaps to render to the Lord the tribute of gratitude proportionate to his condition.

Recall what temptation is and what an abundance of fruits it yields. The feeling of repugnance for the good is an effect of our nature that draws us toward evil; and you know that we have three enemies continually at war with us: the devil, the world, and the flesh. No one can keep them from harassing us, but no one who keeps closely united to the Lord can be overwhelmed by them.

Do, then, all your actions with a deep-felt desire of putting into them all the fervor which you are able. Do not be surprised at the feeling of repugnance (not to be confused with lukewarmness) that you may experience even in the holiest actions; rather, on completing them give thanks to the Lord for being able to do so much with His help in spite of your misery. Stir up your faith in Him who commands us to do good and yet is always satisfied with the mere desire to do it. *Nunc coepi*.¹⁸⁸ Look at the past as did the Saints, with regret, but also with the feeling of pleasure in the thought that God has such a vast area in which to exercise His mercy.

Think of the future with simplicity and with the sole desire of following the voice of God—this God who is so different from me, God whose goodness we shall never succeed in knowing fully, God who says: *in caritate perpetua dilexi te*.¹⁸⁹ So let us repeat as often as we can this *nunc coepi* with deep faith and striving to increase in love.

¹⁸⁷ This is the draft of a letter addressed to Fr. Stephen Rossetti.

¹⁸⁸ Now I begin.

¹⁸⁹ I have loved you with an everlasting love.

TO THE ORATORIAN SUPERIOR

*Oratorian Fathers for the Retreat.
Visit to the relics of St. Philip Neri.
[Asti, September 1875]*

It has been two months since Your Rev.¹⁹⁰ had the kindness of promising His Exc. once again this year to send Oratorian Fathers to guide the Retreat in this Seminary. As the established time draws near (which was inserted between the last two Sundays of October, the evening of the 24th till the evening of the 30th, so as to cause less inconvenience to the Laz. Fathers), the Bishop charges me to first of all thank you once again for your kindness and to ask you to notify us of the time we should [wait] at the train Station for the Fathers who will preach.

I extend to Your Rev. and the whole Congregation greetings from the Most Rev. Bishop and also respects from the undersigned, as I frequently remember the followers of St. Philip and I just remembered them with such sweet satisfaction (at the beginning of September) as I visited the relics of their Saintly Father in the New Church.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Probably Fr. Felix Carpignano, provost of the Congregation of the Oratory in Turin, and confidant of Bp. Savio (cf. L. 19).

¹⁹¹ The relics of St. Philip Neri are preserved in Rome at the Church of Holy Mary at Vallicella, which is more commonly called the New Church.

The rough draft of the letter has no conclusion or signature.

TO FR. JOSEPH RICCIO

Booklets for the Catechism Children
A token of the Jubilee.

Asti, Feast of the B. V. of the Rosary
[October 7] Year of the Jubilee 1875.

J.M.J.

Dearest Joe,

Wrapped with some booklets which you can pass among your holy little beggars in Catechism, I'm sending to you what you requested together with an appended annual payment for Costigliole¹⁹² If you should still need ten more in addition to the five enclosed, listen—I am always happy to be able to please you in this and in any other way that I can. I'm also sending you a picture¹⁹³ as a remembrance of Rome and my visits to the tomb and catacombs of St Sebastian, that great Confessor of the Faith whose glorious passion painted by Guido Reni was copied in huge proportions in mosaic over one of the altars of the Vatican Basilica.

Good-bye, dearest friend. May the Blessed Virgin with Joseph her Husband ever assist their devotees, the two Josephs, both the addressee and the most humble sender of this letter.

¹⁹² In the first part of the sentence, Marelo uses a Piedmontese term referring to countryfolk who request holy cards. The payment for Costigliole refers to annual membership dues for the St. Vincent de Paul Society (cf. L. 25).

¹⁹³ Marelo uses a word coming from French, referring to a photographic reproduction of Reni's painting in St. Peter's, which Marelo mentions often (cf. L. 25).

Asti, October 4, 1877
Feast of the Poor Man of Assisi

J.M.J.

Dear Friend in the Lord,

*Qui non renuntiat omnibus quae possidet...qui non odit patrem et matrem ...adhuc autem et animam suam, non potest meus esse discipulus.*¹⁹⁴ How many true disciples of Jesus Christ do we still have today in this country of ours which for many centuries was the classical land of monasticism. Hardly anyone gives any thought to the practice of the evangelical counsels. While Congregations of women increase every year by the thousands, the novitiates of monasteries remain deserted. Has the love of riches, pleasure, and freedom hidden from view the maxims of the Gospel to the point no one any longer wants to become a disciple of the Divine Master? Are we to go along with the spirit of the world and say that religious are a thing of the past? No, the evangelical counsels must be practiced by a certain number of Christian at all times, otherwise Jesus Christ has spoken in vain.

Therefore, let us strive to open up also to men, in spite of the obstacles set up by the world, and in whatever condition they are situated, what is so easily and so diversely available to women: the more perfect state of life (!). One cannot suppose that among our Christian people there is a dearth of souls who even in our day would detach themselves from the world for the love of Jesus Christ. Blessed is the man who becomes the providential instrument of their eternal salvation. At this point I wish in confidence to ask you a question which I wish you would just as confidentially answer as God inspires you. Would you perhaps know any of these souls, be it even an unlettered, coarse country dweller or a poor laborer, who feels the inclination to make common cause with other souls so as to be able to say with St. Peter: *Ecce nos reliquimus omnia et secuti sumus te*¹⁹⁵ If there are such souls, let us pray that the Lord will strengthen them in this vocation and render them generous and ready to pursue it at the proper time. Even for those who are not qualified for studies, there must be possible the observance of the evangelical counsels and the assurance of one's salvation in the religious state. The dangers in the world are too great for anyone to suppose that Providence refuses a shelter to so many whose weakness calls for a place of refuge. I repeat my question, trusting that you will give me an affirmative reply, and so I shall be able to communicate more important details on the subject. I need not recommend that you keep the matter secret. These things are of a very delicate nature, and discretion would counsel both of us to discuss them only with the Lord. From Him alone can come the light and guidance in a matter which is of so great importance to the souls He has redeemed.

I will pray for you in the hope that you will reciprocate on behalf of him who remains

Most affectionately yours in the Lord,

Father Joseph Marelllo

¹⁹⁴ Lk 4:33,26.

¹⁹⁵ See, we have left everything and have followed You.

LETTER TO FR. ROLLA

Asti, November 4, 1877, Feast of St. Charles Borromeo

J.M.J.

Dear Brother in the Lord,

I have delayed writing to you in order to find out with greater certainty the will of God. His Excellency and another person for whom I have a deep veneration¹⁹⁶ and to whom I confided my wish, have both approved it on condition that first of all I explore carefully the divine will. Therefore I am asking you also not to mention the matter to anyone till such time as it shall please God to bring those wishes into effect. Merely search, as you promised, for some person of good will—whether young or elderly would make no difference¹⁹⁷—provided he is qualified for the state of the religious life in accordance with the terms mentioned below, and direct him till the time is ripe. *Secretum Regis abscondere bonum est* (it is good to conceal the secret of the king). If we do the works of God in silence without trusting in men or even in ourselves, but relying wholly on supernatural help, everything will proceed for the better¹⁹⁸. I shall add nothing more at this time. I shall only set forth briefly and with greater precision than in my last letter the conditions one must fulfil and the spiritual dispositions he must have if he wishes to withdraw from the world and to serve God in the House of St. Joseph,¹⁹⁹ in fact to give you a complete idea of my plan, I am herein transcribing the first draft of the fundamental basic Rule such as I presented to His Excellency for study.

Will you also please examine it secretly in the presence of God. Pray that it may give the first impetus to a good work and may become the cause, even though incidental, of a foundation to be started some day by the person to be designated by Providence for that purpose.²⁰⁰ Remember me to the Lord, as I also remember you.

Most affectionately yours in Christ Jesus,
Fr. Giuseppe Marello

P.S. Do not take the trouble of answering. Your first reply has given me enough assurance—as I had already been convinced—of your interest in whatever you consider to be God’s will.

Company of St. Joseph

Whoever is unable for any reason (advanced age, lack of studies, etc.) to qualify for the Ecclesiastical or Religious State, and yet desires to follow closely the Divine Master by the observance of the Evangelical Counsels, is welcome to the House of St. Joseph. Withdrawing

¹⁹⁶ Probably Padre Anglesio, Superior of the Little House of Divine Providence in Turin; or perhaps Msgr. Giovanni Bertagna, of Castelnuovo d’Asti, in the diocese of Turin. The latter was Vicar General of the diocese of Asti for several years.

¹⁹⁷ Fr. Marello expresses here his habitual abandonment to Providence.

¹⁹⁸ The thought most frequently expressed in his words and writing.

¹⁹⁹ Since the Congregation was dedicated to St. Joseph, he would be the one in charge: He hath made him lord of His Household.

²⁰⁰ In his humility Joseph Marello did not think he would be the founder of this institution. Even later on, while taking on the responsibilities and the burdens of administration, he gladly left to other the honors.

therein with the resolve to remain hidden and silently active in imitation of that great Model of a poor and obscure life, he will have an opportunity to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ.²⁰¹

The Brother of St. Joseph is not a Professed Religious, but simply an *Oblate* who continuously offers himself to God in order to tend to perfection by living detached from every earthly pleasure of body and spirit.²⁰²

The obligations of the Company of St. Joseph are outlined in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself: “Whoever does not detach himself from all that he possesses... whoever does not renounce the love of his relatives and even of himself cannot be My disciple.”²⁰³ These words comprise the three essential points of the life of perfection: *poverty*, that is, the renunciation of worldly goods; *chastity*, that is, the renunciation of pleasures; *obedience*, that is, the renunciation of the will. St Benedict, the patriarch of religious life in the West, expressed this threefold renunciation with admirable precision and brevity in the following Rule: *The Brother must have nothing of his own: absolutely nothing. It is not even lawful for him to have in his power his own body and his own will.*—Rule of St. Benedict, Chap. 33.²⁰⁴

The better to insure *effective* detachment from earthly things, the House of St Joseph will avail itself of coadjutor Lay Brothers for its indispensable dealings with the outside world. By observing in their respective state *effective* detachment by poverty of spirit, mortification of the senses, and obedience to their director, the Lay Brothers can be true members of the Company and can enjoy, in return for their temporal services rendered to the Oblate Brothers, a share in all their spiritual goods.²⁰⁵

Laus Deo.

²⁰¹ A disciple in the full sense of the term: one who renounces all that he possesses in order to follow Jesus. Such is properly the condition of one who embraces the religious state.

²⁰² At first Joseph Mareello had no intention of binding his Oblates with vows. This development came about later when the Congregation was approved by the diocese and the Holy See.

²⁰³ The Oblates of St Joseph were to cultivate the virtues entailed by the three vows, even while not making a formal profession of vows.

²⁰⁴ The Rule of St. Benedict served as a model for many religious orders in the course of the centuries.

²⁰⁵ With the development of his foundation, Joseph Mareello divided his Oblates into two classes of members, priests and brothers. “The priests are engaged in the direction of the house, in schools, and in such other activities as shall be entrusted to them by their superiors. As for the brothers, some attend to studies and help the priests in the care of the youth in schools and religion classes; others work and, with the help of young aspirants, attend to all other house chores.” (Rules of the Congregation of St. Joseph, Chap 2). Notice the words *Laus Deo* at the end of this draft. We find these same words on the bottom of the manuscript of the Rules of the Congregation of St. Joseph, which our Founder kept in his files: *(Sit) laus Deo!*

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TO A PRIEST FRIEND

Asti, November 7, 1877

J.M.J.

Dear Beloved in the Lord:²⁰⁶

Your reply was just as expected. It is unfortunately true that the male sex yields the *optimam partem* to the weaker sex and no longer cares as in former centuries for the promise: *habebitis thesaurum non deficientem*.²⁰⁷ But what you cannot promise today, you can by God's power promise tomorrow. With this hope I am now revealing to you in its entirety the design which I merely referred to in my last letter. His Excellency and another most worthy person from Turin,²⁰⁸ in whose judgment I can trust, have given their approval. I may certainly communicate the design also to you, who were the first one I asked for help in its execution. Please study it in the presence of God. I hope that with your help you will bring it to effect at least in part, or, if that is not possible, you will promise the assistance of your prayers at the present time as a pledge of your cooperation in the future. With all my heart, I remain,

Most affectionately yours,

Joseph Marelllo²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ The addressee could also be Fr. Rossetti, who later became rector of the seminary and a canon of the Cathedral of Asti.

²⁰⁷ "You shall have unfailing treasure."

²⁰⁸ Either Father Anglesio, Superior of the Little House of Divine Providence in Turin; or Msgr. Bertagna, from the diocese of Turin, later Vicar General of the diocese of Asti.

²⁰⁹ This letter is accompanied by a copy of the draft included in Letter XCV.

111
TO FR. DOMINIC BOSSO

Sale of the house in the Castello district. New requirements from the Sanitation Commission. Feast for Fr. Baratta's first Mass.
[Asti, May 30, 1885]

J.M.J.

Most Venerable Father,²¹⁰

Yesterday evening while the deed was being drawn up at the Fr. Vicar's house for the sale of the house in the Castello district²¹¹ (for which 2,700 liras were collected as contracted and another 5,000 will be collected within a period of ten years), an unexpected letter from the Mayor arrives. A copy is enclosed.

The Sanitation Commission has still not finished bothering us. When we thought we had satisfied their demands by so many improvements on the sewage drains, we are once again faced with new requirements for which not even a thousand francs would suffice for total compliance. And after already having spent several thousands on them and having satisfied the new pretensions with new sacrifices, the Town Hall puts forward its ample reserves and wishes to preserve its complete liberty of action. As you see we need Father to come quick and give us your useful advice. I do not have time to relate to you so many things about our month of Mary and about the family celebration we will have tomorrow for its close and for Fr. Baratta's²¹² new Mass. The prayers of the Little House and of its Little Daughter will intertwine tomorrow to implore heavenly blessings on the entire family and on their Esteemed Father, to whom, presenting the respects of the Fr. Vicar and all, I profess my devotion.

Gratefully,

Joseph Marelllo

²¹⁰ Fr. Dominic Bosso, Director of the Little House of Divine Providence in Turin from 1881 to 1891. Cf. Letter 207.

²¹¹ On April 2, 1874, Mr. John Cerrato founded in Asti a Hospice for Chronic Invalids, which in 1882 he deeded to Canon Sardi and Marelllo. On May 30, 1884 they moved from Carceri Way in the Castello district to the St. Clare's building on Alfieri Boulevard. The former location of the Cerrato Hospice was sold. The Vincentian Sisters from the Little House attended to the patients.

²¹² Fr. Baratta, Marelllo's beloved follower, together with Fr. John Medico, was the first of the Oblates of St. Joseph after Fr. Cortona to reach the priesthood. During 53 years of ministry he did great good. He was born at St. Stephen of Montegrosso of Asti in 1855. He died on December 26, 1938. Cf. Letter 157, 168, 176.

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TO FR. DOMINIC BOSSO

*Christmas Wishes, Progress in
Cottolengo's Cause for Beatification.
Ricordy-Thesco Bequest.
[Asti, December 21, 1885]*

Most Illustrious and Fr. Monsignor,

We are very happy to take advantage of Rev. Sr. Anania's²¹³ trip there so as to send your Illustrious Reverence wishes for a Christmas season filled with truest happiness and choicest blessings.

To the many prayers that will be sent up for your Reverence on that Feast, we will also join our poor prayers that the Lord may will to keep you for many years to come for the love and gratitude of so many whom you have helped, for the benefit of this L. House and this Hospice which we know is so indebted to you and so dear to our heart.²¹⁴

We thank your Reverence and with you the Very Rev. Can. Pulciano²¹⁵ for the telegram you sent us relative to the Congregation's most happy results regarding Ven. Cottolengo.²¹⁶ *Deo Gratias*. All were very happy to hear the news. Please tell Rev. Can. Pulciano, to whom we also wish all happiness, that in case Mrs. Quaranta should want to pay the Ricordy-Thesco bequest, we are most willing to see that she be freed of whatever bother could be involved with the Hospice's not being established as a legal corporation, and accept her recommendation.

With most affectionate respect for
Very Rev. Father, we remain devoted
and grateful *in Domino*,
J. M. Sardi — J. Marelllo

²¹³ Sr. Anania was Local Superior of Cottolengo's Vincentian Sisters serving in the Asti Seminary. She later was Mother General for many years.

²¹⁴ The Little House had passed on a sizeable offering for the acquisition of the St. Clare building.

²¹⁵ Canon Edward Pulciano, made Bishop of Casale in 1887 and of Novara in 1892.

²¹⁶ The Apostolic Proceedings for Ven. Cottolengo began in 1879 and led to the Decree of Heroic Virtues in 1901, Beatification in 1917, and Canonization in 1933.

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TO THE OBLATES OF ST. JOSEPH

*Good trip. Prayers at the tombs of
the Saints. Proceedings for the
episcopal consecration.*

Rome, February 5, 1889

*Omnibus et singulis praesentem litteram inspecturis salutem in Domino.*²¹⁷ How many things there are to say *et omnia bona.*²¹⁸ St. Joseph watched over our trip and brought us safe and sound to the eternal City. Yesterday after a little rest and bodily nourishment, we went to thank God for the good trip and to pay our initial pilgrims' respects to the Holy Apostles, Princes of the area, or actually of the whole world. Before their tomb I began the litany of invocations *pro me et carissimis meis,*²¹⁹ and I continued it at the tombs of other great Saints. What a beautiful kiss I planted on the tomb of St. Pancras, the martyred youth, also in the name of the youth of our family! The litany will not end so soon, for this city has hundreds of Saints whose patronage I'm to claim, and then I have to keep the promise I made. I've been here little more than twenty-four hours and it already seems like a month. The sights and dealings with so many people have wrenched my thoughts away from St. Clare's. This morning we were in the Vatican for a couple of hours and we have already taken care of matters relating to the Consistory: visited the Chamber Master,²²⁰ requested the audience with the Holy Father, made the Profession of Faith and taken the oath orally and in writing before the Most Holy Auditor,²²¹ began the arrangements with the Bishop-elect of San Severino for the Consecration,²²² perhaps in the Church of the Oblate Sisters of St. Frances of Rome.²²³ We also paid a visit to the Piedmontese Cardinal, Oreglia, who welcomed us most graciously²²⁴ — *Hodie sufficit.*²²⁵ If I will do my best to keep our bargain, may the Brothers do the same on their end; *Deus autem nos adiuvet et exaudiat semper—Iterum salutatur omnes qui in Hospitio Clariano serviunt Deo.*

*Joseph una cum comite peregrinationis*²²⁶

So that all may rest at ease and especially the good Mother, I should add that Knight Aicardi is treating us just like brothers and has even arranged for Msgr. Torchio to sleep at his house.

²¹⁷ Greeting in the Lord to one and all who will read this letter.

²¹⁸ and they are all good.

²¹⁹ for myself and those dearest to me.

²²⁰ Bishop Francis della Volpe.

²²¹ Bishop Gabriel Boccali.

²²² Bishop Aurelio Zenghi, former Canon Law Professor in Fabriano.

²²³ Instead, the Consecration took place in the Church of the Immaculate Conception, run by the Capuchin Fathers, on Veneto Way (cf. L. 141).

²²⁴ Card. Aloysius Oreglia of Santo Stephen, born in Bene Vagienna (Mondovì Diocese), was Bishop of Palestrina and Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church.

²²⁵ Enough for today.

²²⁶ But may God help us and ever hear us—Once again greeting all who serve God in Clare's Hospice—Joseph together with his traveling companion.

TO THE OBLATES OF ST. JOSEPH

*Continuation of pilgrimage to the
Saints' tombs. Sistine Chapel for
anniversary of Pius IX's death.
Papal Audience. Multiple Greetings.*

Rome, February 9, 1889

*Litteras vestras accepi, fratres in Christo carissimi, et hisce litteris meis venio ad vos.*²²⁷ I am taking advantage of all available time to continue my pilgrimage to the tombs of the Saints. In these few days how many gracious audiences I have already had with many of them! It's so much easier to meet with Heaven's Princes than with the earthly ones. While I must wait permission for access to the dignitaries of the Church militant and be content for now at least with seeing the Pope and Cardinals from afar, I go with complete freedom to visit St. Peter at the Mamertime Prison, St. Paul at his underground dwelling, St. Ignatius and St. Stephen in the resting place they share, St. Ignatius in his cell, St. Leonard of Port Maurice at the scene of his rigorous penances, the *Sanctos qui consummati in brevi expleverunt tempora multa*²²⁸ in the small rooms where they lived (at St. Aloysius' we celebrated Holy Mass and stayed for a couple of hours), St. Catherine of Siena, St. Frances of Rome, St. Felix of Cantalice, St. Philip and James, St. Leo and St. Gregory the Great, etc., etc. to cease belaboring the point. Also worthy of extensive comment was Thursday's service in the Sistine Chapel for the deceased Pius IX of blessed memory. The Holy Father participated in the service in the company of Cardinals, Bishops, Roman Princes, and Dignitaries of every religious and civic rank.²²⁹ The singing probed every recess of the heart and it seems like I can still hear Pope Leo's voice blessing and entreating eternal rest for the soul of his Predecessor. I am still moved beyond what words can describe.

February 10, morning hours. Yesterday evening I was finally able to see the Holy Father up close, to kiss his foot, to shake his hand, to talk with him from 5:30 to 6:15 and to hear *verba vitae*²³⁰ from the mouth of the Vicar of Christ. We formed around the Successor of the Prince of the Apostles a crown of seven designates for the apostolic mission, and oh what courage the presence of that holy old man instilled in our hearts! What salutary counsel, what wise guidelines for the life of a Bishop! What encouragement to charity, meekness, constancy of will, and above all to Gospel prudence. He wished to insist on this, commenting on St. Gregory's words which call this virtue the Abbess of all others, and on the saying of a Pontiff I believe: "*si sanctus est oret pro nobis si doctus est doceat nos, si prudens est regat nos.*"²³¹ but it's impossible to even mention all that we heard in that unforgettable audience which opened with fatherly encouragement for each one individually and closed with an apostolic blessing for all. Tomorrow evening we are invited to a second audience and I will request renewed blessings *pro omnibus meis iuxta singulorum vota.*²³² Now I give many thanks to the Lord for all the

²²⁷ I received your letter, dearest brothers in Christ, and this letter of mine brings me to you.

²²⁸ The *Saints who in a short lifetime accomplished great things* were St. John Berchmans and St. Aloysius Gonzaga, whose little rooms, transformed into chapels, are found in the ancient Roman College, by St. Ignatius Church.

²²⁹ Pius IX's anniversary was celebrated in the Vatican on February 7th.

²³⁰ Words of life.

²³¹ If he is holy, let him pray for us; if he is learned, let him teach us; if he is prudent, let him govern us.

²³² for all my own according to each one's intentions.

assistance I'm receiving these days through the prayers of my beloved brethren and all the good young rascals of St. Clare's. The Saints of Rome will give them their recompense for me. An individual reply for each individual question. Fr. Cortona will be satisfied with the tasks delegated to him from my part.²³³ To him I entrust the missions of greeting all the Vincentian Sisters and particularly the Mother Superior whom he will inform that every day at the usual time I have my good bread crumbs;²³⁴ of returning affectionate greetings to our dearest Rector;²³⁵ of remembering me to Canon Cantino, Canon Mussi, Fr. Rossetti, Fr. Vergano,²³⁶ Fr. Raimondo, and the other worthy Priests of St. Clare's; of saying a special nice word to Fr. Ferrero;²³⁷ of communicating my news to the borders at the Milliavacca Institute²³⁸ and through Canon Cantino to the Sisters of Charity; in short, of greeting *omnes salutandos*.²³⁹

February 10, afternoon hours. Since I went to dinner with Cardinal Oreglia, I couldn't put everything I wanted in this letter. It's already pretty long anyway, and so as to be able to get it into the mail right away, I'll have to save the individual replies for an other day. Fr. Cortona will interpret my responses for me and will tell each one who wrote a part of the collective letter that I hold their affectionate words (including those of Fr. John)²⁴⁰ and all the dear families they represent very deep in my heart. Tomorrow they will surround me at the Holy Father's feet and will receive the same blessing as the Bishop of Acqui

—Joseph S. Clarae²⁴¹

To Bros. Leo and Benedict.²⁴² I need nothing else, all is going well.

²³³ For Fr. John Baptist Cortona cf. Letter 153.

²³⁴ Sr. Cristina, Superior at St. Clare's until her death in 1894 (cf. L. 265). The word for bread crumbs is the Piedmontese expression "pan – pist".

²³⁵ Fr. Joseph Gamba, Marello's intimate friend and penitent. He was born in San Damiano of Asti on April 25, 1857 and ordained a priest on September 18, 1880. He later became Rector of the Cathedral in 1884, Pro Vicar in 1892, Vicar General in 1899, Bishop of Biella in 1901 and then of Novara in 1906, Archbishop of Turin in 1923, and Cardinal in 1926. He died on December 26, 1929.

²³⁶ Canon Felice Cantino who on June 7, 1889, succeeded Marello as Archdeacon; Canon Severino Mussi; Fr. Stephen Rossetti, Rector of the Seminary; Fr. Carlo Vergano, Cathedral canon and seminary philosophy professor.

²³⁷ Fr. Cyprian Ferrero, Bishop's Master of Ceremonies

²³⁸ Pious Institute founded in 1714 by Asti's Bishop Innocent Milliavacca for young girls aspiring to the religious life. In 1880 Marello became their Spiritual Director. Up until his appointment as Bishop, he was also ordinary Confessor for the Sisters of Charity serving in Asti's hospitals.

²³⁹ all that should be greeted.

²⁴⁰ Cf. Letter 95, 111, 153.

²⁴¹ Joseph of St Clare's.

²⁴² For Bro. Leo cf. L. 153; for Bro. Benedict, Letter 161.

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TO MSGR. JOSEPH PAGELLA

[Rome, February 17, 1889]

....I've just now been betrothed with the sacred ring.....

TO THE OBLATES OF ST. JOSEPH

*Indescribable Joys of the Consecration
as Bishop. Farewell Visits and Return.
Blessing of the Holy Father. Thanks
and First Bishop's Blessing.*

Rome, February 18, 1889

Yesterday I was unable to travel by letter among my most beloved at St. Clare's, but oh how many times I found myself in their midst in spirit! The entire day was spent in heartfelt but indescribable joys: the first part with the Holy Spirit from whom I had to seek and receive so many favors; the second part in fraternal agape with my four Apostolic companions joined together around our common father who had laid hands on us and anointed us Bishops;²⁴³ the final part at the feet of Jesus Christ's Vicar to take leave of him and listen to his comforting words of farewell. The Lord must have secretly communicated to my most beloved Brothers of St. Joseph the consolations that overwhelmed my soul on this memorable day. I will still have to use this week for farewell visits: to Cardinal Oreglia who showed us so much kindness; to Cardinal Massaia, venerable Apostle of Africa, with whom we enjoyed a holy hour and a half conversation admiring his charity and simplicity as a great Servant of the Lord; to our consecrating Cardinal, also a holy man, Grand Penitentiary by title and penitent by virtue; to the Archbishops assisting in the Consecration,²⁴⁴ of the Capuchin Order, both so deserving of reward for having suffered such persecution, working in such far away countries; to all the Cardinals in a word for it is only right to personally pay my humble respect to all. I still have a considerable number of visits to make to other dignitaries on earth and many more to Heaven's Dignitaries. I will budget my time to make all those I previously planned for this trip. The visits to be received, the letters to be sent and the various errands to be carried out could only cause a delay in my departure, but in any case by the end of this month I'll be *Deo favente, in medio eorum qui me diligunt*.²⁴⁵ The Holy Father has deigned to assure me of his help in this expression of thanks by blessing all with a special apostolic blessing. Holy old Man! How he took consolation along with me from the affectionate testimonies that I received on this occasion, as if he experienced in his own heart the same feeling of gratitude that moved my heart. That's enough. When I arrive in person, I will have plentiful material to relate for our conversations during the recreation periods. For now I charge the Priests with expressing my thanks to Fr. Rossetti, Fr. Vergano, Fr. Gamba, Fr. Ponzio, and Good dear Felice (see note below) who had the graciousness to send me a kind telegram yesterday.²⁴⁶ May they also receive through this letter an expression of my gratitude for their kindness. A warm greeting to all who inquire about me. To the Mother Superior, the Sisters and aspirants, to the big and little Brothers, *carissimisque omnibus*,²⁴⁷ to both the beginning and the more advanced Latin

²⁴³ Besides Bishop J. Marellò and Bishop A. Zonghi (cf. L. 140), Cardinal R. Monaco La Valletta (cf. L. 141) also consecrated: Michael Antonio of Milia, former Capuchin Provincial of Salerno, as Bishop of Cassano; Julius Matteoli, former Dean of Castelfranco of Sotto, as Bishop of Sovana – Pitigliano; and Anthony De Lorenzo, former Canon of the Metropolitan See of Reggio Calabria, as Bishop of Mileto.

²⁴⁴ Co-consecrators were Archbishop Rocco Cocchia of Chieti and Archbishop Ignatius Persico of Damiatina.

²⁴⁵ God willing, amidst those who loved me.

²⁴⁶ Cf. L. 142. For Felice cf. L. 26, 36. Canon Ernesto Ponzio was the Secretary of the Diocesan Chancery.

²⁴⁷ to all the dearest ones (often used to refer to the minor seminarians).

students, including those who aspire to it from the desks of the liberal arts, in short to everyone in the House *etiam parvulis a benedicat vos*²⁴⁸ with all the force of that charity that must inflame the heart of a new Bishop. And for their part may they continue to pray for him who has now become father to another numerous family and must sign off with a cross

+Joseph, Bishop of Acqui

(see appendix)²⁴⁹

²⁴⁸ including the youth, a “May Almighty God bless you...”

²⁴⁹ This postscript was not preserved for us.

[Acqui, July 2, 1889]

.....*Protector noster adiuvet eos semper*. May the aid of this great protector be extended also to all the students and may they do well in their examinations and receive an abundance of divine graces in exchange for the consolation I received from their affectionate letter ... All will surely join in thanking the Lord with me for the good health and peace of soul He has been granting me during these extraordinarily busy first weeks. Yes, *Deo Gratias* for the way He guides me in my study of so many matters and in long conferences with the vicar general and in patient reading of the letters piled high on the chancery desk. *Deo Gratias* for comforting me with the multiple expressions of affection from the good citizens of Acqui. Visits by the hundreds, personal greetings by the thousands, ceremonies in the various churches, addresses of various lengths, and examination of the clerics all tire the body, but *Deo adiuvente* they energize the spirit ... May my dearest ones at St. Clare's always beseech this divine aid for me, and I will not fail to invoke upon the beloved brothers of St. Joseph *omne datum optimum quod de sursum est*.²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ James 1:17. Every good endowment from above.

[Acqui, September 23, 1889]

Dear Fr. Cortona,

This time your problems are more numerous than ever and a lot more difficult to solve. Let me try to solve at least some of them, beginning with the most intricate, humanly speaking: how to get money. Fr. John should continue to insist economize, economize, but not to the point of depriving the table of the food needed to keep a bag of bones going. One can practice thrift in regard to so many superfluous things: turning off the lights when not needed, buying only what is strictly necessary, imitating a little of the spirit of St. Francis by foregoing costly paraphernalia for the Church; and in so many other ways that don't come to my mind but which the keen and observant mind of our industrious treasurer, (Fr. John) is so quick to discover. With all these cuts you will already be saving a good thousand francs a year. Another thousand might be saved this year by doing without wine. In these times there are few communities that consume so much of this expensive beverage as our own, while some institutions don't use it at all. With the scanty tuitions that we charge, one cannot claim what is not even provided in other places where the tuition is higher. See what you can do about this. An increase in tuition and a larger enrollment could almost double the income. The wealthy should have no trouble giving a few more lire a month; those of moderate means may continue on the present rate, with the condition that they forego full rations. In the diocesan seminary those who cannot afford 25 lire monthly are charged 18, but they get no more than bread or soup. Do you suppose we are being too strict by giving the same treatment to those who pay only 15 lire? As for the little ones who have been sheltered for two years in St. Clare's, would it not be advisable to request something in addition to the admission fee? At least those who still have relatives could be offered the choice either to renew the fee or to return home, since our institution can no longer afford to give them free room and board....And couldn't the Mombarcelli debt be squared off with a load of grapes in this bountiful season? And another load could come from the harvest of Casa Medico and Casa Baratta, to be paid off later.

Couldn't you collect wheat from sow debtors and from people who are short of cash for tuition? And still, with all these sources of income there remains a large void to fill. *Deus providebit*. In the meantime use up what Providence has already supplied for us: the income from legacies... the funds deposited by that benefactress... in the sum of 2,000 francs. And if you have to furnish collateral for a larger sum, you can depend on the credit of the Bishop of Acqui for 5,000 lire, etc.... If in spite of all these transactions you still need to get a loan, look for a kind and reasonable lender and, for the time being, ask for a few thousand lire.

The question of money has kept us grounded long enough, and it is now time to say *Sursum corda*. Lift up your hearts, and on the occasion of the annual retreat may God fill them with the trust that strengthened St. Joseph in all the circumstances of his life. During these holy days, with the spirit of piety may the spirit of counsel and fortitude descend upon the Brothers of St. Joseph. May the divine light make them see what they must do, and may the divine grace help them do what is right.....

+Joseph, Episcopus

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Acqui, October 12, 1889]

Dear Fr. Cortona:

..... I am happily anticipating the fruits of the annual retreat. May the spiritual harvest make up for the scarcity of other harvests. These will follow once we have gathered in the former: *Adiicentur vobis*.

With the news about the retreat, I expect to hear about so many other good things: for example, that the enrollment of our pupils is nearing the hundred mark; that the two teachers have received their credentials; that Bro. Vincenzo has won his laurels; that the Inspector is well disposed toward St. Clare's; that Father Carandino is busy preparing for the new school year; that the Bursar is beginning to sail in smooth waters; that Father Baratta has regained peace of mind; that Father Cortona is at the helm and is going ahead day by day with invincible courage and with fearless assurance that he will overcome every difficulty; that the Brothers of St. Joseph are more than ever serene and at ease under the protective mantle of their Patron where Divine Providence has gathered them together; that a chorus of thanksgiving goes up to heaven for the plentiful graces showered on the community.

This is the good news that will reach me within a few days. For my part, there is nothing new when I say that I keep the family of St. Clare's in my heart together with my spiritual family of Acqui.....

+Joseph, Episcopus

[Acqui, November 8, 1889]

Dear Fr. Cortona:

The letter that I have just received bears good news mixed with the bad. I should say there is good news that satisfies our human feelings, mingled with news that looks bad if reason did not consider it in the light of faith. The illness of Bro. Paul would make me very sad indeed if I did not realize that St. Joseph is the infirmarian, and that, while suffering by God's will in one of its members the Congregation will enjoy better health in the whole body. Let us always repeat that *omnia cooperantur in bonum*²⁵¹... even in the smallest things, as we have learned from long experience....

84!!!! Now that's a handsome number, and the four exclamation points fit right where they are. But St. Joseph wants the number to go even higher. Before getting acquainted with them personally and knowing their names, the newly arrived pupils are already dear and familiar to me in the Lord. And which of the older boys failed to answer the roll call? And how about the latest ones? Has Piana already found his way? What about Basso, Sovente, Spinelli? And the nephews of the two Mothers Superior. I would like to ask more questions on matters financial, but the conclusion of your letter throws cold water on all my question marks: *Veni et narrabo tibi*. So then I'll have to go for an answer by word of mouth. The many items that are hard to explain in writing will be more easily explained by word of mouth, and so I'll reserve my questions for the occasion of my semi-pastoral visit....

Have Father Carandino, the secretary, get himself an assistant secretary to give me news about Bro. Paul and the increase in the enrollment. I am also sending a stamp to Fr. Baratta so that he'll write to me, at least from his Casabianca. Many regards to Mother Superior and all her charges; a special greeting to each member of our folds, even the least....

+Joseph, *Episcopus pauperrimus*

²⁵¹ All things work together for the good.

[Acqui, November 8, 1889]

I am forwarding to you a letter from Msgr. Bertagna where one can easily discover the names of the persons who are making this offer.²⁵² The sixty year old is Monsignor himself, and the eighty year old is his mother. We shall take time together to reflect and prepare by word of mouth the reply that is called for. In case a fourteen year old boy of promise from this diocese calls on you, I think you should accept him. He cannot afford more than fifteen lire a month, but there will be some way to supply the difference. The garden of the episcopal residence is in need of a dozen American vines to cover the squalid walls. Could Fr. Giovanni take the trouble of sending them? Tell Sister Ognissanti to pray for the deceased pastor of Perletto. I have just received the sad news of his death. Four priests gone to their maker in less than five months! May St. Joseph raise up helpers for me in his Congregation. I have just received a letter from Casabianca. I rejoice that spiritual joy is still flourishing among St. Joseph's priests. Fr. Baratta is one who should never lose it and he should remember that *hilarem datorem*, etc.²⁵³ Let him be always cheerful inwardly and outwardly, at all costs. Away with scruples, they are the blight, I say the blight of the spiritual life. Stifle every fancy from the start. Do not turn back to retrace your steps. Do not run too far ahead, nor stop too long to see whether the step was well taken. Have confidence in God, who is near us to correct our mistakes, unavoidable as they are in spite of the best intentions in the world. Let him say "Amen" to what I'm writing and let him read it before witnesses. This will be all; my day book is taken up with the Pontifical Mass for the Dedication of a Church, and other matters besides. As usual, greetings in the Lord from

+Joseph Episcopus et Vester

²⁵² Msgr. Bertagna owned a summer home at Castelnuovo d'Asti, which he wished to sell to the Oblates for their use as a summer residence.

²⁵³ God loves a cheerful giver.

[Acqui, November 23, 1889]

Dear Father Cortona,

...Thanks for your classified list of all the pupils. I see there is a dose of rejects, not to say riff-raff, to use one of Fr. Giovanni's terms. Rejects from the Salesians or other institutions should be eyed cautiously, as we have learned from experience. It is regrettable to see the good ones leave (though for the Seminary) while the mediocre and the retarded stay behind: Bardone, Gatto, Piano, Arosio, Cantone, Gemma, Nosengo, Moccagatta, and others. It is quite true that, not counting the members of the Congregation, in our secondary school there remain hardly more than a dozen who are worth all the expense and sacrifice. In the summing up, the results are not too flattering for the Diocese and for the Congregation. Were it not for the fact that the faculty are doing good also to our own students, of whom we now have a good number, it would be best to do away with an expense that bears so little fruit, not to say that it does even harm by multiplying misplaced youth. It is painful to recall how many students have left St. Clare's to add to the problems... Tell Fr. John to also study with Fr. Baratta *regulas constituendas*. In spite of all my good intentions, my time runs out on me even in the long night hours. A bit of the Liturgy of the Hours and the bundles of papers the Vicar General sends me to study take up the night time that remains after conferences.... To the Brothers, novices, postulants, aspirants of whom you sent me good news convey my good wishes.... Bro. Gabriel is a little depressed. He should be encouraged to trust in God and to be big-hearted. The defection of a Brother could bring harm to the Congregation. All our Brothers are at this time going through a crisis; the discouragement of one who is highly esteemed can easily spread to others. May St. Joseph teach us how to take care of our aspirants; or rather, may he himself be their guardian.... Even with my small handwriting I've taken up all the space. Again, regards to all. A word of appreciation to Mother and the Sisters for their pleasant visit. Tell Bro. Paul to send me news about that tooth that he no longer has. Enough for now; there's barely a tiny corner for greetings from my household joined to those of

+Joseph Ep. Aq. et S. Clar.sis²⁵⁴

²⁵⁴ Joseph, Bishop of Acqui and St. Clares

[Acqui, November 30, 1889]

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

I was glad to have news about your trip to Turin with Fr. John and your uplifting visit to the Little House of Divine Providence.... As for my visit that you are looking forward to, there are a number of difficulties. We are in the season of Advent, during which a shepherd of souls is obliged more strictly to residence. Besides, there is the mission that will last till the fourth Sunday; and so I have the added duty to give good example by attending the sermons. Before Christmas I have to go to Turin, where I won't be able to finish all my business in one day. I could on that occasion make a short stopover in Asti; but then someone in St. Clare's might tell me: *parum pro nihilo reputatur*²⁵⁵, and I myself would get only a fleeting taste out of the visit. Wouldn't it be better to postpone the visit to January and have a longer stay? In that case, you yourself could call on the Bishop of Acqui before the year ends, and I would have more leisure to discuss so many points that we can barely touch on when I visit Asti....

The Archdeacon will soon notify St. Clare's of the usual assessment (30 lire) for the Propagation of the Faith. It might be well to introduce among the students the custom of making a donation at least once a month to that work and to the Holy Childhood. Even the shut-ins could offer something. *Date et dabitur vobis.*²⁵⁶

+Joseph Episcopus

P.S. Tell Fr. Baratta that last Thursday at the home of the Contessa Bosco we gossiped about him and the people of Revignano. Notice how his fame is spreading abroad: Turin, Acqui, Biella, and even elsewhere with the help of St. Joseph.

²⁵⁵ The equivalent of, "you may as well not have come at all."

²⁵⁶ Give and it shall be given unto you.

[Acqui, December 15, 1889]

Dear Father Cortona,

Let this letter serve to discharge an obligation that I would have wanted to discharge personally; let it be the means of conveying to St. Clare's a handsome bundle of greetings for the coming feast of Christmas. — So then (you wrote) we won't be seeing you at all this month? — Oh, I remember well that I was too eager to rush into a promise and that my excuses found no acceptance; and I do remember strengthening your expectations by adding a word of hope on my part. I wrote in my last letter: *maybe soon*, which could have been understood to mean before Christmas if you stressed *soon* more than *maybe*. And now I am forced to explain the meaning of that phrase and to declare that by putting both words together you get the following expression: *sooner or later*. But (you say) didn't you pass through Asti on your way to Turin? Yes, I did, and I really felt bad not to have even dropped a word of greeting either coming or going. The idea of my passing through town without even taking a look through the train window! But that's the way it had been arranged: leaving at five in the morning, returning at 11 p.m. and being content with only one day to take care of calls in Turin. To lengthen my stay did not seem advisable under the circumstances; and besides, I just couldn't justify a hasty visit to Asti without stopping to see anyone. At least on this occasion I would have had to spend most of the evening with the Bishop; I could have found no reasonable excuse for declining a long chat with His Excellency. St. Clare's for us is St. Clare's and is never too selfish, but what about others and especially the Bishop? I for one owe the Bishop the homage of a son and a brother²⁵⁷ and I must take this close bond into account. Was I to excuse myself to attend the investiture? A rather tenuous excuse, which would not have been proper on that occasion. To sum up, an overnight stop in my opinion was not appropriate; in fact it could only have worked against the longer visit that's in the planning. So this ends my explanation.

There is no lack of work in these days, or of health. Confirmation of the sick, ordinations, attending to preaching, receiving callers, writing letters, presiding over examinations (tell Sister Ognissanti that her town of Perletto is now provided with a new, good pastor), etc., etc....

Don't forget about the bimonthly payments and the American vines.... I desire news about everyone, and good news at that, or on the way to becoming good news with the coming of the Lord Jesus who I pray will be good to all of you....

+Josephus Episcopus et Vester semper

²⁵⁷ Bishop Ronco of Asti, where Joseph Marelllo had been Chancellor prior to his appointment as Bishop of Acqui.

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TO ST. CLARE'S HOUSE

[Christmas 1889]

Joseph
Bishop of Acqui,
to the dear Sons of St. Clare's House,
Peace and spiritual joy
in Jesus our Savior

With all my heart I thank you for your greetings and I wish I could return each one of them individually with this letter as I do at the crib of the Infant Jesus. One of you reminded me that in former years on this joyful occasion I used to bring you a Christmas gift. Oh, how I would like to bring it to you this year too if you were not so far away. Still, you do expect something from me and I'll have to find a way to send you at least something sweet. Along with the candy that can leave only a momentary sweetness to your palate, I should give you as usual a more lasting gift to satisfy your sight and your devotion. Yet what can I do about it? Ah, the Holy Infant comes to my aid. He takes it upon Himself to come to you in my name. He wants to show you His beautiful face, to bestow on you a heavenly smile. He wants to present to you His snow-white lily, to raise His little head to bless everyone of you, to invite you to remain always with him as little lambs to enjoy His loving caresses. Welcome, then, this divine messenger of mine as He brings you a far more precious gift than you could have expected from me. Do not be afraid to ask for too much from Him; on the contrary, ask for a very big gift. The more you ask of Him, the more He will give you. His joy in bestowing His favors on you will be greater in proportion to your desire to ask for them. O good Jesus, grant to these dear sons all that they desire and even more than they desire. From the first day of the new year resume with them Your divine chats so as to draw them to Your heart. Caress them as Your little friends who have already learned to experience the sweetness of Your love. Grant that they may become your great friends in this life and may later possess a throne of glory in Your kingdom of eternal life.... My little children, let all of you say: *Amen, Deo Gratias.*

[Acqui, January 21, 1890]

Dear Father Cortona,

It's just as you say. The Lord has sent influenza in place of other more serious punishments that His justice would have a right to inflict. I often go in spirit to St. Clare's to visit the dear patients, and I would go in person were it possible. At this time I am taken up with two important transactions with the Roman Curia, I have to plan my pastoral letter and study the questionnaire for the Visit, and this week the Vicar has an assignment for Bubbio. Besides, I feel that my presence there would only be a burden, especially if I too took sick; and in that case people would say that I had missed the flu in Acqui only to catch it in Asti. So it's better that I fulfill here as best I can the duty of charity by recommending to God the Family of St. Clare's, giving thanks for those who recover, asking for hope and patience for those who are still laid up, wishing everyone a deep spirit of surrender to the maternal goodness of Divine Providence. —My special wishes are for the one who has been the one to suffer the most during the past days. Like St. John the Evangelist he was unable to move around by himself and had to be carried like a baby here and there. A prayer for Fr. Baratta, who I hope has regained all his strength for the sake of Casabianca; for Father Carandino and for the other Brothers who as yet are not responding to fraternal care; for Fr. Giovanni so that he may stay on his feet for the sake of the others. May Providence continue to spare the Sisters who are more urgently needed for the House as it has thus far spared the Sisters in the kitchen and Mother Superior. And if some Sister is to get sick, I hope she recovers soon. And how is your mother? And Bro. Benedetto? There must be plenty of work in the tailor shop, so the flu didn't dare touch him. —Someone is calling and I must stop here. Greetings to all, also on behalf of the Secretary and Leone. And may the Lord ratify in Heaven the blessing sent to each and every one in St. Clare's by

Joseph Ep.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Acqui, February 10, 1890]

....I doubt that Rep. Ercole's sponsorship will enable Bro. Vincent to obtain the ecclesiastical subsidy for the administration. That office requires many documents both from the Local Government and the Diocesan Curia, and then, even in spite of the bigwigs' entreaties, one has a long wait....

[Acqui, February 26, 1890]

Dear Father Cortona,

My heart aches at the news of the condition of the dear Brothers Philip and Enrico. If our blessed Lord decides to call them to Himself, it would only be to enable them to help us and the Congregation more effectively from above. This assurance comes from our faith; but the voice of nature pleads strongly to the throne of divine mercy to leave them with us a little while longer so that they may first visibly edify their Brothers here below and render their work more fruitful. O Lord, inspire us with the prayer that pleases You most, and then give us the grace always to adore the decrees of Your will. —It seems to have been by the design of Divine Providence that Bro. Thomas left the Congregation since it was no longer possible for him to do any good there either for himself or for others. The letter he now writes to request readmission does not change matters, neither do so many of his former promises. We know the poor fellow too well to believe that the conditions in which he finds himself at this time will really lead him to live up to his promises. His character and his native temperament make it, I would say, almost impossible for him to do so. Maybe he could still try with the Little House...

The papal indult is an act of kindness on the part of Holy Mother the Church. Why not take advantage of it? Most of the Brothers have no health to spare.... The Sisters also have need of keeping up their strength to do their overwhelming amount of work. God knows this, and has inspired the Holy Father to mitigate the law of fasting for the faithful, St. Clare's included. If there were no indult, the help of God would be at hand to render obedience less burdensome. But now that it is becoming too heavy and is lawfully being removed by the same authority that lawfully imposed it, why should we be so stubborn in our own judgment as to act differently than the other faithful who feel *in Domino* that they can avail themselves of the kindness of the Church? I would not have had the courage to restrict for my seminarians the generous indult which the Holy Father authorized me to extend to all the people of my diocese; and I cannot see how the Superior of a Congregation can unhesitatingly restrict for his subjects (let alone annul) a benefit which the Head of the Church wishes to extend to all without reservations. There was some Bishop who was about to impose limitations, but then he yielded to the better judgment of his equals. That is the way I see it. At any rate, follow the judgment of the Bishop as he must have already set down both general and particular norms for the seminary and for other communities who may have approached him on the matter....

Joseph Episcopus

P.S. Special greetings to the sick Brothers. My secretary and Leone also send cordial greetings.

[Acqui, March 20, 1890]

Dear Father Cortona,

This is the first time in my life that on the occasion of the feast of St. Joseph I am unable to send an individual note of thanks to all those who sent me greetings and best wishes. How is it possible to write even one word of thanks to each one among the thousand friends who this year so beautifully expressed their thoughtfulness toward me on my Saint's Day? Bishops, canons, pastors, priests, Brothers, Sisters of every observance, confraternities, good laymen, and then also a cross section of all classes of people from the House of St. Clare's which I am at a loss to count. And everyone is in expectation of a word of appreciation of their best wishes. Fortunately, I do not consider myself bound to reply immediately to the hundred letters that come from your side, and I can presume that the writers will be even more delighted to have a reply by word of mouth. But when will I ever get a chance to fulfill this duty? Man proposes and God disposes. The older we get, the more we are persuaded by experience that in this world our will must always be subjected to that of others. I was already convinced of this when living in St. Clare's, but here in Acqui my conviction has soared a few degrees higher. —Now then... — Ah, Fr. Cortona must be thinking of Bro. Leone shaking his head, and I'm thinking of some sly and holy interjection of Fr. Giovanni and I wish I could add to that "now then" something quite different from what was about to drop out of my pen. But, I regret to add, I have nothing to say in its stead. Now then... I am disposed to do the will of God. If it is God's will that after starting my pastoral visit to the more remote parishes on April 20 (as in God's Providence was arranged) I should be administering Confirmation to my people in the Apennines on the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, my own spiritual children of St. Clare's should then join in spirit their distant brethren and pray: "*Olim nobis, nunc aliis; protegat omnes Joseph.*"²⁵⁸ That will be all I have to say for the present.

I send a blessing to each and every one from the bottom of my heart, and I embrace all in the Lord.

Affectionately yours,
Joseph Episcopus

²⁵⁸ Once he belonged to us, now he belongs to others; may Joseph protect us all.

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TO ST. CLARE'S HOUSE

[Acqui, March 25, 1890]

Feast of the Annunciation, and, by participation, of St. Joseph, who unknowingly received from God so many graces in common with his Spouse, even though he was unaware of the great Mystery.

Joseph, Bishop of Acqui, to his beloved sons in St. Clare's: I am comforted in the fact that you realize why I am unable to keep my appointment for the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph. I am so deeply comforted that, without further delay, I formally promise a visit in the first week after Easter. God willing, I will arrange to have my pastoral visit to the people of my diocese preceded by a visit to the Brothers of St. Joseph. —Meanwhile, I rejoice in all the good that was done in the recent feast of our glorious Patron Saint, and I repeat with you *Deo Gratias*. And a thousand *Deo Gratias* for the blessings which Divine Providence showers over the field of labor of the priests of St. Clare's. Fr. Giovanni really feels the words *aemulamini*, etc.²⁵⁹ of St. Paul and does not wish to stay behind Fr. Baratta. Another *Deo Gratias* for the Ottolenghi bequest and the donation of 4,000 lire accepted according to agreement. A hearty "well done" to the catechists who conduct the evening classes for eighty young people. May the good God grant zeal and vigor to His servants in all the tasks that He deigns to assign them; and may the glory He receives from them be reflected in His saints, especially in Mary and her spouse St. Joseph.

Father Pelosi and Bro. Leone send greetings.

²⁵⁹ Strive for the better gifts.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Acqui, Easter, 1890]

Joseph Marella
Bishop of Acqui

Together with the members of his household wishes his beloved ones of St. Clare's the *gaudium magnum quod est alleluia*²⁶⁰ and many heavenly blessings. He secretly whispers in Father Cortona's ear that, God willing, next Tuesday evening they will arrive for a visit with the Sons of St. Joseph to share with them also the Easter joy.

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

²⁶⁰ The great Easter joy.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Acqui, April 19, 1890]

....I am also awaiting news about the celebration, which I imagine was exceptionally beautiful and inspiring. *Filius accrescens Joseph*,²⁶¹ and the sons of St. Joseph must also grow, at least in devotion to their holy patron.....

²⁶¹ Gen. 49:22. Joseph is a growing son.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Acqui, June 16, 1890]

Sorrowful anniversary of my departure from St. Clares.

Dear Father Cortona:

...Let me add a word of congratulations to all of St. Clare's families who zealously vied with one another in manifesting their faith in Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; an exceptionally splendid manifestation of faith engendering more intense acts of love. The splendor of lights, songs, incense, and a hundred other beautiful things that for one hour surrounded the King of Glory, is a symbol of the triumphant feast which the souls of the elect offer the glorified Jesus.

Joseph Episcopus

TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Vaglio Serra, August 24, 1890]

....Before granting me an answer, the Cardinal would be obliged to seek much information from the Bishop of Asti. What standing do the Oblates of St. Joseph have in the eyes of the Church? In what way do they depend on the Ordinaries? Are they regularly approved? What are their rules? etc. etc....

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Acqui, September 8, 1890]

Joseph Marelo, Bishop of Acqui, will end his pastoral visits on Monday evening, September 8, and will then retire to Strevi for a little rest in the company of the priests and Brothers of St. Clare's who come to join him on that hill preceded or accompanied by Father Cortona. *Interea valeant omnes in Domino, B.M.V. intercedente cum eius Sponso et omnium Protectore Josepho.*²⁶²

²⁶² Meanwhile I pray that all are enjoying good health in the Lord, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin with St. Joseph, her Spouse and the Protector of us all.

[Acqui, October 24, 1890]

Before resuming my pastoral visits, I owe a reply to your letter in which I read with pleasure your description of the funeral rites for Bishop Torchio of blessed memory. I wish the second part of your letter had also continued in the same vein and had been the bearer of consoling news. Unfortunately, in this life joy and pain are forever alternating. The funeral of a servant of God leaves us with a sense of peace in the hope that he is now in possession of his eternal reward. On the other hand, the opening of the school year at St. Clare's, instead of bringing the expected joy to our hearts, causes us to fear an uncertain future and fills us with a thousand forebodings. And yet, was not the life of St. Joseph also a succession of consolations and fears? Let St. Clare's, then, be like the house of St. Joseph. In the midst of doubts and anxieties, let all hearts rest trustful and secure. Let everyone repeat with St. Paul: *Placeo mihi in angustiis pro Christo.*²⁶³ Even last year the future looked dark, and yet Providence brought back the sunlight. When school opened there were not many pupils, and then the number increased almost to a hundred. By All Saints Day I expect to receive the news that the enrollment has increased by quite a few more and that within a few weeks the number will have doubled to eighty. I am doing my best to contribute to this increase, and within a few days I will send two more from the parish of Visone: the two brothers Costantino and Angelo Ruggero. It is possible that you will be receiving even more. No doubt, God will take care of the rest through the intercession of St. Joseph. I pray with those of St. Clare's. Let them pray along with me as I prepare to face the severe cold on my way to consecrate two churches and visit six parishes. For these and other tasks I am in need of spiritual help. Greetings in the Lord from Peloso and Leone.

Yours in Our Lord,
Joseph Episcopus

²⁶³ I am content with my distress for Christ's sake. 2 Cor. 12:10

[Acqui, December 19, 1890]

Dear Father Cortona,

I trust that the acceptance of the poor deaf and mute girl at St. Clare's will draw the blessings of Divine Providence and will open the way for a gift from the Holy Infant. The Sisters of Siena, to whom I sent the welcome news, will also pray for the Home of St. Clare's.

The institution of the *laus perennis*²⁶⁴ would be quite timely in our day. The main problem would be to arrange it in such a way as not to harm the health of the participants and consequently bring harm to others. Our Lord is so generous that He often prefers to stay in the background and give a hand to others by giving priority to the works of charity over exercises of adoration; or rather, He bestows on the former the merits and value of the latter. You might try to arrange a schedule that will provide for total participation with the least amount of inconvenience to individuals. Repeat often the aspiration: *In te Domine, speravi*,²⁶⁵ etc. I do not consider it wise to cut down on food. It would be like expecting a bountiful harvest after having been sparing with the seed. — I am in a state of siege with visits, letters, and other business, and so I'll have to limit all my Christmas greetings in one word: *Pax vobis hominibus bonae voluntatis*.²⁶⁶ Even if you should be in need of everything, be constant in your good will and you will receive from Jesus that peace which is worth everything. Father Peloso and Leone join me in invoking on the House of St. Clare's the blessings of the Holy Infant and the patronage of the Blessed Virgin and glorious St. Joseph.

Joseph Episcopus

²⁶⁴ Perpetual Adoration.

²⁶⁵ In you, Lord, I have hoped.

²⁶⁶ Peace to you men of good will.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Acqui, February 21, 1891]

Dear Father Cortona,

I have received news about St. Clare's from the pastor of Monbaldone, who related wonderful things about what he had seen. *Deo gratias*. I am still waiting for Mass intentions as we agreed. The object of this letter is entirely to remind you of this matter in case it was forgotten. Otherwise, I have nothing new that might be of interest to the Brothers of St. Joseph. So I'll close by asking for the prayers of the community. *Eamus simul ad Joseph et oremus pro invicem*,²⁶⁷ and may our Holy Patriarch obtain for us from God every grace we need. In the bond of charity I remain

Affectionately yours in Our Lord,
Joseph Episcopus

P.S. Father Peloso and Leone send greetings.

²⁶⁷ Let us go together to Joseph and pray for one another.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Acqui, February 23, 1891]

Dear Father Cortona,

This is the first time that I have the consolation of replying to a letter that is so full, so overflowing with good news that I had Father Peloso and Leone read it for their enjoyment like a delightful piece of music stupendously harmonized from start to finish. St. Joseph is still the Choirmaster. He gives the intonation; but sometimes he does permit a little dissonance here and there. However, during this month so dear to him, he wants all the notes to flow just right so as to lift our hearts heavenward where there is nothing but harmony. Our Holy Patriarch wants us to realize that in Bethlehem the hours of desolation and of silent waiting were followed by comforting visits of angels to the accompaniment of heavenly songs. I leave it up to Fr. Cortona to point out the various analogies found in these two settings: Bethlehem and St. Clare's. For my part I am happy to have expressed in my last letter a wish that is pleasing to the Lord: Let us all go to St. Joseph, I wrote. I noticed our Saint surrounded by all of you as he made his triumphal ascent to his throne, and he also beheld a widening circle of friends and many others come toward him to do him honor. God grant that new friends of St. Joseph may come forward this month and bring him the gifts of Bethlehem which he, the Provider of the Holy Family, knows so well how to make use of for its daily needs till he has led it to the gates of Heaven. God grant that we may always remain worth of belonging to this blessed family and of receiving from its Head our daily nourishment.

Thanks be to God for the successful outcome of the philosophy exams. To all the candidates I say, Well done, and courage! Well done and keep going, I say to Fr. Baratta as he wins new laurels as our Apostolic Missionary. St. Clare's now has a plentiful supply of everything. Preachers, Confessors, Catechists, Professors, Lovers of the Fine Arts, not to mention Procurators, Bursars, Shop Foremen, Workers, etc. We wanted a Subdeacon, and St. Joseph will not have us wait any longer; and in due time he is ready to give us a Deacon as well. Our health too is good, and in this month we hope that Bro. Alfonso will get stronger so that he can get back to his work with a greater drive.

Finally, a word about that coat. I can do without it for this winter, and so Bro. Benedetto will be able to save the cloth for a cassock.

Affectionately yours in Our Lord,
Joseph Episcopus

P.S. The entire episcopal household returns your greetings.

[Acqui, March 7, 1891]

Dear Father Cortona,

The sad news of the death of Fr. Bosso came too late for me to suggest that a representative group from St. Clare's go to the funeral of the venerable deceased. I presume you attended it with Mother Superior without waiting on my advice. It would be well for the community to celebrate the seventh day and month's mind Mass for the repose of his soul. You would thus repay a public debt of gratitude to the good Father who loved the Oblates so much and who will always be blessed not only by the Home for the Aged, but also by our little Congregation. In this way we shall all the better assure for ourselves the benefit of his prayers from Heaven, where I have every reason to believe that the Father of the poor has called him. I saw him on the 25th of last month, and I had a feeling it would be the last time. He looked like one of the Patriarchs as he lay surrounded by his sons, his face serenely reflecting the peace of his soul. The Father of the Little House truly possessed a faith comparable to that of those ancient servants of God, and even amid the sufferings that accompanied his illness his words were always true to this virtue. Neither the fear of death nor the desire of recovering could move him from his tranquil and childlike abandonment to the will of God. "The Venerable Cottolengo will obtain for us your recovery," the attendants would tell him. "This," he replied, "is a problem that only Divine Providence can solve." In every occasion great or small he always had his dear Providence in mind, and now that his own life was at stake he followed more consistently than ever his principle of walking in the ways of Providence. For others death is a painful sacrifice; for him it simply meant conforming himself to the wonderful designs of the Supreme Ruler of all things, especially of the Little House. Let us pray that his successors will be animated by the great trust that inspired Father Bosso.

As to your inquiry about the work to be done at Casabianca, I see no reason to change the method we have already discussed and adopted with a right intention. We have given a triumphant reply to the various objections. To be constant and persevering in a program of action, to carry it out with solicitude and zeal — this is not identical with being emotionally worked up. Even our passions are a help in doing good. They help if they do not take the upper hand and if they submit to reason in whose service we employ them by the grace of God. My advice, then, is to keep making all needed improvements on the farm house and to employ the help of the Brothers in such a way that, without harm to their spiritual life, you can also achieve some material advantage. In a word, let intellectual and manual work counterbalance each other as two means leading to only one end: the service of God in imitation of St. Joseph.....

Joseph Episcopus

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Acqui, March 8, 1891]

Dear Father Cortona,

The Congregation, debts, Providence!!! Three most significant words which call to mind three important ideas that are not always in perfect harmony with each other. With the help of faith, the first and the last idea can be brought together in a nice melody; but sometimes that one in the middle simply cannot be forced to stay in tune. To sum it up: If the project²⁶⁸ doesn't require more than a few thousand lire, go ahead. If instead it reaches beyond our means, let us stop and wait for St. Joseph to give us the nod. This is his beautiful month. Fr. Cortona is preaching his glories; the Brothers and the entire community are united in invoking his protection; Bro. Stephen is offering up to him his trials; and Bro. Massimo, if God so wills, is ready to offer up even the sacrifice of his life — a sacrifice full of sorrow and of glory as well. So we shall say to our great Patriarch: We belong entirely to you, and may you be all ours. Show us the way; support us at every step; guide us where Providence wants us to go. No matter how long or short our journey, no matter how smooth or rough, whether by human sight we glimpse our goal or not, whether our pace is fast or slow, with you we are sure of always going along the right path.

I send a special blessing to our good Bro. Massimo as a pledge of the prayers that I offer to God in his behalf. Warm greetings and best wishes for a speedy recovery to Bro. Stephen when he returns to St. Clare's. To everyone, especially to the priests (including those who are close to ordination) and to Fr. Cortona my heartfelt greetings.

Affectionately yours,
Joseph Episcopus

²⁶⁸ Building improvements at St. Clare's.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, March 20, 1891

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

I received on St. Joseph's Day the flowers and the bilingual greetings from St. Clare's. Now I am also awaiting news about the celebration, which I imagine was exceptionally beautiful and inspiring. *Filius accrescens Joseph*,²⁶⁹ and the Sons of St. Joseph must also grow, at least in devotion to their great holy Patron. — On the occasion of my Saint's Day, I received many promises of prayers and spiritual help. I wish to share all these kind offerings with the dear Oblates, since they too are entitled to this treasure. And just as I share *omnia mea*, the Sons of St. Joseph will also share with me *omnia sua*. And so each will be able to say: "*Omnia mea vestra sunt et vestra mea*,"²⁷⁰ according to Jesus' prayer that His disciples "*sint consummati in unum*."²⁷¹

²⁶⁹ Joseph is a growing son.

²⁷⁰ All I have... All they have... All my possessions are yours, and yours are mine.

²⁷¹ That they may be perfect in unity.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Acqui, shortly after April 1, 1891]

Joseph Marelo, Bishop of Acqui, sends to Fr. Cortona Easter greetings and the peace of Christ, to be extended to all the Brothers gathered in His name. And he wishes to say that if no other funds are available, approval is given to use the notes deposited in the Chancery. For the rest, St. Joseph, who has taken care of things so far, will surely provide for the future. He continually repeats to his Sons: "*In silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra.*"²⁷² Alleluia.

²⁷² In silence and in hope will be found your strength.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, April 7, 1891

J.M.J.

...Now a word about Fr. Baratta. He writes so many good and beautiful things about his mission at Rocchetta Tanaro that I can't help repeating a thousand times in my heart: *Deo gratias*. Poor Oblates of the Home for the Aged, you are among the minor priests. You are nothing and you enjoy none of those positions that hold promise for the future. And yet Our Lord makes use of you also for the good of souls. Yes, keep on saying: "*Servi inutiles sumus*;"²⁷³ but keep on going forward to do the portion of work which the Divine Will assigns to you day by day through its representatives. And may others *videant opera vestra bona et glorificent Patrem vestrum qui in coelis est*...²⁷⁴

Affectionately yours in the Lord,
Joseph Episcopus

²⁷³ We are unprofitable servants.

²⁷⁴ see your good works and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.

Strevi, June 10, 1891

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

Yesterday I arrived at the villa to stay till tomorrow, when I am scheduled for the pastoral visit to Sezze. I thought I could find more leisure here to reply to your letter, but even at Strevi there is no peace, and it is not yet time for a lengthy reply.

The solemn enthronement of the Blessed Sacrament in the farmhouse chapel was so vividly described that, while reading it, I thought I was witnessing an enlarged scene of good Zaccheus. Bro. Phillip²⁷⁵ represented the fortunate guest of the Savior. And he was not the only one. There were many other Zaccheus, more or less small of stature, to share with him his joy, each one applying to himself the sweet words of Our Lord: "*In domo tua oportet me manere.*"²⁷⁶ *Deo gratias.*

Blessed be God when He renders fruitful the farms from which the sons of St. Clare's draw their sustenance. And may He also be blessed when in His just judgment He has willed to strike a large area of the countryside of Acqui, and particularly the places I went for my pastoral visit. May He be doubly blessed, because while punishing for sins He awakens faith and devotion in hearts. To arrive in a town at the very time when this awful scourge is destroying the most bountiful harvest,²⁷⁷ and to see Christian resignation written in people's eyes and to find their wills bowed to the will of the Lord and their hearts opened to the message of immortal hope, — this is indeed a moving spectacle and one that truly edifies! Praise God. Among the towns visited in my last pastoral rounds, those hit by the hailstorm were the ones best disposed to draw profit from God's grace. The general Communion there was the best attended, and for the men it was, you might say, a second Easter. Even in these difficult times the faith is still firmly rooted in our country towns.....

...From Tuesday on I shall be able to welcome Fr Cortona and his companions. Meanwhile I ask the Heavenly Father to bestow on all of you every perfect gift.

Ever affectionately yours,
Joseph Episcopus

²⁷⁵ Bro. Philip, like Zaccheus, was short of stature.

²⁷⁶ I must stay at your home.

²⁷⁷ The hailstorm.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, August 13, 1891

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

...Thank God, the hailstorm spared a large part of the vineyards of St. Clare's. And though this scourge struck the vineyards of the Bishop and those of so many people in his diocese, God's will be done. But there are trials of quite a different sort that call for resignation. Last month I was lamenting the fact that I had only four newly-ordained priests to provide for the many vacancies. Now three more places have been left empty by three other deaths. And so in a short time seven parishes have been left vacant, not counting the parish of Cortiglione, whose pastor is incapacitated by paralysis; that of San Marziano of Mombaruzzo, whose pastor is absent for illness brought on by old age. Let the members of St. Clare's pray that God will come to my aid in so many hardships. And in return I shall continue to pray for the growth and prosperity of the workers whom the Heavenly Father has raised up in the family of St. Joseph....

Affectionately yours,
Joseph Episcopus

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, August 16, 1891

....As long as our total debt was counterbalanced by the value of the house, it was possible to easily accept mortgaged capital in the hopes of being able to somehow act as agent for it out of our own personal resources, if worse should come to worse. However, now that we are carrying an annual debt of almost seven thousand liras, corresponding to a capital of 140,000 liras, it seems to me that we should definitely stop and no longer reach for those apparently generous offerings which could really become a liability to the house... Rather than commit myself to more debts, I feel obliged to put myself in better order with respect to the old ones ... so that we may not slip from the path of trust to the path of imprudence...

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, October 27, 1891

....I spontaneously and wholeheartedly thank you for your good will in so generously offering a replacement for Leo who departed. It is an offer whose value is increased by the great sacrifice of the one offering and of the one who would allow himself to be offered. The congregation's willingness to give up or rather lend me one of its dearest brothers, and the individual's giving up even for a time the delights of the house of St. Joseph for my benefit are very valuable to me. Yet how could I be so selfish as to quickly and lightheartedly accept such a precious gift, without first making certain that this gift could not cease to belong to St. Joseph? I have to be fair and divest myself of my self-interests as bishop in order to examine the greater good for each side. When asked to give an impartial judgment on this, I would be inclined in favor of St. Clare's. I will say more. As I am writing, so many things to consider are coming to mind that, were I able to communicate them to Fr. Cortona face to face, I might hear him withdraw his proposal. If out of generosity he should fail to do so, it would then be up to me to do it in his name in order to be fair. To come to a conclusion then, I'll say that Bro. _____'s leaving St. Clare's is of temporary benefit for the congregation and of possible future harm, while his arrival here at the bishop's residence in Acqui, though beneficial to me in certain ways, also presents difficulties for me in other ways.... This is what I would have to explain personally in order to hear Fr. Cortona himself tell me: "You're right; I agree."

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, January 14, 1892

....We are in God's hands and we would be wise to resign ourselves to His just judgment. If I cannot go to Asti personally, I will not fail to be present in spirit and to unite myself in prayer to my most beloved at St. Clare's ... and to the others in the sad list presented me. I commend them to the Lord with my whole being. I will not name them here, but I keep them all present in my memory and in my heart.....

Acqui, January 23, 1892

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

Here is my immediate reply to all of your questions. By all means, you must accept the administration of the Castelvero parish. First of all, we must be consistent with our principles and always arrange our accounts with Divine Providence alone. Secondly, we must obey, even at the cost of great sacrifice, the will of the Bishop, who is in the hands of God and can be the instrument for achieving certain advantages that outweigh the harm that one might want to avoid. For our part, let us always tip the scales in favor of authority, and we can then be confident that God, the supreme authority, will arrange those same scales in a thousand different ways and on a higher level so that, without the knowledge of others and sometimes even in spite of them, things will turn in our favor. Have I made myself clear?.....

The two enlisted Brothers who wish to go to Tuscany to bake themselves with academic grammar remind me of St. Jerome's dream where he saw himself being flogged for being more of a Ciceronian than a Christian. A son of St. Joseph is more in need of learning the language of the saints than of learning the pure idiom of Tuscany. In that charming land called the garden of Italy, it is unfortunate that while learning purity of diction one can lose the purity of one's morals. More than in any other region, one gathers there, along with nature's flowers, the flowers of classical literature, while passing up the flowers of piety and virtue. And so the taste for profane beauty easily prevails over the taste for the sacred. Besides, an army barracks is no place where one can expect to learn propriety of speech and treasure up the best phrases and the most polished idioms. I then consider it a product of idle fancy and inexperience this desire to spend one's term of service in Tuscany amid strangers, rather than in Alexandria or Turin, near friends and benevolent acquaintances, close to St. Clare's, in a favorable atmosphere that has helped so many others preserve their vocation.....

Let me conclude like Fr. Cortona by expressing the wish that in all things we may make our own will the will of God, *ut reportemus repromissiones*²⁷⁸

Joseph Episcopus

²⁷⁸ That you may inherit the promises.

Acqui, April 4, 1892

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

Let us with one voice exclaim: *Fiat voluntas Dei in omnibus*;²⁷⁹ and meanwhile let us meditate on the events taking place with divine permission. Bro. Massimo, faithful to the call of the Lord, ascends among the angels in Heaven; Bro. Pietro, unfaithful to his vocation, sentences himself to prison in the army barracks among.... Poor fellow! He didn't learn to humble his own judgment, and he felt it sweet to have his own way; but now he realizes that, far from being the master of his own way, he has become it's slave..... Concerning him and Bro. Massimo one can repeat the words of St. Thomas, which have already been applied to other cases: *Vide paris vocationis quam sit dispar exitus*.²⁸⁰ To tell you the truth, this latest defection caused me more sadness than surprise. One does not take such a decisive step, with such openly deliberate and energetic choice, unless one has already begun rashly to slide downhill.

Ah, obedience! Not the kind that sometimes wants to open its eyes to take a peek at its own point of view, but the kind of obedience that is called *blind*. How many graces does not obedience draw down from Heaven to keep us from taking a false step and to guide us directly to our goal! Let us mourn the fact that not a few Brothers allowed the tender shoots of this virtue to wither, while St. Joseph wanted it deeply rooted in their hearts. Let us lament their fate and make it the subject of meditation for ourselves. After the recent trials may the good God console us with the recovery of Bro. Teodoro and the seminarian Molino. St. Joseph will intercede for us.....

Joseph Episcopus

²⁷⁹ Let God's will be done in all things.

²⁸⁰ One and the same calling, but with what different results!

Acqui, September 8, 1892

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

I have examined your project and have come to this conclusion: If a skilled and conscientious contractor were to take the job and rebuild the shed besides (a big farm without a shed is like a suit without pockets), for the sum of seven or eight thousand liras, I would say all right; otherwise, we would have to give the matter some thought. On the death of Madama, we'll have to disburse the handsome sum of twelve thousand lire. Add this to what you spend on the building and the other real estate now in the process of being purchased, and you will have a figure that is much higher than what you would get for the farmhouse in case we had to sell it or had the chance to buy another one at a good price and with more room. And here we might note that the proposed enlargement of the building would give us no more than a half dozen rooms with a large dormitory, which are definitely not sufficient to accommodate two groups (the Brothers and the workingmen, not counting Madama and visiting priests and guests). This would call for two kitchens, two dining rooms, a chapel, a study hall, tool shop, storage room, pantry, etc., etc. Good heavens! This means living quarters for at least a permanent group of thirty-five. That would really be something to try out! I think (and I might be wrong, but I wish there were facts at hand to prove it) that after finishing this job and paying for the essentials, we would still be getting nowhere. Besides, we would be blocking the way to progress because we would make it impossible to execute a more rational expansion of the building for community use without a huge expense. Then we'll find ourselves saying: It would have been better to build a new house, detached from the old one, and designed for our present and future needs, and located on an area that allows for expansion. In a word, my fear is this: We might be fooling ourselves into thinking that we can patch up a shoe and make it look like new in order to save the price of a new one; but after the expenses are in, we would still have an old shoe and the hoped for savings have gone up in smoke.

These were the conditions that made me favor the purchase of Monfrion. I said to myself: We are already willing to spend fifteen thousand francs for the old farmhouse (building and sheds). Let's use this money as a down payment on the new farmhouse. We could pay an annual interest of seven or eight thousand lire on the balance and retire the debt by selling those fields that Fr. Giovanni was so eloquent about. And so we would have two farmhouses as surety against our debts and which we could sell in case of need without any loss to ourselves. Now I am told that the asking price is too high. In that case it's better to shelve this project also. How true it is that things seen from a distance or in the light of our own preconceived ideas are apt to be judged in one way; but when you examine them more closely, you judge them quite differently.....

Joseph Episcopus

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, October 12, 1892

...[the journey to Genoa was a] long pilgrimage for almost three weeks through the Apennine buttresses and Ligurian Region (Albenga, Port Maurice, Loano, Arenzano, Genoa)....

...[the Tenth National Italian] Catholic Congress, whose sessions all together lasted about twenty hours....

...I mainly had an opportunity to renew myself. New courage and sweet hope for better days are infused into one's spirit by seeing and relating to so many members of the clergy and laity, who have come from every part of Italy with the sincerest desire to serve the cause of God and the Church, which mourns the desertion of such a large number of its ungrateful children....

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, November 20, 1892

....Your letter found me between my bed and the easy chair due to persistent congestion making me cough day and night for two weeks. Fr. Peloso is near me with linseed plasters, demulcents, pills.....

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, December 20, 1892

Dear Father Cortona,

The visits, letters, and greeting cards that I'm receiving these days remind me of my duty to direct special prayers to God for the beloved family of St. Clare's. Yet my head is befuddled with so many other thoughts contending and vying for first place. During their recent visits Fr. Cortona and Fr. John added so many new ones to the old ones and now they are all in my mind, which desires to put a little order to them and send them with a word of recommendation to the Crib of the Infant Jesus. But *hoc opus hic labor*.²⁸¹ Lucky for me that the little Divine Child tells me that He will come to my aid, sounding the call and summoning all those thoughts to line up according to the order preordained by His ineffable providence. *Deo gratias*. Although our minds might be able to determine which things are good, they are always an infinite distance away from that Mind which alone can make that determination in an absolute manner. Humans may discern what is good, but God discerns the greater good, the true good. Thus while desiring the good, the saints always subordinated their judgment to that of the One who, although granting us some of our good desires, wants to exchange them for other relatively better ones. Therefore let us make our many wishes for the Feasts of Christmas and New Year, but let us allow the good Jesus to hear them in that way and to the extent that He knows better how to turn to His glory and to our spiritual profit. However, we do want Him to hear that wish around which all the others revolve: *Salvator noster salva nos*.²⁸² I close this votive prayer and I remain

Most affectionately yours,
+Joseph Episcopus

²⁸¹ This is the task, this the toil.

²⁸² Our Savior, save us (Mt 8:25).

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, February 5, 1893

...Now that the news has been published, however, and I know that the Holy Father desires for his jubilee to have a beautiful representation of bishops around him, I have decided to follow the example of my confreres and to brave the inconvenience which has not discouraged others older and feebler than I. Then this means heading a group from the diocese and presenting to our common father a beautiful little family of some fifty children....

Acqui, March 6, 1893

J.M.J.

Dear Brother Philip:

I have received your letter in which you explain to me the difficulties you are having with your studies and the remarks made on the matter by Fr. Giovanni and Fr. Baratta. Actually, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Religious issued rather severe instructions at the end of last year concerning the program of studies and the education of candidates to be admitted to orders. These instructions were issued in view of the undue leniency exercised so far and the facility with which bishops ordained candidates presented by Religious Superiors. Such excessive leniency and facility could no doubt cause harm to the Church, especially in these times of increased learning among her adversaries, who are engaging her in continuous and obstinate battle on the field of knowledge.

Your doubts and the remarks made by the aforementioned priests are not amiss. I have, then, no better advice to offer you than this: Ask our Lord to enlighten you and the priests of St. Clare's, and then with holy indifference follow the judgment which they, together with Fr. Cortona, knowing well all the circumstances, will feel it their duty to pronounce. St. Paul, whom you desire to imitate, wrote these words: "*Numquid omnes apostoli, numquid omnes prophetae, numquid omnes doctores, numquid omnes virtutes, etc..... Aemulamini autem charismata meliora*"²⁸³ If God should want to make you a saint like Felix of Cantalice, you would be indeed fortunate and you would rank with him in Heaven above so many big Doctors. The divine goodness did not leave you without those gifts that go into the making of a good religious and an active member in the Congregation of St. Joseph. If, in the likeness of the great Patriarch St. Joseph, you were to serve Jesus in humble tasks inferior in dignity to those of St. Peter, remember that the humble guardian of Jesus holds a higher place in Heaven than the great Apostle. Be satisfied with the role our Lord assigns to you here below, and firmly trust that, with God's help, you will be able to discharge it in such a manner as to deserve a great reward in Heaven. To whom was it said: "*Ego ero merces tua magna nimis?*"²⁸⁴ To the obedient and faithful Abraham.

But I notice that I am saying too much, as if Bro. Philip really needed encouragement to get into a frame of mind that is already habitual in a religious. This frame of mind I discover in every word of your letter, and so there is no need of my attempting to arouse it in you. Instead, I shall ask Our Lord to give you the grace of perseverance and to grant to all of you an increase of generosity in following the divine will as it is revealed through the voice of obedience.

Recommend me also to the Lord. I'll be seeing you at the farmhouse. To you and all your dear family of semi-hermits, my most heartfelt greetings and best wishes.

Joseph Marella
Bishop of Acqui

²⁸³ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?..... But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

²⁸⁴ I will be your reward exceedingly great.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, March 6, 1893

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

The purchase of the Castle of Frinco had already been agreed upon, since it had been judged advantageous under every aspect for St. Clare's. And really, if the building is not so beautiful, it is quite solid and is in no need of repairs. The price too is very reasonable. I presume that the annual taxes are also reasonable. At any rate, we had asked for light from above and had sought the advice of considerate people; and it was this that prompted the decision. So then, we have followed the will of God, and we can feel at ease....

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, May 11, 1893

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

Deo gratias that the two government inspections did not go totally well for St. Clare's. If everything had gone smoothly, we might have had reason to be disturbed and to fear that under the appearance of safety the enemy was lying in ambush. Let us be glad, then, that our trials have not come to an end and that there are no lack of adversaries to make us grow in confidence in God. We know from experience that at the right time our difficulties disappear, there is a change of heart in those who caused them, and God's work moves on surrounded with new favor. Do we not have a beautiful proof in all of FR Cortona's letters, including the latest one? ...

Thank you again for the prayers offered for the Bishop of Acqui during his pastoral visits. The valley of the Bormida toward Cortemiglia is one of the best parts of the diocese for good morals and for loyalty to the faith. I found there a deep piety as shown by the beautiful churches and sacred furnishings and, above all, by the great number of communicants. The town fathers delivered addresses of welcome that would put to shame the best Christians of the Middle Ages. In one parish they welcomed the Bishop on both knees. I consecrated two churches, and on these occasions the faithful demonstrated the depth of their faith and the fervor of their love for the beauty of God's house. *Portae inferi non praevalerunt.*²⁸⁵

Always affectionately yours,
Joseph Episcopus

²⁸⁵ The gates of hell shall not prevail.

Strevi, August 14, 1894

...I am happy that the brothers wound up their vacation in Strevi with a crowning pilgrimage to Our Lady of Clay. I must add that all excel *moribus et disciplina, singulariter et collegialiter*.²⁸⁶ Bro. Thomas in singing; Bro. Cyril in riding the little donkey; Bro. Eugene in leading the hikes and Bro. Felix in sacrificing them and looking for other amusement; Bro. Theodore, Bro. Callistus and especially Bro. Joseph in bowling *boccie*; Bro. Michael in charge of the sacristy; Bro. Casimir with the prudent scheduling of community prayers and recreational activities; and then everyone in meditating, singing psalms, and praying the rosary, etc., so much so that the vacation spot could be called a Religious House during these days and the Chapel a Shrine....

²⁸⁶ In manners and discipline, as individuals and as a group.

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, September 12, 1894

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

The news I have received is painful indeed! *Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit.*²⁸⁷ The Lord gave us good Bro. Theodore; the Lord has taken him away. But we are comforted by the hope that He will give him back to us in Heaven together with the Brothers who, we can believe, are already shining with eternal light. Let us also find comfort in the thought that if God asks us the sacrifice of some beautiful flower from our garden, He will repay us a hundredfold by causing many others to sprout under the heavenly dew and by always lovingly defending them against the frost and ice until He is ready to transplant them above. I am leaving for Strevi now, and I shall be waiting for you during this week and the next to spend a few days there. I give my sorrowful greetings to the mourning Brothers and I embrace them all in the Lord.

Affectionately yours in Jesus Christ,
Joseph Episcopus

²⁸⁷ The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away(?)

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, October 26, 1894

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

...The spiritual darkness keeps growing ever thicker around the Brothers of St. Joseph, and it almost hinders us from moving forward safely. Still, blessed be also the frightful darkness if it is the will of the Lord that sends it. We shall walk trustingly in the dark with the thought that the Angels are watching over us to keep us from stumbling. We shall inch our way forward if we cannot run or even proceed by steps, but we shall keep on our feet. But when shall we be able to see the light? That is God's secret. We may long for this light as one longs for the dawn; yet, as with the dawn, we cannot make it appear one moment sooner. We must nonetheless keep our eyes fixed eastward, in the direction where the morning light will make its appearance. Beware lest we mistake it for the northern lights which are wont to deceive the pilgrim.

At this moment I cannot add anything else on paper. If you come to Acqui after the Feast Day, we can discuss a few more matters. Meanwhile, may St. Joseph shelter his devoted sons under his fatherly mantle. With this wish and with warmest regards, I remain

devotedly yours in the Lord,
Joseph Episcopus

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

Acqui, March 4, 1895

J.M.J.

Dear Father Cortona,

The letter I received from Bro. Immaculato shows me that during the month dedicated to their patron, more than at any other time of the year, the Brothers of St. Joseph in true imitation of him *miscent gaudia fletibus*:²⁸⁸ joys of the spirit because they have been counted worthy to suffer dishonor; tears of the heart pierced by so many thorns. I too share deeply in their common sorrows as well as their joys. I join in the prayers for the souls of Fr. Baratta's father and of Bro. Alexander's mother. On those departed ones who have ended their earthly day in the Lord's love, *luceat perpetua lux in regno coelorum*.²⁸⁹ We shall pray to St. Joseph to obtain health for the sick, and for all of us the grace to know and to follow the divine will.... Be all of good heart under the fatherly mantle of St. Joseph, a place of safest refuge *in tribulationibus et angustiis*,²⁹⁰ also for your most affectionate

Joseph Episcopus

²⁸⁸ They mingle joy with tears.

²⁸⁹ May perpetual light shine in the kingdom of heaven.

²⁹⁰ In trials and afflictions.

TO ATTORNEY PHILIP GRAGLIA

Acqui, March 26, 1895

....For some time now I have not been without vexation and sadness brought on me by persons with whom I would have desired always at any cost to proceed in perfect harmony.....

....(I encourage you to) give maximum impetus to Catholic Action and to organize it by instituting Parish Committees and a Youth Branch....

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TO FR. J. B. CORTONA

[Undated]

With regard to the acceptance of young men who have dropped out of seminaries or religious houses, you know too well how I feel. Out of a hundred, ninety-nine turn out badly. Experience has demonstrated the wisdom of the rule laid down by certain Congregations and the practice of certain dioceses (including the diocese of Acqui) never to accept those who have been dismissed. Would that this rule were followed everywhere. The Church would not have to deplore the scandal of priests and secularized religious wandering from one diocese to another and taking advantage of the good faith of bishops who have not yet come to know them well enough. St. Clare's has already had its share of experience and must keep the lesson well in mind. This is the advice I offer you.

Yours affectionately in the Lord,
Joseph Marelli, Bishop of Acqui

A 1
FR. G.B. TORCHIO²⁹¹ TO THEOLOGIAN P. ELIA²⁹²

*Investiture of Marellò-
His miraculous recovery-
New Year greetings.*

San Martino Tanaro, January 11, 1864

My dearest and illustrious Theologian,

I hasten to share with you and with your beloved family the joy I experienced two days ago of bringing back to the foot of the altar our Marellò and of presiding again over his investiture into the clerical state. I have taken and recognized in this decision of his a Christmas gift from the good Lord and as a bit of solace He has deigned to give me to comfort my poor heart... *perierat et inventus est!*²⁹³

The hand of God, not even a month ago, had led him to the threshold of eternity,²⁹⁴ but He let him go. I sincerely hope, to make of him something completely His, a zealous priest. Let us offer Him our praise and thanksgiving.

I hope all of you have started the new year well, and therefore I offer you and your relatives, whom you will be so kind to greet for me, my best wishes and those of my brother.

Taking this happy opportunity to express again my deepest esteem and sincerest affection, I remain

Your most obedient servant and dearest friend,

G.B. Torchio, Pastor

²⁹¹ John Baptist Torchio, pastor of San Martino Tanaro (cf. Letter 115)1

²⁹² Paul Elia, professor of dogmatic theology in the Seminary of Asti (cf. Letter 8). He and his family, who had their residence in Turin (cf. letter 2), used to take their vacation in San Martino Tanaro (cf. Letter 5). (cf. Letter 14, 118.

²⁹³ He was lost, and is found! Luke 15:32.

²⁹⁴ Cfr Letter 4.

A 4
FR. D. BOSSO TO CANON J. MARELLO

Turin, January 13, 1885

Dear Canon Marello,

Tomorrow, the 14th, was set for Father to go to your town to discuss matters pertaining to the schools, but Divine Providence has decided otherwise. Last night at two o'clock the eminent Canon None, an old benefactor of the Little House, died in Turin and left the same as heir to his modest patrimony. So since I must do the burial tomorrow, it has become impossible for me to leave Turin. Nevertheless, *quod differtur non aufertur*,²⁹⁵ and within the coming week, most likely on Monday, I hope to be in your town, if not to celebrate the Feast of St. Hilary as the good Rector Fr. Rossetti had graciously invited me to do, then at least to pay a visit.

Your letter made me exclaim a heartfelt *Deo Gratias*, because it is evident how Divine Providence watches over your dear house and how you fear nothing, but we will discuss that more at length there.

Everything else proceeds well *in Domino*, and we hope that Divine Providence will decide to do still many more things. *Fiat, Fiat!*²⁹⁶

I send warm greetings to you, to the whole Congregation, and to the little Seminary, and I beg you to pay my respects to good Fr. Rossetti, telling him that what couldn't be done Saturday will be done Monday.

Your good friend and companion in
the works of Divine Providence,

Fr. Dominic Bosso

P.S. Many greetings to the Sisters.

²⁹⁵ A postponement is not a cancellation.

²⁹⁶ Let it be, as in Genesis' "Let there be light," in Mary's "Be it done to me according to Your will," and the Our Father's "Thy will be done."

A 6
BISHOP G. RONCO TO MSGR. G. PAGELLA

Asti, November 28, 1888

...In his every office he has shown an ability to assign proper importance to it, to know the persons to work with, the problems to be overcome, the quantity and the quality of the duties to be fulfilled. Thus performing them with admirable calm and firmness he has been able to run the straight path of duty and simultaneously win the respect and the esteem of all. He is gifted with ability for action, and without seeming pressured or wasting a moment, he works with great peacefulness and constancy. He has shown a great knowledge of the world and has not let himself be taken in by others' deceptions.

...He is of such kind and patient disposition that, when confronted with people's importunities, he has never been known to appear irritated nor to speak sharply, and particularly not in his Chancery Office....

His gifts of true, sincere, and profound devotion are well evident from the most edifying demeanor which emanates from his entire person, from the strict self-possession he maintains in church and at all sacred ceremonies, and from the zeal with which he moves others to devotion in the many prayer exercises which he initiated and directs in the church next to the Hospice of Charity. Yet this does not prevent him from actively and effectively attending to the salvation of souls. In fact he daily performs the ministry of sacramental confession both in the cathedral and in the church of the Hospice of Charity, both in the morning and in the evening at the penitents' convenience. He is very effective in his preaching: spontaneously deciding to proclaim the Word of God in the church of the Hospice of Charity, he is joyfully listened to not only by the patients, but also by many who flock to hear him there.

His life is a tireless practice of saintly virtues, of zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and of charitable deeds for the poor. And this entire treasure is hidden beneath the wrapping of the purest humility....

A 20
FR.. J. B. CORTONA TO BISHOP J. MARELLO

Asti, June 7, 1892

J.M.J.

...Fine, Bishop, very fine. We have already produced a good amount of hay. The grapes are looking magnificent, as are the grain and corn. So far the silkworms are also doing very fine.... It has already been twenty days since we sent Your Excellency a half cask of wine.... Soon we will also send you a little Asti Grignolino table wine. Perhaps it would be better for you to send us back the demijohns so we will not have to buy others.

A 25
FR.. J. B. CORTONA TO BISHOP J. MARELLO

Asti, December 11, 1893

J.M.J.

...The other day I was thinking that our Congregation must have at least the appearance of a tasty morsel since it whets so many people's appetite. At its birth the Michelerio Institute wanted to engulf it. When it moved to St. Clare's, it tempted first Fr. Bosso, then later the Doctrinarians, more recently Fr. Ponzan, and finally Fr. Ferrero who seems never to have taken his eye off of it and to have already made his plans for it.