

JAMES ALBERIONE

OPERA OMNIA

WOMAN ASSOCIATED WITH PRIESTLY ZEAL

JAMES ALBERIONE

WOMAN ASSOCIATED
WITH PRIESTLY ZEAL

For the clergy and for women



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© Society of St. Paul, General House, Rome, 2001
For private circulation

Seen and approved for printing
Rome, 26 November 2000
FR. PIETRO CAMPUS, Sup. Gen. SSP

*Thanks to Sr. Arsenia Estrada, sgbp, and Bro. Maurizio Tirapelle, ssp,
for their collaboration in this work.*

Abbreviation of the work: DA (Donna Associata)

Original title of the book:
La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale

Translation: *Andres R. Arboleda, Jr., ssp*

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PRESENTATION

1. Importance of the work

La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale [Woman associated with priestly zeal] (DA) is the second extensive book (after *Appunti di teologia pastorale*) written by the young priest Giacomo Alberione during the years 1912-1915, the time when the Pauline Family began to exist. The first edition of DA was printed in 1915 in Alba by the newly established *Scuola tipografica «Piccolo operaio»* (“Little Worker” Printing School). The last edition, in English, was in 1964, with Alberione still alive, after having been translated, adapted and updated after the suggestion of the same Founder, by the Daughters of St. Paul in Boston (USA).¹

Although in DA no mention is made either of the *Society of St. Paul*, or of the *Daughters of St. Paul*, or of the *Pious Disciples*, or of the *Pastorelle* and much less of the *Apostoline*, an impression that remains in the reader, man or woman, of these pages is that they contain some *theory or prospect* that is at the base of the foundation project² of that *family* of which Fr. Alberione not only

¹ This version (*Woman, her influence and zeal*, St. Paul Editions, Boston, USA, 1964) also had the honor of being briefly reviewed by *International Survey* (1965), *The Priest* (August, 1965), *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, *Social Justice* and *Today's Family* – through the efforts of the then Provincial Superior Concetta Belleggia.

² On this matter, let the many testimonies that Fr. Alberione himself left be noted. All the congregations for women maintain in their documentation explicit references to our book, in relation with their specific mission. To the Pious Disciples: “Beginning that year 1908, I began praying and making others pray so that a religious family of withdrawn life, dedicated to Adoration and to the priestly and liturgical apostolate, may be born. It was then that I wrote the book *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*, wherein I expressed myself in a manner that was then possible...” (cf. *Alle Pie Discepole* [APD] 1946-1947, no. 22). In a course of Spiritual Exercises held in June 1947, still to the Pious Disciples, Fr. Alberione literally said: “In 1911 I began to write the book *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale* and I finished it in 1913 in order to shed light on the Pious Disciple as regards her vocation and on vocations” (APD 1946-1947 no. 504). Sr. Joseph Oberto, PD, has extracted numerous passages, at least six, wherein Fr. Alberione speaks explicitly of DA as addressed to the Pious Disciples (cf. APD 1957 no. 105; APD 1958 no. 214; APD 1963 nos. 320, 443; APD 1964 nos. 22-28). One among many references to the Pastorelle Sisters: “Hold on to the constitutions. Your mission is as if Mary’s mission, associated with

thought but was already bringing to reality (1914-1915). In *Ut perfectus sit homo Dei* (I, 376), which may be considered the Founder's spiritual testament, during the course of an Instruction of great importance for the Pauline Family, he locates the start of the branch for men with reference to the *Appunti di teologia pastorale* and as regards the branch for women, he affirms: "The Sisters in general represent the 'woman associated with priestly zeal',³ also published before 1914,⁴ when the first aspirants were gathered and the first and small printing press was opened."

The reading of *DA* together with *Appunti di teologia pastorale* could then contribute to a rediscovery of a *Pauline Family* charism or at least of that association or collaboration, held necessary of woman with the priest, as the title of the book itself suggests. *DA* seems a *foundational* and at the same time *charismatic* work. Certainly, it is a reference text, although for many years it has gone out of circulation, in spite of the fact that it is the only book of Alberione – after *The Manual of Prayers of the Pauline Family* and *Maggiorino*⁵ – that has had at least nine editions.

2. *DA* has a history

In *Abundantes divitiae gratiae suae*,⁶ the testimony of Alberione himself is reported, that "he had, already in 1911, started drafting" *DA*.

that of Jesus in saving souls. For you I wrote the book: *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*" (*Prediche alle Suore Pastorelle* 1950, vol. V, p. 88). In the same manner, speaking to the Apostoline, he said (7 August 1961): "And, hence, the mission: go, preach, teach... Which means: *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*, a book addressed to all the sisters of the Pauline Family; the foundation is there. And it was written precisely even before the first house was opened..."

³ See note 6.

⁴ When Fr. Alberione indicates as date of composition of *DA* a year preceding 1915, he probably refers to the work of gathering the material and the preparation of the book.

⁵ T. ALBERIONE, *Maggiorino Vigolungo. Aspirante all'Apostolato Buona Stampa*. Alba, Scuola Tipografica editrice, 1919. The book has had many editions and reprints, at least, 11, and translations in different languages.

⁶ In no. 109, speaking of the preparations for the founding of the Pauline Family, he affirms: "[As] for the Sisters, he had, already in 1911, started drafting the book, *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale*".

In an unpublished introduction prepared in view of the publication of the ninth edition, Sr. Cecilia Calabresi of the Daughters of St. Paul gathers other bits of information.⁷

On a calendar page kept at the *Fondo San Paolo* at the General House of the Society of St. Paul, with a date (handwritten by someone else) *R[oma] 1-VIII-1966*, Alberione noted:

“The poor book [DA] was written in 1912 and reflected its own time. At the same time, however, it shed some light on what was to come.

I did not follow up the succeeding editions; many things have been retouched; partly useful and partly less useful.

Take into consideration the present times and the Vatican Council II... SAC. G. A.”⁸

These indications of the Founder already lead to a “historically contextualized” reading of his work. That is, it has to be placed, in its context along the wave of that continuing *aggiornamento* or updating which Fr. Alberione himself showed to have appreciated.⁹

⁷ On 5 June 1961, speaking to the Daughters of St. Paul gathered in Spiritual Exercises in Ariccia, Fr. Alberione said: “Before establishing the Congregation, I had prepared *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale* precisely for you. And he repeated the same thought (recorded, as before, on magnetic tape) during a meditation made in Rome on 13 February 1964: He said, “Before you were born, the book *La donna associata allo zelo sacerdotale* was written”. At another time, he confided that he thought of it in 1909 and then wrote it in 1912.

⁸ This annotation is found also in *Carissimi in San Paolo*, on p. 1284, where it is followed by the explanation: “The principles are always from the Scriptures and from Tradition; instead, the application to the current times must be done wisely, according to the time, place, social conditions.” (MM).

⁹ In confirmation to this, read the *Avvertenza (Notice)* that the Author placed at the end of the book in its 2nd edition: “This book was written when the Catholic action of women did not yet have the marvelous progress that are known to all in Italy. Hence, the author did not take it into consideration; the Readers are asked to refer themselves to the Italian environment of 1914”. – An integration was then expected. This would be done in 1928, with the 5th edition, as it would appear in this other note that came before the Appendix:

“An appendix is considered useful to come with this fifth edition: ‘Le organizzazioni femminili dell’Azione Cattolica Italiana’.

Considering the most consoling development that these organizations are assuming, under the invitation and the sweet but strong insistence of the Holy Father, Pius XI, a reference to them seemed necessary. Many women readers in fact are also leaders and active members of the Women’s Catholic Action.

The appendix has been drawn, with the gentle concession of the Author, from the book: ‘Prontuario dell’Azione Cattolica Italiana’ of the most zealous

Being a book bound to the thought and the work of a Founder, *DA* deserves a reading and deepening, also technical, especially by the Pauline Family.

Certainly, *DA* does not deserve a reading of the literal type, perhaps with the preoccupation of keeping oneself repetitively faithful, and as a whole immobile, to the Founder's charism, something which would perhaps not be an authentic approach either.

In Italy, as was mentioned, *DA* had nine editions¹⁰ but until 1937, the text remained almost unchanged.

In the eighth edition instead – according to Fr. Damino – through the work of one or two Daughters of St. Paul assigned by Fr. Alberione, corrections, additions and cancellations were introduced; more, at the start of the 29 chapters a verse of the Scriptures was added and, to close, there is an added feature, *In margine alla storia*, with a biographical example.

The preparation of the ninth edition (in 1954) was entrusted by Fr. Alberione to Sr. Cecilia Calabresi.¹¹ This is the edition that is

and very competent Fr. Marotta O.D.I. Along with that of my women readers, my most sincere gratitude to him.

Feast of the conversion of St. Paul, 1928. THE AUTHOR.” (MM).

¹⁰ Aside from the 1st edition of 1915: the 2nd in 1925; the 3rd and the 4th are only reprints; the 5th in 1928; the 6th in 1932; the 7th in 1937; the 8th, still always in Alba, in 1940; the 9th, instead, in Albano, in 1954. – The 5th edition has the same cover as the 2nd, with the same thick paper, advertisements, type-faces and price of L. 5. Considering that the reprints are not editions, the 5th edition would pass for the 3rd and not the 5th. Hence, *DA* should have had 7 editions and not 9! Two reprints (or even more) between the 2nd and the 5th edition. – From researches it shows further that copies numbered from 25,000 to 30,000, including the first large outputs. (MM).

¹¹ Sr. Cecilia Calabresi writes: “Precisely in 1953-1954, Fr. Alberione entrusted to the undersigned the task of revising the book. On 10 March 1953, Fr. Alberione wrote me: ‘Revise, take away, add as you think: for as long as it does the greatest good!’ The following 17 October, he was insisting: ‘The Holy Father Pius XII, in his last speeches, tends to give ever greater importance to women’s work in various areas. It is good to bear them in mind for the next edition of the book *La donna...*’ On 15/4/54, after having received the revised book, Fr. Alberione hastened to thank before even having paid much attention to the work: ‘I thank you very much for the work on the book! It is a delicate and practical work!’ Two months later, he confirmed: ‘I am very grateful for all the work... The revision of the book is very good (7/6/54). Following a more attentive review, done in about a month’s time, he wrote: ‘I am very happy for the intelligent revision. Deo gratias. Some little additions (Pius XII) would be needed here and there regarding the clergy (in the first or

most reworked, considering that, at the request of the same Fr. Alberione – many passages on women, extracted from the writings and speeches of Pius XI, and especially Pius XII, were introduced therein.

The *Center of Pauline Spirituality*, presents anew the first edition of which authenticity and authority are unquestionable.

3. History in *DA*

DA reflects its “own time” – as Fr. Alberione wrote – that is, the period from 1912-1915 and thereabouts: a time that sets the environment and necessarily also the date of the work.

Alberione mentions, as “current” during those years, *a Jacobine, revolutionary, socialist activity* [*DA* 36]; *socialism as popular Freemasonry*, [*DA* 33]; *Freemasonry* [cf. *DA* 31], etc.

Terms like *collectivism, positivism, socialism, feminism, anticlericalism, laicism, arrogance of the press, women’s vote, labor union, circles, association, credit, emigration* point only to some of the important social phenomena of those times, well known to the Author. In fact, aside from taking note of them, he was fighting against many of these.

When Fr. Alberione wrote *DA*, he was not yet 28 years old. It is perhaps also for this reason, his youthful age, that he conceived his own writings as a weapon, while accepting the counter-positioning of the *good press* against *bad press*.

Soon, however, his ideas would become initiatives, although the context within which he moved remained to be that of an ongoing laceration between the Church and the State. Naturally, Fr. Alberione stands with the Church and, as a whole, against the secularist State.

Nonetheless, this religious militancy of his, that transpires in *DA*, did not lead him away from a personal commitment as regards social issues. On the other hand, it led him also to the area of politics.

the last part) that you could introduce. As soon as these additions are made, the book would be printed by the novices of Albano’ (12/7/54). – Having received the book and the additions, Fr. Alberione passed it on to the printing press and dated the text on 22/11/1954, feast of St. Cecilia.”

For example, he would join Catholic associations along the path of the dissolved *Opera dei Congressi*.

Dialogue between Church and State, as well as between progressives and conservatives in the same Catholic world, was scarcely practiced and also Fr. Alberione showed himself scarcely convinced of its need and effectiveness. It was the time when loyalty to one's side, or to the hierarchy, was the priority virtue.

It was the time of the anti-modernist struggle. In *DA*, nonetheless, there is no trace of *modernism* or *modernist*. This would seem strange, considering the notoriety that the movement had also among the clergy of Piedmont.

Evidently, Fr. Alberione tried to keep his distance by following his own path, for example, by drawing from *modernism* what was *modern* or *new* that, being safe, could be welcomed by all.

“This is something new: some *modern* means used for an ancient purpose: to save souls.

The enemies has taken recourse to *new* weapons; we cannot or should not fight the cannons of Krupp by using the cannons conceived by Napoleon I” [*DA* 39].

Fr. Alberione declared himself explicitly open to renewal. Along the way of the same great feminist movement, Catholic and Freemason, of those years, he would point out a new and at the same time natural mediation that could be taken up by the clergy to fight the ill, and it is precisely the *man-woman* cooperation.

At the eve of the great war (1915-1918), in 1914, Pius X, whose pontificate significantly marked the young Fr. Alberione, died. Benedict XV (Giacomo Della Chiesa) would succeed Pius X.

In the same year, 1914, Fr. Alberione, at 30 years old, started the *Pious Society of St. Paul*. A year later, coinciding with the publication of the second edition of the *Appunti di teologia pastorale* (*Notes in Pastoral Theology*), he started the foundation of the future *Pious Society Daughters of St. Paul* (15 June 1915).

Italy joined the great world war when *DA* was already in print, too late for the echoes of this conflict to get into this work.

4. The contents of the book

Also a fast synthesis of the many topics proposed to us by *DA* should bring to light at least the following affirmations:

- the *man-woman* relationship is not achieved only in marriage inasmuch as it can be and should be achieved also in an apostolic *association* between women and priests;
- pastoral ought to be renewed by adopting the collaboration of *woman*, as the first and most important *means* for achieving the salvation of man;
- the care of souls must be renewed by assuming *modernity*, understood as the combination of new and effective means in pastoral activity, like the press, to arrive at the whole of *today's* society, which is ever more and with hostility detaching itself from the Church.

In this direction, at least the following affirmations could be considered emblematic:

“He who reduces his priestly life to mass and breviary: or else he who writes over his own flag and takes as his motto only these words: *I-God*, he would not be a priest: it is better for him to enter the cloister” [DA 16].

“Let one have as his motto: *I-God-Souls-People*” [DA 17].

“The priest without women would lose three fourths of his influence in society; women without him would lose all. Just as between God and man stands the priest, so between the priest and man stands the woman, the adjoining ring” [DA 66].

“If today there are new forms of immorality, it is because the spirit of evil takes seriously all the portents of civilization, especially today's spirit of association, by organizing evil. Less important complaint: we notice instead that we must, for the sake of goodness, make use of all the modern progresses, particularly of association” [DA 171-172].

“A most zealous priest was telling me: ‘We need to expand according to the needs of today the goals of the old associations.’ It is true: no one ought to ever doubt this truth: choose the means most convenient to the goal to reach. Today, it would be ridiculous to obstinately cling on to primitive systems of navigation, of the press, of military tactics, etc. Religion, the dogmas, Christian morality are unchangeable in their substance but the manner of knowing and applying them progresses. The Catholic Church is indelectible and the word of the Gospel would not let even the tip fall:

but the Church and the Gospel possess as well the marvelous ease of adapting themselves to the times and to peoples” [DA 318-319].

Fr. Alberione intended to renew the means and forms of the pastoral ministry in order to better respond to the needs of his times. Also he knew well, however, that what was new yesterday is old today.

To be renewed had been his challenge and the same is true for the heirs of this text: to take from it what is perennial, find the means and the forms of actualizing it today. It is still worth believing, like Fr. Alberione, that today every pastoral or apostolic initiative that is conceived and brought to reality as exclusively masculine, at the exclusion and in competition with woman (or only woman, or in competition with man) would be destined to fail.

At the background of the *DA* there remains a proposal of synodality or “cooperation,” “association” or alliance by the Founder so that his *Family* may become a unitary subject, either as regards the formation of its members or of the Pauline mission which, centered on communication, has to be accomplished in a Church and in a world called to be transfigured together into a single family of God.

Thus, although that “old,” a work like the *DA* would find newer fulfillment in its charismatic value. What lasts, at least as for a tree, aren’t the the roots? And at least as relevant as the “house” are not perhaps its foundations?

Rome, 26 November 2000.

ANGELO COLACRAI

NOTICES

1. The text of this present edition reproduces faithfully that of the first (1915) which we consider the *typical edition*. No language variations have been applied, also where the terminology is strongly marked by time. – The correction of evident mistakes and the meaning of unusual words or expressions are always noted at the footnotes.
2. Purely formal and orthographic variations concern the punctuation (some introduced or eliminated marks where required for clarity or by syntax), some initials of words (capitalization is reduced to the minimum indispensable), or the abbreviations with periods (*S.* for *saint*; *D.* for *don*, and the like, so that they have been made as much as possible uniform).
3. Aimed at making understanding of the text easy and in order to distinguish the different topics within the chapter, subtitles, placed within square parenthesis, have been introduced. – Similarly, for reasons of uniformity, the titles of chapters and original subtitles, according to their respective order, have been made homologous by making them uniform as to types and graphic placements.
4. All the notes at the foot of the page are credited to the curator of this present edition, except those followed by MM (= Mercedes Mastrostefano, FSP).
5. The marginal numbers, in bold types, refer to the pages of the typical edition and, when these begin at the middle of a paragraph, it is accompanied by the symbol “|”. Such numbering ought to be adopted in all the textual quotations, and carried over in individual foreign editions. Only this remains to be the norm for all the books of the *Opera Omnia* of Fr. Alberione.

Teol. G. ALBERIONE

La donna associata
allo zelo sacerdotale

(Per il Clero e per la Donna)

ALBA — 1915
SCUOLA TIPOGRAFICA « PICCOLO OPERAIO »

Frontispiece of the original 1915 edition.

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Reviewed by the bishop's delegation: nihil obstat. *Alba, 18 August 1915.*

Can. CHIESA FRANCESCO
Delegated Reviewer.

Reviewed: Imprimatur. *Alba, 19 August 1915.*

Ab. MOLINO, Vicar General

TO MARY
WOMAN'S LOFTIEST IDEAL
ARDENT WITH ZEAL
AND
COUNSELOR OF APOSTOLIC ZEAL

1. – *These words of Msgr. Mermillod¹ addressed to women and young ladies had a singular impression on me: “You have a mission to accomplish in the world: a family to lead, society to build, the Church to serve and to console. You have to be apostles.”² Meditating on them, I deeply felt the truth: and I tried to pour some of my persuasion in these pages in order to communicate it to the priest and to women.*

2. – *Two thoughts are dominant in the entire book. God created woman in order not only to be of material help³ but especially of moral help to man. It is a help that she alone can render on condition that she is sincerely religious, virtuous in practice. Under this aspect everyone sees that woman comes to cooperate with the priest in his noble mission. From here follows, a duty, so obvious, as much as serious on the part of the clergy: to form woman to a high level of virtue, to an ardent zeal, in conformity with today’s needs: to lead her in an enlightened, prudent, constant work, for the moral-religious welfare of the family and of society.*

3. – *In order to be more clear, I had to distribute the material into three parts:*

A) *Woman can and must be of moral and religious help to man. This comports that woman places herself alongside the priest’s mission in order to cooperate in it according to the times, the circumstances, her gender. Frassinetti⁴ says: “This time, single ladies are called by Providence to a quasi-priesthood, to a true apostolate...”*

10

¹ Mermillod Gaspard, Swiss cardinal, was born in Carouge, in the diocese of Geneva on 22 September 1824, and died in Rome on 23 February 1892. He had sensed the importance of social issues and advanced with words and with writings that they have to be resolved with the help of religion.

² In *DA* we have *apostoli (masc) (apostles)* instead of *apostole (fem)*.

³ Alberione often speaks on the concept of woman as help to man: cf. *DA* 9-10; 24; 32; 40; 45; 47; 61; 64; 68; 97; 98; 118; 160; 192; 194; 198; 289; 339, where he expresses the usual manner of thinking in his environment.

⁴ Cf. also *DA* 70; 91; 110; 184; 187; 216; 225; 228; 287; 323. This priest from Genoa has influenced Fr. Alberione in delineating the kind of pastoral and spirituality of a parish priest. Born in Genoa on 15 December 1894 and died there on 2 January 1868, Giuseppe Frassinetti was the elder brother of blessed

B) *Woman's area of work. Here I made a draft of the multiplicity of the activities that await the delicate and fruitful zeal of woman: at home and outside the home, in private and in public, as a free woman (that is, not in organization) and as woman in organization.*

C) *Lastly, I spoke about the task that belongs to the clergy: to train woman for the whole of her mission, prudently guiding her, thereby making an apostle of her.*

It presses on me, however, to say: I do not do other than propose an outline of a great study that has to be done better by others and I pray the Lord that he raises soon one who does it. To gain much of it is God's glory and of souls!

11 4. – *While writing I had as aim what is useful, hence I flew over what is already known and practiced, while I stopped more at length on what is important that we know today; I did not believe removing some | repetitions because, it seemed to me, they would pour out better my thought; I did not study much the style and language: I referred to many works to confront, especially at the last part. I am profoundly persuaded of the zealously that animates our clergy: they shall know how to see deep through its uncultured form in order to find in it the practical means thereby benefiting souls.*

5. – *I entrust this book to Jesus master and model of priests: to Mary most holy, the loftiest ideal of the mission of woman and counselor of apostolic zeal: to the Guardian Angels of the venerable readers and mine: to the goodness and benign sympathy of my Confreres, from whom I shall receive with all the liveliest gratitude whatever observation.*

Alba, (Feast of Mary Immaculate) 1914.

The AUTHOR

Paola Frassinetti (Genova, 3 March 1809 - Roma, 11 June 1882), foundress of the Sisters of St. Dorothy. Ordained priest in 1827 and designated prior-parish priest of Santa Sabina in Genoa in 1839, Giuseppe founded the "Pia unione dei Figli di Santa Maria Immacolata" (Pious Union of the Sons of Holy Mary Immaculate (not the Sons of Mary Immaculate started instead in Brescia in 1849 by Lodovico Pavoni). He published no less than a hundred books, often addressed to persons who could not be parts of real religious congregations while desiring to undertake an apostolate. To these he suggested that they dedicated themselves to the apostolate in the parish, in association with the parish priest.

FIRST PART

WOMAN
CAN AND MUST MAKE HERSELF
COOPERATOR
OF PRIESTLY ZEAL

PREAMBLE

Without zeal, no one can ever think of a true priest: and most ardent zeal for the salvation of souls.

Zeal would not be effective if all the means are not applied. Among these, there is¹ one most strong: women. In fact today, a movement of markedly good feminism is taking place in the Church. It is ever more expanding and intensifying. It is the mission of women that is being placed at the service of the Church. It is a work required by the nature of woman, a work that is repeated in every historical movement, a work that is most convenient also at the present times.

This is what we wish to take up in this first part.

¹ Variations in the Italian original: *Ve ne ha* (also elsewhere *vi ha*) stands for *ve ne è* (*vi è*).

THE PRIEST'S MISSION

What is the priest's mission on earth? – To save himself? Too little. – To become a saint? Still too little. – What then? To save himself, *but by saving others*. “We want to remind the priest,” so Pius X¹ says in his *Exhortation for the clergy* in 1908, “that it is not allowed of him to only attend to his own sanctification: he is the worker that Jesus Christ led to work in his vineyard. It is his serious duty to uproot the weeds, to sow the good seeds, to watch over so that the enemy may not come to sow weeds... Priests, therefore, should beware of a life of individual sanctification, thus forgetting the pulpit, the confessional, the sick, the children, the afflicted, the sinners: let him move on like Jesus, by doing good to all and delivering the oppressed from the demon.” – The priest is *man for others*. – Thus the Founder of the priesthood, Jesus Christ, has wanted it: in fact, just as He had established the sacrament of Marriage for the generation of the body according to nature, so did he institute the sacrament of Holy Order for generation according to grace. | *Per evangelium ego vos genui* (St. Paul).² And Jesus did not want to spare any doubt on this most lofty goal of the priesthood and he told the Apostles: *Faciam vos fieri pisces hominum*;³ and even more clearly yet: *Posui vos ut eatis et fructum afferatis, et fructus vester maneat*.⁴

15

A formidable responsibility weighs on the priest: inasmuch as just as a head of the family shall answer for his children, the teacher for his students, the priest must answer for the souls that he could save. Thereby St. Paul, almost terrified by the thought

¹ Cf. also *DA* 14; 30; 34; 79; 108; 110; 166; 168; 178; 180; 192; 223; 286; 335. During the papacy of Pius X, Fr. Alberione finished his formation for the priesthood and published his first writings.

² Cf. 1Cor 4:15: “I became your father in Christ Jesus.”

³ Cf. Mt 4:19 and Mk 1:17: “I will make you fishers of men.”

⁴ Cf. Jn 15:16: “I... appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain.”

of such weight, exclaimed: *Vae autem mihi si non evangelizavero!*⁵ On the other hand, he encouraged the good ministers of the Lord at work with the hope of a most special recompense prepared for them: *Qui bene praesunt presbyteri duplici honore digni habentur:*⁶ and the two honors are: *Centuplum accipietis et vitam aeternam possidebitis:*⁷ the hundredfold of consolation in the accomplishment of this most sweet duty in the present life and a special glory in heaven.

The priest, therefore, is not simply a LEARNED MAN: neither is he simply a SAINT: he is a LEARNED MAN-SAINT who avails with learning and holiness in being apostle, savior of souls. – Otherwise, he would be out of his mission and hence would he be betraying his own vocation:

16 1. he who should want to make, as his *principal or almost exclusive* occupation, music, literature, | art, politics, medicine, concern over material interests, etc. It is well understood that exception stands in those cases when there is the need for these things due to particular positions, for example, that of a professor, or of a seminary treasurer, etc. Here, the priest is not involved with material things, with literature, etc., as such, but as means for directly or indirectly saving souls. Neither should the priest-teacher consider as his mission and primary purpose that of conducting his classes well, or teaching how to read, write, arithmetic: these, in his hands, shall not be but a means for reaching the souls of children and to make them Christians, practicing Christians...

2. he who reduces his priestly life to the Mass and the breviary: or else he who would write on his own flag and take as his motto these words alone: *I-God*, he would not be a priest: it is fitting for him to retire in a cloister wherein he could sanctify himself and perhaps through his prayers sanctify others: he however does not live the life of a secular priest. It is not enough for this to pray, to mortify himself, to live a with-

⁵ Cf. 1Cor 9:16: "... woe to me if I do not preach it" (the gospel).

⁶ Cf. 1Tm 5:17: "Presbyters who preside well deserve double honor."

⁷ Cf. Mt 19:29: "Will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life." For the hundred times more, cf. also Gn 26:12 and 1Chr 21:3.

drawn life, to avoid sin as an individual: from him the Lord has the right to demand for souls, from him, society expect THE PRIEST'S WORK. Jesus Christ told him clearly: *Euntes docete...*⁸ and the Pope: *To the priest, individual holiness is not enough, he has | to work in the Lord's vineyard.* Let him have, therefore, the motto: *I-God-Souls-People.*

17

What is the care for souls? – “It is the action of Jesus Christ and of the Church, exercised by the priesthood, for the salvation of souls.” It is the same ministry that one day the Son of God, made man, exercised in order to give the spiritual life to souls: *Veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.*⁹ And now this occupation of Jesus Christ was left as an inheritance to us, his ministers: *Sicut misit me Pater et ego mitto vos...*¹⁰ It aims at seeing to it that human thought, science, philosophy, etc., are Christian: it aims at turning Christian hearts, affections, the will, words, and all the works of man: it wants to raise and sanctify everything... Why? In order to lead each one to his place prepared in heaven: *Vado parare vobis locum.*¹¹ – Hence: pastoral action has this purpose – *to let Christianity live in people.* And Christianity, so it is today repeatedly heard by everyone in theory but is translated by few into practice,¹² *is a way of life.* It is not a composite of ceremonies, of external acts, of bows, etc...; Christianity is not a piece of clothing that one puts on during certain special solemnities as weddings, baptisms, funerals, as if to accomplish a role: it is a way of life. It takes man, integrates him, almost consecrates him. The priest cannot speak of himself as | satisfied when he shall have splendid ceremonies in church, hymns executed to the dot, a thousand devotions: he cannot say he is satisfied of the yearly communions, marriage done in church, of church funerals: he cannot say he is satisfied with certain

18

⁸ Cf. Mt 28:19: “Go therefore... teaching them...”

⁹ Cf. Jn 10:10: “I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly.”

¹⁰ Cf. Jn 20:21 (and Jn 5:30; 6:58): “As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

¹¹ Cf. Jn 14:2: “I am going to prepare a place for you.”

¹² Original Italian variation: *DA* has *patria* = *motherland*; instead of *pratica*.

parades, as are pilgrimages, processions, big contests as to attendance in conferences:¹³ he cannot say he is satisfied that a certain number of souls indulge in childish sentimentalism and very spiritual ideas:... no: these are *means*, even if they have always been so: but the *end* is just another matter. The end is to change thoughts from human to Christian. It is a must that man becomes Christian not only because he is baptized, that he greets the parish priest, or goes to mass sometimes: but he must be a Christian at home and in society. – Otherwise? One runs the risk of exchanging the means for the end: to render almost ridiculous a religion, which is so much more noble that uncreated Wisdom could teach us; to make of religion an externality that is sought at times due to circumstances, as one would call the band in some solemn feasts.

19 To whom must this care of souls be addressed? – There cannot be any doubt in the reply: to all those who are called to heaven, to all those to whom the apostles and their successors | were sent, that is, to all men. Here, there cannot be any distinction of class, of age, of conditions: *omnibus debitor sum*,¹⁴ with St. Paul every priest has this to say. – That the duty of going after the spiritual interests of all the souls without distinction lies on the shoulders of all priests in general, one can say that it lies on the shoulder of the parish priest in a most special manner. – That the priest has committed his strength, his intelligence, his time, his life for souls in general, one must say that the parish priest, also *ex justitia*, assumed this obligation. And he assumed it for the sake of all the souls that make up his specific parish. All these souls, without distinction, have the right to have in him a father, a friend, a teacher, a zealous pastor. All: not only the PUSILLUS GREX¹⁵ of pious souls, the al-

¹³ Aside from councils, general and special, and the properly so-called diocesan synod, public and official assemblies, the church ruling provided for other periodic meetings of the clergy, less public and solemn, for purposes of consultation and professional training, such as conferences on the forane or vicarial levels and the bishops conferences.

¹⁴ *I am indebted to all.* Cf. Rom 1:14: “To Greeks and non-Greeks alike, to the wise and the ignorant, I am under obligation.”

¹⁵ Cf. Lk 12:32: “Little flock”.

ready converted: but also of the working mass that sweats from morning till evening in work shops and in the fields, so often abandoned in the hands of subversives: but also of the educated class that is ordinarily held as naturally adverse to religion: but also the most hardened sinners, that ever so often the priest habitually places, I would say unmitigatedly, AMONG THE MASS OF THE DAMNED; but also the most miserable poor from whom he flees, while Jesus Christ would have sought them by preference: but also the businessmen, the government employees, the students, the so-called gentlemen, etc., all. | If a preference should ever be made, it should be that of Jesus Christ who leaves the ninety-nine sheep¹⁶ in order to look for the only one lost: it should be that of the doctor¹⁷ who attends above all to the most seriously ill: *Venit*¹⁸ *salvum facere quod perierat*. And this means that the parish priest, *coeteris paribus*¹⁹ should, by preference, dedicate his time, his efforts, his life to sinners, to the working class, to the indifferent.

20

What conclusions? – From all these, two conclusions seem to spontaneously come: *address the care of souls to men; in caring for women, seek to train them in true virtues.*

¹⁶ Cf. Mt 18:12,13 and Lk 15:4,7.

¹⁷ Cf. Mt 9:12 and Lk 5:31.

¹⁸ *DA* has *veni*. Cf. Lk 19:10: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.”

¹⁹ *Under equal conditions.*

THE CHRISTIAN WOMAN AND THE WOMAN APOSTLE

We now come to explain the two conclusions: from them we shall have the key, I would say, the summary of what will be said subsequently.

[To train in true virtues]

One conclusion is this: *in spiritually caring for women, aim at training them in true virtues.* – It is not the case here to investigate all the reasons with which priests prefer to attend to the care of women. A certain natural inclination, a certain spirit of ease, an extended habit of not welcoming anyone but those who come across, some rare time something I do not really know, very similar to a passion, etc...: nonetheless here are some causes, to justify or not, such a manner of doing. Not wanting however are those who entertain the illusion that they are doing enough and pacifies certain remorse of conscience by saying: After all, I am working! Watch out though: how are you working? How are the women you are taking care? – Are they Christians? – Surely through baptism and through a profession of piety. And yet Christianity is a way of life: the Christian woman has a withdrawn life, works for herself and for others: most prudent in her speech, modest in behavior and in appearance, | alien to what might suggest a danger; she is patient, charitable, humble. – Are these women so? If not, they are not truly Christian. – More: the Christian woman is a consoling angel of the family, she is a perfume that fills the home, she is the oil that is spread out to defuse or diminish or take away every form of conflict due to differences of character or real defects. A daughter shall be truly Christian if she is obedient, respectfully affectionate to her parents, caring towards her brothers and sisters. A wife shall truly be Christian if she surrounds with the truest affection and with most attentive

concern her husband, if she shall extend to him humble submission, if she reserves for him the most delicate faithfulness. A Christian mother lives for her children, whom she instructs with jealous concern in religious and moral principles, to whom she is a living example of virtue, whom she watches over continually. – Are the women like that, they who most frequently go to church and confession and listen to sermons? – Whatever might be the answer, it is certain that here the priest shall aim all his efforts if he does not want to transform piety into ridiculous pietism. From the confession and from the pulpit, in advice and in sermons, in exhortations and admonitions, in public and in private, wherever, he shall try to infuse Christian life on women. It is a life that is capable of making the weakest creatures into heroines of fortitude, the meekest creatures to heroines of patience, the most timid creatures to heroines of charity. In the history of Christianity, a great number of them are remembered and it is certain that a much greater number of them are unknown to the vulgar human look: God alone has taken an account of their merits and he shall make them known on the day of judgment. But it is as well certain that generally they had as guide virtuous priests who also generated virtues.

23

[Through woman to man]

The other conclusion is: *address the care of souls to men*, at least as much as women are cared for. Here, however, I do not intend to treat this topic precisely and directly: it is not my purpose for now, although it is of capital importance. However, anyone who wants to see it directly discussed, let him confront: *L'apostolat entre des hommes* by P. Contier (Gibier)¹ (Publisher: Charles Amat - Rue Cassette, 11 - Paris). Nonetheless, I

¹ Probably, Gibier Charles-Henri-Célestin, born in Artenay, France, on 25 December 1849 and died on 3 April 1931 in Versailles, where he was bishop. He published different series of *Conférences aux hommes* (16 volumes, Paris 1907-1911) touching on fundamental themes as God, Jesus Christ, the Church, the family and society. He is considered a precursor of Catholic Action (MM).

shall indirectly speak of the spiritual care of men: in this sense: *avail with women to reach men, involve women in this supreme task: to sanctify man (sanctificatus est vir infidelis per mulierem fidelem).*² And this for many reasons:

24 1. Today not only the *laudatores temporis anteacti*,³ but also the more modern lovers of today's life themselves exclaim: with regards to religion and Christian morals, the level has gone down so low! We sense it so close when we notice the feverish thirst for pleasure that pervades everyone, when we see so widespread a press that does not respect either faith or modesty, when we notice everywhere the immense number of discontented individuals, those who can't bear discipline, when we hear of so many vulgar errors, when we notice above all the intense and widespread work of the sects. It is a general ill that penetrates all the strata of society: they are symptoms that disquiet all the well-meaning individuals, that make one fear for the future. Most surely, we have the words of the infallible Master to assure us: *The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church.* It is not said, however, that they shall not prevail against this or that parish, this or that province, this or that country...; and especially it is not said that they shall not prevail against these or those souls: our daily experience and a long history tells us otherwise. There are evils and other things more serious that preannounce the thickening of black clouds in the horizon. But aside from many other reasons for hope we also have this: women are ours, women are Christian and these can be of strongest help. Fr. Ventura,⁵ after having described

² Cf. 1Cor 7:14: "For the unbelieving husband is made holy through his wife".

³ *Those who praise the times past.* Horace (*Ars poetica*, 173). It alludes to the habit of undermining the present in favor of the past.

⁴ Cf. Mt 16:18.

⁵ Gioacchino Ventura di Raulica, Theatine publicist, orator and philosopher, was born in Palermo on 8 December 1792. He was a student of the Jesuits but already in 1818, he joined the Theatines. A follower of the French Ultramontanists and of Lamennais in particular, he translated and diffused the latter's works in Italy. His funeral speech (held on 28-30 June 1847 for Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), an Irish politician (cf. *DA* 238) had great success. Fr. Ventura demonstrated that there cannot be real opposition between religion and freedom. Another speech, however, held for those fallen in the siege of

the present moment, said that the Church would have entrusted to Catholic women a mission of restoration, almost an apostolate; and Msgr. Pujia, archpriest of St. Severina, writes: "At present we witness a marvelous movement | of religious restoration, moral and social, that has arisen as an apostolate of the Catholic woman: an apostolate that after having developed within the walls of the home, has often gone beyond such boundaries." Therefore, avail with women in order to remedy so many ills⁶ and in order to sow so much good among men.

25

2. More: we know too well that our best conquest is not the woman: but man. Thus is the example of Jesus who, in the Gospel, addressed himself more to men: thus does the nature of our religion want it to be if it adjusts itself to all in its simplicity, in its sublimity, it is better understood by the intelligence of man: thus would the nature of the Christian family want it to be, where *vir caput est mulieris*⁷ and man ought to instruct and give example of religion to the other members: many other considerations want it that way... In practice, however, there is a certain number of priests who would not have the courage, perhaps even the aptitude, to dedicate themselves to serving men. There are priests who would excellently govern a company of Daughters of Mary,⁸ or the society of Chris-

Vienna (27 November 1848), wherein he hypothesized an alliance between the Church and democracy, was placed in the Index. Ventura saw in democracy the concrete putting into practice of natural principles, the heritage of all peoples and guaranteed by the Gospel. Even then, it seemed to him that revolution itself was "the blind and desperate effort of a Christian nation, but this was to place power back within the limits that Christianity has placed it" (Speech for the dead of Vienna, Rome 1848, p. 11). Someone defined Ventura as "the man of a single idea: the Christian idea; and the man of a single book: the Bible." Comforted by the blessing of Pius IX who remained friends with him also during an exile for the political mistakes he committed, Fr. Ventura died in Versailles, France, on 2 August 1861. Mentioning Fr. Ventura here, Fr. Alberione has in mind one book of his entitled, *La donna cattolica (The Catholic Woman)*, a continuation of *Donne del Vangelo (Women of the Gospel)*, in 3 volumes, published by Coeditors Turati of Milan and Dario Giuseppe Rossi of Genova, 1855.

⁶ Variation in the Italian *DA*, *mali = ills* was omitted.

⁷ Cf. Eph 5:23: "For the husband is head of his wife." and 1Cor 11:3.

⁸ Cf. also *DA* 25; 27; 170; 180f; 198; 201; 235; 255; 307; 309; 318; 333. Alberione refers to a manual of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. (cf. *DA*

26 tian mothers, but would experience an almost insuperable repugnance for taking care of men. More: there are others whose ministry is exercised in the confessional, almost singularly, and in the confessional most are | women. These priests, real hidden benefactors of humanity, directing women in firmly Christian lives and in an apostolate of prayer, of example, of action, shall not fail to let salvation reach so many men. Then, whatever would the priest's action be, it shall still be most true that woman is by nature more inclined to piety and that she shall always find comfort in her own weakness before the priest. The priest then shall have many occasions of exercising his salutary influence on her and avail with her for the welfare of so many souls who would not be going to him.

3. Neither is wanting another reason drawn from an opposite consideration. A woman, if she is not good, will be bad: and a bad woman is an extraordinary power in the devil's hands; she is a center of corruption, and an infecting germ. She shall destroy even the patient and daily work of the most zealous priest.

If we do not model women after the Most Holy Virgin, through whom life came, we shall have women modelled after Eve, through whom came man's destruction; if we do not make of them Helens⁹ we shall have Eudossias,¹⁰ Elizabeths of England¹¹

181 and 111) and he mentions the Pious Union of the Daughters of Holy Mary Immaculate (cf. *DA* 184f), of which he mentions some rules copied from a booklet by Giuseppe Frassinetti (cf. *DA* 186-187), founder of the "Pia unione dei Figli di Santa Maria Immacolata" (Pious Union of the Sons of Holy Mary Immaculate).

⁹ Saint Helen (267-328), King Constantine's mother, dedicated to the service of the poor and the care of churches of the new and pilgrim Christianity at the Holy Land.

¹⁰ There are at least two Eudossias: the first is the Empress of Byzantium, wife (from 27 April 395) of Arcadius and mother of Teodosius II. She was detested for her unbridled luxury and her hostility to the bishop, St. John Chrysostom. Instead, Eudossia Lucinia, daughter of Teodosius II, designated "august" in Ravenna in 439, moved on to Rome in the same year and founded there the Church of St. Peter in Chains.

¹¹ Elisabeth I (Greenwich 1533 - Richmond 1603), was the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn (see note 18). She became queen at 25 years old, in 1558. In her 45 years rule, she changed the face of England.

Catherines of Russia:¹² if we do not make of them Matildes of Canossa,¹³ Catherines of Siena,¹⁴ we shall have | Marozias, Teodoras.¹⁵ If women do not inspire modesty, they shall be forward in fashion; if the educated woman does not give us clean reading, she shall give us pagan and pornographic productions;¹⁶ if woman does not spend her time in good, she shall lean on to wantonness and to evil activities: if she is not zealous, she shall become scrupulous and petty.

27

¹² Both Catherine I (1682/1683-1727) and Catherine II (Stettine 1729 – Petersburg 1796) were known for their adventurous and unbridled lives.

¹³ This countess had given refuge to Pope Gregory VII, the pope of the “Gregorian reformation” in her ancient castle of Canossa, in the province of Reggio Emilia. Pope Gregory VII was persecuted by King Henry IV of Germany for having proclaimed the superiority of the pope’s power over every earthly authority (*libertas Ecclesiae*), including that of the Emperor (MM).

¹⁴ Catherine was born in Siena 1347 and died in Rome on 29 April 1380. She united profound contemplation with an untiring activity. A messenger of peace in a society overwhelmed by a violent rivalry, she worked for the Pope’s return from Avignon, for the mending of the schism of the West, for the reform of the Roman curia, for the betterment of morals, for the assistance of the sick and the imprisoned. Her writings excel in wisdom, in fervor, in charity and the extraordinary quality of language. She is the patroness of Italy since 8 June 1939 and Doctor of the Church since 4 October 1970 (MM).

¹⁵ Teodora is the name of at least three Byzantine Empresses (the first [527-548] was the wife of Justinian; the second was the wife of Emperor Theophilus [829-842]; with the third [995-1056], the Macedonian dynasty was extinguished). Alberione, however, could be alluding to Teodora of Rome, a famous noble woman of the IX-X century, wife of the patrician and then the *magister militum* Teofilattus. – Marozia, her daughter, together with her powerful family, exercised great influence on the politics and on the papacy of the so-called “iron age of the papacy.”

¹⁶ For example, read about this general worry due to the spread of pornography as what the German newspaper *Allgemeine Zeitung* of Munchen, dated 23 June 1903, wrote: “It is quite painful to see how deeply and rapidly has the state of public decorum fallen during the last twenty years: books, images, cafe concerts, postcards, advertisements, humor newspapers, songs, in show windows and in the widespread and ornate reports of judicial debates, there is a widespread a kind of moral syphilis that horrifies; rottenness towers ever higher, and if it could, it would also thread underfoot heaven; no social class, no age is immune to it... Before this light all political contests should disappear! Catholic or protestant, Christian or atheist, radical or conservative, let each one think: the purity of domestic life, woman’s chastity, man’s faithfulness, youth’s integrity, the healthy of generations, all these are in danger!” (cf. *La Civiltà Cattolica* 2 [1909] 439-454).

If we shall not have Clotilde,¹⁷ the salvation of Clodovis, king of the Franks, and woman apostle of Gaul, we shall have Anne Boleyn,¹⁸ the destruction of Henry VIII¹⁹ and of England.

One who is familiar with the ways of the world has but to cast a glance far and wide and he shall see its disastrous truth. Just as in a parish, a well-organized group of Daughters of Mary would also keep within bounds the group of young men: similarly and even more, truly, young women²⁰ who are rotten and shameless are enough to lead to corruption also the better young men from among the group of St. Aloysius. It is then that we have women working for men, or we shall have them against us! And it is well known: when a woman loses faith and shame, worse yet, when a woman is prey of subversive parties, she becomes even more violent, more anti-clerical, a more passionate apostle of evil than man himself. Have a hold on women, therefore!

¹⁷ Daughter of Chilpericus, king of Burgundy, Clotilde (Lyon 475 - Tours 545) after the death of her parents, was educated in Christianity and towards the year 492 she became the bride of Clodovis, king of the Franks. On his conversion, she has had notable influence. (MM).

¹⁸ Anne (born in 1504?) was the daughter of Thomas Boleyn, belonging to a modest and new noble family. She was a damsel in France, at the court of Francis I. Having returned to England (1526) and received in court, she was noticed by Henry VIII and fell in love with her. This love became the immediate cause of the English schism. Henry VIII was already married to Catherine of Aragon (daughter of Ferdinand the Catholic), whose daughter, Mary, should have been the legitimate heir of the throne. Henry asked for the recognition of the annulment of his marriage, but Pope Clement VII turned him down. Henry rebelled and had Thomas Cramer, Archbishop of Canterbury, declare his marriage null. Then he married Anne Boleyn who then became queen (1533).

¹⁹ Variation in the Italian original *DA* the name is *Arrigo VIII*.

²⁰ Variation in the Italian *DA*: *figlie* – Piedmontese dialect for “ragazze” (girls) “giovani” (young women).

TWO KINDS OF FEMINISM

For various years, we have been witnessing a women's movement,¹ that seems to extend and further intensify its agitation. Its appearance had been surprisingly welcomed by many, with suspicion by all, with a smile of compassion by many: few are those that have taken it seriously, being careful to study [what] it might want, with what means, with what hope, with what interests it has for humankind. On its part, the clergy either believes it to be a negligible utopia, or a colossal ingenuity that is being organized, or an unreasonable demand. – So it is in general, not all, and the feminists were justifying these evaluations of serious people and of the clergy: their demands are so strange, their principles so unreasonable, their reasons are so light, and in great part the means set in motion are so indecorous!!! – But what happens in every historical event, even the most unfortunate, could not be wanting also here: amidst so much evil and exaggerations, however, is always hidden something good and some truth. Evil, however, appears ordinarily to be more impressive, | inasmuch as it floats in the social environment, evil is violent and more noisy: good instead is ordinarily at the bottom, is accomplished in silence, calmly and constantly. And that ridiculous and vain feminist movement, in general, shall not allow the public to notice another movement which, blessed by the pope, inspired by religion, nourished by charity, was advancing ever more, doing a lot of good everywhere. Two feminisms therefore:

29

¹Read what in those years *La Civiltà Cattolica* was writing, associating “feminism” and “decadence” and trying to distinguish good feminism from a corrupt and corrupting one: “According to a well-known saying: men make the laws and women the customs, no one ignores the capital influence that women exercise on public and private morality, and as a consequence the importance of their moral mission towards man, the family and society. It is proper therefore that the suitable purpose of a healthy feminism ought to be that of defending and promoting the morality of women, to facilitate her moralizing mission. Without this, whatever other rehabilitation or juridical, economic or political demand cannot but turn harmful to her and to others.”

one might be called socialist feminism,² revolutionary, anti-Christian, antireligious, immoral: the other instead is moral, is Christian, in a word, good.

[Socialist and Masonic feminism]

The main point of difference between these movements is religion: socialist, revolutionary, etc., feminism professes itself non-confessional and ends up being anti-Catholic; Christian feminism places at the base of all its understanding the sincere profession of the Catholic faith. – Dr. Bolo³ in the book *La donna e il clero* (*Women and the clergy*) gives proof to these four propositions that here we can only quote: “1. *All that is useful or essential a woman can demand has been done or at least drafted by the Catholic clergy*; 2. *The possibility of a feminism exists only through the Church*; 3. *Feminism, inasmuch as reasonable, has nothing new except its name*; 4. *The sufferings that today feminism would want to relieve women from depend on in the rejection, in theory, and more in fact, of the doctrines of the Gospel.*”

30 If the Gospel is set aside, women will turn into slaves again, instruments of pleasure, means of production and nothing more. The entire olden times is proof to it: it is enough to refer to Greece and pagan Rome where the cadavers had to be entrusted for embalming or burial only in advanced stage of decomposition due to the danger of immoral posthumous outrageous violation.⁴

Well was it recently written: *women, watch out for your executioners, for your worst enemies, hypocritical enemies, because clothed in sheepskin, poised as your defenders: they are the feminists who want to emancipate you in order to oppress you: who want to raise you up in order to throw you to*

² Enemy of the Church (cf. DA 33; 35; 157; 172; 269); regarding such feminism further cf. DA 40; 203; on social revolution, cf. DA 32.

³ Cf. BOLO E., *La donna e il clero*, translation by P. Carlo Negro B., Napoli, Rondinella e Loffredo, Librai-Editori, 1913. Alberione quotes or draws inspiration often from this book (even if he does not refer to this edition – cf. DA 230 – but to a preceding one, printed and distributed in Turin).

⁴ Cf. BOLO E., *op. cit.*, p. 144.

the garbage heap: watch out for chatty feminism: he who promises too much is either a megalomaniac, or a liar, or a traitor.

What then are its ideas? Pius X summarizes them in these words: “See how wrong are those who expect absolute equality for women, with all the rights and attributes of men. Can you imagine a woman amidst the noise, the excitements and the passions of public life: an emancipated, independent woman, placed at the same level of man in social life, on the stage, in the parliaments, who argues, legislates, imposes herself, conspires, rebels, stands on barricades?... This is not the mission of women; hence he errs who supports this ill-understood feminism | it would mean wanting to correct God’s work, just like that mechanic who pretends to correct and reshape the course of the stars...”

31

Besides, the purposes of this utopia-feminism were declared by the best of their representatives.

The General Congress was held in Paris in 1900, wherein the better women members as well as the better male members of the party of England, German, Austria, Russia, Italy, France, America, etc., participated in. Here is the doctrine manifested there:

“Christianity is the greatest historical disaster”; “we need to abolish the confessional and whatever Christian instruction”; “the daughter at home subjected to parents and the bride indissolubly bound to a man are miserable slaves, lay sisters, criminally made stupid: this morality, brought to heaven by religion in the person of the Virgin, a hypocritical, slow, assassination of every minute.” “Freemasonry, an enemy of superstitions and of error, is the natural adversary of the Church: let women enlist themselves in the loggia, assume its spirit, transmit it to the family: to exclude women from Freemasonry means to prolong the Church’s empire and the authority of priests.” And in order not to transcribe here all the vulgarity of the thoughts and of the language to which they have been carried away,⁵ I shall but say that they made vows for prostitution, for divorce,

⁵ Variation in the Italian *DA*: the original has *trascorso* instead of *trascorso*.

32 for free love, | for the right of adultery, for social revolution, for lay school,⁶ for the equality of woman to man in *all* employ-

⁶ Nine days after the fall of Rome, on 29 September 1870, a government ruling made the teaching of religion voluntary in the schools of the Kingdom of Italy. Religion would be taught only after the request of parents. In 1873 the theology faculties in all the universities of the Kingdom of Italy were suppressed (cf. FERRARI B., *La soppressione delle facoltà di teologia nelle università di Stato in Italia*, Morcelliana, Brescia 1968). In 1877, the office of the spiritual director in senior high schools, in high schools, in the technical schools was abolished, thus automatically taking away the teaching of religion in high school, which was, in the preceding law, entrusted to the spiritual director. In 1883 (regulation no. 1590 of 21 June) the teaching of religion was definitely suppressed in all the courses of schools for teachers, a maneuver to abolish it directly also in the elementary schools by taking away the qualification from teachers. These were all dispositions that went against the Casati law of 1859 that was still valid and was respectful of freedom. In order to excuse the contradiction of such a decree against that law, it was said that the times had changed, that the new spirit was that of the Constitution of 1848 (on which also the Casati law was founded); that in the school the non-dogmatic principle was introduced along with respect to the freedom of thought, etc. In 1877, the study of *I diritti e doveri dell'uomo e del cittadino* (*The rights and duties of man and of the citizen*) was imposed. These rights had to take the place of religious education. The *Gazzetta del Popolo* of Turin, in the issues of 11 and 14 November 1877, denounced the teaching of the catechism of the diocese as not saying any word on the duties towards the motherland, and instead was guilty of turning children stupid; to profess dogmas that are rejected by the civil world. It decidedly forgot that "the supreme, absolute, universal principle of constitutionalism is the sovereignty, the omnipotence, the cult of the popular majority, that makes and supports the law, the rights, power, all." Now in no other argument had the great majority of the Italian population manifested so clearly its will, as for the keeping of catechism in schools. In the survey of 1901, not more than 36,092 in Italy declared themselves without any religion; 138,818 above the age of 15 did not give any indication of their own religion; the others, more than 31 million, had replied as belonging to the Catholic religion. And in the more recent referendum of the parents of family on catechism in the schools, in Venice there were but 196 against, among 10,000 students of the elementary school; in Turin 31 among 26,000; in Genoa 208 among 18,000; in Florence 562 among 18,000. If one reflected afterwards that those against were largely Jews and "heterodoxies" and that those not against have expressly asked the keeping of the teaching of catechism, it was by force right to conclude, with Hon. Greppi at the meeting in Milan, "To go against such a plebiscite of the will of parents is to subvert the public right; if the majority has never to tyrannize the minority, to admit that tyranny might be exercised by the minority would be enormous and contrary to every political system" (cf. "La guerra al catechismo" in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 4 [1907] 644f). Already many years before, in Piedmont, Msgr. Gastaldi had reacted vigorously by writing on Christian education and supporting the

ments and offices, etc... As one could see there is but one Masonic thought: and today, one can notice it in magazines and pamphlets. Freemasonry aims at putting women under its yoke.

The Freemason Levillon,⁷ during the international congress held in Paris in 1900, said: "It truly is not such a good thing that as a new generation comes, we have always to restart the same work: it is not convenient that we remake Penelope's woven cloth, always worked on and always unwoven... but we cannot arrive at so much without the help of women." Nathan⁸ expressed the same sentiment as well when, in 1898, he revealed in Turin the plan of action for the Italian Masons. "Vainly would we hope on the absolute effectiveness of our work, no matter how intense, when we do not know how to put in it the action of her who, by nature and aptitudes, is an educator by excellence... of that person who from cradle to tomb presides over the family, governs it, directs to it her talent." And he continues by saying that she must be removed from being religious, take her away *from the governors of her conscience*, who are the priests, to accept her in the order of Masons.

foundation of Catholic schools, while praising the parents of the 11,487 children who, in Turin (in 1877) were asking for the teaching of religion in the state schools, as against only 397 that did not want it (cf. *Chiesa e Società nella II metà del XIX secolo in Piemonte*, edited by Filippo Natale Appendino, Istituto regionale piemontese di pastorale, Edizioni Pietro Marietti 1982, p. 339). "The lay school," so *La Civiltà Cattolica* 4 [1907] 405 wrote, "is specifically a masonic dogma and is an essential part of that broad program of de-Christianization of Italy that Leo XIII summarized in a marvelous synthesis in the Encyclical of 15 October 1890 to the Italian people, while basing himself on the vows and the resolutions taken by the Masonic sectarians in their most authoritative assemblies." Here, Fr. Alberione shows how he was especially attentive to the school problem.

⁷ One of the many French journalists sympathizing with Freemasonry (MM).

⁸ Ernest Nathan, politician (London, 5 October 1845 - Rome, 9 April 1921), was the son of Sara Nathan Levi, a Jew of Pesaro, friend and collaborator of Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872) known during his exile in London. He actively participated in the administration of Rome and from 1907 to 1913 he was the city's mayor, the head of a lay and democratic coalition. As mayor, he encouraged housing initiatives and attended to state schools. The municipality's taking over public services is credited to him. Nathan was also among the initiators of the Dante Alighieri Society, founded in 1889, with the aim of spreading the Italian language and culture abroad.

33 Let this be noted: Masonic cleverness! Inasmuch as women would abhor | the sect, in a meeting held in Rome lately, it was decided to let them join through treachery: by proposing to them *lay* or *neutral* beneficence, whose bottom lines, however, are secretly manipulated and regulated by Freemasonry! And so behold the *lay* institutions for the sick, for the poor, for children, for endangered girls, for wayward women. It is an ancient trick of the devil: to fake God's work in order to attract followers for himself! Did he not go so far as imitate, or better, ape the miracles? – And yet how many good women have already fallen into the shameful trap! Perhaps due to simple naiveté and ignorance!

And what is socialism doing, that which had been called, and not completely wrongly, popular Freemasonry?

The *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro*⁹ (The General Labor Confederation) compiled in 1912, through the Chamber of Labor, statistical data on the socialist organization for women in Italy. It showed that, in spite of the natural repugnance of women to being organized by subversives, socialism has already gone relatively far. Almost a hundred thousand appear in those socialist groups!! And work is ever fervent!

34 Such feminism does not need any rebuttal; besides, the rebuttal had already been given by the great majority of women, themselves, | who either remained indifferent to it or have stood against it.

[Christian feminism]

And truly, feminism did not have anything new but for its name: the errors themselves were so old, as old as women of the oldest profession.

It is not the noticeable name of feminism, but the substance of *good* feminism that is as ancient as Christianity itself and, even more, by many parts. In fact, it consists *in bringing to reality all the doctrines of our faith for the sake of the weakness and of the dignity of women.*

⁹ See below, DA 203, note 41.

And going to details, we can say that the program of good feminism, blessed and expounded by His Holiness Pope Pius X on 21 April 1909, has two parts: one negative and the other positive, as regards the negative part, this feminism is opposed to:

1. The removal, *systematic and as a matter of principle*, of the woman from the family environment in order to cast her into *all* the occupations: lady-lawyers, doctors, members of the parliament, policewomen, women soldiers, etc., etc.: women are essentially mothers and as such they must remain; mother of the body through generation and of the soul through education, there are creatures that are *especially* hers: mother of the body through charity and charitable deeds and mother of the soul through instruction, if she does not have creatures that are unquestionably hers.

2. the unmaking and destruction of the family, the cell of society: and hence, divorce, free love, every form of modern immorality, | dishonest entertainment, provocative body exposure, etc.

35

3. all that revolutionary and socialist feminist movement that today is being organized in all parts of the world. Neither can one believe that such a movement is only a wishful thinking: started in the United States of America, it has moved on to England, France, Germany, etc.: and in Italy it is introduced to us especially in the two national institutes that are the *Consiglio Nazionale delle donne italiane* [National Council of Italian Women] (a creation¹⁰ of an international federation of women) and *l'Associazione per la donna* [Association for Women]. Neither can one doubt of their anti-religious spirit: the first, in fact, boasts of its being *non-political and non-confessional* (art. 11), but in practice it shows itself anti-Catholic. For example, in Rome, in 1908, it casts its vote against catechism¹¹ in the ele-

¹⁰ DA has *reazione* = *reaction*.

¹¹ Alberione refers often to the catechism, cf. DA 127; 169; 187, 189, 190-192; 221; 250; 255; 259; 275; 324-325. During the last thirty years of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th, a reflection on catechetical method was related to French Msgr. Dupanloup, bishop of Orléans, who in a written discourse sent to the congress of Piacenza by his biographer – Msgr. Lagrange, bishop of Chartres – he was called “the greatest catechist of his

mentary schools; then the second clearly shows itself in its Jacobine, revolutionary, socialist, etc., activity. And the number of women, organized in these institutes, has increased as a

century.” Msgr. Lagrange wrote, “His (Dupanloup’s) fundamental concept of catechism is this: it must not only instruct, but also and above all bring about religious education; thus it is not only teaching, a class of religion, but a ministry, an apostolate.” For Dupanloup, “the aim of catechism is Jesus Christ and his love” (cf. DUPANLOUP, *L’Œuvre par excellence: Entretiens sur le catéchisme*, translated into Italian in 1870). The catechetical revival raised by Vatican Council I had a strong moment in Italy in the National Catechetical Congress in Piacenza in 1889. About 400 priests, coming from all over Italy, participated in it while excluding lay persons although their cooperation was decisive in it. In his opening address to the congress, Card. Capecelatro sustained two basic theses: 1) the unification in Christ of the whole religious teaching; 2) catechesis must first of all teach the “Christian facts” and must follow their “historical purpose,” because “while it helps much to imprint well the events on memory, it gives unity, warmth, and life on the events themselves (cf. *Atti e Documenti [Acts and Documents]* of the First Eucharistic Congress held in Piacenza on 24, 25, 26, September 1889, Piacenza, Tedeschi, 1890, p. 59). In the Congress, there was this worry on the deterioration of teaching and of religious instruction among Italian Catholics. Msgr. Scalabrini pointed out from the start that “in better times, the science of theology was the science not only of the Church, but of all the schools, and how, in small degree, it was learned lovingly by the child at the parish priest’s class, as much as it was profoundly studied in senior high schools and in universities” (pp. 60-61). Now, however, catechism was “neglected, belittled, opposed,” excluded from the schools and least attended also in parishes. Msgr. Bonomelli – whom Fr. Alberione admired – in his talk sustained that “the teaching must not only be vocal, but also visual” (p. 228). On this matter, also the Swiss priest, Hippolyte Ducellier, of the Geneva diocese, sustained that “many constitutive elements of the Church are visible and they must be seen” and because of this “youth that escapes us” we must “find new methods of action” because “the oral method, through questions and answers, that is, the catechetical method, is no longer enough” (pp. 329-330). The Congress had had steps forward made as regards the catechism text and on the unification of catechisms. Certainly, it is due to its influence that the Bishopsrics of Lombardy and Piedmont (of whose members expressed their views on a single Catechism for the whole of Italy) would reach an agreement in 1896 to adopt the same Catechism, that of Msgr. Michele Casati (Bishop of Mondovi, 1765) which eventually was also welcomed in Liguria and in Emilia and, in 1903, in Tuscany. Pius X, in 1905, had taken this Catechism and, with slight retouches, adopted it for the dioceses of the ecclesiastical province of Rome. In 1912, what would be known to be Pius X’s Catechism would be drawn from a radical revision and shortening of this same text. (cf. *Chiesa e Società nella II metà del XIX secolo in Piemonte*, op. cit. [DA 32, note 6], p. 363). Fr. Alberione would prove himself especially aware of the problem of catechesis.

whole to about 16,000. Neither could it be said that socialism, in the part concerning women, has lost its prestige and by now no longer has any purpose except economic: inasmuch as, given but not granted, that socialism is dead in Italy, Freemasonry is not dead and will not die that easily. Now, Freemasonry as it was seen above, today tends to take for its own | women, in order to make of them instruments of struggle against the truths of faith, against faith, against the bishops, against religion. Today, against this false feminism rises good feminism.

36

And coming to the positive part of this last, we can say that it especially aims at these goals:

1. To seek that women achieved the maximum good at home. This is the first, the most obligatory, the most effective, the easiest work of women. As for me, I am persuaded of this: the enemies of religion and of priests take crazy delight and believe to have placed us in serious trouble when they tell us that we are *metaphysical* and they poke fun on St. Thomas¹² and the Scholastics: meanwhile, however, they fall into the pit that are dug for others. Not only are they *metaphysical* but they are truly real *planners* and manufacturers of utopias when they want women, *at all cost and always and systematically*, to get out of the home. But that would mean putting the foundation in place of the roof, the basement in place of the attic; it is to set aside the principle that the poet expresses with these words:

Se il mondo di laggiù ponesse mente
Al fondamento che natura pone
Seguendo lui, avria buona la gente.¹³

As God expresses himself in the Scripture, in accordance | with her aptitudes, the needs of daily life, the woman has, in the first place, her own family as her area of work. And whoever wants

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¹² Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) from Roccasecca, Frosinone, is recognized in the Roman Catholic Church as the greatest philosopher of the Middle Ages. His philosophy, which for centuries became the official doctrine of the Church ("Thomism"), attempts at putting together Christianity and Aristotelism.

¹³ Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, VIII, 142-144. (*Our translation*: Should the world down below consider / the foundation that nature sets / abiding by it, good its people shall be).

to give her, as her primary occupation, a job outside the home, shall have to violate her tastes, shall have to oppose God's providential designs, shall have to create very serious embarrassments to man and to society, shall have to produce displaced persons, unhappy ones, useless ones and, worse, rebels. Women are queens at home, if they know how to be so and, without having to pretend, they could dominate the hearts of their loved ones. – And it is from here that, when she wants it, she could succeed to have the greatest influence on society. Then, if there were also here some planner who dreamed of a State based no longer on families but above all on badly defined state collectivism extended also to individuals, nature and good sense agreeing together will always tell us that the family is the foundation of the State, the cell of the State, is indispensable to the State. That if the State is made up of families, it shall be what families are: that this, the better the families are, the better the State is and behold that gender which is called *weak*, remaining in its own place, becomes the hidden, but true giver of strength, prosperity, progress of the country. And so, just as in every special event the proverbial phrase, "*cherchez la femme*",¹⁴ is heard, so face to face with | the conditions of the people and of a State, one could say: observe how the women are. Well understood feminism therefore is that which tends: [a] to form daughters that are, in fact or almost by adoption, the little mothers in virtue towards their younger siblings: form spouses that are the soul friends of their husbands in order to make their souls similar to them in faith, in piety, in virtue: to train mothers that are like the mould wherein the soul of their children shall be formed.

It would be said: for this we need not a name and of a new program: it is what has always been preached. It has been said: the substance of good feminism is as old as our religion, which, by itself, possesses what is needed not only for guiding souls for heaven, but also for bringing peoples to that relative happiness possible in the present life. Centuries will not add other

¹⁴ "Look for the woman" is a sentence made by a Paris policeman in the drama (presented for the first time in 1864) *Les Mohicans de Paris* by Alexandre Dumas, father, (1803-1870), act three, setting five, scene seven.

things, neither will they change its essential and unchangeable principles. New, however, is this: today's women must shape today's men: they have to meet the needs of man today: they have to make use of the means today. And, just to make an example only, today's woman must be instructed in faith unlike the women of the centuries past. She has to foresee a bit the objections, the difficulties that the faith of her children would meet amidst the world: she cannot cast her children as defenseless lambs amidst rapacious wolves:¹⁵ she | has to arm them with complete as ever instruction. It is repeated till boredom, but not quite enough: young people go to church and also receive communion until twelve, or fourteen years old... then you see them no longer. This is a fact that can have many causes: not last of it are mothers who could not give them what they do not have: broader religious instruction, a character that is stronger face to face with the so many seductions of the world... This what is new: some modern means used for old purposes: of saving souls. The enemies are making use of new weapons, and we must and neither must we fight the cannons of Krupp¹⁶ by using the cannons conceived by Napoleon I.

39

Further below, we shall better see the meaning and the means for the principle: *today's woman must form today's man.*

2. The first and the most natural workplace of women is the home: second and almost as a complement is that outside the walls of the home. And here women can be of help in a very great number of women's work. She can help in the propagation of religion by joining associations: Ladies of St. Vincent, Ladies of mercy – parish catechism classes – religion classes – Marian associations – Pious union of Christian Mothers – Retreats for workers¹⁷ – Protection of young

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¹⁵ Cf. Lk 10:3.

¹⁶ DA has *Kroup*. Krupp is the surname of a German family that owned the biggest steel foundry and the manufacture of armaments in Europe.

¹⁷ They are the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, given for some successive days to persons gathered in houses meant for them; "a work that the French call *des retraites fermées* among which *des retraites fermées ouvrières*, the "retreats for workers". "In Chieri... for a long time it was thought and was begun finally the attempt to hold [retreats for workers] in 1907; then it was repeated anew in 1908 with better success. In a well equipped house,

40 women¹⁸ – Holy | Childhood – Propagation of the Faith – League for holiday rest – League against blasphemy, of the good press, etc.

They can help in social action: Guidance and mutual aid for women workers – Rehabilitation work – Protection of women abroad – League against duels – Inexpensive cooking – Family pensions – Endowments – Maternity funds – Social security – Shops – Labor union for women, etc.

A woman can improve her own level of culture as regards religion, social sciences, morals, hygiene, management of the home, etc. And all these she can have in home study, in cultural circles, in schools of sociology, in proper libraries.

As can be seen, the possibilities for women to work are many: and they would even grow immeasurably if one would want to remember the two areas of activities commonly assigned to nuns and to teachers: areas of work where women, according to Msgr. Bonomelli,¹⁹ can truly be of *help to the priesthood and to the Church in the vast work of salvation of souls*.

which from a hill raised over the field, looks over the nearby city, far from the hurry and the distractions of life, were gathered, for three days in silence, in meditation and in other religious practices proper to the Spiritual Exercises according to the method of St. Ignatius, at first some thirty, then some fifty and more workers. Something similar was done, this year itself, in Turin and in another small city, Avigliana, near Turin. And the outcome was such a success that for five courses of Exercises held at intervals, there were 210 workers who participated in them and, in spite of the rigorous obligation of silence, the mental work, unusual for such men, the regularity and the discipline, something very new to them, all, except four, have persevered in it till the end.” (cf. *La Civiltà Cattolica* 4 [1908] 61-69). In *DA*, Alberione mentions still these retreats for workers (cf. *DA* 197) that originated in France with Fr. Watrigant as a method for trying to make them be helped, and which soon reached Piedmont (cf. precisely *I ritiri operai in Chieri nel 1907 e 1908 - I ritiri operai in Torino nel 1908* [Opera degli Esercizi Operai], Torino, Tipografia Artigianelli 1908).

¹⁸ The foundress is Baroness Montenach, wife of a member of the Swiss Parliament.

¹⁹ Geremia Bonomelli, born on 22 September 1831 in Nigoline, Brescia, was ordained priest at the seminary of Brescia on 2 June 1855. He was then sent to the Gregorian University in Rome where he had as teachers Passaglia, Schrader, Patrizi. Two years later, a doctor in theology, he began teaching in the seminary of his diocese at first as professor of philosophy of religion and then of hermeneutics and of dogma, until, on 8 July 1866 he was promoted as

What remains to be answered yet is the question indicating more or less the work program of Christian feminism: what does it think of other matters, raised by socialist feminism, for example as regards political and administrative suffrage | for women? Christian feminism does not get directly involved in it, persuaded that the murky world of political passions is not the better place for women wherein to get involved. It is certain, however, that on the day that such right would be recognized, it would then be her duty, too, to avail with it; if only not to renounce a weapon that in the hands of sectarians would immediately be turned to a revolt against Christian principles.

41

Thus distinguished one feminism from another, there is no reason left for not fighting with all zeal against the first and for not promoting, on the other hand, the second. To fight against the first and to struggle against Freemasonry, that makes use of everything to damage the Church: and this is inarguably the duty of a priest; to support the second means to take advantage of an instrument for good and to support the spirit of the Church.

However, can women truly accomplish such a mission? Did they accomplish it in the past? Shall they have to accomplish it for the future? These are the three questions to which it behooves giving an answer in order to persuade also the skeptics.

parish priest of Lovere. On 26 November 1871, he was consecrated Bishop of Cremona (by then it had 222 parishes, 650 priests and 350,000 faithful). Bonomelli launched an energetic action for the reform of discipline and of studies. He opened free schools, supported youth and workers' circles; he encouraged the growth of religious communities and personally dedicated himself to an intense catechetical work, preaching up to eight times a day during his pastoral visits. A vast publishing activity extended the space and time of his more intimate vocation as catechist and apologist. He promoted the foundation of different newspapers in Cremona, among which are *Il messaggere* (1880-1894) and *Il cittadino* (1898-1905). In his whole life he kept a tight correspondence with the more prominent people of his time, both Italians and foreigners, in an exchange of ideas regarding the burning issues of his time.

WOMEN'S APOSTOLATE IN THE PAST

For reasons of brevity and clarity, I shall limit myself to pointing out a group of special facts: setting aside the collective ones, most numerous and no less convincing.

[Three biblical heroines]

The first group is that one offered us by the Sacred Scriptures in the Old Testament: it is impossible to read it and not feel the truth of these words: *The worthy woman is more precious than treasures brought in from the farthest ends of the world...*¹ And women were not yet raised to that dignity that brought her the law of perfection! In spite of this, not only in the home but also outside it that they exercised their mission: Esther, Deborah, Judith,² are the three classic examples around which thousands of others stand as crown. – Esther, not so much for her beauty, as much as her virtues did she please the king and was raised to the throne by Ahasuerus. Haman, the king's minister, cruel and an enemy of the Israelites, had obtained a decree for the extermination of the Israelites.

43 Esther, warned by Mordecai, ordered penance and prayer for everyone. Then, she presented herself before the king | and with her ways she won over his heart in such a way that he did not only free his people from a certain death but eventually sent Haman to the gallows.

The Israelites had sinned and God punished them by submitting them to the hands of Jabin, king of the Canaanites: and harsh was that oppression. But then, there lived a prophetess Deborah by name, to whom the Israelites came for counsel. She gave Barak the order of gathering 10,000 warriors, then she came to the battlefield and gave the orders to attack. The entire

¹ Cf. Prv 31:10.

² Cf. The books of Esther and of Judith. For Deborah, read Gn 35:8; Jgs 4-5; Tb 1:8.

army of the enemy, although so many and well-armed, was defeated: Sisera himself was killed by Jael,³ another Israelite woman: the people were freed.

At another time, it is Holofernes who lays Bethulia under siege. He cuts off the aqueducts, and threatens to exterminate all the inhabitants. These get scared and they insist upon Uzziah to surrender the city.

However, Judith, illustrious widow of Manasseh, comes forward and reprimands the little faith in God and she raises the hope of everyone. Having come near the enemy camp, she is captured by the guards and led to Holofernes: she wins over his heart, receives his graces. Then, during the night, while Holofernes slept away his drunkenness, she severs his head. The following day, Holofernes' army flees hurriedly. Betulia is freed and its people, welcoming Judith, sing: | *You are the glory of Jerusalem, the surpassing joy of Israel; you are the splendid boast of our people.*⁴

44

[With Jesus and the apostles]

At the beginning of Christianity, history tells us of a feminism that has nothing to envy that of the 20th century, although it has nothing advanced in it under many aspects. The Baby Jesus is presented at the temple. Beside Simeon, stands a woman who proclaims the expected Messiah: *“There was a prophetess, Anna... She never left the temple, but worshiped day and night with fasting and prayer. And coming forward at that very time, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.”*⁵ Much later, Jesus converts the Samaritan woman⁶ and this, transformed from a sinner to an apostle, invites her village people to Jesus who would eventually believe in him. Jesus moves from city to city, from palace to palace; and the pious women⁷ welcome him, serve him,

³ Cf. Jgs 4:18-23.

⁴ Cf. Jdt 15:9.

⁵ Cf. Lk 2:25-38.

⁶ Cf. Jn 4:7ff.

⁷ Regarding the women following Jesus, cf. Mt 27:55; 28:5; Mk 15:40-41; Lk 8:2; 23:27,49,55; 24:10,22,24; Acts 1:14.

and invite the people to him. Jesus rises from the dead and he reveals himself first to the pious women who become the proclaimers of the great event: in fact the angel of the Lord tells them: "...Go and tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.'"⁸

45 Inasmuch as the apostolic preaching met obstacles of all sorts, women educated hearts in the intimacy of home life and with effective private propaganda | (and) brought religion everywhere, not excluding imperial palaces. – The Apostle recalls the name of various women who were of valid assistance to him: "I commend to you Phoebe,⁹ our sister, who is [also] a minister of the Church at Cenchrae," so he tells the Romans, "she has been a benefactor to many and to me as well. Greet Prisca and Aquila¹⁰ (two spouses) my co-workers in Christ Jesus, who risk their necks for my life, to whom not only I am grateful but also all the churches of the Gentiles; greet also the church at their house (that is, those who were gathered by this woman and by this man in their house for the breaking of the bread and in order to listen to God's word). Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you (a language that meant the work for the Gospel). Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa... Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. Not much different are the greetings that St. Paul addresses to the different women in the letters to the Colossians, to the Philippians, the second letter to Timothy, etc.

Then there were two classes of persons who cooperated, almost by profession, with the apostles:¹¹ the so-called prophetesses and deaconesses.¹² The first, by a special grace, received from the Lord the spirit of prophecy (in a broad sense) and they were explaining to the people also the arcane meanings of the scriptures, particularly the prophetic ones, and the mysteries of the faith: different Letters and the Acts of the Apostles. The

⁸ Cf. Mk 16:7.

⁹ Cf. Rom 16:1.

¹⁰ Cf. Rom 16:3ff and also 1Cor 16:19 and 2Tm 4:19.

¹¹ *DA* has an Italian typographical error: *agli* instead of *con gli*.

¹² For the title of prophetess, cf. Ex 15:20; Jgs 4:4; 2Kgs 22:14; 2Chr 34:22; Neh 6:14; Is 8:3 and in the New Testament Lk 2:6 and Rv 2:20. For the title of deaconess cf. Rom 16:1, in reference to "sister" Phoebe.

deaconesses | lasted for many centuries in the Church and in some places, until the 16th century. They were virgins or widows, of proven virtues, chosen by the bishop, admitted to the service of the Church through a special blessing. Among their tasks, these were the principal ones: to assist at the baptism of women, to teach the women catechumens and also others in the truths of the faith, to visit the sick women, especially to prepare them to receive the priest, to watch over the coming in and out of women in the Church, etc. Tertullian¹³ and St. Clement of Alexandria¹⁴ bear witness to their merits in behalf of the Church and of the faith.

[In the history of the Church]

The stories of women in the Catholic Church would be very interesting and we hope that someone to write about them would soon emerge. Here, while silent about an infinite number of them, I shall remember Constantine¹⁵ the Great's mother and spouse not the least causes of the Church's freedom and of her triumph over paganism; Genevieve¹⁶ and Clotilde, wife of Clodovis, king of the Franks, to whom is credited her husband's conversion as well as that of his kingdom; Berta¹⁷ to whom a great part of

¹³ Quintus Septimius Florentius Tertullian (160-250 ca.), of Carthage, in Africa, was an apologist who defended the Christian faith against the Gnostic heresy (MM).

¹⁴ Clement of Alexandria (150-212) was one of the Fathers of the Greek Church who tried to reconcile Platonism and Christianity (MM).

¹⁵ Elena Flavia Giulia (250-330), first wife of Constantius I Clorus, Constantine's mother. She is highly merited for her support to the Christian religion after the edict of 313 and for the construction of the Basilicas of Rome and of the Holy Land. – Fausta Flavia Maxima (298-326), daughter of Maximilianus, emperor, and sister of Maxentius, was married to Constantine in Gaul when she was still a child, in 307. In life and in death she was involved in family tragedies.

¹⁶ Cf. BOLO, *La donna e il clero*, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

¹⁷ This saint, married to the king of Kent, had five daughters whom she educated in the faith. Widowed, she became abbess of a convent she herself founded. She died in 725(MM). Cf. what is said of Berta: VENTURA G., *La donna cattolica*, II, Milano-Genova 1855, p. 304: "The English monarchy and nationality are the work of one French princess, St. Berta, daughter of Caribert, king of Paris. It was she who converted to Christianity King Edelbert, her husband, and England."

England owes its faith; Jarislav and Lioba,¹⁸ venerated as missionaries of the Slavic, German, Hungarian countries. They are the happy first fruits of that large band of heroines¹⁹ who, in every century, left at the missionaries' side in order to bring the faith and civilization to savage countries of Asia, Africa, Oceania.

47 To three women are bound as well three events that | in Church history had a most exceptional seriousness. The end of the stay, that was the cause of infinite troubles to the Church, that was rightly called exile or slavery in Avignon, is to be highly credited to Catherine of Siena: that woman, before whom unbelievers and no less than believers bow their heads, this most pious woman, literate,²⁰ able in politics, but who received everything from penance and prayer. The temporal power of the popes, which, although was occasion of some evils, brought immense advantages to the Church, makes us immediately remember the name of the famous Matilde of Canossa, her firmness against the ambitious aims of the emperor, the help she extended to the Pope. Then, a humble young woman, Miss Jaricot²¹ creating the *Opera della Propagazione della fede* (Asso-

¹⁸ Thus it appears in *DA*. Here, Alberione perhaps depends on BOLO, *La donna e il clero*, op. cit., p. 16f. Lioba (o Leoba, Leobgytha, Truthgeba) is a Benedictine saint, abbess about the year 745 in the convent she herself founded in Tauberbischofsheim in Baden. Related to St. Boniface on her mother's side, she participated with him in the Christianization of Germany. She died on 28 September 782 (or 779/780) in Schöornsheim, near Munchen (MM). – Regarding Iarislav (Jarislav o Jaroslaw) different princes are known, in Kiev and in other Slav territories, but it is not easy to relate them with the holy women referred to here.

¹⁹ *DA* has *eroi = heroes*.

²⁰ Perhaps *illetterata = illiterate*.

²¹ *DA* has *Iaricot*. Cf. BOLO, *La donna e il clero*, op. cit., p. 17. Pauline-Marie Jaricot is the foundress of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith – cf. *DA* 40; 47; 79; 108; 115; 174-175; 327. Born in Lyon on 22 July 1799, she also died there on 9 January 1862. She belonged to a rich family of industrialists and had a carefree youth. She changed after a serious illness. Enlightened by her brother Philéas, who eventually became a missionary, Pauline-Marie started from among young workers and some influential members of the Catholic laity, that movement for prayer and collection of donations that on 3 May 1822 became the great work of assistance for the Catholic missions. Inspired by the desire for reparation and by the desire of spreading the good press, Jaricot founded in 1826 also the living rosary – cf. *DA* 115; 306. Sensing how misery favored the de-Christianization of workers, she

ciation of the Propagation of the Faith) has established the foundation of a glorious future for the Church, has opened the golden age of the Catholic missions.²²

How many women saints whom we venerate on the altars and who, hence, were also gifted with heroic humility and they not only made women and girls fervent, but, having the occasion, they also urged to be zealous the very ministers of the Lord, the pastors of souls, the bishops and the popes! Just let everyone see what St. Bridget,²³ Saint Catherine of Siena, Saint Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi,²⁴ Saint Teresa,²⁵ Saint Jean Frances

wanted to try a remedy with a bold undertaking: the establishing of a Christian factory. To this purpose, she bought the factories of Rustrel, in the lower Alps, in order to run it as a cooperative. But she was cheated, and the venture failed. Her process of beatification was started in 1930.

²² Some of these organizations were, for example, the Opera della Santa Infanzia (Association of Holy Childhood), of the Scuole d'Oriente (Schools of the Orient), of St. Peter Claver, the Œuvres apostoliques, il Bonifaciusverein, la Ludwigsverein, l'Œuvre des partants and the like, all started with the purpose of supporting with money one or the other regions or apostolic institutions of the world. The "missionary" organization most referred to by Alberione was probably the Propagation of the Faith (in existence till 3 May 1822) conceived by Pauline Jaricot.

²³ Bridget Persson (born in 1303) was Swedish and belonged to a noble family. She was married against her will and for a year remained a virgin. Then she had eight children among whom was St. Catherine of Sweden. She founded the Order of the Most Holy Savior (Bridgidine). She also gave advice to more than one pope, as Pope Urban V and Gregory XI. She died in Rome in 1373. Alberione was affectionately bound to this saint since he was a child because of a small church dedicated to her near the Cascina Agricola, where the Alberione family moved, in the fields of Cherasco. Before that small church, his mother waited for little Giacomo at dusk, on his return from elementary school.

²⁴ She is a Carmelite nun saint (1566-1607) of noble Florentine family and belonging to the San Frediano monastery.

²⁵ Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada was born in Avila, Spain, on 29 March 1515 and died in Alba de Tormes on 4 October 1582. She had a fervent childhood and a dissipated early adolescence. The day of her profession, she got sick and decided to dedicate herself to prayer. Recovered from her sickness through the intercession of St. Joseph, she backslid once more and immersed herself in mundane company. Her father's death (1543) pushed Teresa back to prayer and remained faithful in it. In 1560, at the height of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), Teresa could undertake fervorously the reformation of the Carmelite Order. This brought the Discalced Carmelite back to the observance of the early rules. A practical woman, she took charge of the least things of the monastery, without neglecting ever the economic part. Alberione often refers to this saint – cf. DA 47; 182; 225; 244; 246; 335.

48 of Chantal²⁶ and countless others. When it had to do with promoting the glory of God and the good of | souls not only did they pray but they also advised and exhorted persons high in dignity in the Church. And these were not offended, instead, they praised their zeal and availed with it themselves. Saint Jean Frances of Chantal wrote, in her memoirs, in a letter that was found after her death: “You will have to remember to beseech the Monsignor of Geneva,²⁷ that he instructed the small people of the city regarding the manner of hearing the holy mass with reverence and devotion and to make, in the morning, an offering to the Lord of all the actions of the day.” Would St. Francis have needed advice on how to tend his sheep? Nonetheless the saint, believing it useful, did not hesitate to give it and St. Francis immediately benefited of it. Thus we read about St. Mary Magdalene de’ Pazzi: “Ardent in zeal for souls, she almost forgets her gender and her condition as sister; clothed by the Divine Spirit, she gave salutary pieces of advice to Giovanni²⁸ de’ Medici, archbishop of Florence, then Pope Leo XI, who responded to her; she dictated letters for superiors of religious houses so that they made reforms against abuses.”

²⁶ Frances Frémyot (1572-1641) was born in Dijon, France, in a rich family. After the death of her husband, Baron de Chantal, she dedicated herself to the Catholic apostolate at a time when Lutheranism and Calvinism were spreading in France. Under the guidance of Francis of Sales, she founded in 1710 the order of the Visitation (MM).

²⁷ He is Francis of Sales (1567-1622), Bishop of Geneva, doctor of the Church, protector of journalists, born in the castle of Sales (in the Savoia area) on 21 August 1567 and died in Lyon (France) on 28 December 1622. Alberione often refers to this saint – cf. *DA* 67; 239; 244; 247; 248; 335. The *Philotea* was a book often used in the meditations to seminarians.

²⁸ *DA* has *Alessandro*. In fact, he who became Leo X (1513-1521) was Giovanni de’ Medici (1475-1521), son of Lorenzo di Magnificent. Elected Pope (1513), he recognized the Gallican Church (1516). Peaceful by nature, he oscillated politically between France and Spain and in the end allied himself with Charles V of Augsburg (Spain and Austria) against French Francis I of Valois (1521). A lover of the arts and extravagance, he impoverished the coffers of the Church but he promoted literature, the sciences and the arts. The date of Luther’s Reformation (the publication of his 92 theses at the Cathedral of Wuttenburg in 1517) coincide with the 4th year of this pope’s pontificate. If the author truly referred to Alexander and not Giovanni de’ Medici, then the pope he refers to would be, invariably, Alexander XI, who reigned from 1 April to 27 of the same month, in 1605: only 25 days of pontificate (MM).

He recommended warmly to Maria de' Medici,²⁹ Queen of France, that illustrious religion that was always the most persecuted religion in the world, and at that time banned by France. She assured her that she would have done great service to the divine glory by her commitment before the king, her spouse, so that in France religion be restored. Most warmly, | she exhorted that queen to work in such a way that there the heresies be uprooted and that great country might go back to that piety wherein King Louis distinguished himself.³⁰

49

In the biography of St. Catherine of Siena, the mystical marriage of her soul with her divine spouse, Jesus Christ, is described. And immediately after, one reads the order the Lord gives her: "I want that your virtues be fruitful, not only for your own soul, but also with that of your neighbor. I want to bind you to me with the bonds of charity towards others. You know that two commandments, of love of neighbor and love of God, contains all the law: to you they must work as feet for walking and wings for flying and *for leading souls to me...*"

St. Germaine Cousin³¹ was no one but a sickly shepherdess, with scrofula,³² maltreated by her stepmother; but in her heart burned the fire of zeal. While the herd pastured at the side of the

²⁹ Maria de' Medici (1573-1642) was the daughter of Francis II of Tuscany. She married Henry IV of France (1600). Regent for her son Louis XIII (1610-1615) she elicited the hatred of the people and of the nobles due to the influence allowed to Concino Concini, a Florentine gentleman in her court. Maria was exiled by her son in England and then in Cologne, in Germany.

³⁰ Perhaps he alludes to Louis, the Pious (778-840), Charlemagne's younger son. He might also be referring to Louis IX, saint, (1214-1270), son of Blanca de Castilla.

³¹ She was born near Toulouse, land of struggle between Catholics and Huguenots, in 1579. Ill since childhood deprived of use of her right arm, she also was exposed to repugnant skin diseases. She was berated by her own family. At nine years old, she was isolated taking care of a herd of sheep. Coming home from pasture, she was forced to sleep in the barn. She did nothing special during her life. She was found dead one morning during the summer of 1601, at 22 years old. In 1644, however, her body was found intact and the treatment of her fellow parishioners changed. She was but a devote farmer, "a bigot" according to others, but she became the patroness of the *Mouvement rural de la jeunesse chrétienne féminine (Rural movement of female Christian youth)*.

³² The scrofula (from "scrofa") is the swelling of the lymph glands of the neck due to tuberculosis.

mountains or were enclosed in the fold, she gathered boys and girls and taught them the catechism, how to live good lives and to flee from sin.

50 Historian Palladio³³ draws for us a superb portrait of St. Olympia, deaconess, chosen by St. John Chrisostom:³⁴ widowed at twenty years old, she rejected new marriages and dedicated her great wealth, her noble energies, her knowledge at the service of the Church. – She visited | the sick in order to help them, to prepare them for the final step, to instruct them; she protected and consoled exiles, the imprisoned, the virgins: she was the strong cooperator of St. John Chrysostom in defending orthodoxy and in the instruction of the ignorant, in helping and serving different churches.

With the great patriarch exiled, she fought against heresies, repeated to the people the bishop's teachings and came to the point of even stimulating the zeal of the clergy against the threats of the heretics. – Perhaps it was due to her that St. John Chrysostom made this statement about women: "*they can participate in all the works that are for the public welfare.*"

We owe to Blessed Julienne of Liege³⁵ the institution of that solemnity that is a true triumph of the Eucharist: the feast of Corpus Domini.

And, to pass to another order of events, let us remember that seven of the great doctors of the Church³⁶ attest the almost decisive effectiveness of their own mothers as to their convictions, their character, their vocation: St. Basil, St. Gregory Nazian-

³³ Blosio Palladio (1508-1580) was at first the secretary of Pope Clement VII and then of Paul III who designated him bishop of Foligno in (MM).

³⁴ *DA* here and below has *Grisostomo*.

³⁵ Julienne of Liege, or of Cornillon, was born in Retinnes, near Liege, in 1191. Having been orphaned, she took the veil about the year 1207. She had her first vision in 1209, followed by many others. Towards the year 1230 she became the prioress of Mont-Cornillon and composed a holy office. She resigned as superior on 2 May 1248, and retired in Fosses where she died on 5 April 1258.

³⁶ *Seven...* in fact, Fr. Alberione lists only six. The seventh Father could be St. Athanasius of Alexandria (cf. *DA* 139, note 14). Their saintly mothers are, respectively: of Basil, St. Emilia; of Gregory, St. Nonna; of John Chrysostom, St. Anthusa; of Augustine, St. Monica. The names of the others are not known to us.

zene, St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine. – Let us remember³⁷ that St. Catherine of Alexandria who argued against the most subtle pagan sophists, convinced them, converted them and they themselves becoming martyrs. That young woman, educated by St. Jerome on the books of St. Athanasius, was consulted by many and in Rome, did a great good for the faith. – Let us remember Melania,³⁸ who refuted against Pelagius, argued | with the stoics,³⁹ converted Valusianus who remained obstinate also before the tight logic of St. Augustine.

51

Everyone knows the exceptional importance today of world events that are the Eucharistic Congresses. They take place for a number of years with such weight and abundance of truly most consoling fruits. Now: these originated from a humble servant of God who had this idea while in silence and in prayer.⁴⁰ – Everyone can sense the spread and the effectiveness in Christian life of the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus: now it was Jesus Christ who chose a humble sister of the Visitation as his apostle: Blessed Margaret Alacocque.⁴¹

³⁷ Here Alberione makes a synthesis of BOLO, *La donna e il clero*, op. cit., p. 153, on “learned women in the past”.

³⁸ Melania the Younger (383-439), a Roman noble woman, niece of the other Melania, the Elder, relative of St. Paulinus of Nola, left Rome after the death of her children, moved on to Sicily and then to Jerusalem, where she founded the monastery of the Mount of Olives. She was in communication with Paulinus, Jerome, Augustine, and had a dispute with Pelagius (354-427), the Brittany monk refuted by Augustine.

³⁹ DA has *storici* = *historians*, instead of *stoici* = *stoics*.

⁴⁰ Refers to Marie Marta Emilia Tamisier (Tours 1884-1910). Inspired by Pierre Giulienne Eymard, she decided to spread the devotion to the Eucharist among the people, by imitating Marian devotion expressed in pilgrimages to sanctuaries. She encouraged and organized in such a way pilgrimages to sanctuaries bound to the Eucharist and to Eucharistic miracles. The first pilgrimage to the Chapel of the Grey Penitents of Avignon dates back to 1874. Msgr. L. G. de Ségur, archbishop of Paris, made the initiative his and obtained the approval of Pope Leo XIII for the Opera dei Congressi (1881). Cf. *La Civiltà Cattolica* 4 [1910] 80.

⁴¹ A Sister of the Visitation, she was born on 22 July 1647 near Paray-le-Monial, in the diocese of Autun, in France. Turned fatherless in a numerous family, she knew suffering early. At 24 years old, on 25 May 1671, she joined the Sisters of the Visitation of Paray. While Janseism was spreading everywhere, the devotion to the Sacred Heart started through the efforts of this woman.

Everyone knows how the events of Lourdes, half a century since, has contributed in the defeat of the French philosophism, material rationalism of yesterday and the disbelief that had become fashionable. Now it was Mary Most Immaculate who chose as her confidant and her apostle a girl, as innocent and simple: Bernadette Soubirous.⁴²

[Eve and Mary]

52 I would be told: it was also a woman, Eve,⁴³ who destroyed man and the whole human race. – Most true: and this proves the great power woman has over man. Women are compared to a great torrent... Left to their own, they become an element of destruction: but if man takes hold of it and channels it, from it would be drawn | electrical energies that bring light and energy. – Could not the woman's power be put under the strong guidance of the priest?

The objection, however, leads us to speak about another woman: the Great Lady. She opens for us a new horizon that makes us know all the greatness of the woman's mission in the work of nature and of grace. In fact, with the mystery of the Incarnation, God raised the woman to a dignity that bears something of the divine. In this work of restoration, we find a woman foretold in the early paradise as a co-redemptrix and, later, described by the prophets and longed for by the patriarchs.

What glorious role this Woman has played, no one can tell us better than the Church which, to prepare the faithful for the annual commemoration of Christmas, poetically, but always theologically precise, sings:⁴⁴ “O Woman blessed through the

⁴² DA has *Bernardetta Soubiroux*. Bernadette or Marie Bernard Soubirous was born on 7 January 1844 in Lourdes where the Immaculate Conception had an apparition from 11 February to 16 July 1858. On 30 October 1867 she made her religious profession among the sisters of Nevers. “She is good for nothing,” the then Superior General noted, but Msgr. Forcade gave her an assignment: “My daughter, I confer to you the duty of praying.”

⁴³ Regarding Eve, cf. Gn 3:20; 4:1; Tb 8:6; 2Cor 11:3; 1Tm 2:13.

⁴⁴ This hymn used to belong to the Lauds of the Common of the Feasts of Our Lady, in the commemoration of Mary on Saturday and in the Dedication of a Church. (MM). (*Translation ours*).

angel's annunciation, but even more blessed because you are made fruitful by the virtues of the Holy Spirit, by you was born the One longed for by peoples!... O Mary, you have turned us into your adorable Son, just as much unhappy Eve has lay hold on us! You open the gates of heaven, so that the poor exiles on earth may come and enter there! You are the way to go to the king of the most high... People all, from slavery ransomed, rejoice for the life that the Virgin to you has brought!" Mary most holy became the mother of God, the queen of saints, the | hope of the miserable, the mediatrix, after Jesus Christ, of all grace and consolation of men. God wanted that we received everything from Mary, the blessed staff that brought forth the flower, blessed Jesus Christ, in whom and through whom all nations were blessed. Thus, by divine will, life emerges from that gender that brought death on earth.

53

Before the greatness of Mary most holy, man understood once more the dignity of his companion, reviled during the pagan times: woman came to understand again her nature and her mission: the Church wanted her as part of her vocation as guide of souls to heaven!⁴⁵

It is not that woman could obtain a preponderant, teaching, governing part in the Church, no; but she always had a subordinate, most effective part. It is God who chooses as instrument of his marvels ignorant and humble persons in order to confound the wise⁴⁶ and the proud: it is God who chooses weak persons in order to confound the strong: it is God who chooses means that appear despicable so that the power of his works may better appear. It is good to further add: woman has in her self in latent state, most often, a torrent of most precious energies: unrecognized, they degenerate, if they are not consumed in empty petty talks or in evil: well guided they perform marvels that man could not have achieved.

⁴⁵ To the devotion to Mary, Fr. Alberione wanted to give his own contribution since the start of his priestly life by writing a small book, *La B. Vergine delle Grazie in Cherasco (La Madonnina), Memorie-ossequi, [The Blessed Virgin of Graces in Cherasco (the Madonnina), Memories-homages]* Alba 1912, 136 pp., 8 ill.

⁴⁶ Cf. 1Cor 1:25-27; 4:10; 2Cor 12:9-10.

THE POWER OF WOMAN

Women accomplished true apostolate in history. Therefore they can accomplish it: the consequence is an inarguable logical value. Rather let us ask ourselves: from where does such power come in the gender that is called *weak*? To principal causes explain the fact: woman is strong at heart: woman is strong in her position.

[Strength of heart]

The woman's strength does not lie in her intelligence, but in her heart: I would like to say, with a modern author, *in her weakness, in her spirit, in her beauty, placed at the service of her heart.*

In man, the heart is half his being; in woman, it is the whole: *more superficial in the rest*, so De Bonald¹ writes, *the woman is more profound in love.* – *Love, in the life of man, does not have but episodes, while in the woman it is the story of her whole life*, thus Staël² writes, with perhaps some exaggeration. It is certain, however, that in the woman, the heart predominates and it could be seen in her tenderness, gentleness, spirit of sacrifice, deli-

¹ Louis-Jacques-Maurice de Bonald was born in Millau in the Aveyron, France, on 30 October 1787 and died in Lyon on 25 February 1870. A priest since 1811, he was for sometime the chaplain of the Dauphin of France, Charles X. In 1852, he was made senator. A proponent of the struggle against political and ecclesiastical Gallicanism (which tended to impose the supremacy of the State over the Church in France and to temper the authority of the pope along with that of bishops, priests and French faithful), he promoted the reform of liturgical books of the Gallican rite in order to uproot from them the Jansenist infiltrations. Against the state monopoly of schools, he defended the rights of the freedom of instruction.

² Anne Louise Germaine Necker, baroness of Staël-Holstein (1766-1817) was born in Paris on 22 April 1766. Since her youngest years, she was a reckless person, a *coquette* so eager to emerge as much as to get the attention of others. She died in Paris on 14 July 1817. Her *opera omnia*, in 17 volumes, was published (1820-1821) by her son, Baron Auguste de Staël.

cateness, intuition. Observe the affection of a daughter towards her father or mother: the affection | of a bride for her groom, although he is still rough and uncaring: the affection of a sister for her brothers although these are scornful: the affection of a mother for her children although these are ungrateful: these are proofs of the great heart of women.

55

Now: force is resisted by force, and the stronger one wins; face to face with intelligence, one uses reasoning and the argument is won by one who has better reasons and tighter logic. Likewise, between two hearts the greater one wins: between man and woman, the latter prevails. Woman does not reason out her ideal, but intuits it, and made her own, she loves it with her entire being and tends to it with all her energies, passionately³ upholds it before man.

She upholds it with weakness. Something that is quite marvelous! The weaker one is, the stronger shall be her prayer. If the poor is even poorer, he is more effective before the rich: if the baby is smaller, more easily does he disarm even a monster of cruelty. And this is the strength of woman: she is queen inasmuch as she prays ahead of man; should she want to command or reason out, her empire would crumble.

And she utilizes this prayer not only before man in order to strengthen her desires: but especially before God. She prays for man: she prays with the trust of a child: she | prays often with the constancy of a martyr. She prays and God listens to her. Now who does not know that prayer is omnipotent before God's heart? Who does not know that God gives everything to one who prays well? Behold then the woman who due to her weakness becomes strong with God's strength: behold woman who wins because she has God with herself.

56

Woman holds up her dominion through beauty: beauty that grows in virtue, in modesty, in decency. In the book of Ecclesiasticus, it is written: "Avert your eyes from a comely woman; gaze not upon the beauty of another's wife. – Through woman's beauty many perish, for lust for it burns like fire."⁴ And, on the other hand, beauty combined with virtue, moves the heart of

³ DA has *passionatamente* instead of *appassionatamente*.

⁴ Cf. Sir 9:8, also 25:21; 36:22; 42:12; Prv 11:22; 31:30.

man, makes him lean on to her: but it does not win him over if not in order to raise him to the Lord.

She supports him with her spirit: man considers things, abstracts, generalizes; woman analyzes everything, turns everything alive. Woman *feels* God, feels virtue, feels what is beautiful and good: and in her feeling, she loves and in loving, she communicates persuasively, and persuading communicates an entirely special unction of her heart. And man, I would say, becomes dominated, I would say, often enchanted.

She supports him with sacrifice: but sacrifice that is accomplished in thousands of little things that man often despises.

57 Woman, in carrying out her sublime mission, has at her service loving concern, firm and sweet exhortations, reprimands that are full of tender gentleness, prayers spiced with burning tears, looks that are a revelation, an inspiration, an intuition, a suggestion and enchanting smiles, a bit of all these together: and with such means she forestalls falls, raises one who tumbles and urges towards what is good!

Watch how many things a woman achieves, how nothing escapes her, how she foresees everything, disposes of everything. And this is a too frequent fact that it is not adequately appreciated: and yet it is most true. Quite difficult it is to appreciate the expressions of tenderness of a sister, the bride's delicate and minute expressions of concern, the continuous and most refined cares of a mother. She does not spare efforts, vigils, privations, blood, life: and suffering, she enjoys suffering, and dying she enjoys being consumed, if only to get what she wants. And man remains won over, falls at her feet, gives up and says: "Ask whatever you want. *Command.*"

[In the heart of the home]

Still, woman is powerful in her domestic and social position: and this, for her, is worth as much as the best strategic point for a captain. She, as daughter, as spouse, as mother is more than a man at home. Now, what can a daughter not do on the mind of her parents and that of her younger brothers? There have been entire families raised in a Christian manner by an elder sister.

Not taking into consideration this fact, too, there have been many situations that it would make it quite ordinary, for a good daughter to hold back a thousand times her parents and brothers and sisters from so many excesses: wherein a good daughter teaches her dear ones, big and small, religious truths so naturally and delicately that she is passed unnoticed: wherein a daughter of solid piety spreads the perfume of her own soul within the walls of the home; wherein she draws her relatives to church, to God's word, to the holy sacraments; wherein she gently induces everyone to speak meekly, to mutual forbearance, for love of work.

58

A noble single lady, sister of a famous lawyer, a bachelor, was once asked why she turned down many offers of marriage from young, good, rich and honorable men... The lady raised her eyes to heaven, then lowered them and covered her face while blushing as she said: "Ah! My brother's soul!" She was the victim that had sacrificed everything to remain beside her brother, so to save him. And she already had done so much!

Then the wife, adding freedom that comes from her being her husband's companion to the strength of affection, can do even much more. How many times is religious marriage fulfilled through her, it is because of her that prayers are done at home, it is through her that the husband goes to mass and the sacraments!

And also there where the priest's voice no longer reaches; also to that man who thinks of nothing but work and profits; also to that dishonest man who dreams of nothing but pleasures and passions; also to that unhappy man who is overwhelmed by the fever of honor or from the thirst of vengeance; also to these can the voice of an angel always or almost always reach: the sweet, insinuating, listened to voice of a wife. How many times is the sight of St. Cecilia renewed,⁵ she who leads the husband to Christ's priest.

59

How many times is repeated what happened to Emilio Littré,⁶ a positivist philosopher, evolutionist historian, senator for

⁵ See below, *DA* 140, note 17.

⁶ Maximilien-Paul-Emile Littré was a versatile writer on science aside from being a fine philosopher and philologist. Born in Paris on 1 February

life, zealous Mason, who received baptism during the last days of his life. The merit of his conversion, however, and this amazed the world, belongs to her wife and daughter: they obtained it through sacrifice, prayer, services, with sweet words, with the Virgin's medal: arguments that are much stronger on the heart than logic to the mind.

Oh, how many husbands are there in eternity who have to render justice to their benefactress and say: through my wife I am saved!

60 Finally, woman touches the apex of her power when she is raised to the dignity of mother: strength of love, freedom of speech, divine authority over her children come together in her. And it is the mother precisely who forms the soul of children: the father sees things get done, but the mother creates conscience in action: the father traces as if the skeleton of education,⁷ but it is the mother who completes it, vivifies it: the father acts on the child who is present; the mother, also on him who is far | by her gaze, on the child who survives her death.

Montaigne⁸ and Smiles⁹ agree together: "The home¹⁰ depends in fact on the woman so it can and must assert that the happiness or the unhappiness of the same home is due to her making." And De Maistre:¹¹ "The greatest thing the world has is formed on the mother's knees: *man*."

1801, he died also in Paris on 2 June 1881. From 1867, he was the director of the *Revue de philosophie positiviste*. Atheism, materialism, socialism were experienced by Littré as acts of faith to which to dedicate himself with humility and extreme openness. He knew Italian and translated into French Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* from the *Divina Commedia*.

⁷ *DA* has *di educazione* instead of *dell'educazione*.

⁸ Michele Eyquem de Montaigne (1533-1592) was a French moralist. He arrived at his skepticism, inspired by good sense and tolerance, through observations of contradictions and the relativity of human nature and things.

⁹ Samuel Smiles (1812-1904), Scottish author, the eldest of eleven children left behind by the death of the father to a widow of limited means of livelihood. His enthusiasm, trust and self-study, that explain his great popularity, are attributed to her mother.

¹⁰ *DA* wrongly has *causa* = *cause*, instead of *casa* = *home*.

¹¹ Joseph de Maistre was a politician, writer and philosopher, uncompromising Catholic and Freemason. He was born in Chambéry, in the Savoy territory (a region belonging currently to Southeastern France at the boundaries with Italy and Switzerland) on 1 April 1753. He died in Turin on 26 February 1821).

This truth is ever so evident and is of ordinary experience that it does not need any explanation. The experience of Coriolanus¹² who gives in to her mother, if this is true, is not but one of the countless episodes of every day life.

How many times can one repeat what St. Ambrose told St. Monica: It is impossible that the son of so much tears would ever get lost!

What remains now is to see how much woman can do through her social position. However, aside from what already appears in what has been said above, we shall see other things more clearly in the second part.

¹² Caius or Cneus Marcius Coriolanus, after his victory over the Volks (493 B.C.) was unjustly accused of tyranny. He took refuge among the conquered people and with them marched to Rome. He, however, was dissuaded by the prayers of two women, his wife Volumnia and his mother Veturia.

THE WOMAN'S VOCATION

Bougaud¹ after having taken into consideration this power of woman, exclaims: “*Initium et finis mulier*”: in every great deed, you will find at the start and in the end a woman. And Tacitus:² “*Inesse in eis quid divinum*”: woman bears in herself an imprint of God’s power. How come this God, who does everything well, who rightly arranges things in weights and measures, all according to his most lofty purposes, is so liberal with woman? There’s no doubt as to the answer: because he has destined her for a most noble vocation: the gifts given to woman are nothing but necessary means for her mission.

Let us go back to the origin of the world: there would appear the truth of this assertion. When God created man, so the Holy Scriptures say, he looked at him and, touched,³ with compassion in his heart at the sight of his solitude, God pronounced these words, among the most tender ever to come out of his lips: *It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him.*⁴ And he created woman in order to be of help to man.

62 Help him in what? In his labors, in his | anxieties: how bitter is pain when it is suffered alone! In joys, in dreams of happiness, little is enjoyed when one enjoys alone! And since man is not

¹ Louis-Victor-Émile Bougaud was born in Dijon (France), on 26 February 1824. Having entered the seminary of Autun and then at St-Sulpice, he was ordained priest in 1846 in Paris. He was a professor of dogmatic theology and of religious history in the major seminary of Dijon and was the chaplain of the Visitation Sisters, always in Dijon in the years 1852-1861. He died on 7 November 1888. As a writer, Bougaud was resolved to lead society to Christ. As an apologist, he emphasized the correspondence of Christianity to the needs and the aspirations of individuals, of families and of the society of his time.

² Publius Caius Cornelius Tacitus (ca. 54-120), perhaps he came from Interamna, today’s Terni, in Umbria. He is considered the major Latin historian of the silver age, having lived during the time of the Flavius and of Trajan, a Roman emperor (97 A.D.).

³ Original in *DA*: *tocco* instead of *toccato*, *colpito* = *touched*, *hit*.

⁴ Cf. Gn 2:18.

created for this earth, but for heaven, since God placed in him heavenly hopes, longings and sublime desires, since the world is an exile and heaven is homeland: to support man in this journey, to lead him to eternity, to go there with him, constitute the highest mission of woman: *adiutorium simile sibi*.⁵ Man, bowed to earth that he should till, would have often lost sight of heaven: and God gave him an angel, an apostle, an intimate, persuasive, loving friend who would keep up the light for him and the taste for heaven.

[Man's companion and inspirer]

Eve, it is true, took advantage of her sweet ascendance over Adam in order to pull him down in sin: but God, by punishing him, has not changed woman's mission: fallen man needed it even more. That woman, under the brutal dominion of paganism, through man's distrust, who fell into slavery, oppression or at least alienated by man, God thought of drawing her out of such a state: otherwise, she would not be ever able to exercise her mission. Mary was the highest model of the Christian woman: She accomplished her task of raising man, of detaching him from this earth, of leading him to heaven. Woman rehabilitated by Jesus Christ with patient work was rehabilitated to her primitive position. After nineteen centuries, the Christian woman | enjoys again that holy and universal respect, that tender and religious love, those honors and those cares full of delicateness that make her mission possible. That certain spirit of chivalry which, in spite of natural exaggerations, dominated so much the Middle Age and today still forms as an enchantment and the perfume of civil society, is totally of one spirit and a fruit⁶ of the Christian doctrines on woman. Again we find in her that purity, that halo of modesty, that serious beauty, that amiable freedom, that generous virtue and that intense desire to attract man's heart in order to raise it to heaven and there bring him with her.

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⁵ Cf. Gn 2:18: "A suitable partner for him".

⁶ Italian original: *portato = prodotto, frutto*.

How many men, especially in today's murkiness of life, would have perhaps forgotten God, the soul, eternity, if they did not have a sister, a wife, a mother, a daughter! These are mysteries that will be revealed only in eternity!

64 Man, better equipped with gifts and schooling, amidst business and occupations regarding the present and what is passing, easily forgets the idea of the future: the invisible suffocates him, his gaze goes downwards. This is a fact that so many find difficult to explain today and which, meanwhile, places man in a status of inferiority with respect to woman: while he should be ahead of her by virtue of his intelligence. What man forgets is precisely how much the woman more easily | remembers, because she feels it ever alive. She does not care so much about logic, but if something has to do with spiritual matters, she has a better intuition of it, enjoys it better, and more easily she tends to it. Someone has said: religion is for women. It is not for women in the sense of excluding men; but it is for women in the sense that women are naturally more religious. *Also the Church, the Pope told Catholic women, renders you this honor by calling you the devote gender. And you must, with religion and for religion, be of help to man.*

He who excludes woman from such a mission, displaces her from her vocation: he misplaces her. Women who do not do this are useless, if not harmful, in the world. A woman who turns proud or complains of having to work for the conversion of her husband could be told this: you are not doing your duty.

THE MISSION OF WOMAN AND THE MISSION OF THE CLERGY MADE CONCORDANT

If this is the mission of women, it follows that priests and women meet in the same vocation, that they ought to work in the same field. In a disorderly manner, depending on tastes? Without anyone regulating and directing the work? No: the army of women must have its captain in the priest. The priest has been established by God to save souls: and he is answerable to it together with women. It is, however, the task of the priest to guide his army to victory: it is his task to patiently study the plan, to refrain the audacious and encourage the timid, it is for him to recall the deserters and to take to the ranks the deviated: to lead all of them in battle.

[Connection link]

Today the value of this principle as regards care for souls is universally recognized:¹ it belongs to the priest, especially to the parish priest, the duty *to avail with everyone in order to achieve his end: to save souls*. He cannot set aside some of the means and some of his cooperators: choir, cultural circle, conferences, advice, sensitive ventures, etc.: curates, beneficiaries, | members of Catholic associations, religious groups, etc.: and among all these means of salvation and among these cooperators, there is one most important, most capable, most effective: women. So, let him utilize this means. Let him lead women, let him avail with them on all occasions: it is understood – with prudence, as we shall see ahead.

In the physical order, man is incomplete without woman: if he has the strength, he lacks the grace possessed by woman: if he has the intelligence, woman has the heart: united together, these two beings complete each other. And they give origin to

¹ DA has *ricominciato* = *restarted*, instead of *ricosciuto* = *recognized*.

other human beings. Something like it is the priest's and the woman's mission: the priest teaches, communicates the charisms of grace, sanctifies the temple: but the woman extends this divine influence up to the walls of the home, woman brings man to the priest. The priest without the woman would lose three fourths of his influence on society, woman without him would lose everything. Just as between God and man there is the priest, so between the priest and man, there is the woman, the connecting link.

[Common vocation]

And here is the very strong bond that unites the priest and woman: the common vocation; and here is the obligation of the priest of a careful² and prudent direction to woman in the choice of means: and here is the duty in the woman to be humbly docile to the advice of the priest.

67 If there would still be some doubt rising in our minds, let us look at history: at the sides of great benefactors of humanity and of great saints of Christianity, you shall always find the sweet image of women and of saints, who as if complete their work. At the side of St. Benedict,³ the great patriarch of western monasticism, you see St. Scholastica⁴ his sister; at the side of St. Francis of Assisi,⁵ the saint so universally loved, there is St.

² DA has *oculto* = *occult*, instead of *oculato* = *careful*.

³ Benedict (480-543/547) is the father of monasticism in the West. He was born in Norcia, in Umbria, to a Roman noble family. He founded 13 monasteries and created a monastic ideal with the Rule that Bossuet defined as "a summary of Christianity, a learned and mysterious compendium of the entire doctrine of the Gospel, of all the institutions of the holy Fathers, of all the counsels of perfection." A lover of concreteness and clarity, Benedict gathered his thought and his action in the *ora et labora*, "pray and work" after which also Alberione drew much inspiration.

⁴ On the life of this sister of Benedict, the only historical source is chapters 33 and 34 of the second book of the Dialogues of St. Gregory the Great. Probably twins, Benedict and Scholastica were born and died in the same years (480-547). Scholastica consecrated herself to God as a young woman and followed her brother in Subiaco and in Montecassino. Their mortal remains rest together in the crypt of the great monastery of Montecassino.

⁵ Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) stripped himself of everything at age 24: clothes, wealth, ambition, pride, in order to marry "Lady Poverty" and to re-

Claire,⁶ his town mate; at the side of the Dominican fathers, there are the Dominican sisters;⁷ at the side of St. Francis of Sales, there is St. Jeanne Francis de Chantal;⁸ St. Vincent de Paul⁹ had done much more for the Church and for the souls with the establishment of the Sisters of Charity as well as with the foundation of the family of Religious men for the missions. The Venerable Cottolengo¹⁰ was highly assisted by Marianna

propose to the world, in perfect joy, the evangelical ideal of humility, poverty, and chastity. His conformation with Christ also physically took place with the seal of the stigmata received at the mount of La Verna on 14 September 1224.

⁶ Claire (1193/1194-1253), born in Assisi to a wealthy family, with an unusual audacity, presented herself before Francis and his friars the night of 18 March 1212 in order to consecrate herself to God. Won over by the rule of absolute poverty, not only individual, but professed collectively, Claire extended to the female sex the spirituality of Francis.

⁷ Both of these take their names from Dominic of Guzman, born between 1170 and 1185 Calaruega, Burgos, Spain, and died in Bologna on 6 August 1221.

⁸ Regarding St. Francis of Sales and St. Jeanne F. de Chantal, see notes 26 and 27 in *DA* 47-48.

⁹ Vincent de Paul (1581-1660), after an experience of slavery in Tunis, decided, in 1617, to start the mission among the poorest farmers. On 23 August 1617, he started the Company of Charity (later called Ladies of Charity) by inviting noble women to serve the poor. From 1618 to 1621 he undertook with other zealous priests many missions in various dioceses of France. He founded the Congregation of the Mission, the Lazarist Fathers, for popular missions (1625).

¹⁰ Giuseppe Cottolengo was born in Bra, in the province of Cuneo in 1786. The eldest of twelve children, he finished excellently his studies, at first in Bra and then in Asti. In 1811, he was ordained priest and went as vice curate in Corneliano d'Alba. He used to celebrate mass at three in the morning so that the farmers could attend before they went to the farms. To complete his training, he obtained a doctorate in theology in Turin in 1816. On 17 January 1828, he began his great work of assistance to handicapped persons in the old Turin. From an old paralytic woman, the patients soon became 40. When the authorities ordered him to close the first house (which Pius IX had baptized "Casa del miracolo" [House of the miracle]) as a precaution against the cholera epidemic of 1831, he loaded his few possessions on a donkey and with two sisters went to the area of Valdocco, towards a farmhouse that had a billboard over its entrance, "Osteria del brentatore" [The wine bottler's tavern]. He turned the billboard over and wrote there "Piccola casa della divina Provvidenza" [Little House of the Divine Providence]. This was on 27 April 1832. Together with the widow Marianna Masi, about the year 1830, he founded the congregation of the Vincentian Sisters, later called Sisters of Cottolengo. The means sustaining the activity was exclusively the enlightened trust on Providence, coupled with constant prayer and charity. He died on 30 April 1842.

Masi¹¹ and the venerable Bon Bosco¹² her own mother, Margherita Bosco.

This is the providential order of the world: it is not up to us to change it: if we go against it, we shall turn our noble ministry sterile: by adjusting to it, we shall work with less effort and come up with hundredfold results.

68 Conclusion. – A warning is a must, to avoid misunderstanding. From what I have said and am about to say, some might perhaps believe that I want to assert that women must not be engaged with other matters except that of cooperating with priests: or | at least that when they do this, they do not attend to their mission. It is not precisely in this sense that I want to speak. Women has to give material help to man: and in doing this she sees what a vast field has been prepared for her to act on: but I do not intend to precisely deal with this matter, thus going out of my intended purpose. Women have to extend moral-religious assistance to man: and this can happen in two ways: either directly, so I would say, *in the work and in the direction* given her by the priest: or indirectly by entering only *into the spirit* of the priestly mission, which is part as well of the woman's mission. Also this is most appreciated: but it is especially of the first that I intend to speak; inasmuch as on the other matter there already is a big number of books, with others even egregiously.

¹¹ A young widow of great faith whom, on November 1830, Cottolengo designated as mother of his poor ones and of the rising institute of Sisters founded by him. (MM).

¹² Giovanni Bosco was born in Becchi, Castelnuovo d'Asti, in Piedmont, on 16 August 1815 and died in Turin in 1888. Of humble origins, he lost his father early, and it was his mother who taught him the first elements of catechism. Giovanni was ordained priest in Turin in 1841. He immediately started taking care of the poor children and founded in Valdocco the first "oratory" (1842) wherein he gathered some twenty boys. In 1846, the young men were now 300. With the help of Fr. Rua and Fr. Cagliero, he established the foundation of the Society of St. Francis of Sales, whose first chapter was held in 1850. At the side of the Salesians, he founded (1872) the Salesian Sisters (Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice = Daughters of Mary Help of Christians) and lastly the Pious union of Salesian cooperators.

SECOND PART

IN OUR TIMES
IN WHAT WORKS CAN WOMAN ASSIST
THE PRIESTLY ZEAL

PREAMBLE

Women can assist priests in their most lofty and delicate mission above all as individuals: in the second place as members of families: lastly, as members of society. These three states, in which women can find themselves, shall be like three headings wherein shall be shown the ways that are available to the spiritual activity of the woman-apostle.

THE ZEAL OF WOMAN CONSIDERED AS AN INDIVIDUAL

Woman individually considered can exercise by herself a great mission of good. And in order to understand it more easily, it shall be well to consider the different apostolates to which she can dedicate herself in the same number of paragraphs: Apostolate of prayer: apostolate of example: apostolate of the word: apostolate of works: apostolate of formation of cooperators in zeal.

And first of all, I believe on the matter to recommend a very good small book by Frassinetti: *Industrie spirituali (Spiritual Labors)* (Genova, Tipografia della gioventù, L. 0.20).

ART. I – APOSTOLATE OF PRAYER

There is no doubt: this is the easiest and the most effective among the different apostolates.

It is the easiest: inasmuch as whoever is there who cannot pray? Since a child, one begins to mention Jesus' Holy Name, until old age, when one no longer has but a weak voice, everyone can murmur a prayer. A holy mass, a communion, a holy rosary, | a novena, a visit to the Most Holy Sacrament, are things easy. – But I have a lot of things to do the whole day! A woman would say. Well, let it be: but there have been many holy souls who, also amidst the chores at home, also while going or returning from work, also among the deafening noise of machines, also in the fields under the rays of the sun, knew how to pray, if not in one way, at least in another, at least with frequent short prayers. How many good girls do we know who, while pasturing sheep, read prayer books, went through the rosary beads, knelt down near a plant to pray!

And whether work were pressing, delicate, difficult, who could stop one from at least offering it to the Lord, performing it willingly, sanctifying it with the right intention! Well, work done in this manner, is it not an ongoing prayer? Here the saying holds: *One who works, prays*. There is more. The same sick person who lies on his bed, oppressed by great pains, can make the most effective of prayers; the sufferings, the crosses, the mortifications, the contradictions suffered with resignation to God's will are worth much more for attracting the divine blessings. Well known is the saying: *Good is to pray, to labor¹ better still, best is to suffer*.

72 It is the most effective apostolate: conversion and sanctification of souls is a work of grace | more than of reasoning or of human efforts: the Scriptures, continuing tradition, theology and the practice of saints affirm it so highly. The sworn promise of Jesus Christ cannot fail: *Amen, Amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you.*"² And buttressed by this divine promise, St. Paul taught to everyone this most noble apostolate of prayer: *I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions and thanksgivings be offered for everyone.*³ – Nothing escapes the power of prayer: be it conversion of sinners, or turning the lukewarm to zealous, or the return of heretics and schismatics, or the perseverance of the just, or the good death of the agonizing, or the growth and prosperity of the Church, or the triumph of the Holy See, or the growth to perfection of the clergy, or the sanctification of religious Orders, or the relief of the souls in purgatory. – True hidden benefactors of humanity are those souls, apostles of prayer: they participate with that divine life that Jesus leads for centuries in the tabernacles. In fact, what does he do in that pyx during the solitary hours of the day, during the silent hours of the night, during the holy sacrifice of the Holy Mass? He placates divine justice angered against the sinners. He implores the divine mercies for many souls. He continues his apostolate of saving the world,

¹ DA here adds a semi-colon (absent in the succeeding editions), with which the *saying* could sound a bit differently.

² Cf. Jn 16:23, and also 14:13; 15:16; 16:26.

³ Cf. 1Tm 2:1, and also Eph 6:18; Phil 1:4; 1Thes 1:2.

exercised one day along the streets of | Palestine. – Souls that are true benefactors of humanity! They do not receive any applause for being so, nor monuments: but the day of universal judgment shall unveil so many secrets, clear many mysteries, exalt these humble apostles.

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On that day, for the first time the benefactors and the beneficiaries shall meet; they shall look at each other, recognize one another: and the glory of the benefactors shall be much greater as it comes much later.

Souls that are benefactors of poor humanity! At least you have this consolation on earth: God listens to your prayers, leans his ears to your sighs, listens to your requests. He who prays for souls satisfies an ardent desire of the Heart of Jesus: and how can Jesus not love him with a most special affection and not listen to him? On the other hand, St. Ignatius⁴ used to say: “Also when, dying right now, I were sure of my salvation, I would nonetheless be ready to risk that salvation while remaining on earth, if only to win over some souls.” And, inasmuch as someone reproved him of this as an act of imprudence, he replied: “Why? Is God a tyrant who, seeing me risk my own salvation to win over some souls, would want to send me to hell?”

Now, what is the practical manner of exercising such an apostolate? Below, we shall see how the apostolate of prayer as organization may be exercised: here, we see how it is individually exercised.

For the faithful departed

74

The heroic act of charity: it is the offering of all the *expiatory* value of all our prayers, actions, sufferings, the offering of the expiatory works applied by us in life and after death, the offering of the merits of Mary Most Holy and of Jesus Christ to the Eternal Father in behalf of the souls in purgatory. – I said *expiatory* value inasmuch as our prayers, actions, sufferings

⁴ It is only here that Alberione mentions this saint and probably he refers to Ignatius, founder of the Society of Jesus, born in Loyola, Guipúzcoa, in Spain, in 1491 and died in Rome on 31 July 1556.

have always three values: the *meritorious*, which could not be given to others; the *expiatory*, which can be applied freely for the souls in purgatory or for the living; the *impetratory*, which could be distributed to whomever among people.

This act is the most sublime manifestation of charity towards the departed. Pius IX granted for this act the following indulgences:

1. Daily privileged altar for priests;⁵
2. To all the faithful, plenary indulgence for the deceased each time that one goes to communion and every Monday by attending mass for the same deceased: visiting in both cases some church and praying according to the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff;
3. Then for one who cannot attend the holy mass on Monday, he or she could apply for this purpose the mass of obligation on Sunday;
4. And to him who might not be able to receive communion, the Pope granted confessors to exchange it to another pious activity;
- 75 5. For all: every indulgence granted or to be granted is applicable to the faithful departed.

It is not for nothing that such an act is called *heroic*: it indeed requires a real renunciation on all the expiatory part of the good deed or to be done and a total abandonment to God's loving Providence, as what concerns purgatory due perhaps to us. For him, however, who does not yet feel strong enough to accomplish such an act in suffrage for the departed, there would also be other acts. There are persons who dedicate one day a week, Tuesday, for the souls in purgatory; there are others who offer for them a communion, a mass, a rosary each week; others instead are happy with but one day a month, that is, the first Tuesday; still others a month a year, the month of November; others only the day destined for the commemoration of the faithful departed, the second of November.

⁵ Privileged altar is "that which enjoys the indult of plenary indulgence, applicable to a deceased for whom the Mass is celebrated. Perpetual or temporary privilege, daily or not [cf. CJC can 918]" (*Enciclopedia cattolica*, vol. I, col. 925).

It is, however, especially on the occasion of the demise of some person known that one has to raise the fervor for the sake of the souls in purgatory: the practice of gathering in the house of the deceased to pray the holy rosary or to visit or to do the *vigil* by praying with the corpse present is a very good practice; very good is the practice of accompanying the deceased to the Church and to his final resting place in the cemetery; very good is the practice of visiting the tomb on specific days, as would be the holy day dedicated to the memory of the deceased; very good is the practice | of celebrating solemnly the thirteenth day or the anniversaries, to keep pious memorials and pictures of the deceased in homes. But a pious woman should not stop with a simple external *show*: during burials she shall bear an appearance that is not only decorous but she shall truly pray and make others pray; she shall avail with all circumstances to remember the dead, to offer suffrages for them and to invite others to do it.

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Finally, there are lists that bear the different kinds of deceased persons who may be in need of suffrages: priests, religious, the forgotten ones, the souls that used to be devoted to the Blessed Sacrament, etc. Well: many pious souls used to address each day⁶ their intentions for one of these kinds of persons. It is a most useful practice: just as is most useful that of repeating during the day some *Eternal rest*, or reciting every evening, or at least while seeing a cemetery, the *De Profundis*.

For the living

The sacrificial souls. Just as a heroic act of charity is the most sublime expression of charity towards the faithful departed so the victim soul accomplishes the greatest act of charity towards persons still living on earth. What, in fact, does it mean to offer one's self for persons? It means | to offer one's self as a sacrificial lamb in order to expiate for the sins of all or of a number of persons and thus to obtain salvation for them. It means to present one's self ready to accept all the trials, the

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⁶ Original italian: *fra giorno = durante il giorno = during the day.*

⁷ Cf. Ps 129 in the Latin Vulgate (now Ps. 130).

pains and the contradictions that the Lord might please to send to a soul in order to obtain for other souls eternal salvation. It means to keep one's self perpetually in this disposition for the rest of his life: to offer one's existence in order to free souls from eternal death and from the very agonies of death. Now Jesus Christ said: *No one has greater love⁸ than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.* Today, we sing a doubtless progress in all the areas of knowledge: but it cannot be denied that due to human malice knowledge is often made servant to evil and that progress has found new means and new ways to sin. Well then, also good souls have created new means of doing good. Among these there is this: by now a rank of souls, so noble as much as so unknown, a rank of souls so sincerely loving people as much as they are despised by people, offer itself victim for its own brothers. They are simple sisters in monasteries, they are teachers in elementary schools, they are humble house helpers, single ladies, women from among the people who burn in love of God and to God sacrifice everything if only to save a soul more.

78 Each soul, also on its own, can do this, | although it is more advantageous to join the *Association of sacrificial souls*, of which we will speak later.

The generous offering. This consists in giving to the Divine Heart of our Lord all the *impetratory* value of our prayers, works and sufferings, while leaving that He makes use of them according to his most holy purposes. A better use of such a value could be none else inasmuch as the intentions of Jesus Christ cannot but be most holy, the best possible. They include not only the ordinary ones that we can conceive within the narrow confines of our knowledge, but they extend to all [and] individual human beings who live in the five parts of the world, to all and individual souls of priests, of Catholics, of heretics, of infidels. With this offering, comes, with summary ease, the extension of our apostolate till the extreme ends of the earth! And to what fervor ought to bring us the thought that while we pray, while we work, away from the sight of everyone, while we suffer some intimate pain hidden from everyone, we do a lot of

⁸ DA has *onore* = honor instead of *amore* = love. Cf. Jn 15:13.

good also in the most distant regions! The manner of doing such an offering is up to us, and this formula would be enough: “*I intend to do everything today and ever according to the intentions of Jesus-Host in the tabernacle.*” It would be beneficial to repeat it every day and also a number of times during the day, although it is enough to recite it once and | for all and then not withdraw it at all. It is well understood that after such an offering it is always allowed to recommend to the Lord our particular needs: even more one can do it with greater confidence of being heard.

79

Other different forms of apostolate through prayer

General interests

a) The pious practice of making a communion every week for the Pope, according to his intentions, is widespread among communities, or else to recite the prayer “*To you, O blessed Joseph...*” for the general needs of the Church.

b) There are numerous souls who each day recite an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* with the short prayer, “*Sancte Franciscus Zaveri*” for the Work of the Propagation of the Faith; and a *Hail Mary* for the Work of Holy Childhood.

c) The practice of receiving Holy Communion every Saturday or at least pray special prayers in honor of the Sacred Heart of Mary for the conversion of sinners is also very good.

d) Pope Pius X has then granted indulgences to two most beautiful prayers while exhorting the faithful to frequently recite it: one *for the spread of the pious custom of frequent communion*,⁹ the other *for the sanctification of the clergy*.

e) Many pious souls often repeat the short prayer, “*Divine, Eternal Father, I offer to you the most precious | blood of Jesus Christ in reparation for my sins and for the needs of the Holy Church.*”

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⁹ Cf. the *Decretum de quotidiana Ss. Eucharistiae sumptione* “*Sacra Tridentina Synodus*”, decreed on the authority of Pius X by the Sacred Congregation of the Council, dated 20 December 1905.

f) Many prayers can be found in pious books against the vice of cursing, for the preservation of the innocence of children, for the spread of religious instruction, for the growth of the good press, for priestly zeal, etc. Regarding an unmarried woman, one reads: "Wanting to participate at the good the proclaimers of God's word do, while cooperating for their fruitfulness, while listening to the sermon, the catechism, etc., she, with frequent short prayers prayed to the Lord to pour his divine strength on the preacher, and to touch the heart of the listeners with the effectiveness of his grace."

A missionary arrived in a parish for the Spiritual Exercises: the expected results, however, were not quite promising. Well, the missionary asked the parish priest if he knew some good souls who could come often to communion and recite the rosary well. – Yes, there is this beggar, very pious, very patient. After having her called, the missionary ordered her to put together each day the holy communion and the continuing recitation of the rosary while he preached. She obeyed and the results of the exercises were very good: leaving, he told the parish priest, *Don't thank me; thank the beggar.*

81 *Particular interests*

Then, going down to the particular interests of souls, the means for promoting them are almost infinite. Just to mention some of them:

a) To aim at some specific person for whom one wants to obtain eternal salvation, for example, a relative, a friend, sinner or not: then to pray often for him, to make some small mortifications, some fasting if this is convenient.

b) To pray for the special needs of those in agony, of the poor, of families, especially when there is a great need for prayers, while promoting three-day prayers, novenas, visits to churches, pilgrimages, etc.

c) To let the beneficial dew of divine graces fall on all efforts beneficial for souls: for example the reconciliation of enemies, the institution of a pious organization, a notice one wants to make, etc.

d) To do with prayer what could not be done through work or word: it is not difficult for the Lord to raise others to do in our stead what we cannot or He himself would directly do it.

As a conclusion of this article, let us remember that the Lord does not know how to turn down one who prays. One day, a priest had to prepare for the last sacraments a young man on his fourth year university course: but the unhappy man had lost his faith. The zealous priest, a personal friend | of the sick person, had often visited him and had tried all the ways of reason and of the heart: but all in vain. A pious young woman began then a fervent novena with communion, rosary, fasting with bread and water. She had not finished her devotion yet when the sick person spontaneously asked for the holy sacraments. He received them with most visible signs of sorrow and he wanted that the holy communion be given him often. God alone is the Lord of the heart, who can direct as he wants with his miracles of grace.

82

ART. II – APOSTOLATE OF EXAMPLE

Most easy and effective apostolate! It is an apostolate within everybody's reach and more especially the woman's! "*Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father in heaven*",¹⁰ so Jesus said. "And it is precisely the light of public good example and the open profession of the Christian faith that more greatly influenced the pagan world to get converted. Apostles, the clergy, women, girls, if with words they manifested their thoughts of faith, if with works of holiness they proved that they are convinced of it and they manifested more that this faith was divine inasmuch as it was already working on them a profound change. They shone with this light at home, in the neighborhood, in society, | before the courts themselves and in martyrdom... and in the end they were victorious! Even at present, Catholics in Germany, in England, in the United States of America, know how to hold high their heads among protestants who surround

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¹⁰ Cf. Mt 5:16 and Eph 5:9; 1Pt 2:12.

them; and their number is increasing, the heretics get converted, the enemies respect and honor them.” – Thus Msgr. Ressia, bishop of Mondovì, wrote and he adds that those who are brave enough to show themselves as true Christians, with faith and works, become true missionaries, true preachers among the people.

[The first pedagogy]

“The apostolate of example could raise a mocking sneer from among unbelievers, but it leaves in their soul a thorn that stings, that scolds them, call them back to duty. Also a small child who prays and lives like an angel ends up winning over rebellious hearts.” On this truth on the effectiveness of good example, there is no pedagogy scholar who does not agree: instead there are some who would say that the strength of the environment is the principal factor of education. And it is such a universal fact, so clear, so constant that it is almost useless to add as proof specific examples: teach a child holy matters but, if he lives in a corrupt environment, early shall he forget every exhortation you make in order to follow the examples that surround him.

84 We ourselves have experienced, we ourselves are experiencing: with saints one becomes a saint, with evil men, the heart rots. It is on this that follows the saying: *No one is that strong that he could cut himself off the others' influence, few succeed in resisting it always, the [greater part] follow it completely!* Would it not also be due to this very powerful force of example, force that during our days is ever recognized and celebrated, so that the Divine Master wanted to teach us first with example before with word?¹¹ He spent thirty years hidden in a poor man's shop, and only about one tenth of his life spent in preaching. Is it perhaps because good example is ten times more fruitful of good than words? Now let it be said if it is possible, how well a

¹¹ Notice the importance of the observation regarding the Magisterium of the Divine Master, accomplished through example first, before words. It is one of the themes Fr. Alberione would greatly develop.

woman who is truly virtuous sows goodness and stimulates it continually even before she speaks a word! She passes by and at her passing, a thousand eyes are directed to her, a thousand good thoughts arise, a thousand sentiments of admiration for her virtue is awakened, a thousand holy enviousness follow her. Only God counts everything: that fortunate soul does not know it: but the day of judgment shall reveal many mysteries! That will be the day of glorification of so many hidden benefactors of humanity. Flowers, dying, leave behind fertile seeds: these virtuous women leave so many of them!

[The attraction of piety and of hidden virtues]

There are many in the world who want to pass for strong spirits and they belittle the piety that they call with petty names. But they, upon seeing that certain number of souls who hungrily listen to the word of God and listen to it so frequently, instinctively reflect if it would not be better if they went along humbly with those lessons of the loftiest truths, explained in the most simple way; but in seeing those pious souls who every morning, like thirsty doves, come to the Eucharistic table, will rethink and ask whether they would be happier if they imitated them at least some times; but in seeing those devote souls who pray with all the opening of their hearts, remember the peace when, in the simplicity of childhood, also they were doing similarly. It would be a fleeting thought, like the wind, externally¹² dissimulated by the murkiness of a thousand material, vain, capricious worries: but it will be a thought that shall reawaken in the peacefulness of the evening, in a sleepless night, during a moment of sadness of misadventure: it shall bear fruit in its own time: perhaps only after years and years. He who harvests often does not think of him who sowed, but the Lord thinks well of him!

Greater is the effectiveness of good example when women know how to put piety together with the exercise of Christian virtues. Neither do we intend to speak here only of external and

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¹² DA has *eternamente* = *eternally* instead of *esternamente* = *externally*.

- 86 clamorous virtues, like | for example, certain charitable deeds: but particularly of internal and simple virtues. There are persons who are so full of humility that they never know how to complain, mistakes are always on their side, the others always have some reason for behaving the way they do, also as they sympathize with them. There are persons who are so delicate in their charity that they are always ready with acts of kindness, to interpret and foresee always a desire, to meet an expectation. There are persons who are so wise that they know how to let themselves be interrupted ten times while they write a letter or balance accounts, waiting without impatience the end of a conversation or the arrival of a person coming late, they know how to stop and then take up work again without letting irritation appear. The misunderstood intentions, the badly interpreted words, the malicious smiles, the icy welcome, the harsh rejection, all these seem to find an insensitive heart in such persons. They seem destined by Providence to spread some joy in these valley of tears! They seem to have the mission of making happy whoever approaches them! Little virtues, workaday, more suited to the woman: but virtues that draw, conquer¹³ the soul and let people exclaim: how beautiful is the Christian religion and piety, that they can inspire such a disinterested and loving life! – There are other virtues that show also because of a greater exterior impression: it is the smile suspended on the lips
- 87 of a | person loved, whom we know to be suffering, but still reveals the intimate joys of resignation: it is the bright look of an innocent person who reveals the gentleness and the sweetness of simplicity: it is the modest and reserved touch that uncovers entirely the chastity of a soul: it is the dignified silence before a hurt or calumny: it is the constant obedience also to orders given with little tact: it is the disinterest of great detachment of a heart. They are a sermon of every day, made without one behaving like a teacher, listened to also by him who does not dare [go] to church.

And finally, those women who dedicate their energies and also their lives to a life of works of charity still exercise a true

¹³ Italian original has *conquidono* instead of *conquistano* = *conquer*.

apostolate by example. We shall see elsewhere how the woman can consecrate herself to these works of charity: it is enough that here we remember the great esteem that religion receives because of its most numerous charitable institutions.

[The strength of charity]

The past year, Ozanam,¹⁴ considered the founder of the Society of St. Vincent De Paul, was remembered with great solemnity throughout the world and especially in France and in Italy. Well, here is how it happened. He had known the existence of a society so called of *beneficial studies*, dedicated to the friendly discussions of literary and philosophical subjects, useful for the day. He, with many companions, gave it the name and, by his work, that society was transformed into *Conference of history and philosophy*. Sixty plus young men carried out | and defended the historical and philosophical Christian truth, as apologists, before their adversaries, deists, Saint-Simonians, Fourierists, and materialists.¹⁵ It was a real field of battle wherein the truth met with error, where debates, sometimes hot ones, took place, where attempts were made to prevail in order to convert to Catholicism. Ozanam, however, noticed early the limited effectiveness of the theoretical discussion. *Instead of scientific discussions, would not a conference of charity be more effective? Less words and more deeds: let us go to the poor.* The same evening, he with his friends would take some firewood left for the last days of evening,

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¹⁴ Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam was born in Milan on 23 April 1813 of Giovanni Antonio, doctor, and Maria Nantas, of Lyon. He died in Marseilles on 8 September 1853. Proclaimed blessed by John Paul II in Paris on 22 August 1997.

¹⁵ Followers of different philosophical thoughts. Deism is a rational conception of the divinity, without supernatural divine elements or dogmas. – Saint-Simonians, disciples of Claude-Henri, count of Saint-Simon (Paris, 1760-1825), adventurer, philosopher and utopian sociologist, proponent of a perfect society founded on a “new Christianity.” Fourierists, disciples of Charles Fourier (1772-1837), French philosopher and economist, ideologue of political circles in France, England, and United States, proponents of a utopian socialism. – Materialists: old and new proponents of a philosophical thought that puts matter as the only foundation of reality.

and brought it¹⁶ to an abandoned poor man. A year after, the members of the conference of charity were about a hundred; a few years later they were fifty thousand conferences spread throughout the whole world; today they have one hundred four thousand members and they distribute to the poor eighteen million lire every year. And the goal? “Charity served as introduction to the faith: also here the needle was making the thread pass through and the members of St. Vincent became the most powerful missionaries for the Christian regeneration of the world.”

89 He who is not inclined to religion because of scientific conviction, or does not love it due to lack of education, appreciates it at least for the spirit of charity | of so many Catholics, of sisters full of love for the poor, of priests founders or supporters of hospitals, sanatoria, hospices, patronages for workers, secretariats for the people. How many times does the logic of the heart and good sense end up winning! The conversion of Emile Littré, Jew, head of the positivist philosophers of his time, Freemason, materialist is repeated. While ill, he was lovingly assisted by his wife and daughter, Catholics and pious. Their lasting patience struck him and said: *How could ever be such a rare virtue be the result of matter?* With divine grace, his system fell like a broken idol: he was converted and died as a Christian. It was the work of charity.

ART. III – APOSTOLATE OF THE WORD

The Lord’s word, that is the truth, is a divine seedling destined to germinate in the minds and to produce Christian thought, to germinate in the heart and produce the due affections¹⁷ and produce saints, to germinate in works and produce Christian life. It is the word that has converted the world, it is the word that keeps it Christian: inasmuch as faith, so the Apostle¹⁸ says, is the fruit of the words of God. Jesus Christ would have used an infinite number of other means to such an

¹⁶ DA has *lo* instead of *la*.

¹⁷ DA has *effetti* = *effects*, instead of *affetti* = *affections*.

¹⁸ Cf. Rom 10:8,14.

effect: but He chose this as the ordinary means: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing ...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*¹⁹ And nothing could ever take the place of | the effectiveness of the Gospel word, preached with zeal and with the divine blessing every Sunday, every day, every hour by many priests and missionaries to a limitless number of persons.

90

But not everyone could make the priest listened to: he is not equally understood by all: not all equally remember his words and apply them to practical life. And thus the Lord has placed at the side of the priest, in order to supplement his limited strength, the better ones among the laity and especially women. Women are most assiduous of God's word, because they are naturally pious: women better intuit the religious truths than men, not because these truths are most lofty and most noble, but inasmuch as they conform with nature, with the needs and the aspirations of the heart: women, better than men, remember them and apply them to cases, to circumstances, to actions of ordinary life. Women, then, become echoes that spread everywhere the priest's word, just like his spokesperson, as his means of transmission. Blessed are the zealous women! For them, St. Paul, left written those words that refer to Phoebe,²⁰ Evodia and Syntyche: *Who worked for the Gospel with me.*

And in how many ways can women exercise this most noble apostolate? In very many and very varied ways: here let us just refer to some of the principal ones.

Through correction

91

An advice given in time, spiced with the sweetness of charity, made valuable with the strength of warm exhortations, can save a soul from falls, from bad ways, from ruin. There

¹⁹ Cf. Mt 28:19-20 and Mk 16:15.

²⁰ DA has *Zeba*, but it should be *Febe* (or *Feba*) = *Phoebe*, already referred to in DA 45. Cf. Rom 16:1-2: "I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is [also] a minister of the church of Cenchareae... she has been a benefactor to many and to me as well.". As regards Evodia and Syntyche, cf. Phil 4:2.

are those who sin through malice, but there are those who, especially among the young, sin due to ignorance or to weakness: a word, an encouragement could save them. Corrections could be made, other than within the home, among relatives, among acquaintances, along the road, in church, in conversations. Sometimes with a long exhortation, more often with a word or an act of disapproval, most often with a look, and even with mere silence. No general rule could be established on what ought to be done in different cases: the particular circumstances of the person, of the place, of the time shall speak by themselves and the ardent zeal shall make one reflect and understand their voice.

Charity is ingenious in always finding new ways and, as an example, let me list down some, utilized by a young man called *Ingenious Bee*, pointed out by Frassinetti.

92 Wishing to correct a relative of hers, afraid that she might be badly received, she asked one of her friends who, in the presence of the relative, would correct her of that mistake, as if she herself had committed it: warning her, however, to measure her words | in a way that she did not tell lies. Rightly²¹ did her friend satisfy her desire; and she thanked her and promised her that in the future she would be careful not to commit such mistakes. The relative, without suspecting the use of such an art, remained edified by her humility in receiving the correction: and she understood that she herself would have to reform.

Knowing that a young woman lived badly, inasmuch as she was keeping a bad relationship, pretending to be a most cordial friend of hers, wrote her a letter wherein she called her attention first on the damage that her reputation, a most precious treasure that one can ever have in the world, suffered; and then the deplorable state of her soul and grave danger of eternal perdition; but all with so much humility, sweetness and affection that is truly friendly that it touched even the hardest of hearts.

Knowing as well that a young imprudent and malicious young man was hovering²² around a very simple girl, unknown

²¹ *Giusta*, from Latin *juxta*, that is: *according to [her desire]*.

²² *Gironzava* = *gironzolava* = *hovering around*.

to her mother, she wrote a note to her: in it, pretending to be a family friend, she warned of the danger that hung over her daughter. The daughter was better looked after and the young man disappeared.

It grieved her very much to hear that a neighbor who, at the height of anger, abused God's holy name. He had a | gracious little daughter who was just celebrating her first five years of age, simple and at the same time good. She called this little daughter, promising her a beautiful prize if she did what she was told. Having had her promise, she taught her to catch the moments her father got angry and, with her hand joined, she stood in front and told him: Dear daddy, do not curse the Lord; and this she did until the father was freed from that bad vice. And that if her father asked her regarding who might have taught her that manner, she would simply reply: the Lord: in fact she was speaking in God's name. The little girl performed so well her part: and the father, seeing himself before that little angel who prayed so kindly, he showed himself at first moved, but he was silent. Eventually, he asked the little girl why she behaved so: Because that way, she answered, the Lord told me to behave! To these words, the father's emotion reached its peak: the next day he went to confession and promised to change.

93

A singular manner of correction was this: to pray the persons that surrounded her to warn him of her defects, assuring that she would be pleased. Such persons in their turn asked for themselves the same favor: and thus she had the occasion to perform so many corrections and thus a lot of good.

Good words

94

It is the most ordinary and easiest way for the woman to exercise herself in zeal. How often are there afflicted persons! Well, to pour into their hearts the balsam of heavenly consolations, by speaking of Providence, of heaven, of the sufferings of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is work of zeal. How often are there persons embittered for an affront received, for a calumny and

loose talks about them that go around, for dislikes they experience! Well, to talk of the sweetness of Christian forgiveness, of exchanging good for evil, of the spirit of sacrifice, is a work of zeal.

95 There are also women who impose on themselves as a rule that of never ending a conversation without letting at least a good word come in: there are others who are used to always accompany material alms with a good advice: others still watch out to catch every occasion for advising a pious practice, for raising the soul to supernatural thoughts, to let sweet goodness be felt. I recall a young man who used to read the newspaper beside a chronically sick person: with the occasion, he knew how to concoct good reflections and add to such reading. For example, if the newspaper spoke about sudden death, he used to say: Happy was he if he was prepared. If the newspaper told the story of honors achieved, he would add: | Very well, as long as he also got divine approval. I remember a woman who, in the short span of an hour, working with some companions, knew how to make very good observations. Pricked by a needle and cheered up by her companions, she said smiling: This is nothing compared with the pains of purgatory. Later, showing a beautiful embroidery, she noted that our life is similar to it: bad deeds would waste it, just as bad weaves waste the embroidery.

A pious lady told how she managed to introduce the practice of the rosary in a family with just speaking about it in passing while visiting: a woman of the populace succeeded to re-establish peace between a couple by just inviting them together to a party in her home: a single lady, often visiting and treating very humbly and very charitably a family, neglectful as regards religion, had obtained that the children be sent to catechism classes and make their first communion.

And how many good words are like seeds sown, fallen from between the farmer's fingers, destined to grow and bear a hundredfold fruit!

Men do not know how to appreciate them: but angels know their numbers and appreciate them: God shall not allow their recompense to remain unpaid.

For the catechism

96

By promoting the teaching of catechism, women become directly associated with the most noble, necessary and effective priestly ministry: to instruct the children. And women can do so in many ways.

First of all with teaching Christian doctrine, when opportunity comes. In almost every parish, priests need catechists, capable and gifted with true spirit of piety, inasmuch as he is made to divide the children into many classes according to their ability and their level of instruction. A woman who attends to sermons, parish instructions, catechism: a woman who tries to supplement deficiencies in religious instruction by reading good books: a woman who attends to reading some of the many commentaries and explanations of the catechism text, can easily reach the *knowledge* necessary for teaching the children the first rudiments of the faith. Furthermore, she needs to be a woman of *piety*, of *edifying life* and of *zeal for the salvation of souls*: and these things are most necessary for her who must teach religion: she shall have frequently participated in the holy sacraments, engaging herself to practice Christian virtues and to love prayer.

It is easily²³ understandable how come there are so many women who do not have the time or the freedom for these so noble activities: it is understandable how many women either do not possess the knowledge, or the influence on youth, or other qualities: and yet in every parish there are those who could offer their help to the parish priest, ready, it is understood, that they will accept all the advice. Other women perhaps should remain happy to imitate a young woman of whom it was written: "Having known a girl most ignorant of the truths of faith and of the Christian's duties, with the pretext of teaching her how to read and write, she managed to convince her mother to let her go to her for a number of months. Meanwhile, she taught her all that mattered knowing; she instilled on her sentiments of love and fear of God: and then, always keeping good

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²³ *Di leggeri = facilmente = easily.*

relations with her, she succeeded to let her sanctify the feasts, frequently approach the holy sacraments and the teaching of Christian doctrine.”

How many times could a woman not teach catechism to children of neighbors and relatives? She could easily approach them, easily she could attract them with small rewards. And this manner of apostolate is especially suited to women who live alone, or are free for themselves: often, however, also certain persons in service to that family wherein no due importance is given to religious instruction could exercise it.

98 Neither are lacking other paths open to the woman’s zeal as regards catechism. Often she could use her influence to let children join | classes on Christian doctrine, especially among those who for reasons of friendship, acquaintance, kinship or dependence have relations with her. She could support the work of catechism with offerings that could be used for prizes, games, trips and entertainment for the children. More, she could, in certain special circumstances, give²⁴ her moral and also material help for the foundation or growth of some oratory, recreation on feast days or parish school of catechism. History recommends²⁵ rightly the generous charity of a great number of women who helped out in the foundation of pious activities with their generous donations, made while alive or by testament.

Now there is no doubt that among these works one of the most urgent today is the establishment of oratories, recreation centers, parish schools of catechism.

And here are the indulgences granted by the pope for the purpose of promoting the teaching of catechism:

To parents: 100 days each time that they teach Christian doctrine to their children and to their household members (Paul V – October 1607).

To teachers: seven years, each time that during feasts they lead students to the Christian doctrine and to teach it to them. (Paolo V - idem.).

²⁴ DA has *dove* = *where* instead of *dare* = *to give*.

²⁵ *Commenda* = *raccomanda*, *approva* = *recommends*, *approves*.

To all the faithful: 100 days each time that | for half an hour they study the catechism either in order to teach it or to learn it. (Paolo V - idem.).

99

Seven-year-olds and as those forty years old or so, each time that, having gone to confession and communion, they come to catechism when it is taught to children in churches and oratories (Clement XII - 16 May 1736).

Plenary indulgence during the days of Christmas, of Easter and of Sts. Peter and Paul, if they assiduously attend catechism lessons in order to teach it or learn it, on condition that, after having gone to confession and communion, they pray according to the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff (Clement XII - idem.).

Three years in each of the feasts of the Most Holy Virgin, if they are used to gather in schools or in classes to learn Christian doctrine for as long as on those feasts they go to confession (Pius IX, *Rescript of the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences*, 18 July 1877).

Seven years if they also go to communion (Pius IX, *Rescript*, idem.).

Songs

Music has a sweet and strong attraction even on less sensitive hearts. It is something most known, forecast by the ancients in the fable of Orpheus.²⁶ A holy bishop of old, seeing his rough people very restive when listening to the truths of faith, turned them to verses and he himself sang them at the height of a bridge | where many people passed: attracted by the song, they listened to the doctrine that they did not want to hear in speeches. More, that bishop assigned some poor people, gifted with good voice, to sing and to sell his songs.

100

Women can turn to this good deed above all by favoring the spread of indifferent songs. Besides, people sing songs for the

²⁶ A mythical figure, Thracian singer, son of Apollo and a nymph, whose song could move trees and stones, tame the fiery and to convince Cerberus to open the doors of Hades so he could bring out her bride Euridice.

sake of singing without reflecting if the meaning of the words is good or bad: then quite easily they accept whatever song. And women can acquire such songs; they can distribute them: they could sing them first, if this is possible and convenient for their state: they could also see to it that they learn them and little by little spread them... How many bad thoughts and sentiments are avoided! Thoughts and feelings that are excited by bad songs that have become fashionable! More: women can see to it that especially the youth learned songs and sacred hymns: to spread booklets and sheets that contain them; to repeat them at home and in workplaces. There were women who under the pretext of songs knew how to attract girls at their homes and then teach them good practices, attracted them more often to the church and to the holy sacraments and with them spread among the people pious and devote songs (Pius IX, in 1858, granted various indulgences to whomever promotes the singing of sacred hymns).

101

ART. IV – APOSTOLATE OF WORKS

Under this title one could list down a truly extraordinary number of works of zeal wherein women can dedicate themselves. The importance of each of them is such that a long chapter or perhaps a whole book would be needed to conveniently illustrate each one of them. He who would want to consider somehow this theme cannot but exclaim: Oh! How vast is the field for religious-moral action open for women! How much good can this weak creature do, when she sets her mind, her heart, her energies to the cause of goodness! Let us bear in mind that we are considering women only as individuals.

For the press

Above all, a woman, when she is gifted with culture, can write. It makes sense to say it: there is a great number who could get into this most noble apostolate: and yet they do not! Is it because of a natural repugnance to produce, is it because of

neglect,²⁷ is it because of an exaggerated conviction of incapacity, or is it, perhaps, even more often, little esteem of this great means of doing good? Well, better consider the truly extraordinary power of the press which is growing every day because of the increasing desire to read. Consider how the written | word ends up being read by thousands of persons and communicating to all some good thought. Consider how other women avail with the press for ungodly and immoral purposes: consider how one can write, also for newspapers, without the need of having one's real name known: consider that it does not take a lot of knowledge to write a letter to the editor of a weekly broadsheet. There are sisters, there are those employed in post, telegraph, telephone offices, there are lady professors, there are women of the educated and noble class, who often have very beautiful ideas, have useful information of events that take place around them, who have very good initiatives to propose. And why could they not write? Praise to the humble woman who challenges her own strengths and asks advice and submits her work for approval by competent persons: but let it be remembered: that is a talent that can bear much fruit. And how can women write? By being a correspondent of a Catholic newspaper for her own town or city: by taking care of a column that almost in every periodical is called *Women's department*: being in competition with the compilation of women's magazines: at times also by taking care of religious bulletins and even writing books, morality novels, short pamphlets, etc.

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More: women can work in the | spread of the good press. And here there is no woman who cannot cooperate. There is a big number of good periodicals that are barely surviving because of limited circulation: just as there are many very good books that need nothing else but being known. How much good can a woman do when she solicits among relatives, acquaintances, townmates subscriptions for those bulletins, those weekly publications, those dailies that she considers useful!²⁸

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²⁷ DA has *neghittosa* instead of *neghittosità* = *neglect, laziness*.

²⁸ It is probable that Alberione had in mind some Piedmontese diocesan publications, founded by the *Opera dei congressi*. In fact, a first initiative of

How much could she do by lending at least one's own reading materials to as many people as possible, perhaps passing them on in cafes, hotels, at the neighborhood circle and meeting places, at the beauty salon!

How much good could be done, little by little with those gentle and holy works of charity, where the woman is teacher, in taking away a bad reading material and exchanging it with something good, or at least indifferent!

There are women as well who are well provided who could also subscribe to a good periodical or magazine for this or that person, this or that family: there are those others who could let free samples of reading materials in those houses where one can hope for new subscribers; others still, while they distribute so

the diocesan committees of the Opera was the founding of a periodical that would serve as official organ. It was thus that were born in Cuneo, *Il dovere*, (*Duty*), a weekly of the diocesan and parish committees; *La gazzetta di Fossano*, (*The Fossano Gazette*) organ of the diocesan and parish committees, that from 17 August 1898 would be replaced by *La fedeltà* (*Fidelity*); *Il Corriere della diocesi e della città di Fossano* (*The Courier of the diocese and city of Fossano*); *La voce di Novara* (*The voice of Novara*), twice weekly and official organ of the diocesan committee which would be succeeded on 16 February 1901, by *La cronaca novarese* (*The Novara Chronicle*). In Alba, *La gazzetta d'Alba* (*The Alba Gazette*) (founded in 1882) that defined itself as "political-religious newspaper of the diocese and vicinity, informed after solidly Catholic principles"; in Mondovì, *Il risveglio cattolico* (*The Catholic reawakening*) was the twice weekly that strenuously battled in defense of religion, of the papacy, of the people; in Ivrea, *Il pensiero del popolo* (*The people's mind*); in Asti in 1900 the publication of *La gazzetta di Asti* (*The Asti Gazette*) began to take the place of the honored *Sveglia* (*Awakening*); in Acqui *L'ancora* (*The Anchor*) was founded in 1903 (cf. "Primo elenco dei periodici cattolici a rilevante contenuto sociale editi nelle diocesi piemontesi dal 1860 al 1914", edited by DELIA CONTRI M. e NEGRI V., in *Bollettino dell'Archivio per la storia del movimento sociale cattolico in Italia*, Milano, a. III [1968], pp. 161-192). Other "good" newspapers, in Alba, *Alba nuova* (*New Alba*); *La torre* (*The tower*) in Santo Stefano Belbo, *La rocca* (*The rock*) in Vezza d'Alba. But publications from the other side exist as well: the Alba socialists for sometime published *Il sole dell'avvenire* (*The sun of the future*); in the city of Bra the radicals were printing *Il XX settembre* (*The XX of September*); the socialists of Mondovì had *Lotte nuove* (*New struggles*) with closed fist and spark: "The world is governed by public opinion, and this by journalism" so a Jesuit editor wrote during those years ("L'onnipotenza del giornalismo," in *La Civiltà Cattolica* 4 [1907] 559-574).

much alms, could reserve some part for the good press: this at times proves more useful than donations of food.

Something similar could be done as regards books: to lend one's own: to give as gifts those that are useful or suitable to persons who shall read them: to suggest them in conversations: to seek to exchange the bad with others that are good and, as much as possible, attractive. How many times one would succeed to block sin and perversion by doing so, and not only that, but also to impart good conduct and religious instruction.

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Here is what one reads about a holy young woman: Desiring to introduce a good book into a home, she brought it with her while visiting once, and there, as if she forgot, she left it. After a few days, she went back asking for the book, as if she wanted to take it back: she however asked if anyone had read it and if the book was liked, if this were true or not: they answered her affirmatively; and she insisted that they kept it because, as it was true, she had other copies for herself: hence, the book remained in that family as she wanted it so.

For this purpose, there are pious persons who keep for themselves a real small library or at least some books that they seek to let others know and be continually circulated, happy that doing so they do some good. There are other persons who, although poor, set aside every day some amount of money, saved perhaps from small pleasures, in order to buy some books. There are persons who procure those books that they know are useful and are wanted by others.

And with these, we also remember another good work: that of spreading leaflets by the streets, squares, parlors, in public vehicles, trams, train coaches, containing statements and sayings of great persons: as well as that of leaving, pretending to forget, good newspapers and printed matters wherever: and another is to paste on envelopes, packages, on walls, on the backseats of public walkways, in trams, etc., small cards containing some good sayings: and finally that of writing on the walls of one's home, along the stairways, etc., some good advice.

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Those who will read them shall have good thoughts: and those who caused this would have great merit before God.

For the sick and the poor

Ordinarily these are the better disposed to correspond with works of zeal: they whom one can approach easily through services and acts of kindness: they are those who need more a zealous soul, who may inspire resignation and dispose them to the final step, when this is needed. Visiting them, helping them, consoling them, the soul draws a lot of good.

106 Now there might be sick persons in different conditions. They could be poor, abandoned, needing everything. In that case, women can visit | them quite frequently: they can give them the most urgent assistance, they could supply the doctor, medicines, blankets, food, etc.: they could, according to circumstances, see to it that they be accepted in hospitals, or insist that the authorities of the place or wealthy persons took care of them. The sick could stay in their homes but well cared for, or in hospitals: and thus women can, if their social relations allow it, visit them briefly, encourage them, offer their services.

However, in one case or the other, material care has no other purpose than as means for achieving the end: to do good to souls. The zealous woman shall not do any visiting without leaving behind a good word: if she sees it proper, she shall advice that the patient also received the holy sacraments before he becomes very sick:²⁹ she shall seek out prayers of good souls, holy cards, crucifixes, etc., for the sick, as the case may be.

Perhaps there may be sick persons who are not religious, are vicious, indifferent: they shall with difficulty think of calling the priest on time. It would then be a work of charity if a woman, given the occasion, shall remind the sick person his duty: or else she could ask the doctor, a relative, an acquaintance, to do the same thing, for as long as she tries to approach the sick person.

107 *The poor you always have with you,*³⁰ our Lord | Jesus Christ said: and everyday we notice the truth of this divine

²⁹ Probably the author meant something like *when the patient is not very sick or when the patient is not in danger of dying.*

³⁰ Cf. Mt 26:11 and its parallels: Mk 14:7; Jn 12:8.

statement. The poor we find along the streets, in squares; the poor we visit in houses; the poor we have even in big buildings and with rich clothes. Women can exercise charity for them in a thousand ways. Not only with material assistance, distributed with prudence; but with good advice; but with offering convenient and possible jobs; by inspiring towards resignation, trust in Providence. And in other ways as well. In fact there are poor widows to help in the education of their families, there are children to watch over during the absence of parents, there are clothes to make for the poor, for the child care centers, for old folks. And for this, wealthy ladies, ladies in town and city centers are more readily available: while in the rural areas, it happens that what is needed is assistance to widows in farm work or to orphans.

Seconding the zeal of pastors of the Church

1. *The zeal of popes*

The Pope, vicar of Jesus, has received the power not only to teach peoples the truth and morals of the Gospel, but also to guide the zeal of everyone, according to the needs of the times.³¹ And because of this, with the surfacing of new circumstances, he specifies | what particular works are to be promoted. Thus Leo XIII³² inculcated in a special manner the recitation of the holy rosary either in public, or in homes; Pius X took special care of the communion of children; other popes recom-

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³¹ Alberione shows how particularly attentive he is of this matter. A sign of the times is the Christian feminism, which is “none else but the application of the great principles of the Gospels to the needs of today.” cf. *DA* 152; 175; 216.

³² Leo XIII (1878-1903) is the pope who issued the first encyclical on the rosary, *Superiore anno* (1884). Leo XIII's other encyclicals on the topic were: *Vi è ben noto* (1887), *Octobri mense* (1891), *Laetitiae sanctae* (1892), *Iucunde semper* (1894), *Adiutricem populi* (1895), *Fidentem* (1896), *Augustissimae Virginis* (1897), *Diuturni temporis* (1898). The list demonstrates the importance attributed above all by Pope Leo XIII to this prayer, which every day leads towards the reflection on the life of Jesus, then on the evangelical faith and in a special manner to Mary, the mother of God.

mended in a most special manner the Work of the Propagation of the Faith and of Holy Childhood, the St. Peter's Pence,³³ etc. Zealous women shall always receive with humble submission and as words of the Holy Spirit, every command of the Holy See: not only to defend it from eventual accusations of evil persons³⁴ but to work in such a way that, in her own circle of influence, it is observed. And how many times has she the occasion of letting known and having observed, for example, fasting and abstinence? How many times could she act as the collector of St. Peter's Pence or the zealous promoter of the Work of the Propagation of the Faith?

It can happen at times that women, the learned especially, are tempted to question or judge the acts of the pontifical prescriptions: this is not only outside the woman's mission, but it also can cause scandal or harm. Receive with reverence and execute: this, instead, is her duty.

2. *The zeal of parish priests*

109 The parish priest is he who has the real responsibility over souls that have been entrusted to him: | to him belongs, as right and duty, non only the principal part, but also the directive part in the care for souls and of the pastoral action in the area under his care. He can avail with other persons and it is his duty to avail with them in proportion to the needs of the situation, depending on the ability of the cooperators, of the goals he sets. As for the others, and especially for women, to humbly second him, to cooperate³⁵ with him according to their energies, to

³³ During the Medieval times, States and Lordships used to deposit an annual contribution to the Holy See. England (VIII century), where the payment was abolished in 1534; the kingdom of the two Sicilies (1059), Denmark (1063), The kingdoms of Spain (1073), Bohemia (1075), Croatia and Dalmatia (1076), Portugal (1144), the Scandinavian kingdoms until the Reformation recognized this as a special tribute to the pope. In 1859, the Holy See found itself having a deficit of 80,000 scudos. It was enough to launch the idea (it seems by Montalembert), that there should be a contest of solidarity among Catholics to support the pontifical finances.

³⁴ In DA: *tristi* = *cattivi* = *evil persons*.

³⁵ DA has: *l'assecondare umilmente il cooperatore* = *to humbly second the cooperator*.

place themselves completely at his disposal. Women, with regards to the parish priest, in ordinary cases, shall do what the hand does in relation with the head: a part of the body executes and serves, makes its own needs known and the decisions is up to the head.

When the parish priest encourages a devotion, an association, a pious union,³⁶ truly zealous women should support their pastor; when the parish priest judges an institution necessary, women, whatever might be their condition, should render their cooperation, moral, or material it may be; when the parish priest calls for the cooperation of good people either for the church or for the hospital, or for catechetical activities, let women respond to the appeal according to their strengths. In a parish even when energies consecrated to good works abounded, little will ever be achieved if these energies were not united: now the only person who could unite them, lead them, channel them is the parish priest. All the institutions that have pastoral goals, all the initiatives for salvation | of souls, all persons who are zealous, *in ordinary cases, directly or indirectly*, must have him as head.

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For the frequent reception of the holy sacraments

It is true indeed that the frequent reception of the holy sacraments, especially the holy communion, is one of the principal means for the practice of Christian life. To frequently receive communion, the state of grace is required and right intention: communion wants to be preceded by acts of faith, of love, of repentance and of resolutions for an ever better life: Jesus Christ, entering into us, brings in new strengths, fruit of grace, for putting a brake on the passions and for the practice of virtues: these are the three motives for which Pope Pius X promoted so much the frequent reception of holy communion. And

³⁶ A pious union was an association of the faithful instituted for purposes of prayer or acts of charity. It was not necessary that it were recognized as a moral personality. For its juridical existence and spiritual capacity, the approval of the local Ordinary was enough. The goods it possessed belonged to the members, who are, however, obliged to respect either the conditions of the donor or the specific purpose of such goods. Pious unions appeared in the Church already immediately after the Council of Trent.

every zealous woman can always support, promote and spread the usage. Many are the means.

Here is first of all what Frassinetti writes of his *Ingenious Bee*: “She observed how young persons lose their love for the world after most assiduously receiving holy communion and then dedicate themselves to serving God fervently and sometimes also in virginity; for the love that they bore for God and for chastity, and furthermore because she saw that this was a most effective means so that young women might set themselves to promote the glory of God, she studied means to attract
111 all the young girls of her acquaintance to frequent communion. This she did through examples and exhortations. If she found still some unease in some, she exerted this effort: she asked them to want to dedicate seven Wednesdays, or seven Saturdays, in honor of Mary Most Holy Immaculate, while going to the sacraments during those days. More easily they agreed: and meanwhile they got used to that practice and persevered eventually. From this practice came about three benefits:

“1. Those girls, so to obtain from their confessors the advice to go to communion so often, lived very attentively as not to commit sins, not even venial sins, consciously.

“2. Going to communion often, with purity of conscience, they enjoyed the consolations of the spirit, and hence, without almost being aware of it, they began disliking the world with its vanities and pleasures, until, sometimes, leaving it behind.

“3. They became as if small apostles amidst their homes, companions and friends, promoting everywhere God’s glory and the good of souls.”

More: every woman, though she may have very limited social contacts, can always invite among her acquaintances and friends: on the occasion of special feasts, of holy Spiritual Exercises, of feast days, in order to offer suffrages for some dear deceased person, [and] during the months consecrated to Mary
112 Most Holy or to the Sacred Heart | of Jesus when it has to do with obtaining some important grace. For this purpose, often it is enough that she remembers that the most powerful means to obtain the Lord’s blessings is not that of lighting a candle, but a novena or a triduum of holy communions.

Furthermore: women can see to the *diffusion particularly of those devotions or pious unions that promote frequent communion*: such as, for example, the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi, the Pious Union for the communion of children, the devotion to the first Friday of the month, etc.

Training cooperators in zeal

There are persons who are ardent with zeal for the salvation of the souls of others: God has given them an extraordinary light with which they have known how much Jesus has done for them. These persons would want to multiply up to an infinite degree their prayers, their counsels, their efforts always for the salvation of more souls: they would want to multiply themselves, too. And, seeing how limited are their own energies, they experience a kind of discomfort. Well, they could be told: be consoled: you can duplicate, triplicate, centuplicate, too, if you want. And how? By training cooperators to your zeal. Read these sentences and you shall see: “Not being able to place in direct relation (a pious | young woman) with all the girls of the population, to whom she desired to do some good, with the pretext of some work or service, made friends with some poor girls, but many good single ladies, who might be able to help her in her work: she taught them in many good activities and made use of these, doing through them so much that she could not do on her own in behalf of many others.” More: “This pious young woman when she came to know that in some place or town there was some good single women committed and zealous in promoting good, she immediately sent them some booklets or other things of devotion as gift, accompanying these with a letter in which she sought friendship, while offering herself to be of service in everything, as far as she could. In this manner, she had good friends in every place, friends she never met: with them she kept communication, encouraged them with her warm exhortations, and she obliged herself to have devote little gifts that she sent them once in a while. Through them she established in many places pious unions and religious practices, very useful to devote souls and to the populations themselves.”

114 “A good thought spread is like an angel that moves about in the name of him who sends it to do good where it penetrates. You would want to accomplish some of those works of mercy that are sweet for the souls: give alms, for example: but you are poor. Well, express | a thought that demonstrates the merit of giving and the needs of the poor; this thought perhaps might penetrate into the heart of rich persons who will give. Would you want to visit sick persons, teach children, etc.: but you cannot, with duties holding you back at home, or you do not have enough: well, exhort persons who are free to do it in your stead.”

Very many and varied are the works of zeal possible for women: they can pray for the salvation of others, they could make use of words and of works: we have seen this already.

Very well, in each of these works women can associate themselves as cooperators:

In prayer: Concerning some sinner to convert, some dying person who is hard to approach, some hatred to extinguish, some work to promote: it is always possible for women to invite their pious friends, young girls, acquaintances to take with her the holy communion, do a triduum, a novena, a visit to the church. In some occasions, it is enough to remember the needs, so they are understood and prayed for: for example, a serious illness, a calamity, an accident, the missions, the heretics. And as far as deceased persons are concerned, there would not be any great difficulty to obtain for them a well attended holy mass, a rosary well said, a *De profundis*, a *requiem*.

115 *In the apostolate of the word.* Just take a look around you: and how many persons, also pious ones, spend their precious time in useless talks. In order to better make use of their tongues, they do not need anything but being trained. Well, let it be told to them that they could talk about what they hear in sermons: that they can let pious unions and religious practices be known: that they can speak about good works, the life of saints, virtues. Let it be told to them that perhaps they could get involved in teaching catechism: that they could spend their time

to console the afflicted, bring peace to families, let good words always come into conversations.

In good works. Here, one could always easily suggest visiting some sick persons, supporting through example and help the good works desired by the parish priest, to exchange good books and newspapers for the bad books and newspapers.

One could always be advised to commit herself to support or even be active so that some organization be introduced: Little rosarians,³⁷ living rosary, blue habit; the collection of offerings for St. Peter's Pence, for the Work of Holy Childhood, for the Work of the Propagation of the Faith; in order to promote frequent reception of communion among children.

Neither would we pretend to create at once | an apostle: no, the Spirit of God is not violent and formation shall take place *gradually*. One begins with doing some good within the home, especially to the father, to the mother, to brothers, to sisters and eventually to house helpers. At times it is a matter of inviting them to a sermon, to the holy sacraments, to a liturgical celebration: at other times it has to do perhaps with taking away from the house some object of scandal as books or pictures, or else, it is a matter of giving a good advise. Easier yet shall be to cultivate the spirit of devotion in some sister or niece, to introduce the practice of reciting a third part of the holy rosary at home, to do something that some good reading is done at home.

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³⁷ An association present in Alba, thanks to Canon Giuseppe Priero, of Fr. Alberione's age and a collaborator since the seminary days. The rosary was strongly imparted by the *Associazione dei sacerdoti adoratori* (*Association of priest adorers*) and Can. Priero wanted to involve in it also the children that were gathered in the church of Santa Caterina, in front of the Seminary, under the guidance of Miss Marta Saglietti, who, later, became the house helper of Canon Francesco Chiesa. – The *Associazione dei sacerdoti adoratori* was supported by the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, founded by St. Peter Julien Eyraud, apostle of the Eucharist. Fr. Alberione became its member in November of 1907, the year of his ordination to the priesthood. His number was 8694. The enlisted members were more than 50,000. Until 1937, Paulines who wanted could also join the Association. In fact, in its registry, one could read the names of the first Paulines. The origin, the root of the Hour of "Visit" or Eucharistic Adoration proper to the members of the Pauline Family could be traced here. (MM).

One could move on from the persons at home to friends and acquaintances and particularly to girls: to narrate to them some things from the lives of saints, to guide them to some fervent confessor, to make them like some practice of devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament or to the Most Holy Virgin.

In this manner the young woman is trained little by little to the apostolate! Let her not be discouraged at the first failures: let her pray more, seek new ways of doing good, seek advice, always hope.

117 Neither should one pretend that every young woman, also the pious ones, or every unmarried woman on her own, would become zealous apostles: each has her own spirit, her own aptitudes, her own inclinations. Something could be offered for everyone to do: not all however | shall be able to accomplish the same work: others shall prefer the apostolate of prayer; others, that of example; others that of the word.

In the world there shall always be a class of persons who shall imitate Marta³⁸ and another class shall follow Mary. But attention has to be paid in choosing the more capable, the more pious, the more active, and not only they: but attention shall be paid also to distribute to them the work that corresponds to each one's inclinations.

³⁸ Cf. Lk 10:38-42 but also Jn 11:20-39 and 12:2.

THE WOMAN'S ZEAL AT HOME

The family is *most appropriately* the woman's area of work: it has been said above and it is good to bear it in mind each time that one speaks of the activities of women. As a consequence, this topic deserves to be discussed much more broadly. And yet for the purpose I have established, doing so would not be necessary: more so because everyone exalts the woman's mission at home, many books deal with it widely, the clergy generally are persuaded about it. I shall take note by preference of what is more urgent in our times: considering the woman as mother, as wife, as sister.

ART. I – THE MOTHER

Need for her assistance

It has been said and it has been published: religious and moral training of the youth belongs to the priest. Well, this is not only a mistake but to believe it is a misfortune. It is a mistake: inasmuch as the right and the duty to educate in a Christian manner the children belongs *in the first place* to parents: they who have given life to the body have to give as well | the spiritual life to the soul. And the Church, more than any code of law, respects the authority of father and mother: so much so that in ordinary cases, she does not grant the baptism of children against the will of parents. A reconfirmation of such principle was lately given by the pope when, mentioning those to whom belongs the promotion of the children to communion, placed the parents in the first place, then the confessor, the parish priest, etc.

It is a misfortune, indeed, considering that nothing equals the influence of a mother on her children: "The mother," so the famous author of *Formation de la jeune fille*,¹ "somehow molds

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¹ Cf. BOLO E., *Fanciullezza cristiana* [original title: *Les jeunes filles*], Italian translation by Fr. Marcello Castelli B., Napoli, Bandinella & Loffredo 1910.

the soul of her child, who is under her eyes, in her hands, under the omnipotent warmth of her love. Effortlessly, she communicates to him her ideas, her sentiments, her tastes.” Now: in what would the priest succeed, he who would believe of dispensing with the concurrence of the mother in the religious formation of the young persons’ hearts? Very little. Rather, I would say that anyone who wants to speak of *true training, that is, moral-religious education*, he would succeed in almost nothing.

120 Let it be noted well: to educate the young religiously does not mean to teach some catechism questions, with some prayers formulas: it does not mean to prepare the child to receive well his first holy communion and the sacrament of confirmation: no, these things are necessary, they are | means, they are a part of the religious-moral education, but they are little. To educate means to *accustom*: in our case it means to *accustom the youth to think and act religiously*. And in more common terms it should mean that the young is trained or educated morally and religiously not only when in his mind the truths of the catechism predominate over other thoughts, when in his life he has as principal aspiration that of saving his soul, when he behaves well and accomplishes the acts of worship with true awareness. This is the most fundamental principle. Philosophy, morals, experience teach him: this training, I mean to say, these moral-religious habits are a real result of repetition of acts. They require that there be a good angel always near that young man and who continually repeats and applies to real events the truths learned from catechism: who would let the prayers and communions be repeated; who requires obedience, charity, chastity. And this not only for one day: but for two, for ten, for months, for years, till the young man has reached the point of *doing things by himself with pleasure, with readiness, in everything his duty*. A priest cannot arrive at this: neither the father completely: only the mother can.

121 It shall be said: the son belongs to the father no less than to the mother: therefore the duty of educating him rigorously belongs to both. | Whatever it is in theory: in practice, [children] are entrusted more to the mother. In fact, the man often is busy outside the home: he goes to the farm, to the shop, to the busi-

ness establishment, to factories. His mind is more often absorbed in concerns over material things. By the time he could dedicate his attention to children, he does not ordinarily possess the religious spirit to a high degree: he does not know how to enter into the hearts of his children as much as their mother can: often he does not think over such things if not when his attention is called or when he is advised to do so by his wife.

And it is for such reason that the aforementioned author says: "Then on the priests lies the duty of using, for the education of the youth, his various helps and especially the mothers: to urge them and to guide them towards a common action."

Purpose of education

A young man shall have learned an art or an occupation when he could exercise it without the assistance and counsel of the teacher. In the same sense, a young man could be said to have been morally and religiously educated when, away from the eyes of superiors or of parents, would know how to be religious and well behaved. We need to train the young to live on their own: it is necessary to train in them that strong will to resist all influence of evil that surfaces from all sides: it is necessary to impart on them religious instructions that they could then resist the | avalanche of errors, that fall from all around: to equip them with practical sense that they won't be guided by the first advice, by the first companion, by whatever example: to fill their hearts with such sentiments of piety, of goodness, of charity that reject the baseness of passions. It is an immense and complex work inasmuch as it has to do with overwhelming and dominating the soul. It means giving a well enlightened faith that establishes the *ideas*: a true piety that guides the *sentiments*; a *resolute will* that assures perseverance: a *practical sense* that may be a sure guide; *an upright conscience* that is not easily seduced; a *supernatural urge* that, bringing heaven to mind, makes less powerful the attractions of this earth. And this not in whatever manner: but energetically and prudently.

Energetically: often it is beneficial to oppose the small caprices of the age, to love more with the head than with the heart,

to sacrifice comfort, time, health. Energetically: persevering until good habit is formed: not abandoning, as it happens too often, at the critical age of the young man: providing for all the details of his needs.

123 *Prudently*: by now our ears are full of the most common complaints: young people stay by the priest until twelve, or fourteen years old, and then they abandon him: it is believed that religion is good for young kids and young girls and not | for men of some talents: those who go out of religious institutes of education turn out worse than others. Exaggerated evils, but not that completely. And often the original fault has to be sought in the method of instruction or education: often there is an *a priori* or *metaphysical* manner of instruction. Aim is not on the young person's future, on the circumstances of the environment, of occupations, of dangers wherein he would find himself, but on making the young man grow in the convent, to make him execute *materially and blindly* the commands. And yet a large part of these young people shall become fathers and mothers one day: or else the greater part are destined to live in the world outside: and yet all are sensible beings who should know how to live on their own and not as perpetually directed.

The mother, better than any other person, in ordinary cases, can know the son's future and say to herself: I must train him so he is capable of living by himself. For this purpose she can use four means that make up the four duties of a mother towards her children: instruction, example, correction, vigilance.

Means of education – I. Instruction

124 Here we are speaking only about moral-religious instruction. It consists as if the foundation of education and at the same time a great means for guaranteeing the end. It is the foundation inasmuch as | no one can do that which, also without fault, is being ignored, and whose importance is not valued. It is the means with which to assure the fruit of education: it is only through instruction and divine grace that one can resist the flood of mistakes, that one can rise little by little as he lives on with his life.

And this instruction² must be adequate and proportionate to the young person. For him who would need to live in the farms, it shall be enough that he or she knew the most ordinary duties and the most common objections: broader shall have to be that of the young worker inasmuch as his faith shall have more assaults from companions, from newspapers, from bad example; broadest and profound should be that of a student, so much so that he could neutralize the effects of erroneous doctrines of one who would demonstrate that faith goes against science,³ religion as against progress, the clergy as enemy of civil institutions.

Neither is it intended here that everything ought to be done by the mother: to her belongs that part that is possible to her: as for the rest, she shall have to find substitutes to her work either in parish catechisms, in good books, in the classes of religion, in the youth circles,⁴ in holiday oratories.

² *DA* has *introduzione* = introduction instead of *istruzione* = instruction.

³ Regarding such discussions between Catholics and seculars, we find a compendium in an article of the time: "In schools and in squares, in books and in newspapers, it is proclaimed at every instant, and shouted in all tones of voices that science is inimical to religious faith and markedly referring to the faith of Catholics. As an assertion of fact, or a translation into words of a contemporary phenomenon, the statement is exact in some part. It would be more exact to say it is not science that has declared itself contrary to faith; rather, in the name of science, certain scientists, those who try to form and elaborate in their heads the thoughts of other persons, of the many and, in order to succeed in it, they need to declare that science as the only and supreme regulatory authority of the world, and they alone, the scientists." (*La Civiltà Cattolica* 2 [1910] 17-35).

⁴ On 23 June 1867, Count Giovanni Acquaderni of Bologna and Mario Fani of Viterbo subscribed to a program for the Society of the Catholic Youth of Italy that was summarized in the words: "prayer, action, sacrifice." In the succeeding years, others, spread a bit everywhere in Italy, were added to the first Circles founded one in Bologna and the other in Viterbo, so that during the first congress held in Venice in 1874, they had reached a total of 72 (cf. *Gioventù italiana*, special issue for the fiftieth anniversary of the Society of the Catholic Youth in Italy, no. 7-9 July – September 1921). In Piedmont, the first circle was that of Maranzana, in the diocese of Acqui in 1879, to which followed, in 1884, the circles of Canelli and Ponzone and in 1886, the circle of Mombaruzzo. In the diocese of Cuneo, the first circle arose in Boves in 1889 through the work of Fr. Calandri of Pieve; the second was "B. Angelo and sant' Andrea" of Cuneo, which was inaugurated on 17 October 1896. During the years 1896-1897, in the diocese of Alba, were established the circles of Alba, Dogliani, Cortemilia, Torre Bormida e Cossano Belbo. Cf. *Gioventù italiana*, cited special issue, in *Chiesa e Società nella II metà del XIX secolo in*

125 What the mother can do is the most fundamental part. She has to give to her child a deep persuasion of these truths: we have been created for heaven; because of the original sin | we tend towards sin; but we must resist such an inclination with God's help that is obtained through prayer: sin is a great evil, the sacraments are the channels of the Lord's graces, Jesus Christ is our only true teacher.⁵ More: she has to show that the child has a very precious heart in which she has to impart great loves for Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Virgin, St. Joseph, the Guardian Angel, the souls in purgatory, for priests, parents, teachers, brothers and sisters, those who are of lower status, those suffering, the poor. Finally, the mother has to inculcate well responsibility over one's actions, and not to give in to every inclination and desire, that it is better to go above certain examples, that he needs to be respectful of his neighbor and to the public welfare.

All this the mother must teach *gradually*, in an *easy and effective* manner.

Gradually: that is, starting from those years wherein the child does not comprehend as yet, but is already capable of doing something and to mutter some words. Then, it would be enough that the child repeats after her the names of Jesus and of Mary Most Holy: much later, with the opening up of his intelligence, he shall understand and he will be made to learn much more things.

126 In an *easy* manner: above all, it is better over all to follow the objective method. For example, while showing the crucifix, one could speak about the Incarnation: from a picture, the child's soul is raised to know the maternal | protection of Mary most holy: from the sight⁶ of the cemetery, one could speak to the child of death, of judgment, of happy or unhappy eternity, of the final resurrection. And according to such a method it is still a very wise principle to make use of occasions: during a walk through pleasant places and before certain grandiose spectacle

Piemonte, edited by APPENDINO F. N., Istituto regionale piemontese di pastorale, Edizioni Pietro Marietti 1982, pp. 390-393.

⁵ Let us take note of this "article of faith," which Fr. Alberione would later propose as the central nucleus of his Christology and his pastoral. Cf. *Gesù, il Maestro, ieri, oggi e sempre*, Rome 1996, pp. 72-73.

⁶ *DA* has *vista* that stands for *visione* = *sight*, or also *visita* = *visit*.

of nature, to speak of the Creator's power: at the death of someone, to speak of being always prepared: at the sight of unfortunate people, to speak of Providence who alone shall restore full justice after life, etc.

In an *effective* manner: and it means that these precepts has not to be speculative, but it is suitable to make them immediately followed. After having spoken of prayer, it is good to make the child really pray, each day, insisting always on the motives: explained as to how we must love the poor, to send children to distribute money or loaves of bread: after having inculcated that all must work, to demand that they be busy according to their age and the circumstances. In an effective manner: and it means still that generally the children have to see at least one good reason for the command, if not always all the reasons: they have to understand that in the world the principle of authority is divinely instituted: they have always to bear in mind that God, just punisher or remunerator, watches over everyone's actions. Continuous coercions are capable of producing fools, | bad ones, those alienated in life. – In an effective manner: and finally it means that the principles have to be repeated and often applied and that to do them belongs to every day, for many years. Thus, little by little in them is formed the habit of prayer, the habit of devotion to Mary Most Holy, the habit of going to church often, the habit of obeying, the habit of respecting one's neighbor, the habit of considering certain in everything the temporal and eternal consequences.

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Neither are all these enough for the mother: she shall have, at his proper age, send her son to catechism, or to the oratory. Certainly, the word of God's minister shall have a divine effectiveness in confirming that of the mother: certainly, the priest, with his authority, with his piety and knowledge, shall let penetrate more deeply and expand the moral-religious knowledge of the young man: surely, finding himself with other young persons gathered for the same purpose of looking after the soul, before the spectacle of God's church, in front of the ministers distributed in hierarchy, he would have a greater persuasion that the future life is something that is important and that the present life is nothing but a means to reach that. And to the mother belongs the task not only of sending children to catechism, but to

make sure of their real participation, of their conduct and of their benefiting from it.

128 With these turned to adults, mothers shall see to it that they participate at the explanations of the Gospel, to the parish instructions, to conferences that are held almost every day in every place for the Luigini⁷ or to members of the youth circles. And on this last thing, mothers must show themselves particularly watchful: inasmuch as it is in special conferences to the youth that those subject matters that concern them more closely are dealt.

Should the young undertake the career of studies, for a most particular need, mothers shall see to it that they are sent possibly to private, religious schools. In them, the son shall more easily keep pure his heart and he shall receive not only literary but also religious instruction. If this is not always convenient in every family, the mother shall at least see to it that her son attends classes of religion and read some good books where, clearly and suitably, the knowledge of religion is imparted.

Neither is all this ordinarily enough: by now the division among men into two great armies is becoming more accentuated, one struggling against the other, respectively guided by the Church and by Freemasonry. And the youth is the area that one and the other are trying to conquer: knowing well that who has the youth today shall have the society of tomorrow.

129 Neither can one remain indifferent spectators any longer | of this fact: also the most peaceful and withdrawn young persons are required to take the side of one or the other part. Those who shall not have adequate knowledge on the dangers that surround them and on the ends set by Freemasonry, these shall fall, perhaps unknowingly, into the net that are set. Hence, it is necessary that the youth knew the organizations established with the ostensible pretext of beneficence, of mutual help, of studies, of civility, of love for country by the Freemasons: it is necessary that they read the bottom line, what the projects are all about, what certain feasts, certain institutions mean and that they understand that these want to steal their most precious treasures, faith and modesty, in order to make use of them for diabolical

⁷ Children organized in parish circles named after St. Aloysius Gonzaga, their patron.

purposes. Now how can the mother look after such an instruction? If she is capable of it, she could directly intervene with suitable counsels given according to the opportunities. The son, however, should not show that he is imposing his own will, rather he has to attend to his temporal and eternal well-being. If, in case, she is not capable as it often happens, she has to see to it that her son joins Catholic circles and associations and attends conferences that shall be held. And if these do not exist, she shall seek the advice of a priest expert on what has to be done: she shall subscribe to good reading materials for her children: she could ask for those published by Catholic associations that are meant to fight against Freemasonry.

More: a mother cannot entertain the illusion that | her son ought always to ignore the so-called mysteries of life, the temptations, the disorders and the dangers of the world. She would expose him to get shipwrecked soon, to be a victim of bad companions and to be buried in evil before even knowing it, because the day when her son will by force find himself at the height of the fight that will certainly come. She shall train him in faith: not casting him into evil, but instructing him discretely. She should speak to him of *certain* schools, shops, companions, entertainments, vices, of the innate tendency for pleasure: she should take the opportunity from things that happened, from the reading of a book or newspaper, from questions made by children; she shall not unleash passions, but use reserve and reverence for their innocence; especially, she shall arm them with the necessary means to avoid the dangers, much prayer and devotion to the Most Holy Virgin. Let her know however not to let her son know what is bad so soon or more than what is needed. 130

The moment of life wherein more than ever children should feel responsible of what they do is when they choose a state in life. It is then that the mother has to show well the different paths that lie ahead of the son: she has to let him see truthfully the advantages and the inconveniences. She has still to show him the capital importance of this great step in life: she has to suggest to him to pray, to think seriously and to seek the advice | of a prudent and holy confessor: but most of all she must leave him full freedom. Not that she may not give him her own 131

advice, but she ought never to impose her will with commands, pressures, impositions, repeated insistence. He ought to have freedom to live in the world or to withdraw from it: freedom to choose his lifetime partner: a sufficient freedom also to dedicate himself to a profession or to an art.

It is said that there are daughters who arrive at marriage without *any idea* about it; this is true if we speak of certain families where there still reigns enviable simplicity and candor of manners.

More often, however, this other fact happens: people get into marriage with a *false idea* of matrimony. It happens to young people of higher religious education: it happens to rich or socially highly placed, where marriage is set with reasons of interests or social position. Here the task belongs properly to the mother: she has to describe well the obligations that are assumed with such a sacrament: the need to choose a groom of solid moral and religious principles: the long and serious preparation that has to come before. Who are the others who could substitute the mother in this task?

In this regard, highly advisable for children and parents is the book *Sposi timorati, sposi fortunati* (*God fearing spouses, lucky spouses*) by Nysten⁸ - L. 2.50 (Libreria Buona Stampa - Torino).

132 Means of education - II. Good example

It was said above: children are not to be *habitually obliged* to do good, but they are to be *persuaded*: they have to be so imbued with natural and supernatural considerations that they are led by these also beyond the supervision of their parents. This stirs in them a sense of morality and feelings of responsibility over their own actions before their own selves, their family, society and before God. Now, what would be the most effective argument for forming such conscience in children? Not so much with reasons: but the example of a sober, industrious and religious life of their parents.

⁸ NYSTEN J., *Sposi timorati, sposi fortunati*. Advice for Christian youth and couples: (Jean Nysten was the general chaplain of the hospitals of Liege) translation from French by Angelo Michelotto.

The instinct to imitate is so profound in man that no one, as much as he would try, shall ever succeed in subtracting himself from it. It is, however, among children where nature reveals its tendencies without any artificiality. St. Basil compares them to beginners in painting: their study consists in faithful copying their model. If the model is good, it is easy that the copy would turn out fairly: if the model is defective, the reproduction will turn out to be badly done.⁹ What a duty and a means of education in woman therefore is that of good example! A child invited to pray by the governess, answered: Why should I when father and mother don't pray? And another: | When shall I be big enough as not to pray like daddy and mommy?

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Example of prayer: The mother educates by showing herself frequently at the holy sacraments, and letting children see her morning and evening and sometimes during the day at prayer.

Example of virtue: The mother educates by showing herself resigned in tribulations and forgiving contradictions. She educates when she shows affection and benign compassion to her husband; when she does not run after all the fashion trends and vanities of women: when she lives a withdrawn life and alien to certain meeting places and entertainments: when she is industrious, caring for the family, solicitous of the spiritual and moral welfare of her children.

Example in speech: Mothers give a deep impression on children when their speech does not reflect so much material interests, vain words, honors, the present life; but rather the soul, eternity, salvation.

Take note: example must be true, not faked. It is not enough to talk of certain things *mysteriously* before children, it is not enough to behave before them while putting on a serious and dignified face, it is not enough to hide vices and unbelief. Children would sooner or later discover the secrets of life, penetrate the mysteries and, by then, aside from learning the vices of their parents, they also would learn being hypocrites.

And the mother can do not only her part: she also can induce her husband, through suitable exhortations, to be what he would like his children to be formed.

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⁹ The original *Sconcia* stands for *brutta, fatta male* = ugly, badly done.

Means of education - III. Vigilance

Going into narrating a parable, our Lord said that in a field, while the men were asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds¹⁰ among the good grain. It is the image of what could happen in the heart of a young man without the vigilance of his parents and more especially of his mother: books and companions, entertainments and relationships, soon would cast seeds so different from what have been sowed through good words and good examples.

What kind of vigilance? The manner, the quality, the measure of it must be regulated by the purpose of education itself: to train people to live by themselves, with full awareness of what they are doing. Everything therefore must aim at developing a moral sense. For this, it must be: attentive, continuous, universal as to see all; discrete as not to be always noticed by the son, so not to demand too much from him, so to form in him the habit of living in the world without his becoming worldly.

135 *Attentive:* that is, what one would do on something of very great interest: not preferring the care for material things, of fields, of business, of the shop, of clothes, of visits, of entertainments. There are mothers who complain for not having time: and meanwhile they spend much time in useless conversations, vanities, leisure. There are others who prefer to go to work.

Certainly for some women this last is a hard need: but as much as possible let them avoid it: it is better to nourish and clothe children as humbly as ever than to neglect their education. If truly a woman could not avoid staying out of the house for the whole day, let her at least leave behind to watch over her children persons who are absolutely temperate and religious persons.

Continuous: that is, in every place: at home, in going to and coming from school, and from the church; in entertainment, at work, at prayer and even while asleep. In every age: when they are small and then grown a bit bigger; in a special

¹⁰ Cf. Mt 13:25ff.

manner from thirteen to nineteen years old: in a most special manner at those time that runs between arrangement¹¹ and celebration of marriage.

Universal: that is to say it covers all. Over companions they go with: and no matter whether they are good or are blood relatives. Over relationships they keep: whether it is with helpers at home, or those who come into the house for whatever reason. Over the books and publications they read: while taking note of the cleverness of | young people when they want to deceive their parents. To the theaters they go to, the games they play, the words they say, the letters they exchange, the manner they wear their clothes.

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And on this regard, it would not be out of place to take note of two pieces of advice. The first: one thing is recreation, another thing is idleness: the first has to be moderately granted; the second ought to be always absolutely forbidden. Recreations must be always engaged in some activity; never allow excessive rest; accustom children, through time, in work, starting from small things. Second: evil times are here and even in school, weeds are sown. The mother shall do very well to try to know the religious-moral principles of the teachers and she shall see to it that the faith of their children is respective according to the manners allowed by law.

Finally: women should never stop their vigilance when their children go out of the house. Getting them employed, they shall choose families who are blameless as regards morals: sending them to work, they shall look for offices and shops where the fear of God reigns: sending them to big cities for higher studies, they shall seek board and lodging that offer moral guarantees. That one's child has become an adult does not destroy the right and the duty of the mother to watch over him. They have to watch out lest sectarian doctrines, indecent words, echoes of vices reach their children's ears; | they can however neutralize their effects through prayer, through Christian instruction, with good examples, with practices of piety.

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¹¹ DA has *continuare* = to continue, instead of *combinare* = to arrange.

Discrete: last condition of vigilance: In fact, in order that the awareness of his own responsibility should take place in the young man, he has to feel that he is answerable of everything before God, who sees also through darkness: he has to feel he alone has to bear the consequences of his own actions. The mother, therefore, has not to extend her vigilance up to very little matters: often she has to tell that her watching over has to be taken into less consideration than that of God: she shall often use the art of watching over without being noticed; she shall try to surprise her son. Especially when she notices something unusual going on in the heart of her son shall she double her attention: and through thousands of ways suggested by maternal love, she shall try to discover his secrets and to get into his soul.

Means of education - IV. Correction

138 The Holy Spirit says: *Withhold not chastisement from a boy... beat him with the rod, and you will save him from the nether world.*¹² *He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him takes care to chastise him.*¹³ Chastisement appears necessary because since during early years, children | are willful, capricious, persistent: commanding is not enough at times to bend them: repression, punishment, correction are needed at times.

Only the virtuous mother knows how to give corrections well: strongly, that is, and reasonably.

Strongly. And this matters so that one wins over weakness and false love: it matters that the necessary sacrifice be done so that a correction is proportionate to the fault: often it is more painful to reprove than to receive reproof. It matters that one knows how to be moderate: and in due time, not only forgiveness is granted but also praise and the reward. It matters that it is not anger that dominates, but the sincere desire for the good of the child: that curses, blasphemies and bad words are not said.

¹² Cf. Prv 23:13-14.

¹³ Cf. Prv 13:24.

Reasonably. Always in view of the great goal of education: to form a deep sense of duty.

Children should understand that their mother does not act according to caprice, but because she is concerned of their welfare: they have to understand that she does not punish them because they have ruined a piece of clothing, but because they have offended God: they have to see in the disapproval of the mother another superior disapproval, that is, that of God.

Only thus are raised reasonable and reasoning beings.

Conclusion

139

“I want to make a saint out of my son”: so the mother of St. Athanasius¹⁴ was saying. *“My God, I owe everything to my mother”* so St. Augustine used to repeat. – *“Thank you a thousand times, my God, for having given us a saint for a mother,”* so did the sons of St. Amelia, St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nissa,¹⁵ exclaim.

Blessed is the society that possesses good mothers: it shall have honest and industrious citizens. Lucky is the Church if she trains good mothers: she shall have a generation of saints. “It is on the mothers’ knees that what best the earth has is formed: man”: thus De Maistre writes his daughter turned mother. Perhaps passion may darken in the soul the good principles received: perhaps doubt penetrates for a while the mind of children: perhaps some seducers might open a door into their hearts: but let the truth of these famous words of the same aforementioned De Maistre be noted: “When a mother has made the sign of the cross on her son’s forehead, vice may erase it for a while, but it shall reappear new after.”

¹⁴ Father and doctor of the Eastern Church (295-373), bishop of Alexandria in Egypt, he was the most strenuous defender of Christ’s divinity against the heresy of Arius. A friend of St. Ambrose, like him, he wrote a precious tract addressed to consecrated virgins. – His mother’s name is not known to us.

¹⁵ Gregory of Nissa (circa. 335-394): Basil’s brother and bishop of Nissa; he defended the dogma of the Trinity against the Arians who denied it. – In reality, their mother was called Emelia.

ART. II – THE WIFE

140 It is written: “*Man makes the laws, woman makes the customs. More: to man belongs the duty of earning bread for the wife: to the / woman belongs the task of procuring faith and morality for the husband.*” Would there be an exaggeration in such expressions? For others, a precise answer: for us it is enough to know that woman can exercise a decisive influence on the religious spirit of her husband. We know that it was Eve¹⁶ who dragged Adam to sin: we know that Cecilia¹⁷ brought about the conversion of her husband Valerian, thus earning from Pope Urban¹⁸ the title of “*an eloquent little sheep*”: we have it in St. Paul’s letters that the unfaithful man is sanctified by the faithful woman.¹⁹

This is not the place for us to insist that, in her choice of life partner, she has to pay attention to his religion, his practices, his customs. This thing is not mentioned and understood enough due to the exuberance of youth. No matter what it has been: if the young groom is a good Christian, it will be easier for the bride to keep him so: if he is instead indifferent or adverse to religion, it will be more meritorious for the woman to convert him.

[Winning the husband’s heart]

And here is the great secret for succeeding in it: *win over* his heart. It is certain that man has the quality and authority that naturally gives him superiority over woman. And man, naturally proud, does not easily give up this position, although he does not exaggerate his power with the pretexts that would make the woman forget that she is his partner. There are in the world

¹⁶ Cf. Gn 3:6f,12-13.

¹⁷ A girl of the nobility of Rome who died martyr about the year 230. She was the wife of Valerian who converted him to Christianity. With the death of her husband, she gave away her wealth to the poor.

¹⁸ Urban I, pope from 222 to 230, he governed the Church during the times of calm under the emperor Alessandro Severo. He assisted St. Cecilia, “an eloquent little sheep” for having borne witness to the faith until the conversion of Valerian (MM).

¹⁹ Cf. 1Cor 7:14. *DA* has *venne santificato* = *came to be sanctified*.

more husbands who are tyrants | to their wives than women who dominate husbands. But this husband who does not allow himself to be tamed by wiles, commands, pretexts, becomes ordinarily a docile child in the hands of her who wins over his heart. And here comes true the divine law of balance: what²⁰ the woman is not empowered by authority, she conquers through love.

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In order to make herself loved, it is necessary that she feels and shows love. The sacrament of marriage well received, constant prayer, natural tendency, natural and supernatural considerations shall set afire and burn the flame of conjugal love. Before the great act, it is licit, even prudent, to have certain demands, to scrutinize defects, to move ahead with diffidence: but with the great step made, all these should no longer be. It would rather be prudent to keep an eye to the good qualities of one's partner, be silent on the differences of education, of character, of persuasions, to emphasize what good there is: above all to open one's heart, to show sincerity to each other, not to think or even just imagine what could have been, what one could have done. And it is above all after the first months of marriage that it matters to do this; each one has a quantity of defects: each time that two go together, they do add up.

Then it is the small acts of sweetness, of gentleness, of daily and continuous patience that manifest affection: it is the foreseeing desires, | the willing giving in, the small expressions that express goodness and makes one lovable. Life is made up of small things, like the sea is made of drops, like the cloth, of many threads; the mountain, of atoms. May women abound in acts of goodness even at the cost of spending much time on it, of sacrificing for them comfort and interests: the intimacy of conjugal affections is well superior over any others. But let her not pretend to change immediately her husband: let her tolerate many defects, let her be silent as well over serious deficiencies: *let her utilize, one could say here, twenty years for making her loved, and one year would be enough for doing him good.* With the ground made ready, then time is up for sowing.

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²⁰ DA has *cioè* = *that is* instead of *ciò* = *what*.

[Prevent the husband from evil]

Above all, women ought to try to *lead their husbands away from evil*. Cafes, theaters, friends, games, entertainments less honest relationships, bad newspapers and books are enough to destroy a husband. If he clings on those things he shall, above all, lose the affection of his family: the most boring times would be that he would be forced to spend at home: he shall become indifferent to the pains and the joys of his family: he shall no longer think of providing for them a good education and whatever they need. More: he would become spendthrift, a blasphemer, a guzzler, a liar... And with all this, if in his heart faith is not totally extinguished, certainly however, his Christian life is destroyed.

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Well, how can women keep their | husbands at home during the long winter evenings, during the rest hours after lunch, during holidays? Not much through advice: much less still by sulking, or with perpetual complaints with fellow housewives: but by making the home lovable. A clean and orderly house: children respectful and affectionate to their father: courtesy and good manners in dealing with one another: kindness and well ordered life: useful family occupations, etc., these are the most effective means to keep in husbands away from bad company, but to keep at least some: "Instead, husbands, fathers, brothers keep away from home in many ways: through negligence, through laziness, disorderliness, dirt, disheveled hair... More: they stay away because of ill humor, selfishness that does not want to be touched, with ill-mannered, impatient, petulant ways, through continuous groaning, complaining, sighing, bewailing and complaining... Perhaps also: through a mania for orderliness, for cleanliness, monotony, through the habit of pointing out defects, with speaking always about painful things..." Thus T. Combe writes in his golden book: *Semplici verità alle donne del popolo italiano (Simple truths for the women of the Italian people)*; a treasure for wives.

[Lead him to what is good]

In the second place: a woman may *lead her husband to what is good*. It is well understood that the way useful with an already religious man and that with an indifferent or unbelieving

man shall be most different. The wife shall pray very much for him | knowing that her soul is in a way bound to that of her husband: they are two companions who, together. Have to go through this land of exile in order to reach the homeland, heaven. More: evenings, she shall invite her husband to recite some prayers with her: on Sundays, she shall make sure that he accomplishes his religious duties: she shall especially know through a thousand ways to attract him to the holy sacraments on Easter, holy days, his feast day, etc.

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That all this may not be possible, the wife who truly loves her husband shall at least try that he attends some preaching on extraordinary occasions, that he reads some good publications or good books during his free time, that he takes part in some pilgrimage to some sanctuary. Neither should she be discouraged: the Lord's grace acts perhaps slowly, but no less effectively: what is not obtained from year to year, perhaps would be achieved in an instant: that he arrives at no other than making him receive in time the last sacraments, would this not be a most beautiful victory?

[Make him an educator]

In the third place: *the wife can succeed at making her husband cooperate with her activity and effort in the education of children.* Every father, not yet turned ugly by vice, listens willingly if his children are spoken about, more so she who speaks is his wife who, with the eloquence of | motherly love, she makes him hear about his duty and his right. Have atheists not been seen educating their children in a Christian manner? Well, often, it is to the merit of a Christian wife. – Besides, the father's example, his words, his commands, his corrections have a most important effectiveness on the children's soul. Even more: there have been many cases when the mother does not succeed in dominating the children without the support of their father: always the fact takes place that, if the parents have unity of views, of means, of action, education of their children turn out successfully. While, if the parents disagree in their view or in means, in demanding and in correction, the fruits of their efforts would be

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very little: children would no longer obey anyone, then, they would end up openly rebelling against both. Now it is to the wife that in practice belongs²¹ the task of achieving such unity: although the father is the supreme head of the family whom the wife is obliged to obey: the mother ordinarily has more time to manage such problem: by knowing as best as she can the heart and the needs of the children, she must make their father know. She then often discusses with her husband the concerns that regard the religious and civic education of children, she consults him when in doubt. More: let her make her husband do some exhortations, many corrections, part of the watchfulness. With discretion and zeal, let her see to it that he shows himself a practicing Christian | before the children, rather, let he himself accompany the children to church.

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Children in some circumstances become the connecting link that join diffident parents though reconciled together: often the Lord makes use of the first communion of children for letting indifferent fathers find sense about themselves. – Well, it is up to the wife to see to it that such things happen: her love for her children and companion in life shall make her guess the right path.

ART. III – THE DAUGHTER

The daughter's condition seems that of humility, of fragility, of obedience, of weakness and nothing more: it seems, at first glance, that the daughter could not, under every aspect, exercise zeal. And yet, it is not completely so. Also the daughter can do so much good around herself: that is, towards her brothers and sisters, towards her parents, towards strangers.

Above all *towards brothers and sisters*. – Every priest, knowing a bit the world, remembers undoubtedly daughters who turned substitutes to parents, deceased or incapacitated, in the education of brothers and sisters: and often they do so with such an effectiveness as to emulate the most powerful influence

²¹ DA, Italian original, has *si appartiene* instead of *appartiene* = *belongs* only.

of mother and father. And when these daughters arrive at sacrificing for their brothers and sisters a happy future, a flattering position, time, health, youth, do they not deserve to be | honored as true heroines? Heroines hidden from the world, and perhaps even unrecognized by those benefited by her and repaid with ingratitude: but they are heroines well known by that God who sees the hidden and does not leave unpaid a glass of water given in his name.²²

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There are others not that much generous, but more numerous: those who associate their delicate and attentive work to that of their parents in the good rearing of brothers and sisters, especially when these are minors. And this they do first of all by good example: by always showing themselves first in obedience: by coming in time and being very recollected in prayer: by using every diligence in fulfilling their duties in school and at home: by assiduously going to catechism classes and to the sacraments.

Then with words: how many times can they teach prayers, give good advice, call to duty, do corrections! Often it is the sisters who tell at home what they heard in sermons, who remember in the family the notices given by the parish priest, who defend and let followed the commands of parents.

Furthermore: with so much effort. I am reminded of good young girls who attentively see to it that their brothers and sisters do their school assignments, that every month or at least for many times a year they approach the sacraments, that they do not read bad publications, that they avoid dangerous | companions. It is true, especially the brothers, that they do not want to obey a sister in everything: it is most true that a sister cannot always dominate them. But when she is good, entirely caring and attentive, ready to please when she can, she shall obtain more with her gentle, patient, persuasive ways. Neighbors speak of a young woman: "She is the angel of peace and joy in her home."

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In the second place, she **could do good to her parents themselves**. Towards her parents, the daughter should never behave

²² Cf. Mt 10:42 and Mk 9:41.

like a teacher and much lesser, like a superior: whether it concerns a mother or a father unworthy of such a name. She shall do well through humble submission and with the most sincere affection. It is her duty to pray for her parents; with this, she could render her parents those things that most often help and support could not.

And how effective is the prayer of children before the Lord! God shall convert parents if ever they might need it: God shall give them the patience and the constancy in such an important mission: God shall give them the necessary graces to win for themselves heaven. There have been daughters who offered themselves to the Lord in behalf of bad parents: and often they had the consolation of seeing them at least die reconciled with God. From parents one has received life: it is not so much to offer one's life for them!

- 149** More: the daughter can do them so much good in thousand ways, varying according to age, circumstances and nature. How many times could she narrate to them good deeds or to repeat to them the truths studied in catechism, under the pretext of explaining to them their application! How many times, at the vigil and on the day of religious festivities, could she introduce the topic in conversations! How many times could she read, during free times, passages from a good book or some trustworthy sheets, as if in recreation! Then days of sadness are not wanting in the family: days are not wanting wherein the same parents, no matter how affectionate, should pass some dark clouds or ill humor: days are not wanting when some conflicts take place between children and parents. It is the daughter's mission then to *function as oil* in order to take away the conflicts: it is then the daughter's mission to be the angel of consolation: of setting herself as the intermediary of peace, as victim of expiation, to defend the good cause. Neither could she complain if, before her brothers she should give way, although she might be right: or if it is for her to suffer something because of her parents: no, this is what belongs to the daughter, as the burdens of the mind and of exertion belong to males. Neither should a daughter believe she succeeds in little: no. If she is truly humble, if she shows herself happy before her dear ones, if she does not have

numerous pretensions as to |clothing or attentions, she shall perform near marvels. Well-mannered and caring,²³ always cheerful, simple, sweet and affectionate, she shall be taken by her parents as a precious treasure so that, in order to please her, they would willing give in to her desires. **150**

In the third place: *the daughter can sow so much good also outside the home*. If vice were to be compared to a fire that rages, its bait is women: if the male youth is in serious danger in their morality, the female youth is a strong push or a strong restraint. The daughter, modest in her way of clothing, in her looks, in her dealings, imposes respect and reverence, puts together esteem and admiration, spread around her the perfume of chastity and of virtues. Instead, the looks of a dishonest daughter wounds the soul, her shameless dealings provokes evil, her looks are an invitation to sin. Thus the saying: *if you want to have good young men, see to it that your daughters are chaste*. In here is measured, if possible, the great moralizing work done by a virtuous, withdrawn, chaste daughter! Also without talking, performs an extraordinarily effective preaching.

She could do much more by good example, by prayer, by work, by taking part in works of zeal.

By example: of a life alien to empty entertainments, of a life that withdraws from being too public, of a life dedicated to piety and to work.

By prayer: not only for herself but still for others and especially for the people's needs and for sinners. **151**

By word: by willingly welcoming the occasion of sowing good sayings and holy exhortations: rendering as well her service, when opportunity comes, to the work of catechization.

By works of zeal: especially parish works, inasmuch as a daughter must assume the spirit of the parish as will be mentioned below.

These forms of zeal have been explained quite profusely above, speaking of the woman's zeal as an individual.

²³ Italian original uses a hardly used term: *curosa* = one who takes care of others.

WOMAN'S ZEAL IN SOCIETY

Some kind of order is needed so that what is to be said becomes easy for the intelligence and memory. Well: I shall set as premise some general observations so I will not repeat myself in every page; then since God alone can heal a sick society, some prayers will be included in order to ask for what is particularly necessary today: then we shall speak distinctly of the works that have clearly morally-religious, social, economic character.

ART. I – GENERAL PRINCIPLES

153 There are three or four events that have characterized the twentieth century from the start: and among these, an outstanding feminism movement. Just as in all great historical events, also in this there are things good and things bad: and over all two kinds of feminism came distinctly about: one is Christian and the other, revolutionary and atheist. The Christian one is nothing but the application of the great principles of the Gospel to the needs of today: women have in the society wherein they live rights and duties. Rights that demand | their honor, their convictions, their dignity due to her gender to be respected. Duties to defend the greatest social heritage that is religion, to defend the weak, to raise the oppressed and the poor.

And the true apostolate of women in society lies here. It is not limited to charitable works, not to raise the lot of workers: her work pushes further than that, which the moral and religious healing of society.

Msgr. Delamaire, coadjutor Archbishop of Cambrai, in a meeting of French women, said: “Your social action has to cover many paths: charity is something good but it is not the essential. I recommend that you support small business, small shopkeepers: help the prosperity of associations of mutual help,

the workers' funds and all those works that develop in your own grounds and which need your personal collaboration more than your money. You can say the decisive word on fashion. You ought to contribute to the moral and religious education of the people."

From here, one can see that aside from the *primary and principal* apostolate at home, women have another *secondary* one in society. It is an apostolate that today more than ever calls for much of their energy: the enemies of the name Christian have augmented their strength | that begins from their being organized: it is a strength that can be opposed only by another Christian organization. The enemies are recruiting for their ranks also women, aware of their worth: we must fight against through a well disciplined army of Catholic women. Man if isolated, would be weak but woman would even be much more. Let women be organized therefore, and let them be trained in social apostolate.

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Here an objection, repeated and refuted already many times during the last twenty-five years, is raised. Women do not have the necessary qualities for such work, her *only* place is the home, let her not be involved in the passions of politics. The objection, refuted above, now presents the opportunity to specify within what limits and with what clauses can women dedicate themselves to this part of their mission.

Most of all: according to *her capacity*: the woman of culture shall defend religion with the pen with words: the woman of the masses with her simple participation in Catholic associations of her own surroundings: in every army leaders are wanted: but more numerous should the soldiers be.

In the second place: this action must *never be at the expense of their family duties; on the other hand, they ought to complement these*. How can one not see, for example, how women would not do *entirely* her duty as mother if she does not see to it that her son is taught | religion in school? How could she assure the fruit of education if she does not see to it that her daughter, leaving the village in search for work, is defended from the infamous international organizations of white slave trade? How would it be possible, or better, how would it become easy to

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have good families when everyday one is forced to witness evil fashion, immoral theater, movies, irreligious talks, pornographic press?¹ Let women, therefore, give principal importance to their duties at home, but let them not neglect other duties; neither should they be so obstinate as not to want to see beyond the walls of the home, in order not to accept the fact that other things require their active participation.

In the third place: *women must not exercise the directive or teaching part in this movements*: this is reserved to Pastors and particularly to the Supreme Pastor of the Church. It is the Church that has led women in their liberation from the shameful condition of paganism: women owe more to Christianity than men: outside they would not but be the servants of the most brutal passions. Furthermore, the final end of every social work, whether it is a labor union, is the religious and moral welfare of the masses.

156 Now this, as such, is an area strictly reserved to the Church. To let oneself be guided by the legitimate Authority: and this, more so | today when everything breathes independence, wherein so many pose as teachers, wherein lay beneficence and organization is so expanded for sectarian purposes.

Fourth: *let woman be satisfied with her power of shaping customs, and let her not pretend to form laws*. Let her set aside politics for now. Perhaps in the future also women could cast their votes and be elected in political and administrative elections.² The Catholic woman then shall know how to avail also with this arm for her country and for her religion. But this is

¹ “The almost universal pollution of today’s journalism, particularly in Italy, is the indication of a great and widespread corruption of our people, and what a doubt! It is enough to reflect to be persuaded about it: the publications that are most stupidly lurid are also the most sought after and the most read by the masses and the non-masses...” Cf. *La Civiltà Cattolica* 4 [1910] 641ff.

² The “suffragist” movement, started in Great Britain in 1904, and active till 1914 under the leadership of E. Pankhurst (1858-1928), raised the issue of equality of women in the political and electoral arena. In Italy, the right to vote was extended to women in 1945 (Legal decree no. 23 of 2 February). It began to be practiced in 1946 with the Constituent elections and was codified in the Italian Constitutions promulgated on 1 January 1948.

not the arena for her struggles. Fr. Rösler, who has written the better ideas on such matters, says: "So great is the action that women can exercise on the legislation of their country: but, look at what conclusions one must arrive at! Such an action would become meaningless by the vote asked by the suffragettes. Women's actions, in fact, lies in the formation of costumes and ways of life. Direct legislation, that places the seal of authority on already established customs, is the man's work. But the action on customs is more powerful than to use violence, with political force, on customs that have already penetrated in the people's life. With suffrage given to women, passions and struggles among parties would be doubled, while women would lose their own power. | In this manner the suffragettes would achieve the opposite of the end they propose to achieve."³

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Lastly: *the greatest act of charity is to see to it that the people stop needing acts of charity: this is the first charitable deed.* False is the socialist thesis that proscribes charity as a humiliation and wants that all social ills be cured by the prescriptions of justice. Equally false is the opposite thesis, dear to the liberals, that promoters of economic harmonies, that make justice to consist in the free mutual agreement, secure to assign to charity the task of the fallen ones in the struggle for life. Between them⁴ lies the theory of the Christian social thought: justice shall be the supreme regulator of the economic order; charity shall fill in the inevitable voids left by justice.

It is not enough that women engage themselves in works of charity, so the Pope said. And St. Catherine of Siena: *At the core of charity there is the pearl of justice.* Before welcoming the baby in the orphanage, would it not be better to see to it that the father could earn and save enough to take care of him? Be-

³ Evidently this position of P. Rösler (of whom we know nothing more), polemically against the exaggerations of the suffragettes, is no longer sustainable due to a series of obvious reasons that history as seen to confirm or deny.

⁴ Italian original: *Tra essi = between them*, that is between the socialist and liberal ranks.

fore opening the doors of the hospital, would it not be better to see to it that the social security and savings could assure an honorable and serene old age? Let not pious souls, dedicated to charity, be scared: in spite of the duty-bound intervention of justice, there shall remain a wide | area for charitable deeds. *The poor shall always be with you.*⁵ so Jesus Christ said.

Such principles established, let us go down to some organizations wherein women could dedicate themselves. I said that in order to maintain some order, we shall consider separately those works that have obvious *moral-religious, social, economic* nature.

And such a division does not concern the end, but the works themselves. Inasmuch as, let it be well noted in order to avoid any serious inconveniences: every Catholic action has always as its aim the moral-religious welfare.⁶ Jobs, homes for the masses, retirement for women workers, etc.: naturally with the immediate economic, health and material goals. Religion, however, raises such works to a most lofty dignity: with a most noble end. Is it not perhaps economic problem that often pushes women to dropping religion, to shame, to crime? Is it not the inadequacy of certain dwelling places that causes so much immorality? Is it not the lack of organization of the women workers that allow tyrannical oppression by employers, night shift, work on holidays? Oh how much moral evils with an enlightened socio-economic action of women! How easy would it be to point to heaven to him who has been given bread!

But first, some prayers that directly refer to the present topic would not be useless.

⁵ Cf. Mt 26:11; Mk 14:7; Jn 12:8.

⁶ Also in Italy, less than in the rest of Europe, the problem of work for men and women was felt and in the Church there was an ongoing discussion beginning above all from *Rerum novarum* (15 May 1891) of Leo XIII. "It is not true that the whole throng of capitalists deserve the nametag as cheats and unjust towards the workers," an attentive Jesuit writes in "La protezione degli operai" (The protection of workers), *La Civiltà Cattolica* 2 [1910] 270-285.

ART. II – PRAYERS FOR THE ORGANIZATION

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I. To Jesus, Savior of the world (*for men*)

Jesus, Savior of the world, listen to our prayer for the Church, founded by you at the price of your blood. You know how many enemies fight against her with the foolish and impious resolve to destroy her. Raise men of living faith and solid firm virtue who will defend her and make her expand even more. Look how these enemies, conspired together and guided by Freemasonry, hate and conspire against your friends who are the priests and religious, against bishops placed by the Holy Spirit in every diocese, and more against your vicar, the Pope. Would that you raise men of living faith and firm virtue who will love them and fight for their defense and their freedom.

Look how they attempt at dominating governments in order to drag them in the struggle against civilization and Christian institutions; how they work for the corruption of women, for destroying through them the family; how under vain but deceitful pretexts draw to themselves the farmers⁷ and the workers; how they devastate so many innocent and unaware youths. Would that you raise men of living faith and firm virtue who will attend to the good education of the youth, who will defend the workers and women from the enemy's traps, who will work for training and sustaining Catholic government workers.

See how these enemies make use of all the means: calumny, heresy, the press, organization, the artifices of passions, ignorance, entertainments, discourses, of everything. Would that you raise men of living faith and firm virtue who will oppose calumny with the truth, heresy with Catholic doctrine, bad press with the good press, sectarian organization with Christian or-

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⁷ Alberione, also he of rural origins, often refers to the world of farmers and of rural centers – cf. DA 95, 195; 196; 198; 201; 202; 250; 251; 275; 285; 308; 313; 320. The tilling of the soil in Italy then took place above all in three ways: direct cultivation (with or without employing outsiders), sharecropping (partial sharing, sharecropping), rental. The patriarchal contract of sharecropping dominated about 50% of the cultivated farms.

ganization, passions with the spirit of sacrifice, ignorance with instruction, obscene entertainments with honest ones, bad speakers with holy speakers.

May pity come to you, O Savior and founder of the Church, for the crowds who thirst for your evangelical truths, who hunger for holiness of which you are the true teacher, who are so besieged in their faith and in their customs. Say once more: I pity this people. Would that you raise men of living faith and firm virtue who will help and defend them.

Most Holy Virgin, my Guardian Angel, come together with me in order to obtain these graces from Jesus Christ, Savior of the World. Amen.

II. To Jesus, Savior of the world (for women)

161 *Our most loving Lord, we, kneeling before your divine Majesty and Goodness, pray to you for women, created by you, as material and moral help to man. They have a | great moral and religious influence in the home and in society: hence your enemies, the enemies of morality and of Christian faith seek to destroy their minds, their hearts, naturally inclined to piety. Would, O Lord, that you raise persons and especially women of living faith and firm virtue who will help and defend them.*

You see how holy daughters edify the family and they are enough to turn sober the entire parish: while rotten daughters destroy the home and renders almost useless the zeal of the most fervent priest. Would that you raise persons and especially women of living faith and firm virtue who will working for the Christian formation of daughters.

You know how the wife can dominate so easily the heart of the husband so to make him similar to hers in religion and in morals. Would that you raise persons and especially women of living faith and firm virtue who may prepare and keep wives practically Christians.

You know how the mother, through instruction and education, shapes the souls of children; that mothers could make of them good Christians and honest citizens, or indifferent Christians and bad citizens. Give us, O Lord, holy mothers.

Would that you raise persons and especially women of living faith and firm virtue so that they may zealously work for their formation.

Look, O Lord, how women in society could be the cause or occasion for so much evil and for so much | good. Good women edify through example, through withdrawn life, through mitigated speech. Bad women destroy by shamelessly showing themselves off,⁸ by daring fashion, by shameless talks. Would that you raise persons and especially women of living faith and firm virtue so that they may turn women Christians also in society.

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The daughter, the wife, the mother, who are good at home, often find very serious dangers in society where they come to work, in dangerous entertainments, in bad press, in sectarian organizations, in the spread of irreligiosity and immorality, thousands of diabolical traps. Would, O Lord that you raise persons especially women who shall help these mothers, wives and daughters, by promoting Christian organizations, procuring honest occupations, encouraging innocent entertainments, rendering religious instructions, furnishing good press.

Remember, O Jesus, how much services have the pious women surrounded you during your earthly life: how much you have made use of them in the spread of the light of your Gospel during the first centuries. Remember how you were wont to choose weak and inept instruments to perform great things. Would that you raise women of living faith and firm virtue who, in a manner proper to their gender and to the times, will spread your truths and your virtues and who may be the sisters of priestly zeal. | We ask you this through the same love that you bear for the souls redeemed by your blood; we pray to you for the sacred bonds that bound you with your Immaculate Mother. And you, O Mary, full of zeal and counselor of the apostles' zeal, would that you present this our prayer to Jesus: make it pleasing to him with your strong intercession.

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⁸ Italian *DA* has *imprudente* = *imprudent*, instead of *impudente* = *impudent*, *shameless*.

III. Prayer to St. Catherine⁹ of Siena

written by Card. Capecelatro¹⁰

for the Union among Italian Catholic women¹¹

O Catherine of Siena, chosen Virgin of the Lord, we invoke you as our special protectress and we eagerly desire that you obtain for us the grace of knowing and imitating you. You, prudent, strong, angelically chaste, you are great principally because you have holily loved much. Your love was Jesus Christ, and in Him you have loved with a heavenly and most special love for the Church, the pope, whom you used to call, "my sweet daddy" and your Italy. Out of these three loves, was born in you an admirable woman's apostolate, that was the precursor to what has become so necessary in our times. Through this apostolate, you sweetly shouted through the whole of Italy: peace, peace, peace!

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And now we humbly and trustfully pray you to ask for us the grace from Jesus Christ of bringing peace | to the world. Would that you grant us, also amidst pains and the tempests of life, each of us may be the first to be at peace with ourselves, and then that our word and our life become bearers of peace to all the others! Pray that a gentle aura of peace envelope the whole Catholic world and especially Italy, peace between the poor and the rich, between the workers and the owners, between the State and the Church and among men of good will.

⁹ DA here and further on *Catterina*.

¹⁰ Alfonso Capecelatro, cardinal and writer of historical apologetics, was born in Marseilles on February 1824. His father, Francesco, duke of Castelpagano (Benevento), having joined Murat's party took refuge in France to avoid the reprisals of Ferdinand I (of Bourbon). At 16 years old, Alfonso entered the Congregation of the Oratorians of Naples and there he was ordained priest in 1840. Soon the Oratorians or Philippian fathers elected him provost. Leo XIII in 1880 elected him archbishop of Capua; in 1886 he was made cardinal and in 1893, titular librarian and prefect of the Vatican. As a prelate, Capecelatro remained what he had been as priest: simple, solid in his dual dedication to the Church and Motherland. Worried about the cultural growth of Catholics, he wrote among other things, *Le vie nuove del clero negli studi e nel culto divino* (1905), that some considered as an intervention in favor of the modernists.

¹¹ See below, Art. III, DA 168-171.

O Catherine, o Catherine, you who live in the light of the Eternal Love and Eternal Beauty, grant us the Spirit of Jesus Christ, wherein you knew how to love also the sinners. We entrust ourselves to you and pray that we become good and that we live forever in God, Truth, Beauty and infinite Goodness.

(Indulgence of 300 days that can be earned once daily by Catholic women who will recite it) - 24 September 1911.

IV. Daily prayer to St. Paul,¹² protector of the good press

O most glorious Apostle, with so much zeal, you have set yourself to destroy in Ephesus those writings that, you well knew, would have perverted the mind of the faithful; would that at present you turn your kind look. You see how an unbelieving press and without / brakes so intent to steal from our heart the precious treasure of faith and of purity of customs.

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We pray to you, O holy Apostle, enlighten the mind of so many perverse writers so that they may desist once and for all from damaging souls with their doctrines and deceitful insinuations. Move their hearts that they may detest the evil they do to the chosen flock of Jesus Christ.

For us, ask for the grace that, always docile to the voice of the Supreme Hierarch,¹³ we never allow ourselves to read perverse books; that, instead, we seek to read what shall be given us, of spreading those which, with their healthy shepherding, help all to promote the greater glory of God, the exaltation of His Church and the welfare of souls. Amen.

V. Prayer for the spread of the pious custom of frequent communion.

O sweetest Jesus, who came to the world in order to give to all souls the life of your grace and who, in order to keep it and

¹² Cf. Acts 19:19. It seems that this prayer was composed for the League against bad press, promoted by Cardinal Luigi di Canossa (1891) (MM).

¹³ *The pope.*

166 *nourish it in them you have willed to be the daily medicine of their daily illness and their daily nourishment; humbly we pray to you, through your Heart that is so ardent with love for us, to spread over everyone your divine Spirit, so that those who unfortunately are in mortal sin, | by getting converted to you may reacquire the lost life of grace, and those who, through this gift, already live this divine life, let them, when they can, come to your sacred table every day: thereby through daily communion, by receiving the serum against their daily venial sins, and by nourishing in themselves your life of grace and thus purifying ever more their souls, they may finally arrive blessed at life with you. Amen.*

O Virgin Mary, Our Lady of the Most Holy Sacrament, glory of the Christian people, joy of the universal Church, health of the world, pray for us and reawaken among the faithful the entire devotion to the Most Holy Sacrament, so that they may become worthy to receive it every day.

(Indulgence of 300 days each time) - Pius X, 9 December 1906.

VI. Prayer for priests

O Jesus, eternal Shepherd of souls, would that you listen to our prayer for priests! May you hear in it your very own infinite desire! Are not priests your most tender and delicate heartbeat, the lofty love wherein are summed up all your love for souls?

167 *We confess, indeed, that we have become unworthy of having saintly priests. But your mercy is | infinitely much greater than our foolishness and our malice!*

O Jesus let only those called by you ascend to your priesthood: enlighten Pastors in their choice, the directors of the spirit in their counsel, the educators in the rearing of vocations.

Give us priests who are angels of purity, everyone perfect in humility, seraphs of sacred love and heroes of sacrifice, apostles of your glory and saviors and sanctifiers of souls!

May you have mercy on so many ignorant people to whom light is owed, of so many sons to whom work is owed, who invoke for him who will keep them from deceit, redeem them in your Name; of so many children and so many young men who

invoke for him who will save them and lead them to you, of so many people who suffer and are in need of a heart that in your heart will console them! Look how many souls would reach perfection through the ministry of holy priests.

Would, then, O Jesus, that once more may you be moved with compassion for the crowds who are hungry and thirsty! Would that your priesthood lead all this languishing humanity so that, once more, through it the earth may be renewed, the Church may be exalted and the kingdom of your heart may be established in peace.

Immaculate Virgin, Mother of the eternal priest, and you yourself priest and altar, you had John the first son by adoption,¹⁴ the priest beloved of Jesus, who established you in | the cenacle¹⁵ as teacher and queen of the Apostles, deign to place on your most holy lips our humble prayer, make it yourself resound its accents to the Heart of your Divine Son, and with your suppliant omnipotence obtain for the Church of your Jesus a perennial renewed Pentecost! Amen.

(Indulgence of 7 years and 7 forty years period each time – Plenary every month) - Pius X, 27 October 1907.

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ART. III – WORKS MORAL-RELIGIOUS IN CHARACTER

Union of Catholic Women

It has to occupy the first place and, because it was instituted by the Pope himself, and because it is destined to channel to the same purpose all the other women's works of charity, of religion, of zeal.

In Italy, it is one of the great *unions* of the Catholic movement, and it intends to promote and organize a Catholic movement for women that cooperates with the other aforementioned unions, in view of common goals. To reach such a purpose, it seeks: *a) to gather the Italian women* in the resolve of reaffirming themselves in the profession of the Catholic faith and in the fulfillment of individual, family, social duties; *b) to*

¹⁴ Cf. Jn 19:26.

¹⁵ Cf. Acts 1:14.

make *more practical and responsive to the needs of the times the various Catholic women's works*; c) to facilitate for all men of different social classes a *culture* suitable to their Christian mission.

169 As can be seen, politics is not only excluded, but “it cannot be engaged in social action only from the economic side, this being the obligation of the Economic¹⁶ Union but it is involved in such an action inasmuch as and for as long as it is related with the moral and religious interests of the people”.

Such an institution was truly providential. As regards work, the Italian women have done so much and are still doing: but it was a local work and not more, a work wanting a single and enlightened directive, a work that could bring about *some good*, but not *general, national*. Now here is a union that, although allowing the necessary autonomy to each particular organization, comes to solicit its activity, comes to expand the goal, comes to unify and makes to converge the energies to common interests.¹⁷

¹⁶ The Social Economic Union mentioned here is a true and proper institution, coordinator of the many economic and social works among Italian Catholics, started with the encyclical *Il fermo proposito* (11 June 1905) – cf. *DA* 292 – inheriting the tasks of the Second group for the popular Catholic “Opera dei Congressi.” On the matter, see also Art. V, *DA* 203ff.

¹⁷ *La Civiltà Cattolica* (4 [1909] 32-43, especially p. 42f) wrote: “Where there is a truly Christian woman, there is a latent force; it is suitable to discover it, win it over to the union. Then in the whole of Italy, particularly in the more populated centers, there is an infinite number of organizations for women to be active in, very well founded, excellently managed, but which are limited to narrow spheres; they are like so many electrical circuits which, in order to become much more powerful only need a hand to put them together... Theoretically it does not seem difficult to raise as if in a wonder an entire union of forces among those already active. But how many obstacles are met in the execution of such a plan. Small competitions take place also in the most holy activities, unfounded fears, prejudices even against the novelties that are not understood well yet. It shall be the task of propagators and to speakers to dissipate these little clouds with the warm word of persuasion, of sweetness, of charity, above all of patience, secure of obtaining tomorrow that which today, a perhaps overly ardent zeal could compromise for ever.” It was the expressed hope by a congress of Italian women against the religious teaching in schools (a problem pointed also in *DA* 32; 136; 154; 188-190; 197), that determined the separation of Catholic women from such Italian association which, apparently neutral, was in reality influenced by Freemasonry. It be-

It is providential: inasmuch as, begun only on 21 April 1909, it has already formed a network of committees in the whole of Italy: it has promoted or benefited many professional organizations for women and also for men: it has cast a strong warning to women against lay organizations: it has worked in all manners possible for catechism in schools: it has opened in great numbers classes of catechism, of hygiene, of being good housewives, etc.: it had the praise of the bishops, held congresses, a week of social encounter for women, meetings: in many places it opened | a true campaign against pornography, swearing, alcoholism.

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And here it would not be useless to note yet other initiatives of various committees of this union. It is true that they are not exclusive to them because they could arise through the work of whatsoever women's group, for example, of the Christian Mothers, of the League of Workers, of the Ladies of St. Vincent de Paul, of the Daughters of Mary: it is fitting to say however that the committees of the Italian Catholic Women have proven themselves particularly active. Thus it should be: to promote Eucharistic adoration through example, offerings, words: to promote pilgrimages¹⁸ of women or children to principal sanc-

came necessary then to establish an organization that, although aimed at elevating the masses of women, were inspired by the Church. Pius X, to whom Lady Princess Cristina Giustiniani Bandini, since 4 July 1980, submitted the idea of the formation of the Union among Catholic women of Italy, blessed the new association, signed with his own hand its statutes and supported it always by encouraging the Italian woman not to remain enclosed at home, but to get out of it, if necessary, to defend the home, by working in the open for the reconstruction of Christian society after the example of St. Joan of Arc. The Association of women followed the developments, the forms, the programs of Catholic Action, through its president's office opened in Rome and through local committees distributed in urban centers in the Italian regions.

¹⁸ To win over the traditional love for quiet proper to people in the rural areas, the local committees of the Opera dei Congressi, also in the Piedmont area, took up a particularly effective means: the pilgrimages, which` aside from being a public show of force to the eyes of the liberals and the socialists, served to close the ranks of Catholics, by exalting their faith, winning human respect and galvanizing them, during those activities, around the needs the moment demanded. Because of this, frequent trips within each diocese and province were being organized; more important were those organized by the Union of Catholic Courage founded in Turin towards the

tuaries, near and far, national or foreign: rites of reparation on occasions of scandals, of public calamities. There are adequately numerous cities where they were held, through the work of the Catholic Women, commemoration of religious events, for example, that of the peace of Constantine given to the Church:¹⁹ or of eminent men for Christian and civil virtues, for example Ozanam.

A singular fact, but quite true, is the work rendered by many Catholic women in starting or in sustaining unions for men. Thus in some cities they encouraged the nocturnal adoration of men, in other cities they gave new life to dying cultural centers for workers, in other cities still they promoted classes of religion, also among students of secondary schools.

171 *At the root of great things*, so Lamartine²⁰ wrote, *you will always find a woman*; history itself bears witness to this, and today's women's movement persuade us in this. It has delegates in every region of Italy: the members of one village or city form the local committee: it is divided into three sections: religious culture: social culture: action.

It is evident that according to the intention of the Holy Father²¹ it ought to enter every place: it does not divide the women's forces but coordinates them: it does not take away energies from other works, but helps them and encourages them.

Whoever reads any issue of the bulletin published by it, *Aziione cattolica femminile (Women's Catholic Action)*, will certainly be persuaded of the great work done, of the greater work that lies to be done and of the relative ease in organizing it in every place.

year 1880 for the whole of Piedmont: to the Madonna of Cussanio near Fossano, to the sanctuary of Vicoforte near Mondovì, to the Madonna dei Fiori in Bra, to the Madonna degli Angeli near Cuneo, to Rome for the Jubilee of Leo XIII in 1902.

¹⁹ Alberione himself, as teacher of History in the seminary, promoted the centenary celebration of the Constantinian Peace (313 A.D.). Cf. *Abundantes divitiæ gratiæ suæ*, n. 102.

²⁰ Romantic poet-writer and French politician Alphonse-Marie-Louis de Lamartine was born in Mâcon on 10 October 1790 and died in Paris on 28 February 1869. At the root of his education, there was his mother, an intelligent and learned woman, religious and charitable.

²¹ Pius X.

For Christian morality

Some *laudatores temporis anteacti*²² do not stop repeatedly singing, in all tunes, the good times of their youth or of the Medieval Age: while painting with the haziest of colors our times. The truth, however, is this: every era brings with itself its own good and evil and it is most difficult to establish any right comparison to it. If today there are new forms of immorality it is because the spirit of evil makes use of all the portents | of civilization, especially of today's spirit of association, by organizing evil. Less useful are complaints: we notice that we, instead, have to use all modern progresses²³ for the sake of what is good, particularly, of associations. And how many women have understood their time by founding: leagues against blasphemy, foul speech, alcoholism, gambling, duel, immorality in cinemas, theaters, fashion, beauty contests, etc. Among these, some are local, others national, others international depending on the scope and circumstances. In some places, women, organizing themselves in local groups, did not do any other than that to accept along broad lines the general statute: thus, for example, is as regards duel, so it is with the *Nuova crociata* (*New Crusade*), that fights against alcoholism and which has its Central Council in Turin (Via Maria Vittoria, 42). In others, a spe-

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²² *Heralders of times past*. See DA 23, note 3.

²³ A diatribe broke out between Catholic conservatives and progressives on the national level in the Congress held in Bologna on November 1903. Having seen the attempts to bring about agreement between the two contenders fail, Pius X dissolved the Opera dei Congressi on 30 July 1904. Giovanni Spadolini would write on this regard: "The Catholic movements had never passed so sad a time." A parish priest of Cuneo affirmed: "The dissolution of the Opera dei Congressi killed the Catholic Action inasmuch as with it the diocesan and parish committees also broke down." Although much later the Unione Popolare was formed, it had but a limited number of adherents, so much so that in 1910 the members for the entire Piedmont area counted but 19,394 and in 1911 only 18,671 (cf. *La leva*, piccola rivista trimestrale di cultura popolare, a. II, n. 1 [Firenze, 15 March 1912]). The economic-social structures, however, continued also after the suppression of the Opera dei Congressi; on the other hand, they grew in number from 229 institutes in 1905 to 467 in 1909 (cf. *Chiesa e Società nella II metà del XIX secolo in Piemonte*, a cura di FILIPPO NATALE APPENDINO, Istituto regionale piemontese di pastorale, Edizioni Pietro Marietti 1982, p. 388).

cial statute was formed according to the particular needs. It naturally follows that in its action, the league can act against other forms of immorality related however with its goal: thus we have seen these leagues effectively act in favor of rest on holidays, to boycott socialist conferences, to promote baptisms of newly-born babies and religious funerals, to protest against *L'Asino*,²⁴ (*The Ass*), balls, dancing, pornographic art, against textbooks in schools, offences against the pope, etc.

173 Alongside these organizations, others | came up through the work of good ladies, and also of zealous sisters, for the *rehabilitation of the fallen*²⁵ and of the imprisoned. They are a kind of recovery homes where they are gathered in order to give them, aside from the necessary attention in such cases, a religious instruction that serves to spare them from other mistakes. Often, this is done by making Spiritual Exercises, at other times also by giving them work and, after having finished the period of rehabilitation, also that of procuring occupations for the future. In some cities were established, with the support of the authorities, “work shops for women, instructional and educational classes in judiciary prisons”: rather, some time ago the *Settimana sociale*²⁶ noticed the work of some ladies who, entering the prisons, visited their infirmaries, giving away books for good and useful reading, giving classes to the detainees.

For worship and for the faith

Association in favor of poor churches. – It is a fruit of a spirit of piety and of love to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament: it is providential today amidst scarcity of material things wherein often the clergy finds itself: it uses so many good energies which, otherwise, would be spent in vanity, in petty things, in sins. It is in fact a kind of agreement or of pious union, among good persons, in view of providing mats, altar lin-

²⁴ An anti-clerical and satirical periodical edited by Guido Podrecca. Rocca D'Adria (penname of Cesare Algranati) to counter the *L'Asino* on equal terms, founded *Il Mulo* (*The Mule*) in 1907.

²⁵ *Prostitutes.*

²⁶ Weekly publication of the Unione Popolare which began publication in Florence on 19 January 1908.

ens, vestments, chalices, etc. for poor churches. At times, collections | are made, with free offerings; at other times, shops are kept for free repair and cleaning; more often these means are put together. More often ladies and rich women dedicate themselves to this service: and they go ahead doing so, in their love for the Most Holy Sacrament, to even include their preparing the wine and the hosts themselves for the Holy Sacrifice.

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St. Peter's Pence. – It is a provident institution for helping the pontiff's glorious poverty. – Every pious woman could easily promote it by collecting money to then send it to Rome through her parish priest or bishop: in some places, however, the women did more: organized in groups among them, they obliged themselves to make a specific yearly offering, and not only that, they also turned into promoters of this most noble work among relatives and friends.

For the poor nuns of Italy. – It is to help those angels of charity and of prayer that the world does not know or appreciate. In Italy, they are sometimes reduced to the most miserable condition: little food, lodgings that are inadequate to protect them from inclement weather. All offerings can be sent to the director's office of the *Civiltà Cattolica* (Roma - Via Ripetta - 246).²⁷

*Association for the Holy Infancy*²⁸ *and The Association for the Propagation of the faith* – Substantially these two organizations | have the same purpose: the spread of the faith among the infidels. The first, however, asks children for the offering of a penny a month for the pagan babies and children: the second is meant for the adults and asks them an offering of one penny every week for adult infidels.

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²⁷ It was widespread among Italian Catholics the custom of offering "alms for the poor nuns of Italy." Now there is the annual collection "Pro Orantibus".

²⁸ Cf. *DA* 39-40; 79; 108; 115; 327. Its founder was Msgr. Ch. De Forbin-Janson (1785-1844), bishop of Nancy, in France. On his return from a trip to the United States and Canada (1842) he thought of fighting against infanticide among infidel countries. In 1842, in Lyon, he had a conversation with Pauline Jaricot (cf. *DA* 47) and it seems it was then that the idea matured, to let children in Europe be aware of the lot of Chinese children, while inviting them to contribute a penny a month.

The conditions of these are quite unhappy: religiously, morally and materially; to offer them aid is not only a Christian deed but also patriotic and humanitarian. So many nuns, and also non-nuns, have consecrated their lives for them, departing with the missionaries as qualified catechists.

But how many other women in Europe truly participate for their welfare by becoming active in such works!

Every year, large sums, although always small as to the needs, reach the missionaries: they are offerings in large part by generous women, they are the fruit of collections of others more generous yet. (For these works, offerings may always be sent to the Rev. Ordinaries).

Organization for the collection of used stamps. – They are crumbs that fall from the table of the rich and which, gathered by the merciful hands of women, come to feed unfortunate people. In fact, they are used to redeem slaves, to educate native catechists for the missions, for the foundation of Christian villages. The office of the organization's director general is in 176 Belgium (Grande | Seminary: Liege): for Italy, it's enough to inquire in Rome (Belgian College, Via del Quirinale).

For the flowers, linens, cleanliness of churches. – There are small associations of pious persons who assume the obligation and take turns to always have fresh flowers in churches, to wash altar linens, to sweep floors. It follows naturally that those who commit to supply flowers are preferably wealthy persons, while for the other things women from ordinary folks will do. Different are the names with which these pious unions call themselves: in some places they were called the *House maidens of the Blessed Sacrament*; in others, *Servants of Jesus*; in others, *Noble Guards of the Lord*. Names are of little importance: practice has said that it is a simple organization, but has to be prudently governed to bring about consoling results.

Association for the Apostolate of Prayer

It is true that every pious woman, also individually, can dedicate herself to this most noble among apostolates: but it is

also true that she can do it with greater fervor, with greater efficacy, by joining this pious union. Founded in 1846, approved and enriched with very special favors by Pius IX and Leo XIII, in 1900 it already had more than twenty million members. It multiplies prayers, sanctifies sufferings and work | and leaves every impetratory value in the hands of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that he may make use of it according to the interests of his Heart. For this, this prayer added to the morning prayers: "Divine Heart of Jesus, in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer you my prayers, works and sacrifices of this day with the intentions with which you offer yourself on the altars. I offer them especially for the intentions recommended by the associates of the Apostleship of prayer for this month and on this day." (*The association's office is in Rome - Via dei Chiavari, 6*). Every month, it sends a holy card with which to remind the special intentions: everyone may have an excellent illustration of it from the golden booklet *Catechismo dell'apostolato della preghiera* (*Catechism of the apostleship of prayer*) (for sale in the same office). Membership can be done in two ways or collectively, by community or parish, or personally. Each of the enlisted member could also be its promoter.

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Association of victim souls of the Heart of Jesus

Purpose. The victim souls abandon themselves without reserve to the Adorable Heart of Jesus in order that he could dispose of them as he pleases, accepting beforehand all the sufferings of the soul, of the body, of the spirit, that | He would want to send them, in the spirit of reparation, in order to cooperate with one's own offering to the greater expansion of the kingdom of the Heart of Jesus, in order to obtain the exaltation of the holy Church, the abundant blessings on the Catholic priesthood and for the salvation of souls.

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Conditions. – In order to be admitted into such an association and enjoy the spiritual advantages, one must:

1. Be a member of the Honor Guards.
2. To make, with the consent of one's own confessor or spiritual director, the act of oblation to the Heart of Jesus Vic-

tim, and to be firmly resolved to persevere in such a spirit of immolation.

3. To be enrolled on the list of “victim souls,” that are found in all the chapels of the Daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is put beside the tabernacle to symbolize the hidden and immolated life of such souls in union with the Heart of Jesus, perennially on the altars.

Spiritual advantages – It is enriched with many indulgences and special faculties for the priests.

The beautiful words of Pope Pius X stand for praise to it: “We have willingly given our name to the pious association (of the victim souls) and we pray the prayers of all the faithful” (21 January 1909).

179 In order to penetrate well the spirit of this pious work, these two biographies can be useful: *La Madre Maria di Gesù*²⁹ fondatrice delle “anime vittime” (*Mother Mary of Jesus*, foundress of the “victim souls”) (Libreria Sacro Cuore - Via Garibaldi, 18 - Torino). *Don Andrea Beltrami*, T. Barberis (Libreria Salesiana - Corso Regina Margherita 176, Torino).

Pious union for the communion of children

The aim of this union is to contribute towards the spread of the knowledge and the execution of the Decree that establishes the age with which children could be admitted to communion, which is that when they reach the age of reason, that is, at about seven years old: to see to it that the same children, after their first communion, often go to the Holy Mass, and if possible, also every day.

Hence, those who can participate in it, aside from church persons, also the lay persons, men and women, be they parents, educators, catechists, etc: on condition that they propose to zealously promote among children of their own families, or of their own institute, or school, or even among other children, more so among acquaintances, friends, relatives.

²⁹ Mother Mary of Jesus (Marseilles 1841-1884), was the foundress of the Institute of the Daughters of the Heart of Jesus (1873) (MM).

For this purpose, they shall teach them the necessary things to know, shall lead them to the altar, suggest to them short acts of preparation and thanksgiving. Furthermore, they shall see to it that the children do not stop frequenting holy communion, | mostly on holy days, and attending catechism classes.

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Such a union falls within the desires of His Holiness Pius X, who wanted it enriched with special indulgences.

(Inquire from the Primary Church of San Claudio – Rome; or to the Reverend Priests Adorers, Vicolo S. Maria, 3 – Turin).

Company of the Daughters of Mary and Company of Christian Mothers

Of these I shall speak but a few words since they are generally known and widespread almost in every place. They are two pious religious associations, the first among daughters and the other among Christian mothers, under the direction of a priest, and more, by the parish priest.

The first gathers all the young ladies who have finished the catechetical instruction, who desire to remain good by means of the holy sacraments, of the devotion to Mary Most Holy, by means of special conferences. In fact, also among more villages flourishing in religion the young woman meets dangers more frequently: she needs instructions especially when she approaches the married state: she receives from the sodality the courage that the union gives.³⁰

The company of Christian Mothers has among these the purpose that the company among daughters has. It welcomes the married woman and helps her in fulfilling her duties as wife and mother through | special instructions (generally monthly), through frequent confession and communion, through example and through the protection of some holy mother: St. Elizabeth of Hungary,³¹ St. Anne, etc.

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³⁰ Fr. Alberione sees the advantages of the union. He insists on association; he speaks of unions, parishes, communities, companies, unions, savings banks, groups, leagues, organization, collaboration or cooperation.

³¹ Elizabeth (1207-1231), King Andrew II's daughter, Louis IV, count of Tubingen, fallen during the fifth crusade. Widowed at nineteen with three

Having a purely religious character, they do not cause any alarm and it is generally easy to find an effective cooperation among daughters and mothers.

See *Manuale delle Figlie di Maria Immacolata (Manual of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate)* (Tipografia Lega eucaristica - Milan).

Spiritual friendships

The Lord, in the Sacred Scriptures, lets himself be called lover of souls: *Domine, qui amas animas*.³² And we know a little how great and numerous are the proofs of love he has given to souls! No one ought to doubt that He has predilection for him who is holy and how God himself exchanges love with love: *I love those who love me*.³³ And, in imitation to our Lord, we ought to love the souls and among them, we must love more those who love the Lord better.

182 And this can be called *spiritual* friendship, which can be manifested externally also in many holy ways. It has not to be mistaken for *particular* friendship, condemned by masters of the spirit. Particular friendship in fact is born | of inclination, natural sympathy, external graciousness; while spiritual friendship is born of love for God; the first ends in being carnal and in the mud: the second leads to heaven and it has been one of the great means of good used by St. Teresa.

This saint, in fact, had established spiritual friendship with four souls all desirous to help each other and make themselves fervent in the service of God; and not only that but also to teach each other and to help one another in doing good to others.

And these two are the goals to set in establishing spiritual friendship.

children, she dedicated herself to ascetical life and to charitable activities as if she herself took part in the crusades. Friar Conrad of Marburg, her spiritual director, defined her as “the consoler of the poor” and the “feeder of the hungry” with reference to the Gospel beatitudes. (MM).

³² DA adds between parenthesis *Sap. II-V-17 (Wis II-V-17)*. Cf. Wis 11:26 (11:27 according to the Vulgate): “O Lord and lover of souls.”

³³ Cf. Sir 4:14.

The first purpose is achieved through three means: prayer for each other, fraternal correction of those defects that appear externally, spiritual conversations directed to the better persuasion on the vanity of the world, and to better love pious life, to better practice Christian virtues.

Saint Teresa, speaking of zeal, observes: that inasmuch as others gather together to dispense with evil and error, so spiritual friends should put together the means for doing good and for benefiting souls. How many times single women, young persons, women would be full of holy intentions, have in mind so many projects and means, and more, how many of them would be disposed to do great sacrifices for neighbors! But, since they are shy, | because they are isolated, because they never express to anyone these secrets of theirs, so many talents remain inactive and noble energies uselessly turn dry. And yet it often happens that such sentiments would be common to different persons who know each other and often talk to each other of so many petty things! Only an occasion is wanting so that these sentiments, real perfumed flowers of true love for God, become manifested and turn into fruits.

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Well, this occasion could be offered by spiritual friendships. – How many times does a woman venture into a good deed, for example, to do some service to a poor family, to visit the sick, to promote catechism classes, a devotion, etc.: but then, because she does not have the comfort of a friendly word, she does not have the strength that comes from union, she gets disheartened before the first difficulty! Well, this comfort, this union, could be furnished by spiritual friendship.

And the possible good things one can do is so much, also when these spiritual friends are simple women of the masses.

And how are such friendships in practice? – *a)* Above all, such persons must be quite free for themselves in order to better meet with the others sometimes: for example, once a week, during ordinary or feast days. *b)* They must be, not yet perfect, while being united precisely because they want to help one another through correction and with | the other means of sanctification, though they already possess tried virtues. *c)* Gathering together, they shall do some good reading, some spiritual con-

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versation, etc.: they should never allow themselves to talk against others, to communicate too intimately, conversations that are not spiritual or not directed towards the welfare of others. *d)* They shall cultivate in a special manner humility, allow themselves to be led by their own confessors, recognize in all simplicity every defect of which they are reminded. *e)* Their number must not be more than five: those excluded may form another distinct group of five. Among them there ought to be one, elected by a majority of votes, who will stand as eldest *sister*. The meetings could be weekly. Everything that may impede the particular duties of each should be avoided, so is that of disclosing so much their intentions, of doing things that may be very singular, strange, ridiculous: this would be enough to destroy every desired fruit. I would advise the reading of the booklet by Frassinetti *Le amicizie spirituali (Spiritual Friendships)* (Roma, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana - L. 0.15).

Pious Union of the Daughters of Holy Mary Immaculate

185 It has many similarities with spiritual friendships: in fact it has the same purpose: “to form congregations of devote single women, intending to | reach their own sanctification and to help their neighbors to reach salvation.” However, it differs in the sense that it is much more perfect: it is something between the secular state and the religious. – It is made up of those pious persons who would want to embrace the religious life: but they cannot either because of poverty or because of invincible opposition of relatives, or for health problems, etc. Remaining in the world, however, they intend to become holy through the practice of the evangelical counsels, according to what is possible in their particular circumstances of life, through the avoidance of every noticed mortal and venial sin, through the practice of virtues and more: “by committing themselves, with every effort, in the sanctification of others.”

This pious union has not only its own rules, but also has a superior elected from among the members, and is directed by a priest, who could also be just the confessor of the superior without formality of choice.

The members meet at least every week to discuss matters regarding the spirit, to pray, to correct one another. In their rule they will find the ordinary and effective means of Christian perfection, so much so that they are enabled to practice, for as long as possible in the midst of the world, what the sisters do in the convent.³⁴ This pious union, however, matters to us especially for the zeal that it requires of the members. Here are some of their rules:

N. 5 – “The daughters of Holy Mary Immaculate must practice works of mercy by assisting, as much as their obligations allow it, especially the sick poor persons of their place.”

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N. 6 – “They must practice zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls by engaging themselves particularly so that in their own families the holy fear of God reigns and that piety is practiced.”

N. 7 – “In a special manner, they should engage themselves in rearing young girls neglected by their parents: to see to it that they receive often the holy sacraments and go to classes of Christian doctrine: rather, according to needs, let them teach these themselves.”

N. 8 – “They shall further see to the rearing of the spiritual life of the bigger girls so that these may learn to love things sacred and dedicate themselves to devote life.”

³⁴ This is an affirmation of great relevance. Along this line, Fr. Alberione would eventually found, during the sixties, his “Secular Institutes,” now called “Aggregated Institutes,” precisely because their members – in particular those of the Institutes of Our Lady of the Annunciation and St. Gabriel Archangel – can “practice... amidst the world, what the sisters do in the convent.” – Fr. Alberione would extend consecration in the world. Also to married couples. For this, he would found the Institute of the Holy Family. It is, in fact, worthy of note that already during the thirties, in *Donec formetur Christus in vobis* (n. 236), he wrote: “The vocation of the religious is special by nature...; special conditions are even possible for those married and for those in the world...” That this was not a mere abstract affirmation is documented by the fact that already earlier, only a few years after the publication of *DA*, Fr. Alberione “made the mother of Maggiorino Vigolungo profess the vows as mother.” (S. Lamera, *Istituto Gesù Sacerdote e Santa Famiglia*, in: *I Laici nella e con la Famiglia Paolina*, Casa Generalizia della Società San Paolo, Roma 1989, p. 85).

N. 9 – “According to opportunities, they shall as well commit themselves to promote the various practices of piety that are cultivated in the town where they find themselves.”

N. 10 – “Those who shall live together with their relatives shall pay attention to never offering any reason for complaint regarding them: rather, they shall always show themselves obedient, patient, charitable and engaged in doing good in the house.”

187 Further on, it is said that they have to mutually help each other in times of difficulties, to assist each other in misery, to serve one another in sickness.

In this manner, such a union becomes a center of goodness capable of extending its charitable influence over the whole parish, in the entire city, rather even much farther.

This pious union, possible as well in every center no matter how small, can be started off through the work of a priest, as much as by a simple single lady after a simple assent of her confessor.

It would be good, however, to read the beautiful illustration that the priest Frassinetti makes in his small book: *Regola della Pia Unione delle Figlie di santa Maria Immacolata* (Roma - Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana - L. 0.15).

Unions for the school problem

The school problem currently stands in Italy as one of the major and the most vital problems. Banned from universities, which in great majority were works of the Church, are the theology teaching chairs: taken away also from the secondary school every remnant of religion: now with laws, decrees, contradictory regulations, with strange interpretations and sectarian decisions, it is wanted at all cost to drive away also catechism from the elementary schools. It is a real persecution that attempts | to cover itself with specious, but absurd, reasons: it is a war waged with a plan, prepared in time, not so much by men in government, as much as from Freemasonry that guides them. Italians, Catholics in absolute majority, cannot remain indifferent. They, in fact, have promoted unions and demonstrations *pro schola*: women have to cooperate in them with so much of their energies.

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The *Nicolò Tommaseo* is an association of Christian male teachers. It tends to defend and promote the moral and material interests of class: it professes Catholic principles and works to keep schools in their traditional path. It has arisen to counter the *Magistrale* association by now manifested as completely atheist and entirely dominated by Freemasonry. The *Tommaseo* readily spread and not a few teachers withdrew from the *Magistrale* to join the former: this has already shown signs of truly flattering victory: abundant fruits have already ripened in many parts of Italy. It publishes as well different periodicals: among which the first place has to be given to *Scuola italiana moderna* (*Modern Italian School*).

“*Pro schola libera*” Union. No one could be an opposition to this if not a tyrant or a sectarian: inasmuch as it does not want to do anything else but to give to the school the right freedom, as it already has in many other states more progressive than Italy in matters of instruction. Its statute in fact states: “The purpose of the union is | to guarantee freedom of teaching, rightfully claimed by the inviolable right of parents, the principal builder of the national culture, freedom that is sanctioned by the fundamental Statute of the kingdom.” In publishes as well a bulletin: for clarifications, it has its main office in Turin.

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Associazione didattica italiana (*The Italian teaching association*). It has the same purpose as the preceding. The only difference: the former is made up especially of parents and teachers: the teaching association, instead, gathers by preference *private teachers*. (Office in Rome).

Segretariato “Pro schola” (“*Pro Schola*” Secretariat): This was established as an initiative of the *Unione popolare*,³⁵ and now works in Padova. It assumes the direction of the entire

³⁵ Cf. DA 189; 196; 203; 231; 291-292; 328. It is an association that arose from among Italian Catholics after the dissolution of the *Opera dei Congressi*, in order to gather, according to the directives of the encyclical letter *Il fermo proposito* (Pus X, 11 June 1906), all Catholics around a single center of doctrine, of political propaganda and of social organization, after the example of the *Volksverein* in Germany (MM).

movement in favor of the free and Christian school. It avails with many means among which are conferences, the press, subscriptions.

Leagues of fathers of family. This ought: to help the parish priest in the catechetical education, to watch over the interpretation of the laws regarding religious instruction, to take initiatives for the freedom of schools.

* * *

190 Now, how can the woman-apostle behave in all this movement? Above all: by taking part in those associations that open | their doors to her: for example, a teacher can enlist with the *Tommaseo*: all mothers can take part in the leagues of parents.

In the second place: by letting such unions known, promoting conferences, conventions, gatherings.

In the third place: by being active in many ways to achieve their goals: through donations, with raising issues, demonstrations, with advancing motions.

In this field, the struggle shall be very long: however, after the Pope's word and the encouragements of the bishops, work has become urgent. The proposed goals are too noble: 1. To let in every township prevail what remains as regards catechism, just as it is now provided by law. – 2. To see as best as possible to the religious education in parish schools and oratories. – 3. To promote a general action for freedom of schools, with the consequent faculty to open confessional schools.

Oratory and parish schools of catechism

191 While a concordant and energetic action has to bring to maturity the idea of *free school* in the national conscience, we must not neglect in any way the teaching of religion. In Italy it was almost universal the usage of holding | catechism classes of children in churches on Sundays and on other occasions.

But it is precisely here that one of the most serious inconveniences in the care of souls in our country lies. In an area that

is that vast there are a thousand causes for distraction: classes disturb each other: as if there were no possible means of discipline: the children lose esteem of catechism,³⁶ seeing in its teaching such a profound inferiority face to face with the other school subjects.

To prevent such deficiency, at least partly, there is the foundation of oratories, of recreation center on holidays, of parish catechism classes.

And how many ways can women cooperate in this modern and true prudential work! The rich woman can sustain with money, always necessary for doing good: the woman of vast influence can provide her total support: the mother can take care of the participation of her children in it: others can assist in the teaching. And here are two very pertinent organizations.

School of volunteer catechists. – Since more than six years this initiative has been flourishing and having most consoling results. They are good young ladies, devote single women, who gather together and, under the direction of some priest, educated ladies, good teachers are trained to become teachers | of catechism. Pius X blessed the work and more than two hundred volunteer catechists obtained regular diplomas given by church authorities, the only one competent in judging adequate knowledge. The teaching of the candidates does not cover only the dogmas, morals or worship: it also covers pedagogy, sacred and church history, liturgy.

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³⁶ What made catechism distasteful to children was not perhaps only the noisy place wherein it was taught. There were also two objections raised by the catechism text itself: "1. the abstract, schoolroom form incomprehensible to children or to the rough ones, wherein the doctrines are expressed; 2. the loaded and exclusive importance the Church gives on these enigmatic formulae, at the expense of biblical events, of the gospel narration, of examples, of the sermons and parables of Jesus Christ" (*La Civiltà Cattolica* 1 [1910] 403ff). On this regard, it is useful to remember two articles published then by Count T. Gallarati-Scotti in *Rassegna nazionale* (of 16 November 1908 and 1 October 1909). "The theological language of catechisms," he wrote, "renders obscure those evangelical truths that were pronounced by Jesus in forms that are more accessible also to simple souls" (p. 137).

Society of the Christian Doctrine. – Pius X gave orders that “in all and in every parish be canonically established the congregation of Christian doctrine.” It can group together all the persons of a parish, but it is particularly addressed to parents and more especially to mothers: and it is destined to give the parish priest the moral and material assistance for the teaching of catechism. In fact, one who joins it obliges himself to contribute twenty cents a year to cover the expenses of prizes, to benefit catechism through prayers and work, by sending children and dependents there: to be available, when opportunity arises, to teaching itself.

N. B. It is not asserted here that only the catechists equipped with diplomas or the members of the Society for Christian doctrine can assist the parish priest: what is meant³⁷ is that *more easily* and with *greater ability* can these render their service.

193 For the good press

There is no good thing which human malice cannot abuse: this can be repeated as regards the press. On this regard it is good that in different places the ladies and also simple working women get united in *pro stampa* committees having double goals: to spread the good press, to take away the bad.

Led by priests and by educated persons, these are succeeding to lower much the copies of bad newspapers and books: while with so much efforts they seek to raise the subscriptions to Catholic periodicals. Through offerings, with alms, through lotteries, through charitable booths they managed to give subscriptions to newspapers for L. 12.00 or also 8.00 instead of the established price of L. 16.00. More: they see to it that every family, should receive each week at least a small religious-moral bulletin: often the same ladies were bringing it from house to house. In a parish, they founded by themselves a local bulletin, directed by a good teacher. In another, a publication of fashion, embroidery, tailoring, so much used in work shops, but truly dirty in the appendix, in illustrations and even in the ad-

³⁷ *DA* has *si suol* = usually had instead of *si vuol* = is wanted.

vertisements, at least they changed these into something good or at least harmless.

Roving library. – In Milan (Via Speronari - 3) the office of the *Federazione italiana | delle biblioteche circolanti cattoliche (Italian federation of Catholic roving libraries)* publishes a bulletin to make everyone come to know the better books that come out from day to day, to give a secure evaluation of them. In such a federation appear in great number libraries founded or at least administered and subsidized by women. Anyone who might want to read the *Guida del bibliotecario (The librarian's guide)*, published by the same federation would be persuaded of three things: of the great ease with which one could open such an activity, in whatever place, for as long as there are no grandiose pretensions from the start; of the great good it is destined to produce; on the preponderant help that women can offer it.

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ART. IV – WORKS SOCIAL IN CHARACTER

For the formation of mothers

There is no priest who is not deeply persuaded of the need to have good mothers: just as it is a truth, painfully evident, that today *true* mothers are wanting.

And this is a very serious evil: many young ladies arrive at marriage *not at all prepared*, morally and materially. Their lives are spent withdrawn, in a shop, or by the spinning wheel; they are not capable of some cooking, of keeping the house clean, of going to the *market*, to keep good company to a husband | to raise children and, at times, not even capable of guiding their own selves, and to think that life has its duties. Youth spent at home would have corrected all these inconveniences! But parents would not want to understand it and lesser even the young women: money, the desire for freedom, vanity draw outside the home so many daughters without it being truly necessary! Here one would understand what wisdom so many Catholic women have shown in Italy, in France, in Germany during these last decades: they founded *schools of home economics, health, em-*

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broidery, tailoring, sewing, cooking, homemaking. From them poor young workers, farmers, emigrants, dressmakers, embroiders, etc., and also refined ladies came out, better prepared to face life; at least materially! They founded *courses of special education* in order to teach daughters, already approaching marriage, regarding a prudent choice and the duties that await them. They founded *courses for the education of mothers* in order to remind and make mothers love the duties of their state in life. – The program is quite vast, considering that it aims at teaching hygiene, home economics, home management, the most effective means of instructing and educating children, of behaving with one's husband. Rather, there are cities where women, grouped together in a *Union of Christian Mothers*, seek to have periodically some conferences | on the home, also in manners of conversation, regarding the matters that concern them most.

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One could read: *Educazione - Conferenze per le madri* (*Education – Conferences for mothers*) - Bettazzi (Ufficio dell'Unione popolare).

Cultural circles

[The circle] is destined to give members: a broader range of instruction as regards religion, the family, society, and at times also art and literature; an education in conformity with the needs of today, for making learners get used to the duties proper to each member.

There are these among farmers, among teachers, among factory workers, among educated women: there are for young ladies and for mothers.

They avail with daily or periodic gatherings, of conferences conducted by speakers and, given the possibility, also by the members themselves, of friendly conversations regarding specified topics, conducted by capable persons. Attached to these ordinarily is a small library that provides newspapers and magazines.

It is from there that mothers well trained for their mission emerge, if the circle is destined for this. It is from there that workers who shall resist the spread of evil shall come. | Something of summary importance however is to be set and it is pre-

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cisely the purpose of the circle: do not admit anyone except those who would be benefited by it. In general it can be said that these shall not be many: but with a few more abundant fruits may come about.

For the decisive period of life [orientation and protection]

The strategic point of the Christian life of a man is the period when he leaves elementary schooling, to move on to the secondary, or else in order to acquire some profession. When youth is saved at that point, the better part is done: but woe to us if we abandon them at this time. And yet until today does not this thing happen? Also in this the initiative of women has known how to find remedy or at least offer its valid support. And so we have women who dedicate themselves to *teaching religion* to students, boys and girls, of the senior high schools, technical schools, colleges, universities, etc.! Then there are women who open *classes of catechism* to the working youth which, forced to spend days on end in factories, would hardly think yet to that which matters most: that is what belongs to the soul! Then, through the initiative of women, *holiday and also evening recreations* are established for the daughters of the people, particularly from the working class. Finally, we see in different places *retreats for young women workers* are held: and the ladies | busy themselves seeing to it that they are comfortable, that they are provided free board and lodging, and even pay for the *day's wage* that they would receive from the factory. (Neither did places where these spiritual Exercises held were wanting of women, ladies and men, too, after the initiative of women.)

What is most common in our rural centers is the company of the Daughters of Mary, which also receives its strength from young girls plus that of the elderly ones and the pious single women.

Many times young persons have to stay away from home because of studies: everyone knows the importance and the difficulty of finding schools, convents, good places for board and lodging. Thus in many cities, for example in Turin, the *Secretariat for families* has been established and it assumes the task of

finding for students board and lodging in families or in boarding schools that give serious guarantees of honesty. And we find ladies opening, perhaps with the help of sisters, *students' homes*.

199 Today more than ever, daughters leave home to look for jobs in the cities as house helpers or factory workers: today the plague of emigration³⁸ has become so widespread. Everyone knows how many dangers these daughters meet. From thoughtless young men in search for pleasures, to merchants of human bodies, who coldly calculate their earnings; in families and in industries, at train stations, at hotels, wherever, the faith and modesty of a young woman are threatened. Now who will not |admire the industrious charity of so many women who have sown the seeds throughout the world of a tight network of institutions in defense of innocence? There is the *Association for the protection of the young woman*. It has houses in all centers of the world that have some importance.

It proposes to provide young people: *a)* protection during trips, *b)* temporary lodging, *c)* employment *d)* guardianship during service, *e)* practical instruction courses, *f)* mutual help, *g)* struggle against white slavery, *h)* rehabilitation (center of the Italian committee: Via Consolata, 1 - Torino). Related with such an institution, and often directed by it are the *Assistance center at the train station*, the *Assistance center at the ports*, that continually have pious persons in ports and in the principal stations in order to welcome and save young women from the claws of birds of prey.

(See *La protezione della giovane (Protection of the young*

³⁸ Italian emigrants were many. For Piedmont, in 1895, there were around 30,000 persons who emigrated; in 1896, 24,836. In the province of Cuneo alone, during the five-year period 1891-1895 the yearly average reached 15,000 persons. In 1905, Msgr. Fiore published a pastoral letter on emigration wherein, calling the phenomenon "a painful wound of the province," pointed to the generosity of the more prosperous persons of the Society of St. Raphael, founded in Piacenza in 1891 by Msgr. Scalabrini, and the Salesian congregation, both appreciated by the Cuneo emigrants in America, and the Center of assistance to workers and emigrants in Europe and in the East, promoted by Msgr. Bonomelli, bishop of Cremona (cf. RISTORTO M., "L'azione sociale dei cattolici Cuneesi nell'ultimo trentennio del secolo XIX" (The social action of the Cuneo Catholics during the last thirty years of the XIX century) in *Bollettino dell'Archivio per la storia del movimento sociale cattolico in Italia*, Milano, a. III [1968], pp. 155-157).

woman). Bettazzi, L. 0.50, at the Azione sociale popolare - Torino - Via Legnano, 23).

See as well *Opera di collocamento (Employment centers)*, that seeks to find suitable and remunerative occupations for so many young women in principal centers.

[Assistance to emigrants]

Still related is the *Organization for the welfare of the Italian woman abroad*, it has its center at that of the protection of young women. Its goals are similar to this: rather, one could say that they are the same: taking note however | that it is focused especially on Italian women emigrants. And there is a need for it: Italy is the country that relatively has a greater contingent of women emigrants!

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And here one could list down the particular institutions for the *protection of bathers*, of the *employees of the health centers and hotels*, of the *rice cultivators*, etc., etc.

Quite suitably in many cities have been opened *homes*, *food centers*, *pension houses* for workers. Being mostly run by sisters, or at least by honest persons, they offer these young women economic, hygienic and moral advantages. And these advantages are so evident that the directors of factories themselves invite the sisters to establish them, and not only that, they also prefer that the other workers who stay elsewhere should stay there.

On this matter, another initiative, tried and with good success in many centers, is very good: to open work centers, social or private establishments, factories to offer jobs to young people who otherwise would have emigrated. (See: *Un'opera cattolica sociale femminile in Torino (A social Catholic center in Turin)*: Laboratorio della Consolata - L. 0.50 at the Azione sociale popolare - Via Legnano 23, Torino). Here, aside from occasions arising for bigger earnings, there also is another immeasurable advantage of keeping young people away from dangers. Furthermore, religious instruction and education could be given them: | living at home, it is much easier for them to prepare for being good wives. And this task of stopping emigration either from the rural centers towards cities, or as helpers or workers, either from the country to look

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for better paying jobs abroad, should as well be the commitment of everyone, also of the woman. Already efforts are exerted in many centers, companies of Daughters of Mary, professional schools, etc. How many unhappy girls entertain illusions! And not only the girls, excusable though they may be, but also parents who pass for being Catholics! Will one earn more in the city, abroad? The issue is problematic; rather, would one not earn more at home on condition of improving the methods and of becoming more industrious? Granted that there would be a better earning: will one not also spend more? And a daughter, without any dowry but knows how to govern the home, is she not to be preferred than another who, emigrating, has not learned such an art, granted that she should put up a thousand lire as dowry? And health, often lost, and the Christian sentiments, often forgotten, are they not worth some hundreds of lire?

Countess Keranflech-Kernezne³⁹ had spoken in so practical a manner in a conference on this topic that we should transcribe

³⁹ *DA* has *Keranflech-Kernezne*. About the year 1886 was born in France the Catholic Association of the Youth. In its first bulletin it appeared that its intention was that of grouping together all the French youth of good will in view of cooperating for the reestablishment of the Christian social order in France. Its method was synthesized with but three words: "piety, study, action." The Association embraced the directives of Pope Leo XIII (Carpinetto Romano 1810 - Roma 1903), and, above all under the presidency of Henri Barire and then of Jean Lerolle, it was strongly committed to social action. This orientation, popular and democratic, was expressed in numerous congresses that, until the publication of *DA*, discussed important social issues. For example, the congress of 1891 had as theme the awareness and the deepening of the conditions of the working youth in France; in the congress of 1908, celebrated in Angers, the agrarian question was discussed; in the congress of Lyon, in 1912, the professional organization of young men and women was discussed. In this context would be placed the commitment of a quality speaker who reached also Turin. Born Simone de Boiboissel, the noble countess Keranflech-Kernezne had recently published a book that she used normally as the foundation of her conferences. The title was: *Causeries et conseils aux mères de famille* [Conversations and advice to mothers of families], R. Prud'homme, Saint-Brieuc 1911, that Fr. Alberione might have had in hand. The same topic of the countess' conferences and of the book would she discuss in 1925, in another short published collection *Trois semaines rurales féminines. Causeries sur l'éducation* [Three weeks with rural women. Conversations on their education] published by the same French publisher. The themes that the countess discussed concerned: "l'enseignement ménager, la pédagogie familiale, l'assistance hygiénique sociale, comme bases de l'instruc-

it here completely. She advises not only lace making in all its forms and embroidery: but she also insists in detail on the rational raising of chicken, of raising vegetables, of fruits. These occupations, she says, can also be had in rural centers without having to leave and crowd in the city: if assisted by the cooperation of labor unions, of professional unions, they shall be more remunerative than industry or business. In many places, a rather broad instruction on the moral and material dangers that accompany them would be enough to stop emigration. It is noticeable: so many emigrants were in happier conditions in their own country. Nonetheless, in some cases it is not just possible to stop it. Then, it would be necessary to at least prevent the disastrous effects. And also on this, Catholic women knew how to work things out. In cities and in populated centers, where this ill is more widespread, they established special schools for emigrants. There, with the country's language, to which they are leading, notions on the duties, the dangers, the trips, the work contracts, on savings, etc., are also imparted. These women assume as well the task of communicating the names of the emigrants to the *Society for the protection of young women*, to the *Society for the welfare of women abroad*, to the *Bonomelli Organization*, to the *Scalabrinians*⁴⁰ etc., as the case may be. In this manner the emigrant is not only benefited but also protected from evil speculators.

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- See: 1. *Italiani in esilio (Italians in exile)* - Mondini.
 2. *Emigrazione in genere (Emigration in general)* - Pasteris.
 3. *Emigrazione operaia italiana (Emigration of Italian workers)* - Pasteris.

tion de jeunes filles", as it appears in one of her conferences in 16 pages printed in 1927. The countess, of noble lineage, was engaged in the social training of the disadvantaged, young and rural women.

⁴⁰ Giovanni Battista Scalabrini was born in Fino Mornasco (Como) on 8 July 1839 and died in Piacenza on 1 June 1905. Belonging to a middle-class family, after his senior high school, he entered the seminary where, he had as colleague, Luigi Guanella. He was ordained priest in Como on 30 May 1863 and stayed in the seminary at first as professor and then as rector until 1870. Having had the chance to invite as preacher of Spiritual Exercises, the then provost of Lovere, Geremia Bonomelli, Scalabrini later ventured into an intense pastoral collaboration with Bonomelli.

Each costs L. 0.50 and is sold at: Azione sociale popolare - Torino - Via Legnano 23.

203 4. *Guida dell'emigrante italiano (The Italian emigrant's guide)* (L. 0.25 - Tipografia del Resegone - Lecco).

5. *Chiave della fortuna (Key of fortune)* (L. 0.70 - Libreria Salesiana - Corso Regina Margherita - Torino).

ART. V – WORKS ECONOMIC IN CHARACTER

Professional unions⁴¹

A huge task belongs to these unions in the solution of the social problems regarding women. They are not tools for fighting, as some might imagine, inasmuch as they are dominated by the Christian spirit. What Catholics will not do shall be done by the subversives: and what will be done without us will be done against us. Possible are so many organizations as many as there are professions for women:⁴² *telegraphs, post office workers, rice planters, embroiders, tailors, needle workers, weavers, nurses, helpers, train employees, hotel workers, storekeepers, etc., etc.* Such unions aim at defending the interests of the classes face to face with eventual abuses: to assure the free Christian profession: to lead the members to a moral upliftment. Fortunately, also here much work has already been done: we have the *Labor Union for Italian weavers*, the *Labor union for needle workers*, the *Labor Union of nurses*, the *League of tailors*, etc. They can be known by referring to the central office of the Popular Union (Padova).

⁴¹ Professional unions: cf. DA 40; with a certain disdain, Alberione would also make reference to a “workers’ union” (cf. DA 155) underlining nonetheless the importance of “cooperation,” of “unions” in general and of the “professional unions” – cf. DA 202-203. The complex world of the organization of Italian labor unions, prevalently socialist in character (chamber of labor, federations, Federterra) reached one moment of national unification in 1906 with the creation of the *Confederazione Generale del Lavoro (General Workers’ Confederation)* (cf. The negative view of Fr. Alberione in DA 33) that, as a statutory objective set “the general and absolute direction of the proletarian, industrial and rural movement, beyond any whatever political distinction”. In reality, the CGL remained in the hands of the socialists of the reformist current (whose secretary general from 1907 until 1918 was R. Rigola).

⁴² Cf. BOLO, *La donna e il clero*, op. cit., pp. 224ff.

Local sections of such organizations could be organized anywhere when the need arises. To them could be united a *professional school*, when it is judged useful: what will particularly be beneficial is a school of *home economics, tailoring, sewing*. The young women can be better trained for life, when, God willing, they shall move on to marriage. 204

The advantages that such an organization should always propose are: the abolition of work at night; weekly holiday rest; hygiene in the establishments and in the factories; evening instruction courses; savings accounts and mutual assistance.

See. *L'organizzazione professionale della piccola borghesia nel Belgio (The professional organization of the middle class in Belgium)* (De Clerc, at the Azione sociale popolare - Torino - Via Legnano, 23).

Social assistance

The group of organizations that come under this title aim at educating women as regards saving and cooperation, so that they may become aware and assume the dignity of enlightened and sober workers. Here are the principal works.

National social security fund for pensions of invalidity and old age. – Six lire are paid each year and the pension varies from a maximum of about L. 237 to a minimum of L. 74. It is within the monopoly of the State.

Dowry funds. – The form introduced by the abbot of Sécheroux di Pithiviers⁴³ is widespread. | Young girls are admitted in 205

⁴³ DA has *Lècheroux di Pithiviers*. Abbé Léon Sécheroux had published a booklet, in 8-page signatures, of 31 pages, entitled *Une casse dotale*, Imprimerie moderne, Pithiviers 1904. It was publicized in *Quinzaine* of 16 July 1904. Some years later (in 1906), this priest, probably born in Pithiviers (a city south of Paris, famous for having been the birthplace of painter Baugin Lubin, 1612/13-1663, and the mathematician Siméon Denis Poisson, 1781-1840), published again the booklet, perhaps printed this time in sixteen-page signatures, in Rheims (rue de Venise, 48). A brief bibliographical profile was published in a quarterly of social issues, *L'Action populaire*, issue number 104. It is difficult to establish from which edition Fr. Alberione drew inspiration while writing this paragraph on the dowry funds. It is nonetheless admirable that his documentation was attentive regarding what was going on during his time in the Church, in behalf of women, also beyond the confines of Piedmont and of Italy.

it from age twelve by committing themselves to deposit from five to sixty lire. The amount of dowry shall be proportionate not only to the deposited amount, but still with the offerings made by patronesses, largely young persons themselves, too; often it also reaches the amount of one thousand lire. – And more commonly it is a local institution.

Maternity funds. – It has to subsidize workers when they become mothers. Obligated to enlist are all the workers who work in establishments and in shops and belong to the age bracket between 15⁴⁴ and 50 years of age. The yearly contribution (L. 1 for workers from 15 to 20 years, L. 2 for those from 20 to 50 years of age) is, by law, paid half by the employer and half by the worker. On the occasion of childbirth, taking place at least six months after enlisting, shall have the right to receive L. 40.00 if she abstains from work for at least four weeks.

Scholastic mutual funds. – It is constituted among school children. It has two ends: mutual help and savings. A part of the contribution, in fact, is turned to a common fund, from where every sick child could have an indemnity in case of sickness; the other instead is placed in the personal saving booklet of the student.

206 *National society of patronage and of mutual help for young working women.* – The purpose, aside from support and moral assistance, is a | subsidy in case of acute sicknesses and the employment of unemployed members. It has two funds: a patronage fund, fed by the offering of patrons: mutual help fund fed by the contributions of the members. The central office as well have its own reserve funds for the general expenses of the society.

One can say, however, that the difficult problem has been set up but not yet resolved, the problem of the *Italian moral and economic union together with the local mutual assistance*. The ethnic diversity perhaps makes it almost unsolvable: however, it would succeed anywhere if it closed into regional circles. Rather, best would be a *workers' fund* that is local.

⁴⁴ DA has 5.

Lastly: a reference to some initiatives here and there tried and successful also by women but surely less proper to woman's actions. The *popular housing* meant to provide convenient dwelling for workers, often forced to live in places that struggle for hygiene and morals. The *gardens and vegetable plots*: in them the worker finds honest, healthy relief, and also a great financial advantage.

Consumers' Leagues. Founded for the first time by a woman, they have as a principle: *to buy is not only a matter of economics, but is also is a social act*. In fact, aside from the economic advantage members get, fair market practice and avoidance of cheating | often hidden in many parts by modern *advertising*.⁴⁵ – Added here also is the *league of workers, cooperatives of production, socialized factories*, etc.

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Works of charity

I mean here Christian charity. This is quite different from lay charity. The first sees in the poor man a brother, Jesus Christ, more: it aims at heaven, to the soul. The second, instead, is a pretension of charity for sectarian goals: it is the angel of darkness that puts on the clothes of the angel of light; it gives a piece of bread in order to buy conscience. Or else

⁴⁵ For example between 1800 and 1900, there were advertisements of the PINK PILL. Under the title "Arise!" the advertisement appealed, rather vaguely, to "Weakened, exhausted males, whose spirit lie prostrate due to the waiting and whose body has become anemic for excesses." But the masterpiece of this PINK PILL was that it was useful not only to men, exhausted by sexual excesses, but were most useful for "the dawn of womanhood." "Is the most attractive girl necessarily the most beautiful? No! The most attractive girls are those resplendent in health and vitality." Obviously, they must have taken PINK PILL "the most potent blood regenerator, tonic for the nerves". The printed announcement was surrounded with a number of girls in bloom, with or without hat; an elderly gentleman on the right, perhaps a doctor, perhaps a client with virile qualities that looks at the pill and appreciates it. There were, however, other pills, for example, the PILLULES ORIENTALES ("L. 9 per bottle free delivery. Address card money order to Lega italiana, via Fra Domenico 9, Firenze"), that assured a "Diva's Breast"; there also was the CREMA CIRCASSA: "Rebuilds and beautifies the breast in TWO days."

today it is the direction of the sworn enemy of the Church, Freemasonry: to do *some* work of charity and give an advantage to the entire *monopoly*.

Very well: here are the results, expressed not in pompous words but with the eloquence of numbers: they are a small episode of a great series of events of daily life. Recently, two statistical data on charitable deeds were published in France. The first, which was Freemason, reported as something extraordinary that the Freemason Orphanage in Paris, meant to house all the orphans of the country, in 50 years had housed 319 children.

208 The second was Catholic: from it one could recognize the religious congregations, | driven away later from the republic by the government, had in 1900 supported:

1. – 60,000 orphans;
2. – 210,000 sick and elderly;
3. – 12,000 wayward persons;
4. – 60,000 blind or abandoned;
5. – 250,000 the poor in general.

Would it be that Freemasonry ruling over France drove away the religious congregations due to professional envy?

The area of charitable activities is very broad, as broad as the world. We are witnesses of misery in every place: and furthermore we know that the greater part of it is unknown to us.

From here comes the first practical rule: let us know how to prefer the *poor who are ashamed*: those whose misery is the most ignored, and often they are in situations much more pitiful than others, who are at least begging on the streets. Here, aside from the assistance, is required the delicate touch of guessing the needs and to cover the alms from the other persons' eyes. The charity of many persons went much further as to send alms in incognito; more, at times even to the point of offering some convenient work, compensating it much beyond one deserves.

209 There is, if it is allowed us, a second norm: as much as possible, attempts must be made to *consolidate the family*. It is the foundation of society: to allow it to disintegrate is always a social ill: this has to be avoided as much as possible. | If helping the mother is enough, let us not take away from her the child to

give to a surrogate:⁴⁶ if a man is still capable of making a living, let him be given a job and help him as much, instead of confining him immediately in a hospital.

It is better to teach one to make a living than to continually dole out: better to teach how to save than to build new hospitals each day. We have seen it above.

And here are some charitable activities:

Day-care and after-school centers. Education at home should be preferred; however, in fact, parents often neglect the moral, religious and civil training of their children: many due to indifference, others because they are busy. On this matter, it is quite well that their work is *completed* by day-care centers, wherein children are welcomed and kept almost the whole day; and more by the after-school centers wherein children, aside from being watched over, are helped in their school assignments and trained through example and advice for a good life.

Hospices, Orphanages. – These *take the place* of parents entirely in their duties of nourishing, instructing, educating abandoned children. And how many are there of these unhappy ones during our days!

Homes for the aged and the disabled. – The less religious a people is, the greater is the need for these institutions. With the multiplication of vices, evils multiply: with the loss of religious sentiments, families break down: with the family's break-down, aged persons and the disabled will find themselves in direr situations.

Hospitals, clinics, sanatoria. – They are the refuge of a good number of human miseries. Often it is God who tries, at other times it is the divine justice that gives the blow: always in view of repentance and sanctification.

Well, how is women's zeal exercised in these works? Undoubtedly, part of them is founded or at least subsidized by women, of great charity: women, more than men, are more sen-

⁴⁶ Role, compensation and duration of service that the surrogate mother (nourisher, a woman who breastfeeds someone else's baby for pay, a governess) and is ruled by laws and by a contract.

sitive than men when it comes to human miseries. Let women, therefore, give.

What if a woman does not possess anything worth a fortune? She, however, possesses a good heart and she could easily find some free time: well, let her visit those places, bring there some smile, some ray of faith and hope, some service.

We seek the welfare of the body to arrive at the soul. – What good is there that women cannot do in orphanages, especially those for girls! Those who attend to these, let them think that they are called to participate in the most noble mission of a mother and of a priest: let him or her who enters, at least sometimes, consider himself a brother or a sister of the wards. These need a heart that take the place of the mother, taken away from them by force of circumstances. Let them be loved, advised, taught. Should it be | the case of old folks or those in hospitals, it is good to be guided by these Christian thoughts. Whoever comes in it, let him either go out of it recovered in soul and in body, or else die there reconciled with God; the hospital is a purgatory; the hospital is the temple of God's mercy.

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Whether it concerns *desperate* cases or not, let him who serves, directs, visits hospitals always have this aim: to reconcile people with God, to inspire the most complete abandonment to God's will.

For as long as we speak the language of charity; for as long as charity is not only in words; for as long as there is material assistance, the way to the spirit has been found. The logic of the heart is more effective than the logic of reason.

Day and night attendance to the sick

It is an association that has as aim the attendance to the sick, especially the poor and the abandoned. It has a very easy organization, not requiring other than a friendly agreement among the members, to get to know the needy sick persons and to establish the time when each one can, by turn, render her service. Should the work assume a rather large proportion, then, some regulation may be formulated, a president may be elected | (or a president in the person of the parish priest or any other priest),

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to hold formal meetings. Widows, women who have no other obligations, elderly single ladies: never young persons.

According to local circumstances, the quality and the number of members, they may commit themselves or not to assist also with money the poorer sick persons, they also could offer assistance, they could assume the obligation of informing the parish priest in time for religious assistance.

This work is most useful in those populated centers where often there are poor and abandoned sick persons, where there is no hospital or charitable institution, where indifference, malice or ignorance, where some sick persons would reach the end without being able to receive the holy sacraments.

It is most pleasing to the Lord considering that these words belong to him: *whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.*"⁴⁷ So the saints even went to the point of kissing the wounds of the sick, thinking that they were kissing in them the sacred body of Jesus Christ. Finally: it is a work that generally enjoys the esteem and affection of the people: families benefited by it will keep a grateful memory and most lively recognition.

Conference of St. Vincent de' Paul

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Begun by Ozanam with his companions, it is most similar to the other works of charity mentioned earlier. It differs from others in this: it includes also young persons, especially students, and has as a purpose not only the help and assistance of the sick, but also *visiting and helping the poor* and the sick. With this charitable institution present in principal inhabited centers, they render three benefits: one material and moral in *favor* of the persons visited, who not only receive the alms of bread, but they are also comforted by the affection of an esteemed person, and often prepared to face in a Christian manner the final steps. An advantage to the one visiting himself: that, coming in contact with the miseries and the realities of life, he would not have regarding it illusions so fatal and so common among the youth.

⁴⁷ Cf. Mt 25:40,45.

A third advantage, and this one we can call social, is the binding of the different classes, of the rich with the poor, of the learned with the ignorant, of the noble and the populace.

Should anyone consider superficially this work, he would say it is most difficult if not impossible to do. Well, facts tell differently. In spite that the members completely raise the common funds, in spite of the spirit of sacrifice that it demands, in spite of the often lamented weakening of the faith, the conferences of St. Vincent de Paul are most numerous. The statistics of 1911 in fact shows that in Italy alone there are 420 Conferences and 16 million lire have been utilized.

It is quite true, though that we cannot take everything into consideration: a part of the good done is accomplished in secret.

THIRD PART

HOW THE PRIEST
CAN TRAIN AND LEAD WOMEN
IN THEIR MISSION

PREAMBLE

This is the most practical: this is what has been aimed at by what has been said till now.

We would begin with examining some defects of the current spiritual direction of women and with studying the necessary qualities of the priest for this duty. Then, we shall speak of the duty that every priest has and that which is reserved to the parish priest: the formation of women for virtue and zeal: the mission of women and its exercise.

216 It is not possible to exhaust in so few pages such a broad topic. I believe it more useful to advise the reading of some of the following books that can be called “the literature | of practical pastoral action”. In it one shall find parts that I have set aside:

1. *Governo della parrocchia (Government of the parish)* - Rivarolo.
2. *Parroco novello (The new parish priest)* - Frassinetti.
3. *Il Curato d’Ars (The Curé of Ars)* - Monnin.¹
They reflect the works and the needs of all times.
4. *Guida pratica del beneficiato (Practical guide of the beneficiary)* - Fino.
5. *La paroisse (The parish)* - Lesêtre.
6. *Le prêtre et le ministère paroissial (The priest and the parish ministry)* - Désers.
7. *La cura d’anime nelle grandi città (The care of souls in the big cities)* - Swoboda.²
8. *Nella luce d’Ars (Under the light of Ars)* - Retté.
9. *Lettere d’un parroco di città (Letters of a city parish priest)* - Yves le Querdec.
10. *Lettere d’un parroco di campagna*³ (*Letters of a countryside parish priest*) - Yves le Querdec.

They especially reflect on the needs and the works of today.

¹ Cf. MONNIN A. S.J., *Il curato d’Ars*. Life of B. Jean Baptiste Marie Vianney translated by Countess E. Manna Crippa, corrected and augmented with the Decree of Beatification and of the Miracles. Nihil obstat for printing, Turin, 23 January 1901.

² This book was also one of the basic texts for the *Appunti di teologia pastorale*. See below, DA 284, note 7.

³ Cf. LE QUERDEC Y., *Lettere di un parroco di campagna*. The first and the only Italian translation approved by T. F. With a letter of Cardinal Ram-

THE FACTS AND THEIR CAUSES

To observe the facts and draw the general law that governs them, this is an excellent manner of reasoning. To take into consideration the evil, look for their causes in order to prescribe remedies for them, this is the wise work of a doctor, of a sociologist, of an ascetic, of a teacher, etc. The facts I am about to narrate are true, but fortunately they are few. Nonetheless similar facts are not few and they could be cited: in them the deplorable evils would be minor, but more or less of the same nature: the more or less does not change the substance of things. | What worries the zealous clergy today almost entirely is to bring a bit of medicine to sick society; in experiencing the inconveniences of pastoral care the clergy shall not think of receiving an affront, but a friendly word that says: brothers, let's watch over our steps.

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Here is one fact: there is a certain number of parishes in Italy and particularly in France wherein the priests, including the parish priests, seem to be destined to no one else but the devote souls, to retreats, to hospices, to the hospitals, to some ladies who pass for spiritual women. These souls keep the parish priest for very long hours in the confessional, they visit him at every instant for petty things and most useless chatter, invite him to a thousand parties and small occasions, to nice made up meals, etc. When evening comes, those priests and those parish priests draw a deep breathe and as if with an air of complacency exclaim: how much work in this parish! How many things have I accomplished today! How tired am I! Some rest I do deserve! – Meanwhile, one could say: Such time lost by working: *in nihilo agendo occupatissimi!*⁴ A saintly bishop would say. Time

polla in the name of Leo XIII to the Author. The book was awarded at the Academy of France, Florence, Office of National Reviews, Via della Pace, 2, 1895, Tipografia minorenni corrigendi. The book was published in 1894 and had different reprints in France.

⁴ *Very busy doing nothing!*

218 was wasted because those long hours at the confessional were in large part wasted, inasmuch as the saints would have drawn better fruits by cutting short with those persons: time was lost because also a | thought, also a prayer for the great mass of the population was neglected: time was lost, because that small herd of devote souls perhaps counts only a hundred, while the parish is made of some thousand souls.

Another fact. – A parish priest was mentioned with so much praise. The person speaking was a good woman, one of those, however, who want to know and pass judgment on why a priest said the *Creed* and another, not... And she was saying about that good parish priest that he spent an average of four hours at the confessional. It happened that I came to that parish and stayed there for a week or so: I wanted to check on what I pleasantly heard. But I was truly disillusioned. That parish priest, an otherwise good person, spent indeed four hours at the confessional...; but in four hours he could hear the confession of but about a dozen persons among single ladies, some sisters, and old ladies, a few pious souls... These were about seventy in the village, and they confessed every eight days, spread through the week... The parish, however, had about four thousand inhabitants: what of these great mass of the population? At the religious instruction, one could see about two hundred persons, including little children; also during the principal feasts the number and the quality of those receiving communion varied little; more than a thousand and two hundred adults did not accomplish the Easter obligation! – And yet that parish priest calculated the number of hosts | distributed during the year and was saying: the spiritual level of the parish is improving because the number of communions has increased since I came... In fact, some more daily communicants were added: but the number of those receiving communion yearly had tremendously decreased: from five hundred from among those who neglected the Easter obligation, there were now about one thousand two hundred!!!

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Third fact. – In a small village there were about twelve thousand inhabitants distributed in four parishes, with a total of thirty-four priests, including parish priests, assistant parish

priests, beneficiaries, employed in confraternities,⁵ abbeys, etc... As one could see all the classes of persons could be spiritually cared for and some more could be added! And yet the result is quite negligible. Little conflicts, empty petty talks, ridiculous competitions! Great zeal is as if reduced to *grab* about two hundred or three hundred women, some nitwits, some cripples and a bit more! And towards this end, if in one church the devotion of the month of May is started, in the other, in order not to let go some of the flock, tries to make it more solemn: if in one church an hour of adoration is done, in the other the exercise of the good death is done: if in a parish, the *way of the cross* is held, in the other at the same time the ceremonies of the tertiaries are held... Go and preach in the city, visit all the churches, after a month, | you shall know all the two or three hundred persons referred to above, persons who run from church to church and form the *great* audience of all! At rare times someone is added to those who are not of this number of *privileged persons!* Let us cover with a merciful veil some efforts that the Lord shall judge in order to increase the number of penitents!... Meanwhile, there are no classes of religion held on holidays to students, who would count something like two hundred fifty. Meanwhile no one takes care of the weavers and of the seamstresses who grow up shameless if not worse. Meanwhile, the three hundred workers of the small factories, enrolled in the subversive parties, are abandoned in vice, lack of religion and in misery... There is someone among those priests who are in contact with some doctor or lawyer, but by reason of interests, or else for reasons of entertainment; there are some who get along with some professor, but for reasons of artistic culture. Then there is a certain number of men who do not even know by sight the parish priest, and with many others of this type, he does not exchange greetings other than a tip of the hat.

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⁵ The confraternity was a corporation largely made up of lay persons, canonically erected and governed by a superior with the purpose of promoting Christian life by means of special good works of worship and of charity towards neighbor. Of the same level as confraternities were the pious unions (or companies or societies).

Fourth fact. – This is told by a young priest, for about three years an assistant curate in a parish of three thousand souls. From the human point of view, so he says, my life would not be that bad. In the morning the *Ave Maria* is rang quite late, I work very little | in the church, much freedom in the convent, discrete treatment. From the supernatural point of view, however, I suffer much! I move about town and everywhere in the village, in its roads and squares, I find children who never attend catechism classes: oh, if only there were a holiday oratory! And here it would be something very easy inasmuch as there are persons who have the means and are charitable. On Sunday mornings, on the first Mass celebrated by the parish priest, there is a crowd of men: the only sign they give of their religious life, because they hardly listen to God's word, and very few come for the sacraments. – What a priceless opportunity, when they are at mass, for telling them some gentle and strong words, where they could meet a priest, a pastor! Well, no! I, at the second mass, the parish priest giving instructions, we waste our breath with a *few devotees*, preaching what is suitable for one who is in the tavern. As for me, I can't do it: the parish priest does something, but he does it with a few women who often for us and for the prestige of being religious are more harmful than those who do not go to Church themselves. Greatest envy rules over these persons, a summary contest takes place among them so they be called devote, there rules a boundless passion for being considered and also most loved by the priest and especially by the parish priest. Thus, sometimes I notice them count, watch in hand, the minutes spent at the confessional: then with a refined cleverness, in some | to find pretexts to go to confession themselves, thus extending the spiritual conversations: then they make of the confessional the information office of all the news in town: then, there is always one who is on the lookout to find out who goes to the convent, who stays there more or less: then follows endless criticisms from every part of him who believes less welcome in the convent: and not only criticisms but vile calumny against the parish priest, cast here and there by persons who, the next day, would go to communion. And such things, believed or not, gets known throughout town and soon we see

ironical and malicious smiles that are exchanged sometimes among young people when we pass by. – What a life of piety is this? Who shall still hold in high esteem devote practices, the rites, the holy communion, the priest?

Here, however, we do not need to examine all the causes of these most serious ills; these would be: not looking at the *great mass* of the population, lack of modern means for pastoral care, little enthusiasm among the clergy, etc. I have tried my best to deal with these matters in the *Notes of Pastoral Theology*.⁶ Let us narrow ourselves to study here some causes in view of established goals. Unfortunately: the ordinary course of events in life, long lasting habits, lightness, self-love, the multiplicity perhaps of occupations block many from doing it. We would always want to be able to say that we have done every one of our | duties: to redirect all faults on the indifference or the hostility of the people.

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In general, there is no adequate training for the spiritual care of women.

From this follows the inability to lead this creature to strong virtues, that inability of not knowing how to duly use her energies: on the other hand, let us say it immediately, these energies are often ignored much. Hence follows also that of leaving her atrophied in dryness or is wasted in petty things, narrow talks, in sweet nothings. How many times is a devotion, mostly sentimental, something I would call a *pastime*, is the entire pious heritage of certain ladies!? Would that God wills that one day the Lord would have nothing to reprove us. Perhaps, however, if we dedicated a day to judge us dispassionately, *to let us come face to face with ourselves*, under the light that burns in front of the Most Holy Sacrament, or that which shall be lighted by our deathbed, we ourselves would find some accusation against ourselves. The more that God “*in angelis suis reperit pravitatem*”?⁷ “Let us train ourselves to good pastoral care of women through ardent piety and study.”

⁶ ALBERIONE G., *Appunti di teologia pastorale*, Torino, lit. Viretto, 1912; XIV, 484 p., 25 cm. – First edition typewritten and photostatically printed.

⁷ Cf. Jb 4:18: “With his angels he can find fault.” *DA* has *reperit*.

HEADING II

PIETY IN THE SPIRITUAL CARE OF WOMEN

224 His Holiness Pius X, receiving in special audience a representation of priests of the Apostolic Union,¹ on 18 November 1912, addressed to them a precious discourse. Among other things, he said: “Distracted by numerous occupations, it is easy to forget the things that lead towards perfection of priestly life; it is easy to fall into the illusion of believing that, caring for the souls of others, one works also on his own sanctification. Let not this flatter anyone, though, because *nemo dat quod non habet*;² and in order to sanctify others, one has not to neglect any of the means proposed for our own sanctification.” Neither is there any doubt regarding this truth: “You priests have to be what you want others to become through your ministry.” To let others become saints as much as we are is something that is relatively easy: more, no. It is true that God may make use of other means, of readings, inspirations, examples; but the ordinary means is this: to make use of the priest, like a channel of precious waters. This is for all the faithful: but here we see this truth underlined, referring ourselves to the spiritual care of women.

“Man has preeminence as to strength of the mind and of the arms, woman has the preeminence of the heart and of sacrifice.” One who observes the distribution of virtues would find its confirmation immediately: I cite as an example the distribution that took place, two years or so, in Padova and at the Academy of France. In this last, the first prizes were all given to women, in this order:

225 *First prize:* (L. 6,000) to the Little Sisters for the Assistance of the Sick of Mauriac.

¹ Association of diocesan priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, founded in France in 1862, by the honorary canon of Orléans, Msgr. Lebeurier. It was spread also in Italy beginning from 1880 (MM).

² “No one can give what he does not have,” a juridical adage.

Second: (L. 5,000) to Miss Rochebilarde.

Third: to the domestic helper Maria Bergnon.

Fourth: to Miss Arnaud.

Fifth: to the farmer Maria Jaffeux.

Women make up the devote gender and in general they have to be led much further in the ways of the Lord: let the master then be more enlightened, more experienced in the ways of the spirit. St. John of the Cross,³ St. Teresa, Frassinetti, St. Alphonsus,⁴ along with many other theologians and masters of the spirit, left on this matter serious words and also severe admonitions. Vulgar eyes see little of these delicateness, but minor or major holiness is something that remains. God shall eternally have a minor or greater glory, the soul a

³ Reformer of Carmel and mystical writer, Juan de Yepes, was born in 1542 in Fontiveros, near Avila in Spain and died in Ubeda, Jaén, Andalusia on 14 December 1591. Being poor, he went to the Jesuit schools and in 1563, after having shown proof of his inability in the various trades to which the family, poor in means, tried to train him, at twenty-one, he entered the Carmelite monastery of Medina. Soon, however, he was disillusioned due to the negligence of the monastic life wherein the Carmelite convents had fallen into. He studied at the University of Salamanca where, in 1567, he was designated prefect of the Carmelite students. In the following autumn, he met Teresa of Jesus, 27 years older than he was and because of this she used to call him her “little Seneca,” or his “half man”. The *fundadora* who had in mind the extension of the reformation to convents for males of the Carmelite order, saw in that young friar, physically insignificant, an ideal associate for bringing ahead her courageous project. She talked about it and convinced him. The reformation began on 28 November 1568 in Duruelo (Avila), where John was already for two months, having become the first Discalced Carmelite. In 1571, he also became the first rector of the first college of reformed Carmelites in Alcalá, an assignment that he would assume (1579) also in the college of Baeza founded by him with the motto: “religious and student – but primarily religious”. In 1572, Teresa wanted John to be the ordinary confessor of the Carmelite Convent of the Incarnation in Avila, where she was the Prioress. There, John exercised a fruitful ministry until, on 2 December 1577, during the most difficult period of the conflicts between calced and Discalced Carmelites, he was forcibly carried away and jailed in the prison of the Toledo convent. “To suffer and then to die” was John’s motto during those eight months in jail. He fled from there during the early hours of 17 August 1578, after which Teresa was very worried for him, ignoring where he might be.

⁴ Alphonsus de’ Liguori, lawyer, priest, founder of the Redemptorist Fathers, was born in Marianella, near Naples, on 27 September 1696 and died in Pagani, near Salerno, on 1 August 1787.

minor or greater happiness: glory and happiness whose reason is repeated by the priestly heart.

226 Other considerations are not wanting either: “There is no controversy that to listen to the confessions of women is the most dangerous and fatal barrier reef that God’s minister meets in the stormy sea of this century.” Thus says Frasinetti in that book that would bring great advantage if every priest read it: *Manuale pratico del parroco novello (Practical manual for the new parish priest)* (Genova - Tipografia della gioventù - L. 1.50). It becomes even more true if to the confessional were added some exterior relations. The spirit of piety uncovers the dangers where simple prudence would not suspect: the spirit of piety communicates a sacred horror even to the shadow of evil: this sacred horror, corroborated by divine assistance, is the safeguard.

Neither would a last observation be useless: if not for one thing, it will at least benefit the broad formation of the priest. He who has a profound piety shall often raise these questions: do I work enough for others? Do I avail with women according to the order established by the Divine Providence? – Delicateness of conscience matters to them. Not only that: in their prayers, particularly in the recitation of the holy office and in the visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament, he shall know how to recommend to the Lord this very important part of his ministry. In defeat, he shall find comfort, in victory he shall remain humble, in work he shall have constancy: inasmuch as if there is the ministry where it is necessary to exclude enthusiasm, to arm oneself with patience, to establish himself in humility... he is this. Women, with the changeability of their hearts, with the petty talks of their gender, with the affectionateness of their character, with the straw fire that burns fast and soon is extinguished, shall prove it right. Those who had experienced it could tell.

STUDY IN THE SPIRITUAL CARE OF WOMEN

Here, I do not intend to refer to sciences in general, but to that of the good pastor and more particularly to that of a good pastor of women since it is necessary to define well the purpose of priestly study: *the salvation of souls*. Is it not true that God's minister is first of all a fisher¹ of men? Not a man of letters, or an artist, or a politician, not a professor has Jesus willed that the priest should be: instead to be a savior of souls. He shall avail with the other sciences for as much as his noble mission would be made easy. From here follows that rule: *study as much as it is needed by souls: set aside what is useless or, worse, what consists a hindrance*. It is not necessary that one should be a saint to come to understand this truth: good sense and natural prudence are enough. Besides, Spencer,² Smiles,³ Förster⁴ develop and apply this truth: life is short, time is precious: having defined the purpose of life, as regards our program in life, we choose what leads us to it; let us set aside whatever is useless. Too many exhaust a precious activity in gathering by chance plants and flowers, while neglecting the maturing grain. – It is a part of priestly science that is better cultivated today, that is, that which concerns the direction of women. | One cannot do or even desire what is ignored: this is a principle of good sense heard many times in philosophy classes. Neither is it licit, after having seen it, to negate mission of women in society, especially today. It is not with being obstinate in closing one's eyes that ills are taken away and what is good is promoted: instead it is in studying and facing old and new problems of the care for

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¹ *Fisher*, as in Mt 4:19 or Mk 1:17.

² Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), English thinker and social thinker (MM).

³ *DA* here has *Smilles*. See *DA* 60, note 9.

⁴ Friedrich Christoph Förster (Berlin 1792-1868) was a historian and publicist who studied theology and archeology and taught history in Berlin.

souls. We shall not discover everything as new, but our obtained knowledge shall go deeper, others shall remind us, still others we shall see perhaps for the first time. Here I would like to suggest some books that could be useful for the purpose: I ignore the issue that they are the better ones of their kind, but having read them, I largely consider them useful.

For the moral-religious formation of daughters

1. *Première formation morale et religieuse de la jeune fille - Formation supérieure (Initial moral and religious formation of women - Higher formation)* (2 volumes: L. 1.50 each - Libreria Sacro Cuore - Torino).
2. *La monaca in casa (The nun at home)* - Frassinetti⁵ (Roma - Desclée - L. 0.40).
3. *La vergine cristiana nella famiglia e nella società (The Christian virgin at home and in society)* (Roma - Desclée - L. 2.50).
4. *Sposi timorati, sposi fortunati (God fearing spouses, lucky spouses)* - Nisten (Libreria Buona Stampa - Corso Regina Margherita - 176 - Torino - L. 2.50) (Reserved for young ladies from 16 up).
- 229 5. *Sul limitare della vita (On limiting life)* - Erminia Vescovi (Libreria Sacro Cuore - Torino).
6. *L'angelo in famiglia (The angel at home)* - Crosta (Libreria Sacro Cuore - Torino).
7. *La vita dopo il collegio (Life after schooling)*.
8. *Il libro della giovane figlia in vacanza (The book of the young woman on vacation)*.
9. *La scienza della massaia (The homemaker's science)*.
Per l'autore delle *Pagliette d'oro (Golden straws)* (Libreria Sacro Cuore - Torino).

⁵ Cf. FRASSINETTI G. (Prior of Santa Sabina in Genova), *La monaca in casa*. With two appendices: 1st Pia unione delle figlie di santa Maria Immacolata (Pious union of the daughters of Mary Immaculate); 2nd Spiritual friendships: Imitation of St. Teresa, added to it is the exercise of the holy mass in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Torino, Tipografia della Curia arcivescovile di Giacomo Arneodo, n. 5 - Via Torquato Tasso, 1900¹².

For the moral-religious formation of the bride

1. *La sposa cristiana nella famiglia e nella società (The Christian spouse at home and in society)* (Roma - Desclée - L. 1.75).
2. *Semplici verità alle donne del popolo italiano (Simple truths for women among the Italian people)* (Firenze - Barbera - 2 volumes: L. 1.00 each).

For the formation of mothers

1. *La madre nel problema educativo (The mother in the education issue)* (Firenze - Libreria Fiorentina).
2. *Un inverno in campagna (Winter in the farm)* (Family instructions on the duties of mothers) (Roma - Desclée).
3. *Educazione dei figliuoli (Education of children)* - Carmagnola (Libreria Buona Stampa - Torino - L. 0.50).
4. *Les grandeurs de la maternité chrétienne (The grandeurs of Christian motherhood)* (Roma - Desclée).
5. *Educazione (Education)* - Oldrà⁶ (Desclée - Roma).

For the social formation of women

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1. *La donna ed il clero (Woman and the clergy)* - Bolo (Libreria Sacro Cuore - Torino - L. 1.50).
2. *La donna nel campo cattolico (Woman in the Catholic world)* (Desclée - Roma - L. 3.50).
3. *Initiatives féminines (Female initiatives)* - Turmann (Libreria Sacro Cuore - Torino - L. 3.50).
4. *Un'opera cattolico-sociale a Torino (A Catholic-social work in Turin)*.

⁶ Cf. OLDRA A. S.J., *Educazione*. Preface by Prof. G. Toniolo. Third reprint. Torino-Roma, Pietro Marietti 1921. The book is subdivided into 16 conferences: – Adversaries and purpose of education; – Need and effectiveness of education; – To educate is to develop; – Need of repression; – Defects of character and of will; – Rewards and punishments; – Physical education; – Chastity in infancy; – The motives of chastity; – Watchfulness over chastity; – Schools and teachers; – Love as means of education; – Example; – Religion, basis of education; – The great step; – The convent.

5. *Femminismo cristiano (Christian femininism).*
6. *Rivendicazioni giuridiche ed economiche del femminismo (Juridical and economic revindication of femininism).*
7. *Iniziative cristiano-sociali femminili (Women's Christian-social initiatives).*
8. *Protezione della giovane (Protection of young women).*
At: Azione sociale-popolare - Via Legnano 23 - Torino - L. 0.50 each.
9. *Gli oratori festivi e le scuole di religione (Holiday oratories and schools of religion) (Libreria Buona Stampa - Corso Regina Margherita - Torino).*
10. *Compiti del clero nell'azione cattolica (Duties of the clergy in Catholic action) (Tipografia Sant'Alessandro - Bergamo - L. 1.00).*

NB. Theory is discussed especially in N. 1 - 2. The practical part is discussed in N. 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10.

It is not enough, however, that one has read the book, or some books, in order to conclude that one has been trained in the guidance of women. It is a must that something periodically *reawakens* the idea that lies at the bottom of awareness: it is necessary for one to | follow the women's social movement: it is necessary that nothing is left aside among the new means found by friends, nor the traps prepared by adversaries.

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It is enough that I mention what I would undertake a bit ahead: local, parish, diocesan works are not enough; we need a national movement and perhaps even international. Very well: for all these reasons a priest shall do well if he reads at least one, from among many periodicals on women's action. Let me refer to some: while taking note that periodicals and human institutions are like individuals: good today but can become dangerous tomorrow.

Matelda – Twice monthly publication for ladies (Firenze - Via Pucci 2 - L. 2.50).⁷

Azione muliebre (Womanly Action) – Monthly cultural magazine (Milano - Via Carlo Farini - L. 8).

⁷ On this magazine, see below, DA 295, note 3.

La donna e il lavoro (Woman and Work) – Weekly for Christian women workers (Vicenza - Via Carpagnon 13 - L. 2.50).

La settimana sociale (Social Weekly) – Under the care of the Popular Union (Padova - L. 2.50).

Vita femminile (Woman's Life) – Weekly magazine for the young ladies (Via Marsala, 8 - Bologna).

Then there is a study that is done not with books but on events. It is perhaps much more useful inasmuch as the life we live and that which is lived about us has lessons that strong that in no other place can they be had: on condition that one listens and | reads. Many do not do it: their eyes clearly reflect external objects, but their spirit does not see.

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Let us observe and reflect: on the heart of women, that open up spontaneously before us, on the effect of our words on their behavior, on the results of direction given in the confession, in private and public conversations.

Let us observe and reflect: with inquiries done with discretion and with goodness we shall open up the souls of the humble: we shall read there the joys and the sufferings, the wounds and the aspirations, the needs. Let us observe and reflect: they shall tell us of the works that are and even that are not yet, those that bloom and perish in other places, those that zealous conferees found and direct.

HEADING IV

ZEAL AND PRUDENCE

“Now, prudence has become the ordinary excuse of the idle; while, through zeal, the imprudent try to justify themselves.” Thus did someone say and he is not completely wrong. Here are some statements of the first: by now we know the world; nothing can be done about it; oh! that one is young, also his enthusiasm shall die down. Let us, instead, observe the other act before any mature examination, without measuring his own strengths, without knowing the environment, without measuring the dangers.

233 It is good to study, to pray, to seek counsel: this is prudence. It is good finally to decide to act | with all one’s strength, as if every result depended on us, and to expect the results, as if everything depended on God: this is zeal. Ordinarily: the older ones possess prudence, the young have the energy; together, they shall work miracles, divided they shall fall together and uselessly at that.

Here are some norms on the matter:

1. *Fear the dangers.* – Women are a serious danger for spiritual ruin: Adam, in spite of the fact that he was gifted with choice intelligence and of integrity, was seduced by Eve. Solomon, David, Samson and a thousand others were shipwrecked against this fatal barrier reef. So much so that St. Augustine wrote: “Believe me: I have seen the cedars of Lebanon fall, men who in the Church occupied eminent positions, men who could very well stand beside Ambrose and Jerome.” Prudence: also because the world always believes to read in the life of the priest that corruption wherein he is soaked. The subject matter is of summary importance, and it is generally understood and explained by authors.

Prudence at the confessional. – There are persons who approach it so that they be guided in the spirit: and meanwhile they profess their most sincere and holy affection for the priest,

at least at the start they pour out to the priest their hearts' burdens... The priest also has a heart, that is often more sensitive than that of ordinary ¹ men: but woe to him if he allows himself to be guided by the heart! Over | the Lord has placed the head. Never long extended conferences at the confessional! There are persons who do not hesitate to confide themselves as regards *the sixth commandment* and with the most trivial of terms... The priest knows well from books of ascetics, from authors of moral and pastoral theology, the way of turning as short as possible such accusations. The venerable Fr. Cafasso ² used to say that as for him he would rather give up the confessional rather than raise all the questions that are required in theory. – There could also be persons who come with the clear intentions of tempting. Every rigor in such cases is never an excess.

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Prudence in one's private life and in relationships. – With employees and with relatives, with the sisters and with parishioners. Reasons of need, suitably set up, sometimes appear as a cover up with the veil of charity certain relationships and communications that are *too frequent* and *too intimate*. It is absolutely necessary to exclude them: if one needs to work together with them, let it be in a specific activity. Perhaps, one must as well exclude some good work, as, for example, a class of music given privately by a young priest to persons who are not quite mature yet. It is difficult to remain in the right balance: however, if ever there may be an excess, it is better for one to be told to be too severe in this aspect than to offer occasions of idle talks. | Inasmuch as, every priest knows, even before the least

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¹ *DA* has *della comune = della maggioranza* = the majority or the ordinary men.

² Giuseppe Cafasso was born on 15 January 1811 in Castelnuovo d'Asti, a town mate of Don Bosco. Educated to an intense Christian life, by the family of patriarchal traditions, little Giuseppe, fragile in body that rickets deformed while he grew, had a volitive and tenacious soul. Having completed his studies in the public schools of Chieti [see *DA* 39, note 17] and then in the seminary of the same city, he was ordained priest in Turin on 22 September 1833. He felt strongly the ideal of the priesthood. He had not specific programs of spirituality and of apostolate, if not those common to the diocesan clergy; he did not leave behind institutions nor he founded congregations; he did not write any scholarly tracts nor on ascetics, but he lived truly and profoundly the ordinary rhythm of the priestly mission.

mistake is committed, there ought to be reason enough to stop or block even the only reasonable danger for accusations. Should a priest lower his face before a population, what good would he still be able to do? It would be better to look for work somewhere else that one can do with greater prudence.

2. With this norm, a second is remembered. *Cæteris paribus*³ ***the spiritual care of women has to be reserved by preference to elderly priests.*** – Let the words *cæteris paribus* be noted in order to dissipate useless objections or misunderstandings. It is a rule of good moralists that anyone who comes to the confessional has to be listened to: they may be young priests who with their piety inspire confidence and veneration: a need may rise when what is otherwise is required. But no one shall remain silent,⁴ I believe, on the rigorism of this rule: the association of the Daughters of Mary, the association of Christian mothers, the choir lessons to young ladies should be, by preference, assigned to the oldest of the assistant parish priests or else, when possible, to the parish priest.

236 To whomever that ministry might be assigned, however, it shall always be prudent to have among one's confreres a sincere friend who would know how to give advice, do correction, on opportune moments. It is not very easy to find this friend, but it is good to ask for him from God through prayer, it is good | to deserve it through humility: he who finds him shall possess a treasure⁵ Let it be noted furthermore: prudence suggests that one should not make preferences inasmuch as women are extremely inclined to be jealous. No very visible preferences, not justified also to the eyes of the world: no preferences at the confessional, in the music classes, etc. – Neither should there be unnecessary intimacies and confidences. Women, so the French people say, do not know secrets. Perhaps so in general, but this is exaggerated; but then there is so much truth in it.

Before men, let not women be exalted with too much praise and let not one appear to be counting on them so much in the exer-

³ *Under equal conditions.*

⁴ *DA has Ma nessuno, tacierà = No one, however, shall remain silent.*

⁵ Cf. Sir 6:14.

cise of the ministry: men and at times entire populations where men would appear too jealous and offended by it: “*Be watchful.*”⁶

But this is not enough: in such matters, it is absolutely necessary to always remember the other part of the Lord’s recommendation “...*et orate, ut non intretis in tentationem*”.⁷

3. Do not despise the devote ones and the devotions. – They may have so many defects because, although devotions themselves are holy, in little souls, however, they could be altered and perhaps they might appear also with ridiculous and grotesque excesses. The Lord, the most just judge, shall surely not demand more than they are capable of giving. More: the narrowness can be partly corrected through patient and constant work: while to despise them, to often preach against false devotion would embitter pious souls and it would not convert the others.

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Having joined a parish, a priest, finding devotions that are exaggerated or not adequately solid, shall examine them prudently to find out if it is possible to remove its defects, without destroying⁸ them. Almost always he will succeed to strengthen them to the greater advantage of souls. Should the obligation arise that they be removed, they could be allowed to just disappear little by little while taking care that, beside them, there should arise new ones that are guided with good spirit. There are pious souls who have defects, but are not serious ones. Perhaps they are a bit more talkative, a bit too sentimental, a bit too vain, a bit exaggerated: one can find a bit of all. But where could we ever find things perfect? If so serious defects and vices we tolerate among the evil why don’t we want to bear those light ones among the good, until we have actually removed them?

And let it be known: this is for our purposes. How many times can the priest avail with the precious services of these persons! They are the ones who keep up the hymns, they are the ones who consolidate the religious associations and often they make up the most faithful nucleus: they are the ones who take

⁶ Cf. Mt 24:42; 25:13; 26:38; 26:41 and parallels: “Stay awake”.

⁷ Cf. Mt 26:41; Mk 14:38 and 13:33: “... and pray, that you may not undergo the test.”

⁸ Original: *distrurle* instead of *distruggerle*.

238 from the Lord's hands so many graces with their prayers and their most holy communion: they are the ones who often offer material assistance necessary | in so many good works. Would it not be a very good advice to see them involved in zealous works instead of alienating them? To observe what is good found among them and draw some good from them? Every woman, in whatever condition, can a zealous work accomplish.

4. There is no need for one to wait *and become sure of the success of a work in order to undertake it.* – Not everything succeeds, not even in the hands of more experienced men. Trying and retrying, persevering in attempts were two maxims of great men. The venerable Don Bosco, or the venerable Cottolengo, or St. Vincent de Paul would not have accomplished their great works if they first made sure of their success. It was then that they prayed, asked for advice and thought: then they measured up their strengths, saw it good to go ahead and cast the nets⁹ in the Lord's name. We are his workers: and the worker has never to take into consideration his strengths alone. Perhaps it would happen that he stops halfway: then, it would be a great act of virtue to subject one's self to trial. Work will be resumed, under another point of view: one who does, errs; but one who does no, errs always.

239 O'Connell¹⁰ liberated strong Ireland from the ignoble servitude of England: he did not succeed in his first attempt, nor in his second, nor in his third: but he finally succeeded! At times, one goes down to the tomb without tasting the fruit of victory as it happened, for example, to St. Gregory | VII:¹¹ one however shall always have the certainty of the reward in heaven: and descendants shall harvest what has been sown in sorrow.

⁹ Cf. Lk 5:4-6.

¹⁰ Statesman born in Carhen (Ireland) on 6 August 1775 and died in Genova on 15 May 1847.

¹¹ Pope St. Gregory VII (1073-1085), was a Benedictine. With discernment, he knew how to purify the Church of his time: he repressed simony, struggled against concubinage of churchmen, raised the prestige of the papacy. Matilde of Canossa offered him hospitality in Canossa, where, as a sign of submission, he had to see Henry IV of Germany. Gregory VII, went in retirement in Montecassino and then in Salerno where he died.

HEADING V

DIRECTIVE PRINCIPLES IN WORK

Not every work shall produce its desired effect: that alone which shall be inspired by secure principles and by a clear vision of its goal. I shall refer to the principal ones: from these the others shall be made clear.

The two goals of the direction of women

The word *direction* here has to be understood in the broadest sense of the word: including all the work that the priest could do in behalf of the religious, moral and physical welfare of women, not only through the confessional and the pulpit, but also outside the church and in private relations. Well: it is directed toward two noble and holy ends: *to train the virtuous woman in order to turn her into an apostle*. They are the corollary of what has been mentioned till now. We, however, would like to note the intimate connection that passes between one and the other of these ends: they are in a certain manner invisible. Who is virtuous, that is one who loves the Lord, necessarily is zealous. St. Augustine says: *He who does not love is not zealous*; and St. Thomas: *Zeal is the product and the fruit of charity*. *The Love of God*, so St. Francis de Sales writes, *lies in rejoicing in what is good that is in | God and in desiring for him what he does not have*. Now, nothing can be wanting to God but a greater extrinsic glory that is promoted by the sanctification of the just, by the conversion of sinners, by the entrance of the souls in purgatory to heaven. From this comes that continuous labor of saints for the spread of the Gospel, for the preaching of the divine word, for the instruction of children. They did not spare themselves from labors; and because it was not always possible to preach, exhort, to give counsel, they often took recourse in fasting, in prayers and in flagellation.

Church history is even full of these examples, given by men

and women. The Love of God and of souls are nothing but two rays of the same flame, rather, it is the same flame.

Those women who have *true* piety towards God are as well good mothers of families, affectionate spouses, they are as well those who in the parish, with work and example, better promote what is good. To expect to have similar apostles without first having them as saints, is like wanting to keep a lamp without oil burning; some enthusiasm perhaps would be possible, but suggested perhaps by vanity, by interest, by natural inclination.

241 These are weak foundations that shall soon let the building crumble; fickle fire that shall burn out soon after the first outburst. | It follows naturally that how much shall the sanctification be, so much fervent shall be the zeal. If the work to accomplish is great, great should also be the virtues of the workers: and a priest cannot set aside this truth: that is to start the building of the tower without first having estimated how much would be needed to finish it.¹

And yet today the promoters of an independent morality do not fail to tell women: do good for the sake of good, do good for the joy of knowing grateful hearts, give out of the sweetness of doing good. From its fruits, one knows the plant,² so Jesus has said: now one can see how little and insipid are the fruits of such a principle. With a remunerating God suppressed, a God who sees what is hidden,³ the greater party of men experience much lesser pleasure in keeping than in giving:⁴ the poor is cast in a condition of inferiority that embitters: from him is taken away also the greater consolation, which is that of the reward in heaven.⁵

To further clarify this principle, it is suitable to add another principle, that is, to declare the characteristic quality of the holiness of women.

¹ Cf. Lk 14:28.

² Cf. Mt 12:33.

³ Cf. Mt 6:4,6,18.

⁴ The opposite of the words of Jesus recalled by St. Paul in Acts 20:35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

⁵ Cf. Mk 10:21 and Lk 6:35.

Spirit of sacrifice and of humility. – A schoolteacher, a subscriber and assiduous reader of *Rivista delle signorine*, (*Magazine for young ladies*) was praising the magazine for discovering the tendencies of the modern female soul: “It always publishes a page of mysticism that raises the soul to sweet Christian sentiments, | letting one forget for some moments the harsh reality of life. I learn how to pray in the open, better than before the altars. Nothing monotonous, convent-like, medievalism, of stagnation...” In simpler terms: none of the eternal sermons of the *abneget semetipsum*,⁶ nothing of the spirit of sacrifice.

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It is not, however, the emotions that need to be developed in women, rather the *manly strength* that they lack. Poetic ecstasies, vague dreams, vapid prayers, generous desires that are often sterile in their idealism ought not to be encouraged: instead, that which nourishes on the reality of life. “Tell me,” a priest observed, “do the mystical pages that raise you up and console you, do they also make you better persons? They develop in you only the emotional part and, allow me to say it, your aesthetic sense, or else do they strength your character, do they make you take generous decisions where it is needed, do they awaken in you hidden energies, taking you away from your ‘I’: in a word, do they enlighten you as regards your duties and do they infuse in your virtues for accomplishing them courageously? Do the mystical pages make you breathe or pray? Do they make you cry sweet sterile tears, or to act in a manly way?” With this, we do not pretend to condemn emotions: no, what is condemned is sentimentalism; there ought to be emotions, so much so in the creature of love, that is the woman; but it should not be the *foundation* | of spiritual life. “Firm and profound religious shall shape⁷ the banks of that mystical river where your ardent affections channeled, they shall flow strong, serene, dignified towards their goal to which God has destined them, while bringing with their flow the fruitfulness of a virtuous and zealous Christian youth. May God bless the powers of your heart, powers that a certain mysticism would weaken and lose.” *Poetry* has

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⁶ Cf. Mt 16:24: “Deny yourself”. *DA* has *abnege* for *abneget*.

⁷ *DA* has *formeranno* = *they shall shape* instead of *formerà* = *it shall shape*.

to be in life, but it should not lead it. It is so said: the negative foundation of every virtue is humility. But this so simple a truth, apparently, is not so easy to fathom. It is better said of women than of men. A woman's position, be she a daughter, wife, mother, is always a position of humility and of a certain submission. And it is in staying in her place that she shall be loved, venerated, respected. And whoever would speak of zeal, it is enough to remember that the darkest forms of ingratitude, the most unexpected surprise, the most hidden sacrifices are awaiting them. And how come women should be at their places, while winning over the natural inclination for them to show off and to present themselves without the spirit of sacrifice and of humility? How would they persevere in zeal?

244 The state of an individual's health is measured by the pulse; the spirit of piety, of women in particular, is measured by the spirit of humility⁸ and of sacrifice. Put⁹ it to the test, here is an excellent means for knowing, offered to the priest: | exercise it in the most varied manners, here is an excellent means of training. Let one read as well the good books of ascetics: let one go through the teachings of the Church: let him examine the modern spirit of devotion,¹⁰ such as the ones taught by the three principal teachers: St. Philip Neri,¹¹ St. Francis de Sales, St. Al-

⁸ DA has *pietà* = piety, mercy instead of *umiltà* = humility.

⁹ DA has *mettetelo* = put (plural) instead of *metterlo* (singular).

¹⁰ The *devotio moderna* (modern devotion) was a movement of religious reformation with an ascetical and mystical background, started in the Netherlands towards the end of the XIV century under the impulse of Geert Groote and of the religious communities he founded (the Sisters of common life of Deventer and the Brothers of common life, at first adherent to the rule of St. Augustine – foundation of the convent of Windesheim, 1387 – and then in 1400, organized as an autonomous congregation). The most representative work is the *Imitation of Christ* (1441) attributed to the canon regular Thomas a Kempis.

¹¹ Philip Neri (1515-1595), Florentine, founded in Rome the Oratory that took after his name. He put together with mystical experience a great capacity for contact with people. Before dying in his eighties, Philip burned the manuscripts of his books kept in his cabinet. Much earlier, at 24 years old, he made a bundle of all the books in his possession (except the Bible and the *Summa* of Thomas) and he brought them to the market for sale, then he distributed what money he got to the poor. From that moment, God alone would occupy his thoughts and his heart.

phonsus de' Liguori; this truth shall always be confirmed. Lest I be misunderstood, I immediately add another principle. The most profound, the most practical, the most useful treatise of this virtue is *La formazione a l'umiltà (Formation to humility)* (Libreria Sacro Cuore - Torino - L. 1.70).

Piety has as well to be joyful. – Also St. Teresa did not quite like *gloomy and sad devotees*. The world judges with terrible seriousness pious persons and here is one of its writers draw a picture of one: “He is an unbearable person having an impatient, manic character, that gets irritated with everything, that is always complaining, happy only when he is peacefully reclined on his armchair with a warmer under his feet, a cup of coffee on the table and the cat nearby.”

It is a maliciously falsified portrait: and yet some *old maid* has made it appear true. Now, Christian asceticism, the asceticism of St. Frances de Sales and of St. Philip especially, does not teach that. St. Francis says: “*A sad saint is a saint who's sad*” and St. Philip: “*In my house, there's no room for scruples and sadness.*” No teacher | of the Church has ever said that in order to please God one has to sport a long face, or that there is an increase of merit when one *puts up a long face* in God's service. Besides: who has the greater reason to be content: one who does his duty or one who betrays it? One who is God's friend or one who is hated by him? Are not the good souls the ones who enjoy the greatest inner peace?

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It is true: the pious soul at times feels the nostalgia for heaven; bears the boredom of this world wherein virtue is often hidden, while vice takes the scene; it is wounded by the sight of threatened innocence... This, however, is always a resigned pain, enlightened by hope, comforted by the sight of the crucified and by the hope for heaven.

Here we ought to be insisting even much more: these things, however, shall be made even clearer by the following directive norm. In fact, it is asked: why should woman's piety be joyful?

Because the secret of each of her success is goodness. – I shall sketch the portrait of a loving woman and one will obviously understand it. Her nature is cheerful, her conversation is

246 dignified and open; she cheers up those around her. Such was the virgin Aselly¹² of whom St. Jerome wrote: “No one surpasses in amiability that virgin, austere, serious but cheerful, happy and serious at the same time.” Pleasant and industrious, she enjoys spending everything at the service of others, | also when these bother her or interfere with her plans. She also was liked by everyone: to everyone she always had a pleasant gaze, to all she smiled. Her charitable indulgence excuses her neighbors, defends their reputation and, when idle talks threatened to start a fire, she would extinguish it with a good word. St. Teresa turned to be the defender of those absent: so much so that it used to be said that wherever she was present, those absent were safe from the arrow of grumbling.

She is condescending to the taste, the will, the point of view of others in everything that is not against conscience. With clever dexterity, she speaks of the virtue of her neighbor, narrates edifying events of which she was witness: she is more capable of these delicate art that others do not notice the defects. Always sweet and patient, she bears with a serene face, without vivacity and resentment, burdens of all kinds.

She is a lily among the thorns, and no matter how much the thorns pierce the lily, this does not cease being a lily, that is, sweet and pleasant.

247 Our Lord was meek,¹³ sweet, affable, gentle: and the people held on to his ways. Something similar is done by the amiable woman. On her face one always reads this statement: “Taste, experience, my yoke is sweet, and my burden is light.”¹⁴ Paola and Eustoquio¹⁵ wrote to Marcella:¹⁶ “Accept favorably | our

¹² Aselly or Asella: Roman virgin praised by St. Jerome in a letter to Marcella (MM).

¹³ Cf. Mt 11:29; 21:5; Jas 3:17.

¹⁴ Cf. Mt 11:30.

¹⁵ *DA* has *Eustachio*. Paola, belonging to a patrician Roman family, when turned a widow, followed the ascetic ideal of Marcella together with one of her daughters named Eustochio or Eustoquio.

¹⁶ Marcella, a Roman widow of the nobility, had built a hermitage in her own palace along the Aventino. Many other aristocratic women joined her thus forming the first monastery, in its broad sense, ever known in Rome. St. Jerome was the spiritual father and teacher of Scriptures at the cenobium of Marcella (MM).

prayer, o good and amiable Marcella, more amiable to us than everything that is on this earth: whose affability has attracted us to follow your way.” *Nothing builds as much as the sweetness of ways*, so writes Francis de Sales. And Faber:¹⁷ *Like a magnet, goodness draws one’s neighbor*. If one should speak of women, then these words assume greater strength. Generally, women may not assume the logic of reasoning, but they have in themselves the strength, and not the power of commanding: in gentleness alone can she find the secret of every success. Woman is lovable already by herself, seductive by nature and by art; but if to all this is added Christian sweetness, she shall be victorious through these powers put together: nature, art, virtue.

Goodness has converted more sinners than zeal, eloquence, or instruction; these three things have never converted anyone without goodness coming in somehow (P. Faber). And virtue should be the real foundation of goodness: inasmuch as it happens sometimes, particularly in a woman’s life, that under a service graciously rendered, under a simple smile, is hidden a heroic act. If she lives in a family or in an environment where piety is hated, her sweetness is much more difficult and at the same time more meritorious. She should be most diligent in her duties, | inasmuch as the malicious ones would be scrutinizing her so that, finding something, they could exclaim: devote persons are worse than the others! She should be taking away from the practice of piety whatever might have a shadow of what is rigorous in her manner of talking, of wearing clothes, in her way of life. She should often be hiding also what good is not commanded, to keep hidden certain books and objects of devotion,

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¹⁷ Frederick William Faber was an English Oratorian, born in Calverley (Yorkshire) on 28 June 1814 and died in London on 26 September 1863. Educated in Oxford, since youth, he was a writer of verses and an ardent disciple of Newman, who also was an Oratorian. He was ordained Anglican priest in 1839 and in 1841 made long journeys in Europe, describing these in his diary. On his return to England, he became the rector of Elton (Huntingdonshire, England). In 1842 he visited Rome where Card. Acton obtained for him a private audience with Pope Gregory XVI. With an admirable frankness, the Pope invited him to join Catholicism in Rome. The conversion of Newman (9 October 1845) made him finally decide and on 27 November 1845, also Faber was received in the Catholic Church by the bishop of Northampton.

not to show certain relations with persons known for their devotion and piety. It is well understood: this to the point where conscience allows. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth,*¹⁸ *that is, the heart of men,* so explains St. Francis de Sales.

249 *Being of our times.* – “Providence,” so Etienne Lamy¹⁹ explains, “has not left us masters of the moment we become her workers, according to different ages. She chooses for us different means, with them, she admitted us to collaborate in her work. Because of this, we do not have, even if we belonged to the iron age, to shed sterile tears on the greatness, on the beauty, on the energies destroyed. We have not been created to inhabit the tombs of the dead, but in order to raise new dwellings on the earth of the living!” Let us not join the ranks of the unjust who protest against the present hour by accusing it of thousands of miseries and by closing our eyes to so many of its virtues and social works. Let us not join those resigned, who seem to want to wait for the full destruction of society | and not only that, but also of the good workers. We are not among the scared who grieve over scientific progress and of its spread through popular instruction. Let us as well set aside the bewailers: Ah! Those times! Now what do you want! There’s nothing we can do, we already have fallen so low!

Ours is the XX century; and it is in this century that we are tasked to live work. We ought to belong to this century,²⁰ that is: to seek *to understand the needs and see to them.* This is easy inasmuch as God has given us a temperament, of customs in relation with our time and not with the times past. The study published on the subject matter in 1912 on the *Jeune fille contemporaine (Young contemporary ladies).* Today organization counts; well, let us organize what is good and the good ones:

¹⁸ Cf. Mt 5:5 and Ps 37:11.

¹⁹ DA has *Lamj.* Stefano Maria Vittorio Lamy (1845-1919) was a French politician of Cize, and an academician of France. A disciple of Lacordaire, he assimilated the latter’s Christian ardor together with a lively awareness of the need for a penetration of the apostolate into the political and social life.

²⁰ This was the persistent thought of Fr. Alberione since the night of prayer during the passage of the century 1900-1901 (cf. *Abundantes divitiarum gratiarum suarum*, no. 15).

today, love for beneficial reading is being spread, well, let us provide good reading; today we speak of all and of everything, well let us train ourselves and let us also speak; today those who do something for the *people*, whose name has become the only passport for one to get accepted in society, well, let us also work for the people. Has not religion always been the inspirer of what is truly the moral-religious welfare of all?

We belong to our times; and let us see to it that women belong to our time. Let us make them understand that today the people thirst for the truth and hence more meritorious than giving bread as alms that offering which the good press is expected to give. | Let us make them understand that it is not enough to raise as good one's own family, while enemies, strongly organized, erode the family's foundation by wanting to introduce divorce, abolish catechism, etc.

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It is more difficult to understand the value of social work than those of charity inasmuch as a great number of persons moves about and are determined by the material events that strike the eyes. Then, women, so spontaneously angels of charity, regulate themselves more than men do according to perceptible data. They see the poor person, not the cause of poverty; they see the person sick with tuberculosis, and not the cause of his illness. To find the causes of the misery and of the tuberculosis, an effort is required, a scientific research, a faculty of abstraction and of synthesis inasmuch as one or the other are complex. Tuberculosis, for example, can depend on the house environment, nourishment, work, vice... Is it not perhaps easier to take care of the sick, without much research? – Well, here is one supreme difficulty that the clergy encounters in forming women of today; here is the serious need towards which the formation of the priest needs to be oriented today; one can give only what one truly has.

Every woman can cooperate with the priest's zeal. – Every woman, should she be a simple girl or a country girl, can always do a work of zeal.

And this is in order to respond to one difficulty | that may arise spontaneously: how come such a weak creature, that is a woman, could perform such a great good as cooperating with

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the priest for the salvation of souls? Or else: considering as well that some women could do it due to a special social position, or through income, or because of education, how could one count on others, closed in convents, or confined in the mountains, on poor and ignorant farmers, on unhappy creatures, to whom nature seems to have proven itself so severe? Well: it shall not be useless to repeat: every woman, also the most despicable to the eyes of the world, could exercise zeal. For one to be convinced of it, it is enough to consider the different explanations listed above. Not everyone could write in newspapers, or teach catechism to children, or contribute to works of charity. Perhaps someone might even be without a family or of friends to whom she could extend a bit of her charity: but is there anyone who cannot at least recite the rosary? Is there anyone who cannot suffer something for the conversion of sinners? There would be some zealous women to teach the rosary to little ones, others to distribute parish bulletins, others to attend to the cleaning of the altar linens and the floor of the church. And here, it would not be useless to say: every woman has a charge of energies that ought to be engaged in doing good, otherwise they would find natural outlets in evil: precisely | like the plant that is blocked from growing upward shall give outlet to its humus in tuberculosis, in swellings. Tears that are not shed for what is evil shall be channeled to the reading of a novel, to a theatrical show, or to a sterile sentimentalism.

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Time that is not spent in works of spiritual or corporal mercy shall be spent in a thousand useless bagatelles. If women's occupation is not directed for the good of the soul and the welfare of others, they shall certainly have little manias that are found also in persons who are good. If they are not directed towards strong virtues and to works of charity, more easily shall they become sterile in empty scruples, in punctiliousness, in ridiculous contests. – Let the priest then see how important it is to diligently channel the precious talents that God has placed in women's hearts!

THE ZEALOUS PARISH PRIEST IN THE CARE OF WOMEN

As priests all have to work for the salvation of souls. Rather, it can be said that priesthood absorbs the whole of man: the priest owes to his ministry his entire mind, heart, time, strength. Then, the parish priest not only have this general obligation, but he may not reserve for himself anything without doing harm to souls: he truly is the servant of servants: he shall no longer have any rest on earth. He is engaged in battle against the wolves² that roam hungry about the fold: he has to sow the truth and holiness of customs: his ambition, his interests, his joy, his | pain are the souls. He is a man for others, not only because of sacred Ordination, but also out of justice, as parish priest.

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To him belongs the most delicate part of pastoral work, to him belongs the task of calling various cooperators to take part in the work, to him belongs the duty of firmly directing his co-operators. Let us apply these duties to the care of women.

To the parish priest belongs the most delicate part. – Ordinarily, he is a well-trained man: in him one finds with difficulty vain enthusiasms: a certain experience already has made him more prudent. Not excluded, but much diminished are for him the dangers inasmuch as for him the spiritual care of women matters: most commonly, to him belongs this task. Women are a very strong leverage for raising the religious-moral level of the parish: they are the strong arms of the priesthood: they exer-

¹ This subdivision of the chapter does not appear in the text of *DA*, where the title “Il parroco zelante nella cura della donna” (The zealous parish priest in the care of women) appears as a simple subtitle, in small italic letters. In the final table of contents, however, it comes in form of a chapter. – This is true also for the next two chapters.

² On the battle against the wolves, cf. Mt 7:15; 10:16 and the parallels Lk 10:3; Jn 10:12; Acts 20:29.

cise an effective and often decisive influence around him. And how can the parish priest forget them when on him lies the true religious-moral responsibility of the parish?

To his long experience, he adds an authority that, in some difficult cases, comes to add strength to his word, while it infuses ardor and security in others. He receives from God special lights and the so-called grace of ministry which others do not have. Also the title of seniority makes him respected and allows the most delicate advice to be received with seriousness and reverence.

254 From here: to the parish priest ordinarily belongs the task of holding conferences to young persons, more so when it concerns customs, like those dangerous entertainments, fashion, relationships, the preparation to³ life, chastity. Then, everyone knows well how one word, gentle and at the same time strong given in due time to individual mothers, can do much good in certain circumstances. He alone can do certain reproofs with some hope for it to be fruitful! It is as well the parish priest who ordinarily exercises the spiritual care over the sisters who administer hospices, hospitals, oratories for females.

Also when he believes it right to entrust work among women to an assistant priest, he shall personally intervene when difficult incidents take place, when matters require important decisions, when the direction and the spirit of the institution are at stake.

The parish priest has to be the soul of pastoral work. – Today, an old method has been disapproved, a method that entrusted *completely* to a priest a part of the parish ministry: for example, the administration of the holy sacraments, the care of the sick, the care of a religious association of women. Distribution of labor, yes: but not without interest: rather, he has to exercise reasonable supervision over him who works with women and over the women who are actively involved. Some freedom is necessary, so that everyone bears his own responsibility and carries them out with all his | strength: and yet a high-level⁴ of

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³ DA has *alta* = *high* instead of *alla* = *to the*.

⁴ DA has *altra* = *other* instead of *alta* = *high*.

supervision is convenient as well. Furthermore, he has to direct the work of his different workers towards a single goal, that which has been pre-established. Without a directing mind, the parish would end up becoming a garden wherein everyone wants to sow, where one gardener destroys or blocks others from harvesting.

Catechetical activities, the nursery center, the clinics; the cultural center for women, the roving library and the school of religion for girls; the pension house of women workers, the association of Christian mothers and the Daughters of Mary: everyone has to experience the direction from above, or the authority, or the encouragement, or the fatherly advice, according to cases, of the parish priest.

This is the spirit of canon laws: since, according to them, the parish is the fundamental association to which parish work has to find its point of reference.

A great task of the parish priest is to attract cooperators to his orbit. – And I do not intend to refer only to assistant parish priests and the priests of the parish: but even more the good ones among the seculars, the teachers, the sisters, the catechists, zealous women, mothers of families, and also those who nourish some aversion towards him. Knowing how to utilize all the various aptitudes, giving everyone the occasion to work, gently inciting them, is the most principal part of the work of one who directs a parish. More | so: because the whole of pastoral work has to refer to the parish priest, also the different associations with religious purposes.

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And how much precious energies can he find! And for what advantage to the population!

It is ordinarily easy to involve in his goals the vice parish priest: not very difficult for the other priests. With amiability by clearly sharing his intentions and his project, by not only listening but also asking for observations: by gently inviting them to some easy activity, by recognizing their merits and expanding his manifestations of esteem and appreciation. The powerful priest is feared, the wise is esteemed, but the priest of goodness is loved. The desert about him, according to the popular saying,

is formed by his wanting to command by the stick, by his being enthroned always as a master, with wanting that everyone bows to his orders... through roughness of character. One rules the world without ever having the pretensions of ruling over it.

Here comes something related,⁵ a word on *pastoral conferences*. They are meetings held among the clergy of one parish or of a vicariate, with the purpose of exchanging views and the fruits of experience and to take proper agreements for the care of souls. They are being held, among others, in Milan, Vienna, Essen, etc., etc., where they are periodically done: in others, they are called by the parish priest or by the vicar forane each time it is seen | useful. And what advantage they bring to souls, if, having banned every show, having set aside vain petty talks, having silenced the voice of self-love, people came down to deeds!

The parish priest has here a means for communicating with his coadjutors his goals, his fears, his hopes: the others have a propitious opportunity to share their impressions: seeing themselves called to take part in the parish work, they shall assume interest, they shall be courageous, they shall not allow their aptitudes to turn sterile. How many learned persons, also eminent ones, criticize and fight for not being listened to! To them is wanting only contact, closeness. In such conferences, for example, an agreement could be reached as to the directive regarding girls who go to dances: the causes of moral, religious, economic evils of workers could be looked into and the most convenient remedies found: then a rational and suitable division of labor could be established while taking into consideration the circumstances and the ability of each one.

The Church has always emerged out of the councils flourishing with a new life; the counsels and the experience of many are worth more than the knowledge and the experience of one person alone. In a particular manner, social, civil, moral progress is accomplished through an infinite series of congresses, gatherings, conferences, parliamentary meetings, councils, etc.

⁵ *In acconcio* = *in proposito* = as a related matter.

As regards the pious persons, the sisters, many teachers, these shall be happy to cooperate with the parish priest. He has but to show himself as he ought to be, that is, pious and zealous: this shall be enough for anyone to be one with him in spirit: with some instruction, with particular admonitions, by assigning to them things to do, he will see them immediately at work. Even more, many of them shall feel honored to serve such a holy cause, they shall get themselves to work with all their strength and also with some holy contest.

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Mothers, if they have not indeed lost every human and Christian sentiment, will immediately understand their mission at home. Suitable and practical conferences can enlighten them greatly: and, if the parish priest shall explain to them how much and what they have to do in order to help him in the religious upbringing of children, he shall often notice them render their service diligently. Some difficulties could be encountered in some teachers educated with the lay spirit predominant today in public schools. Then, charity must show itself more industrious.

Above all, within the limits allowed by the laws that govern us, the parish priest could see to it that only Catholic teachers might be practically elected. It is true: this is something so uncertain and delicate: and yet often it could have a happy conclusion. A teacher has in front of her children during the most beautiful hours of the day; | through science she could communicate religious truths and good customs, or point out error and vice. Neither does the reason stand in the current conditions when the teacher is often forbidden to teach catechism: inasmuch as it is most certain that a Catholic teacher can communicate more the religious spirit while catechism is abolished, than an unbelieving teacher, even when catechism appears among the subjects to teach.

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If the parish priest is respected and loved by the village: if the people know that he does not interfere with the affairs of the local government unless religion and souls are affected: if those to whom the choice belongs are bound with him with bonds of friendships or at least of good will: it would not be difficult to have the right teachers designated according to conscience. And

this is true even more in those towns that enjoy some school autonomy. This fact alone would be of a great religious advantage that would be a series of sermons.

260 With the teachers chosen, it shall be the task of the parish priest to establish cordial relations with them while trying to bind them with himself with all the means suggested by prudence: by tolerating as well some of their defects. And what if, in spite of this, someone would persist in representing the sad part of the rapacious wolf in the fold of lambs? Absolutely, never rail against them in the pulpit. At times | it may be necessary to come up with a dignified, serious, calm and well motivated protest: but those that they call *philippics*, angry and violent, do no good at all: on the other hand, they make the wound become worse. Often, however, the indirect manner would be more worthwhile: to advice *in camera charitatis*;⁶ to let her be corrected by some well respected persons, or also by the mayor: to threaten to take away some other occupation that might be dear to her: to prudently promote a protest of parents: to secretly work for her transfer (though today this has become so difficult). A parish priest dealt with the matter this way: he invited the teacher to hold an evening class, of which he knew she wanted; another parish priest provided students for tutoring outside school hours; a third invited the teacher to join in the distribution of the prizes for catechism, asking her to speak on the need of taking care of hygiene... With these teachers bound with such industry, disarmed in a pleasant and also honorable manner, these teachers became a boon to their students, something that did not fail to extend to the whole population.

261 Someone perhaps might observe: that in practice serious difficulties occur in awakening the spirit of zeal for the soul of others among indifferent people, indifferent also for one's own soul. The objection is founded but it is not unsolvable: and its solution brings us | to a pastoral norm that is truly exceptionally valuable. Here it is:

⁶ *In private, charitably.* A current expression in religious pedagogy to mean a fatherly reminder within the context of spiritual direction.

Move the parishioners through the youth.

Few reach that point of corruption and decadence as not to see the importance of education of the youth, of not loving youth and not admiring those who patiently take care of them. Hence the advice of a saintly bishop to a young priest while he sent him to a village that was so hostile to religion: Go, but before doing any good deed, make yourself loved first. – But how? – *By attending to children first.* The education of children is that which often bring disagreeing man and woman together: it is that which bring close and binds closer the people with the priest. Parents are happy about it so that they love all those who take care of their children, even by just extending⁷ them only a caress. Those who represent civil authority also are glad that they could experience the social advantages of peace, morality, order and well being that religion brings about: there are but the sectarians who obstinately refuse to recognize it. The youth themselves are happy that, growing through the years, they will never forget him who has directed their first steps in life. And one can easily observe it: with what relative ease could holiday oratories, evening classes, associations for the youth be opened! | And let one notice with how much generosity do the people give, whether it is for the Christmas tree, or for catechism prizes, or for feasts for children! Let one observe how the people, without distinction of class, political party or tendency, participate in those gatherings, in those shows and programs that concern the youth.

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The parish priest who draws people to take care of children, who proposes activities for the benefit of young people, who surrounds himself with children, though he might even ask for money, but in the name of the children, does not elicit suspicion, not excite diffidence, not create parties, does not attract accusations, hatred and quarrels. On the other hand, he even wins over hearts, binds them strongly to himself, leads his people, who will assume the obligation of giving him, of being grateful to him. The more successful will he be in drawing

⁷ DA has *prodigano* = *profusely extending* instead of *prodigando* = *extending*.

women into his orbit, they who have more sensible hearts, open for the more noble sentiments!

In order to achieve these things, follows one last norm: *let the parish priest educate to the spirit of the parish*. – It consists in the devote union among the faithful who make up the curate, just as if so many brothers and sisters, submissive to their common father, who is the parish priest. It consists in that sentiment through which each feels the needs, the joys and the wants of the others. It consists in an attachment to the parish church, to its feasts, to its rites. Necessary: so that good actions | are not lost in so many turns, destined to get exhausted.

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Needed: so that the pastor's word should sound respected and venerated by all. It is necessary: so that during the rites, in charitable activities, in initiatives, courage, that comes from many, is infused. For this effect it would be good: to mention once in a while in sermons the responsibility that the parish priest has before God, to speak of the obligation to obey him and to support him in the different charitable activities. It will be beneficial as well: to see to it that solemnities are grand, to see to it that the church is kept decorous: to see to it that feasts, for example the first communion, would be feasts of the entire parish. Furthermore, it would be good that the parish priest sees to it that he participates in every joy and pain of his spiritual children: in public, if it is of public interest; in private, if it concerns persons in private.

It is not the case to repeat here what many books say on the affability and the good treatment of parish priests. But it would not be useless to note that the lack of parish spirit has been the case of very serious disorders in many curates: that to work for it is a great art; that, to have it, a fire of zeal is lighted up, particularly among women, for all the activities that need to be started off.

THE ZEALOUS PRIEST IN THE CARE OF WOMEN

There are things that have to be done in union with the parish priest and others independent of him.

I mentioned above that the master association established in the Church is the parish: the parish priest is by office, by right, by duty, its moderator: the other priests, chaplains, beneficiaries, rectors of churches, spiritual directors of hospices and hospitals, teachers, etc., and especially the vice curates, are more or less directly his cooperators. They are the parish priest's arms: and a great principle should shape their conduct: *study the program and the direction of the parish priest in the spiritual care of women in order to support him in whatever is possible.*

A parish priest, guided by a sincere desire for the religious welfare of his parish, has a *long-range* plan and a *short-range* one: these have to be studied also in terms of the care of women. The long-range program is: *to lead souls to Heaven by all means*: this is common to every parish priest, no one can excuse himself from it: and not much study is needed to understand it. – The short-range program instead is: *the composite of those specified means for caring that the parish priest chooses according to the local needs*. It is specific, it is practical, it is the expression of zeal and of prudence of a good pastor of souls. In this, he also has something original and particular: and it is here that his cooperators must study him and support him. I do not believe that cooperators ought to function independently: that parish priest would not succeed in his intentions unless he provokes and takes into consideration suggestions and observations: no one can ever assert that cooperators ought to strip themselves of freedom necessary in the accomplishment of specific duties. Nonetheless, the parish priest has always a precedence that at times might impose respect, at other times obedi-

¹ See note 1 of the preceding heading.

ence: but always it has to be recognized that pastoral work has its center on him. Different direction, badly hidden discord, open struggle, these are always causes of infinite troubles among the clergy and among the people. Certainly, it can happen that one who is in an inferior position might have more secure points of view, then, he can also humbly manifest his thought: in practice, however, before God and men, mutual agreement in action is always better: disagreements are always the worst of evils.

[From the pulpit and from the confessional]

Hence, material help and, even more, moral help to the parish priest in his initiatives in favor of young people and women. It is known: hardly do these initiatives obtain immediately the whole population's approval: there always are those who want to see in them human goals, sordid speculations, spirit of novelty!

266 More so when one new activity is focused on | women, so inclined to envy, jealousy, suspicion! And woe is there if these interpretations should find confirmation or support among the divided clergy. Each one has his own talents and according to these, he shall support the parish priest: from the pulpit to the confessional, in public and in private, with words or deeds, through the assumption of a part of the work or by offering one's services for eventual needs only.

The good use of talents received is what assures success in God's judgment.

So then: the priest, who is not the parish priest, shall he stand by with his hands on his waist or, worse, as a mere spectator in the act of observing or of waiting after the parish priest? – No: there is, other than the help that he can extend to the first pastor of the parish, a number of things that he can do. He can accomplish a great work from the confessional: since women go more frequently to the sacraments, let the priest find out what area comes his way for working. Zeal is first of all founded in piety and in virtue: let the priest then penetrate souls with the more profound sentiments of piety, strengthen wills for true virtues: these souls shall be ready to the first appeal of the par-

ish priest for whatever good work. What could the parish priest do if, wanting to establish an organization, he should notice that the truest of the foundations is wanting?

Formation in virtues through advice, by calling for examination of conscience on the principal duties, through insistence especially on humility and on gentleness.

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Then, through the confessional, more than in any other manner, one can direct women to zeal: and to a very broad range of zeal, from which *are excluded only those activities that require a true external and local organization*. The confessor sees more easily what good women might do, in their capacity as wife, as mother, as daughter, as sisters, as an unbound woman, as a person who lives in a society. Then, the confessor's words have strength and a particular authority that, accompanied by divine grace, comes in a moment when the soul is disposed to welcome it. History is there to prove that the priest has worked more, in general, when he did not reduce his ministry to external activities. It is suitable to work on the souls in particularly and from within.

Neither can he train in zeal only with advice, but also with often reminding on the examination of conscience on this duty, important among others. To enter into ourselves, to place ourselves before ourselves, to excite repentance in us, just as it is done in confession is, also naturally, a great means of formation. No one can argue against its educational value. I said that whatever priest, parish priest or not, having under his direction organizations for women | or not, can always lead and remind women to be zealous at home. I have as well said that this is the part of zeal that weighs more on women, that which constitutes the most essential parts of her duties, the first area of woman's activity. Let every priest, then, find out what work is open for him. The parish priest can and should aim at something more: we could see this further on. Meanwhile, he himself among the beginners of the parish ministry, and every priest, free and in the dependence of the parish priest, can do what is most urgent: to train well-meaning youth, to form faithful brides, to train conscientious mothers, then to direct everyone in the work for moral and religious welfare of the family.

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More: one who does not care about her brothers and sisters, of her husband, of her children, how can she have the diligence for caring for others? On the other hand, is it not in the sanctuary of the home that the first attempts of zeal ought to be done? Training for zeal, as formation to whatever other virtue, is not a work done by jumps but gradually, passing from the more simple and from here to the more difficult, then the most difficult.

269 More: our periodicals on women's activity rightly so have cast an alarm during these last years. Perhaps not everyone has noticed its importance. They said: let us work, but not to destroy nature; but in order to consolidate it, | to help it, to perfect it: let us work without destroying God's work.

Now, the family is the work of nature and of God. Today it is threatened in its foundations by the impious, by Freemasonry, by socialism. These tend to destroy the foundation through civil marriage, with divorce: they tend to destroy life by throwing out of the house not only the husband but also the wife: they tend to destroy the fruits by frustrating² and stealing the right of parents to educate their children. Now the priest who works for the consolidation of the home performs a necessary and at the same time modern work. *Local action shall not be enough*: but this is the base of general action. To turn daughters, wives, mothers into lovers of the home, attached to and interested in the good functioning of the home: daughters, wives and mothers, who should find their purest and greatest joy in staying at home: daughters, wives and mothers jealous of the peace and sanctity of the home. Should not many of the organizations' work be aimed at these? They do not have to take the place of but to perfect, assist, accomplish the work of the family and the accomplishment of the family duties. Many from among the Catholic women's movement have as well to remember that they let women go out of the home too much, very often they turn to naught the influence of parents, to separate members from the home, to impose an education | that is too artificial, without love, with domestic ideals.

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² DA has *frustare* (to whip) instead of *frustrare* (to frustrate).

Speaking of confession, two short observations would not be useless. Women, more than men, are more inclined to *scruples and to small obsessions*. Well, all spiritual masters recognize the powerful means for caring: let her be engaged in works of zeal: lead patiently her activity on serious and grave concerns. Among the first of these: visits to the sick, the spiritual as well as material care of children, social services for women; among the second are: to cultivate practical virtues, prayer for the spread of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the care of the family. It shall not always be easy but the effect is certain.

The confessor is not only a judge, but also a doctor, teacher, father. – Now I would like to take into consideration something that might be a burning issue. Moral theology is quite profuse in training confessors to become good *judges* but very limited in teaching them to become teachers, fathers and doctors of souls. And yet the occasions of serious difficulties for judgment are not so frequent: while it is something most ordinary, most common, that of having to suggest strong, convenient remedies, of teaching at least the principles of Christian virtues, to console and encourage continues. One could see here how necessary it is that the priest does not reduce his studies | to the book of *moral theology*, at least up to the way it is dealt with today. He needs a broad instruction in ascetics, the knowledge of modern psychology, a broad study of the modern needs and those of pastoral work.

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Canon Brianza³ wrote a very good book on the *modern lack of will power*: based on the principles of moral theology, on practical psychology, he draws precise, secure rules for direction and pastoral work. Among other things, he takes note suitably how women of today have become more nervous, neurotic, hysteric and, consequently, lacking of will power in comparison with the past. Thus he concludes: “Let us pray so that the venerable clergy leaves a bit more to God’s judgment the problems of yesterday, as, after all, they are gone! And

³ Doctor Enrico Brianza was an honorary canon of the cathedral of Bobbio (Piacenza) (MM).

that they, with greater courage, get into practical matters of today: less criticism, my God, but much, very much practice! Let us pray more so that the clergy might make the use of moral theology more penetrating into the medium of psychology, which is, also this, a great conquest that God has will and that we must utilize..." I cite only one mistake that is born of the neglect of these studies. It often happens that one preaches on a virtue; the audience approves, comes up with a sterile desire and concludes nothing. Not much has been said to the senses, decision was not made, in short, one has not prepared himself: one, who did not have the legs or have them very weak and sick, wanted to run.

272 I refer to some of the excellent books of practical psychology: the reading of at least one is indispensable to the clergy, whether he lives in the city or in the countryside, for himself or for others.

1. *Governo di sé stesso (Government of one's self)* - Eymieu⁴ (Libreria Pustet, Roma, L. 3.25).
2. *Formation de la volonté (Formation of the will)* - Guibert (Libreria Pustet, Roma).
3. *Il carattere (Character)* - Guibert⁵ (Libreria Pustet, Roma, L. 0.75).
4. *L'abulia moderna (The modern lack of will power)* - Brianza (Libreria Ghirlanda, Via Unione N. 20 - Milano - L. 2.50).

⁴ Cf. EYMIEU A., (died on October 1933), *Il governo di sé stesso* (Saggio di psicologia pratica) *Government of self* (Essay on practical psychology). The only translation approved by the author based on the 21st French edition, Roma, Desclée & C. In the book three principles are developed: 1) The dominion of actions through ideas: ideas lead into action; 2) Through actions, to govern the emotions: the conditions of success; 3) Through emotions, to govern the ideas and actions: the choice of an ideal. Conclusion: the mission of freedom in the government of self.

⁵ Cf. GUIBERT J. (superior of the Seminary of the Catholic Institute of Paris), *Character*. Definition, importance, ideal, origin, classification, formation. Free version by the priest professor Domenico Dall'Osso, Salesian. Third revised and corrected edition, Torino-Roma Marietti 1928. In the preface, one reads: "Already, Jouffroy said: men are lacking; well, they would not be lacking if, other than following lazily and blindly their inclinations, they would truly attach to their lives a purpose, modeling it with systematic effort after great characters."

5. *L'educazione del carattere*⁶ (*The education of character*) (L. 2.00).
6. *L'educazione del cuore*⁷ (*The education of the heart*) (L. 2.50).
7. *L'educazione della coscienza* (*The education of conscience*) (L. 2.50).
8. *L'educazione della virilità cristiana*⁸ (*The education of Christian manhood*) (L. 2.75) of P. Gillet (Libreria Desclée, Roma).
9. *Guida dei nervosi e degli scrupolosi* (*The Guidance of the neurotic and the scrupulous*) - Raymond⁹ (Libreria Desclée, Roma - L. 3.50).

It should not be believed that the confessional has to be turned into conversations on ascetics; more so when women are concerned, of whom we always have to remember an ancient saying: “*cum mulieribus sermo brevis et durus*”.¹⁰ Neither has the sacrament of penance to be reduced into pure judgment: the confessor has to be, more or less, spiritual director, that is, he has to teach, correct, stimulate his penitent. In some instances,

⁶ Cf. GILLET P., *L'educazione del carattere = Character education*. Italian translation after the 2nd French edition (5th thousand), Rome, Desclée & C. 1911. The book closed with a “formula” that was posted by the Author, a Dominican, at the start of the book: “Do we want to be Christians of character? Let us begin by being honest men.” (p. 160).

⁷ Cf. GILLET P., *L'educazione del cuore (The education of the heart)*. Second edition, Roma, Desclée & C. Editori - Ditta G.B. Paravia & Comp. 1914.

⁸ Cf. GILLET P., *L'educazione della virilità cristiana (Education of Christian manhood)*. Translation of the third French edition, Roma, Desclée & C. 1913. The Author wrote on September 1909 in Louvain: “Here is a short treatise on supernatural psychology.” And he added: “It is our conviction that before one becomes a Christian, and in order to become one, he has to achieve the ideal of the honest man.”

⁹ Cf. RAYMOND V. O.P., *La guida dei nervosi e degli scrupolosi (The guidance of neurotics and the scrupulous)*. A guidebook of all those who suffer and see others suffer. Preface by Dr. Masquin and letters of Doctors Bonnaymé and Dubois. New edition with a chapter on the “care of neurotics”. Translation by Tullia Chiorrini after the 3rd French edition (15th thousand), Roma, Desclée & C. 1912.

¹⁰ *With women, let your conversations be brief and tough*. Cf. ALBERIONE G., *Appunti di teologia pastorale*, Torino 1912, p. 229. This recommendation to speak short with women in the confessional comes from the conviction rooted also in the environment or in the very popular Piedmontese “wisdom”. (cf. PAVESE C., *Il mestiere di vivere*, 1937).

273 he can point out books to read: but | not all souls find the time needed; and, when they find it too, they would always have two difficulties to face. How can a priest point out books he is not familiar with, whether it is suitable or not, to the capability and the needs of the penitent? The books are not enough; then, not everything that is needed by a soul can be found in them, and when they can be found, the soul finds it difficult to apply. “*Nemo iudex in propria causa,*”¹¹ and much less for women who are better suited for being guided than led or for directing themselves.

This topic would need volumes for it to be adequately discussed; and it is augured and prayed to the Lord so that He raises authors. I indicate two books that can be satisfactory for such a need of *one who wants to refer to the formation of virtues:*

1. *Pratica progressiva della confessione e della direzione spirituale*¹² (*Progressive practice of confession and of spiritual direction*) (2 volumes - Libreria Sacro Cuore, Torino - L. 3).
2. *La confessione e direzione* (*Confession and direction*) - Boccardo¹³ (volume I - idem - L. 3).

¹¹ Cf. *Nemo esse iudex in sua causa potest*, a saying by Publius Siro (Latin poet, 1st century AD). *Sentenze*, 545. (*No one can be the judge of his own cause*).

¹² Cf. *Pratica progressiva della confessione e della direzione spirituale* (*Progressive practice of confession and of spiritual direction*). After the method of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the spirit of St. Francis di Sales. First volume: *Dalla tiepidezza al fervore* (*From lukewarmness to fervor*). Translation edited by A.L.F.P (This volume is independent from the second) Paris. – *Pratica progressiva della confessione e della direzione spirituale* (*Progressive practice of confession and of spiritual direction*). After the method of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the spirit of St. Francis di Sales. Second volume: Parigi, P. Lethielleux, Librario Editore, 10, Rue Cassette 10 (313 pp.).

¹³ Cf. BOCCARDO L., *Confessione e direzione. Il figlio spirituale* (*Confession and direction, The spiritual son*), Stocks: Torino, Libreria Tappi, Buona Stampa, Libreria del Sacro Cuore; Roma, Pustet, Desclée, 1913, III-XXIX, 464 pp. Approved for printing by the priest Francesco Paleari, in Turin, Piccola Casa della Divina Provvidenza, 29 June 1913.

THE FORMATION OF WOMEN FOR VIRTUES

“Among women, always attend to mothers.” – This is the principal part of her work in the world; such is her nature; such is the ordinary fact. Women who are voluntarily celibate, no matter | how numerous, always constitute an exception: and even more so, not to become *spiritual* mothers. For some years or so now, a statistical datum indicates the rise of the number of sisters, in France alone, to 300 thousand!

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Well, what is more maternal in their job? To pray, to serve the elderly and the sick, to raise orphans, to instruct the ignorant, to uplift and console every suffering, are these not parts of motherhood? But the virgins, the sweet mothers of human miseries, are not all enclosed in cloisters, neither do they wear the veil: there are many of them in unfortunate families.

Some look at them with an air of compassion and disdain, as if they were all the refuse and the victims of nature, of accidents, of misfortune.² Not all are like that: some have seen from a distance the peace of the cloister and the joys of marriage. And yet for the love of God they have set aside one and the other, in order to be of support to old and very demanding parents, servants of brothers and sisters, caregivers of orphans. To them they have given everything: youth, freedom, future: they are spiritual mothers.

Aim at forming the mother: this is the great principle and in the spiritual education of women. The instruction of a young woman is not enough until when it is good enough in rearing in a modern manner the children. These difficulties then are to be considered vain: our youth know of catechism | what is enough for themselves: they are young country folks: piety will keep in good moral character, etc. Education is not enough if they do

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¹ See note 1 of Heading VI.

² DA has *fortuna* = *luck* instead of *sfortuna* = *misfortune*.

not make them equipped for a life of sacrifice and of goodness that is proper to mothers.

Instruction. – Few words: it is not difficult to see the importance of instruction and the means as it has been said somewhere else, especially when speaking of mothers. Catechism for boys and girls: this is the principal part of the priestly ministry: here is the task most sweet for an apostle: here is the most effective and most urgent work nowadays. The defense of the Christian school requires our work: ask that the catechism classes be held within the terms allowed by the law; to work for the municipal autonomy for the administration of schools, to place religious education as platform for the elections, to aim at free schooling: here is the current work in the field of Catholic action. Neither should the priest be disinterested of all these, depending on this awareness: it is nothing but the application of the great command that concerns the priest: “*Docete omnes gentes*”.³

276 **The parish catechism classes and the oratory.** – Everybody knows: to teach Christian doctrine in the Church to girls, divided into classes that disturb and get on the way of each other is a method that is full of inconveniences. The oratory with its own rooms and built for the purpose: | equipped with the means of discipline for the catechist: furnished with suited personnel and of pleasant recreation: this would be the ideal. Let it not be said that it is impossible to achieve. When one is *decided* to succeed: when some strange *a priori* thinking is not followed: when one does not pretend to accomplish the work if not little by little... perhaps one room at a time, he will achieve more than he can even believe...

At the oratory, classes of religion for students shall be followed and the catechism of perseverance for the girls from the populace, the religious conferences and the moral conversations shall be for all. The need of forewarning the young persons against errors that are spread broadly in schools and in shops requires that religious instruction covers also some apologetics, some sacred and Church history, with the confutation against the most common objections.

³ Cf. Mt 28:19: “Teach all nations.”

See the golden little book, “*Gli oratori festivi e le scuole di religione*. - Eco del V Congresso” (*The festive oratories and the classes of religion* – Echo of the V Congress) - (Libreria Buona Stampa - Corso Regina Margherita, 176 - Torino).

To eventually complete the instruction of girls are the classes of sewing, of home economics, etc.: those things that have been spoken about elsewhere.

Education. – It requires that women are trained to seriousness, to virility,⁴ to amiability.

Seriousness: Women are naturally frivolous and everything in them tends to assume the mark of frivolousness: not excluding piety. Well, let the beautiful words of the author of *Formation religieuse et morale de la jeune fille* be listened to. “To reflect is the first condition of seriousness: to have a depth of wise thoughts is the second. Wise thoughts are like good counselors, living among us, and always ready to give us advice. Reflection is nothing but a conversation with them.” To let women get into the habit of reflecting: this is a great problem in education, particularly for females! It is a difficult thing, but not impossible. There are three steps to make. To stimulate desire for it: a real desire, with revealing clearly the motives, the advantages, the sweetness. Let her do it sometimes: in small, simple, ordinary things. To make a habit of it, with the repetition of actions. To reflect on the thoughts that are the seeds of actions: to reflect on the sentiments of the heart: to reflect on the events that happen: to reflect on the temporal and eternal consequences of one’s activities to reflect on what one listens to.

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And the priest has a thousand occasions to achieve it. There is the pulpit out of which he shall always see great fruits, inasmuch as he shall appeal to the experience of his listeners, press on the soul to almost enter into itself; he shall analyze and describe the sentiments, the habits, the ideas, the customs, the fashions, the virtues and the defects of his listeners.

There is the confessional: where he could insist on particular examination of conscience over one’s principal defect, per-

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⁴ Stands for *maturity, strength of spirit*. See above DA 279-280.

formed many times, or at least once, every day. And not on the defect alone; but on its causes, but on the good that perhaps is neglected, but on the spiritual activity, but on the habitual effort, but on the strength of will. Frequent confession, also considered only from the human point of view, is one of the most effective means to enhance seriousness...

There is meditation and spiritual reading: not always possible but very useful. And at least it shall be possible to read only books and serious periodicals: at least it is possible to avoid vain and too light talks: at least it is possible to listen frequently to God's word.

With these efforts, it shall not be difficult to avoid that piety which is complete sentimentalism of which women are often accused. Piety must be the means: not the end. Our most holy religion is a *life*, not some devote practices; one is not pious until one lives the faith, works with faith, feels according to faith. Fruit of piety must be the theological and cardinal virtues and not only: but also the moral virtues which are meekness, humility, patience, etc.

279 Seriousness still requires: wise ideas. And these have to be penetrated more deeply through long reflections and frequent prayers. Neither do we | intend to speak here only of *human* ideas, but also of *supernatural* ideas. The formulae, "*art for art's sake*," "*good for goodness' sake*" has given a wrong proof, aside from the fact that they are false on their own; this has been said before. In women's souls must find roots these directive principles: life, in its true sense, is a journey to eternity, a proof; it is not a time for pleasures; on earth, each has a part to perform, a mission to accomplish; youth is the foundation of physical, intellectual, moral, religious life; each one can arrive at a certain degree of perfection, that depends on one's habitual efforts; conscience is the first and principal guide of actions, which one cannot ever contradict, in order to bow one's head to someone else; in life, there is no one else to please but God alone.

Lucky is the woman who is serious in her tastes, in her tastes for fashion, in her character, in her piety. She has in her ideas and in her reflection inestimable treasures.

Virility. With this term, we understand that composite of qualities that require more strength: and strength is necessary for the ever more frequent sacrifices in life; for the spirit of initiative, that makes one enterprising; for the courage that allows one to act strongly; for the firmness that assures perseverance; for the calm and prudence that are the eyes of activities.

Sacrifice is more bound to the woman's life than that of man's: the whole role of motherhood is a series of pains. The wife, the daughter, the sister are relatively in a state of inferiority and of obedience: man is generally rough and because of this tramples upon so many little defects and desires of women. Woman must keep silent and suffer the voluntary and involuntary little trap. The woman who is not trained for sacrifice is a plant having a very weak stalk, destined to bend under the wind's blow. – And yet at a young age it is that easy to draw life as a series of joys: it is so easy to find educators who know only how to give in, never to refuse: it is that ordinary to try to always satisfy! At what current the priest has to go against! But he cannot excuse himself if at the same time he gives up to make of souls strong and sincerely Christian.

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Spirit of initiative. Women love to find their paths drawn, the need for support is innate to her. And yet in the struggle between good and evil, in society and at home, women cannot allow themselves to be *led*: they must have their own ideas and behind them they must show determination. It is not that they are freed from the obligation to obey; what is not allowed them is to let themselves be carried away by evil. There always are superiors, wise counselors, confessors: and yet in her own surrounding, the woman herself must many times assume the role of adviser and a teacher. To study evil in its causes, seek | remedies and to ask humbly the approval of her director, is the best spirit of initiative.

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Courage: in executing what the initiative has decided. Courage, inasmuch as what is good requires strength, stimulates envy, excites oppositions. That courage which is acquired by multiplying the small victories on shyness, on insecurity, on tastes. That courage that knows how to resist when it comes to religious con-

victions, when what is put in question are good customs, when it is beneficial for perseverance in pious practices.

Perseverance with calmness and prudence. Circumstances at times require that one knows how to give in or at least change route. Hard headedness may indicate narrow mindedness and it can as well destroy one's holiest designs. Knowing how to choose the right moment, how to prepare the blow, how to dispose spirits are indications of that prudence that ought to come in everything, like salt in every foodstuff.

Some lovable qualities, so necessary in women, have been spoken about above.

* * *

282 Here, the question is raised: ***which is better: education at home or that outside the home?*** It follows naturally that here one has to exclude every college, work shops, family-homes that are governed by the lay spirit or simply by a non-confessional⁵ spirit as they could do nothing but give a rather | sad direction for the young. Religion is the true foundation of moral life; one cannot exclude it, without seeing the structure of education crumbling to pieces: and, in fact, the lay spirit does nothing but increase in terrifying level juvenile delinquency, unleash precociously the most brutal passions, prepare a rather dark future for the motherland. Let us then speak of those colleges, work shops and family-homes where, thanks to the Lord, the Christian spirit still dominates and let us ask if it were a better choice to entrust to them daughters or to keep these at home. The answer cannot remain under the shadow of doubt: *education at home, in general, is superior to whatever else: all things being equal.* Education within the home leads the young girl to *true* life, and it is more in conformity with the needs of her small world; it responds ordinarily well to the social position of the young woman. It also is broader: no other education, in fact, prepares better the good housekeeper, who knows how to govern her home; the mother of the family, who knows how to adjust one's self to all the needs of her children;

⁵ DA has *confessionale* = *confessional*.

the affectionate wife, who has moved on to marriage | with the awareness of the great step, who knows how to be compassionate, to suffer, to console.

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In spite of this, reasons of study, the needs of life and misadventure force a large part of young girls to go to intern schools, hospices, and boarding houses. In these cases, the priest has to exercise direct or indirect influence as well in order that in those places education approximates as closely as possible that one given at home.

Certainly: see to it that those young girls could make some money is something: everyone understands it. But it is not all: man does not live by bread alone.

It has been heard sung in different tunes: those young girls who leave religious educational institutions often, upon entering the world, become worse than the others. The assertion perhaps is somehow exaggerated, but it as well hides some truth or at least rings a severe admonition to educators. Very often there is *constriction*, and not *persuasion*: too often the youth are not *forewarned* against *real* dangers: too often they are not educated to *life in the world*, but to a continuing *life in community*. A sense of morality must be developed, with the greatest freedom that could be reconciled with life in community: to establish deeply religious principles: to keep continually present that world where they are destined to live. It would be beautiful to ignore it always, but, inasmuch as they are going to join it one day, it is suitable | to remember the saying “*jacula praevisa minus feriunt*”.⁶

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Also there, social instruction has to be imparted demonstrating that the world is divided into two cities, one against the other that is armed: the city of God and the city of the devil. The division is marked as ever: he who is not with God is against Him.

Finally: in these educational entities a school of good housekeeping and of good manners would do a lot of good. It would be quite ridiculous, if not painful, what happens: girls gone out of them, with discrete bag of instruction and also some ability to

⁶ “*Expected arrows wound less.*”

do some work, do not know how to introduce themselves with some refinement, they do not know how to prepare the simplest of food!

To all it is known: a priest cannot always have a direct influence on these institutions. *But he can always do something*: in conferences, in sermons, in the confessional, by dropping for a while sometimes in the visiting rooms to speak with superiors, etc. Often a familiar conversation appeals to more intimate persuasions: having convinced the personnel, much has been done, perhaps, everything.

285 *Special preachings to women!* – Dr. Swoboda, in his splendid book: *La cura d'anime nelle grandi città*,⁷ (*The care of souls in big cities*) speaks at length on the importance of dividing the people into classes when it comes to preaching. His thesis matters more especially in big cities, but it does not lose any strength with reference to rural centers: experience has by now strengthened it. Such division allows one to say more interesting, more attractive, more useful things. Suitable time would be the Spiritual Exercises: and somehow lesser, the Lenten season, by establishing for each day, or at least for a three-day period, a special preaching for women, for mothers, for young ladies. In many parishes, particular conferences are held: in others, the occasions of particular circumstances are taken: in some places, they are held by other educated women, or even by midwives, or by a doctor, should some special topics be chosen for discussion. Most worthy of notice and admiration and as an example⁸ is the work *Esercizi spirituali per le donne* (*Spiritual exercises for women*) initiated in different places. There are those

⁷ Cf. SWOBODA E. (domestic prelate of His Holiness, Court councilor and Professor of Pastoral Theology at the University of Vienna). *La cura d'anime nelle grandi città*. (The care of souls in great cities). Studio di Teologia pastorale, (A study on pastoral theology). Italian version by Canon Dr. Bartolomeo Cattaneo on the 2nd German edition, Roma, Libreria F. Pustet 1912. In the Introduction by the Author himself, one reads: "Whoever rethinks on the ideal beauty of the primitive Christian life and then turns to consider the very great moral and intellectual influence that big modern cities exercise on society... he shall not but recognize that no one question turns interesting for practical Christian life than that of the care of souls in these great cities."

⁸ There is a rather unusual syntax present in the Italian original.

for married ladies alone, those for students, for young workers, etc. In certain cities, they set themselves completely apart from the world and close themselves in some religious house: in others, instead, while staying at home, they try to live more withdrawn and to fill their day with pious activities. The duration may be more than a week, at times only three days: there also is the usage, not only among education institutions, but in some parishes, to conduct a day of *monthly spiritual retreat* for women.

In this work of formation, *frequency in the reception of holy communion* ought to be spoken of at length. It is an effective means so that the Holy Father | Pius X never ends dealing with it and making it easy. Whoever would want to take the words of Jesus Christ into consideration has but to open the Gospel of St. John (Chapter VI) where the effects of the Eucharist are spoken about. Those, instead, who want concrete proofs ought to confront the life of pious souls, of virgins, of sisters, of missionaries who go to communion every day, with the life of him who is far from the Bread of life and this Wine that gives life to virgins. The terrifying sterility of Janseanism,⁹ face to face with the warm fruitfulness of the saints, apostles of frequent communion, is as well clear for him who does not want to close his eyes to the light. The forests, in order to be invigorated, needs new plantations. In order to re-invigorate and renew our society turned old, Pius X, with his decrees on communion, prepares generations in whose hearts runs generous and pure heart, blood mixed with that of the Divine Lamb, through the frequent participation in the Eucharistic table.

By now the clergy is not only persuaded by it, but one could see them work with great fervor towards this end.

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⁹ Janseanism is a heretical doctrinal system developed by Cornelius Janseen (1585-1638), after the footsteps of Michele Baio, who affirms that after the original sin, man could not do anything but sin. Thus we are not even worthy to receive communion. The heresy was spread also in Italy, where it left a mark of ethic-religious sentimentalism. In 1794, Pius VI put an end to Janseanism with the Bull of Condemnation, *Auctorem fidei* (MM).

PERFECT CONTINENCE - CELIBACY - MARRIAGE

Perfect continence

From Frassinetti, I transcribe some sentences: “The priest shall not be satisfied with preaching frequently and warmly against the woeful of vices: dishonesty. It shall be more convenient that he does not forget the most beautiful among the virtues and does tell the people his praises, so that they might love and practice it and that many creatures be happy about it. It is the virtue of virginity and perfect continence, of which, because of a very serious prejudice, most rarely are their preciousness and merit emphasized.¹ This prejudice says that this is a virtue difficult to keep, that should not be embraced by anyone, without a special vocation from God: and that it is proper only for priests, friars, nuns... It is believed that it goes beyond the strength of ordinary people... as it happens with mystical theology and arcane and divine communications...” (*Manuale del parroco novello = Manual of the new parish priest*).² He proceeds with proving that such a prejudice is contrary to the Sacred Scriptures and particularly to the teachings of St. Paul;³ it is contrary to the teachings of the Fathers; it is contrary to the practice of the Church. Hence, with an eloquent statistics he proves the absurdity | of such prejudice so that: “in fact, with due abstraction done as regards those under the twelve and⁴

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¹ DA Italian has *rivelare* = to reveal instead of *rilevare* = to emphasize.

² Cf. FRASSINETTI G., *Manuale pratico del parroco novello (Practical handbook for the new parish priest)*. A small work useful also for other churchmen, especially confessors and preachers, Genova, Tipografia della gioventù, 1902¹⁰. It is a book of more than 600 pages divided into three parts: a) some of the duties of the parish priest; b) on the sacraments; c) practice of some of the virtues more necessary for the parish priest. – The summary discussion in DA is found on pp. 206-207 of Frasinetti’s book.

³ Cf. 1Cor 7:9,25,34-38; 2Cor 11:2.

⁴ DA has *ai* = to.

fourteen years of age, such a virtue ought to be professed by at least half of mankind.” More so since obliged to it are: all young persons from twelve-fourteen years of age until the time of marriage: a number that grows every day,⁵ in spite of the lack of love for this beautiful virtue of celibates, voluntary or forced: the widowers: so many single ladies. “Now a virtue, of which, in fact not a great number of persons cannot be dispensed; on the other hand, so many persons in the world find themselves obliged to it under the pain of serious sin and amidst so many seductions: could this virtue be so difficult to observe without a particular vocation from God? Is it a virtue proper only to priests, monks and nuns? ... Could a virtue, which is observed by only a few chosen persons, be required from all?...

Two effects would a more frequent preaching on perfect continence: that those who cannot, or who shall not get married, making a virtue out of necessity, may willingly and meritoriously keep it: that the number of those who embrace it willingly might increase. More so because it is among them that the Lord chooses priests, missionaries, religious, so many pious ladies in the world who zeal for God’s honor, who consecrate their own energies and material things for the good | of the Church. “It is as much beneficial that the love for perfect continence is extended among unmarried women, called by Providence these times to a quasi-priesthood and to a true apostolate unknown to the past centuries.” It is the apostolate of thousands of sisters who are spreading everywhere: it is the apostolate of so many single ladies, who in almost every nation, spread the perfume of their virtue and often become a true help and strength for the priest.

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The confessional, allowing persons to go to more details, more than does the pulpit, thus encouraging greater intimacy, and enveloped by an aura of spirituality, turns out even better in infusing love for this virtue, beautiful among virtues. With sobriety and prudence, the confessor can describe it in its most attractive forms: he could give the preventive and medicinal

⁵ The following emphasis translates the obscure expression of DA: *precisely for the lack of love for the beautiful virtue*, but it could be usefully ignored.

means for it; he could forewarn as regards dangers. His voice shall have the sound of authority of Jesus Christ himself; it shall be accepted, through the special dispositions that the penitent bears; it shall be more convenient for the state of soul and for the particular circumstances of each one's life.

Christian Celibacy and Marriage

290 Christian celibacy, voluntary or imposed by particular circumstances and personal defects, is a condition, a state of virtue. But there is a celibacy that could be called pagan, chosen only for the purpose of a greater freedom in giving an outlet to the more brutal | passions, without one having to bear the burden of a family. It is a real social plague, an immeasurable evil for souls! It is inspired by the most shameless doctrine that today, having crossed the Alps, have spread also among us: it is nourished by a boundless and nauseating thirst for pleasures.

What of St. Paul's words: *Melius est nubere quam uri?*...⁶ One should say that: *Animalis homo non percipit quae sunt spiritualis Dei!*⁷ Now, before the young lady reaches that state of using her reasoning in order to be more libidinous than the animals, it behooves to prevent her and make her fall in love with the virtue of continence. And this is more urgent after the fact that, for some time now, also among the weaker gender such a doctrine is becoming more widespread, what, one day, was gaining ground only among men. Having kept one's heart innocent, or at least, not yet extinguishing the love for this beautiful virtue, the young woman shall come to understand and listen to the words of St. Paul as the confessor shall believe to tell her: *Melius est nubere quam uri.*⁸

When, then, can the confessor advice celibacy to persons who intend to live in the world? It is not the case of repeating here what is explained by authors of pastoral and moral theology: when there are certain physical defects, when there are

⁶ Cf. 1Cor 7:9: "It is better to marry than to be on fire."

⁷ Cf. 1Cor 2:14: "Now the natural person does not accept what pertains to the Spirit of God."

⁸ See above, note 6. DA has *intimarla*.

certain sicknesses, when there are no necessary means of | subsistence, etc. Here, we are speaking only of celibacy freely chosen for the love of virtue. It could be allowed when these three are cumulatively present: 291

1. That it could be foreseen that they will live chastely, not only with others, but also with themselves. How many of them become the parish priest's cross with their scandalous lives! The cross of confessors for the habit of habitually falling into *solitary sins!*

2. That their choice is in fact spontaneous, rather, that it is manifested with a certain insistence.

3. That, in general, particularly when it comes to women, they have the means of livelihood or that they can have easily a means of livelihood. How many times, when turned⁹ old, or fallen ill, turned the laughingstock of nephews and nieces or also of brothers and sisters, they are forced to live a miserable life or to take refuge in the hospital!¹⁰ In so many cases, only the hope of inheritance could impose some respect.

⁹ Stands for *diventate* = *have become*.

¹⁰ *All'ospizio* = *At the hospice*.

THE FORMATION OF WOMEN'S ZEAL

292 Prof. Pasquinelli¹ writes in *Settimana sociale* (*Social weekly*): “Last year a postal money order worth L. 100 reached the office of the Unione Popolare with these words that say entirely a real Christian perception, responding to the needs of the times, of the good | willed today: the brothers of Terni, for a grace received, offering to the Unione Popolare. A poor woman wrote to the same office: Coming back from Lourdes, I send to you what is left with me, L. 2.00. But it is not always so: on the other hand, one would say that the woman who looks as good, devote, faithful interpreter of the Gospel doctrine, is much farther from zeal, very far from the Christian women’s movement: others would even feel almost horrified by it. How little then is to offer works or money! The evil has two causes: two remedies could heal it.”

The first cause is the lack of instruction regarding *all* the Christian doctrine, on *all* the pontifical documents, on *all* the examples of the first Christians and of saints who have honored the Church of God. They know the usefulness of a communion, of a holy rosary campaign, of the construction of a sanctuary: but they do not know the encyclicals: *Rerum novarum*, *Graves*

¹ Archimede Pasquinelli (Jesi 1874 - Rome 1918), first president of the youth section of the diocesan committee of the Opera dei Congressi, was a personal friend of Giuseppe Toniolo (Treviso 1845 - Pisa 1918; prominent economist and sociologist) and of Romolo Murri (Montone Sanpietrangeli 1870 - Rome 1944; priest and theoretician of the Democrazia Cristiana). Dismissed from teaching in state schools for being too “Popish,” he decided to dedicate himself full time to politics and to social journalism. From 1903, he collaborated with *Il domani d’Italia* (*Italy’s tomorrow*), a political broadsheet founded in Rome by Murri two years earlier, but transferred to Bergamo after the condemnation of the founder for Modernism. He eventually collaborated with *L’ora presente*, in his city of origin. In a necrology that appeared in the same paper, Pasquinelli was described as “an active organizer, agitator, poor and happy organizer of strikes, a militant of popular struggles”.

*de communi, Il fermo proposito.*² They ignore the great concerns of the pope for the institution and the spread of the *Unione delle donne cattoliche* (*Union of Catholic Women*). Convinced of having done everything, if they have spent something for a more or less sacred celebration, they do not consider if the people's *life* were truly religious, people who often mix swearing with the Lord's hymns. They do not care to see around them people who are alien to the Church; and, believing themselves to be a class of people favored by God, | some *devote* women spend long hours deploring the times, the novelties, men, with any thought of improving them... And granted that this should come to their mind, they would immediately fall back: There's nothing we can do! Therefore, there is not only deficiency in instruction, but also in education to zeal. What is needed then is instruction united with education.

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Instruction on the responsibility of women, on the nobility and on the ease of her mission. It is good, through advice, examples, instructions and conferences, to let these three truths, with patience and constancy, be deeply imbibed by daughters, women, spouses, mothers.

Responsibility: it is the clear consequence of the mission and the power of women in the formation of customs: it is, however, little understood, much lesser felt. And yet, women, though not ordinarily made for great problems and grand scholarships, would be very well capable of having an intuition of it, and to experience noble sentiments for it. God has equipped them with such attitudes.

This task the priest shall find quite easy since he shall speak to women regarding zeal in the field of the home. A mother ordinarily lives for her children and merely mentioning them, stirs the most delicate fibers of her heart. The wife, who has endowed her affections to her companion, given her by Providence, feels as hers all her husband's interests. There is

² *Rerum novarum* (1891) by Leo XIII on social problems; *Graves de communi* (1901) related with *Rerum novarum* and of Leo XIII himself; *Il fermo proposito* (1905), by Pius X, for the reorganization of the Italian Catholic laity following the dissolution of the Opera dei Congressi by the Pope (1904).

294 no | wayward daughter who remains insensitive to the well-being or ills of her parents or of her brothers and sisters.

More difficult would this task be when it concerns the women's zeal outside the home, though it may not be organized: more arduous yet if it were organized: most arduous yet if it were a social and economic organization. The devote woman is especially shy: organization demands a studious mind that ascends to the consideration of the power of union: the social and economic organization, by curing the ill on its roots, is most effective, but it is not understood by ordinary, shallow, or superficial souls. Nonetheless, no one has to despair: women in these activities are not called to assume directive positions: they *have to be guided* by the clergy. Well, ordinarily, women are so docile that one can hope of seeing them do what is suggested to them: experience, also in this case, is a good teacher. And more: there is a method of teaching that captures attention and wins over even less open minds: a method that over and above other method counts more for women: *through induction, by facts, by examples*. One has to speak of the deeds of so many saints: narrate the stories or the biographies of good mothers, wives, women, who almost forgetting that they belong to the weaker gender, have performed marvelous deeds for the good of the Church and of society. Let the women's movement, | which today is expanding, ever so fruitful with good deeds, be especially known. Promote the subscription to periodicals that illustrate it, like those mentioned earlier: *Matelda*,³ *Azione muliebre*

³ Regarding this twice monthly periodical for young women, born in Florence and which for some time, would be composed by the Daughters of St. Paul, cf. *La Civiltà Cattolica* (notebook 1458, 18 March 1911): "We have under our eyes the first issues of this periodical, born with the new year in Florence, in order to serve the fold of young women. First of all the name of the most kind Dante heroine, with the symbolic motto "fior da fiore" (flower of flowers) recommends it. Its content recommends it even more... Without bunglings and heaviness, with well set up materials, and enlightened treatment drawn from artistic vignettes, with the delightful variety of topics, and even with the attraction of curious events and of games with prizes, although in the modesty of a novice, it reveals itself a periodical that is well conceived and better executed... We welcome it and recommend it to families in Italy and to mothers above all so they may give it as gift to their daughters." In a following review in 1914, always *La Civiltà Cattolica*,

(*Women's Action*), *La donna ed il lavoro (Woman and work)*, *Vita femminile (Women's life)*, ecc. As a general rule, let there be no long speeches, conferences that fly over heads: instead, easy treatments, familiar conversations, detailed diffusion, done everywhere, especially during visits.

These examples may be said to be *dead*. But there are others that are *alive*, even more effective. They are those that every one may witness: they are the sights of misery; they are the social researches. The conferences of St. Vincent de Paul with their home visits furnish the true knowledge of the poor. To enter certain lofts, to see with one's own eyes the poverty, at times extreme, to listen to the pitiful story of families, of sickness, of domestic dramas and tragedies, etc., are things that are never ever cancelled:⁴ they give the better idea of the reality of life: they make one think of the good that remains to be done. And meanwhile, the need makes one say words of comfort and religion: meanwhile, one feels the need to give: meanwhile one gets out of one's own selfishness: meanwhile this thought remains deep in one's soul: I must not, nor can I, neglect others. Let women be initiated to these visits alone or in company with others: let her be initiated to approach the sick.

The so-called *social researches* are no less useful. We have them on holiday rest, on the frequency of attendance of children in catechism, on hygiene and the morality in residences and in industries, on the conditions of work at home, on the employees of hotels, on rice plantation women workers, etc. etc. Let certain veils be raised, let certain mysteries be dug into and such mis-

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information is given that its director is Marianna Bettazzi Bondi and that its main office and administration have transferred to Turin. – On this matter, a historical clarification is due: “The Daughters [of St. Paul] take care of the composition of the *Matelda*, of the correction of proofs and of writing,” thus the *Unione Cooperatori Buona Stampa*, n. 10, 1923 affirmed. Although the work lasted only briefly (about a year), it bears witness to an involvement in the women's world according to a declaration of Fr. Alberione expressed at that time to the Congregation of Religious: “The Daughters... render service to the world of women what the Pious Society of St. Paul renders to the world of men” (cf. documento 18, p. 376, in MARTINI C. A., *Le Figlie di San Paolo. Note per una storia (1915-1984)*, Roma 1994).

⁴ DA Italian has *scancellano* instead of *cancellano* = *cancel*.

eries would appear in a way that women will not remain indifferent. Then one would see them come forward then to ask what could be done: rather, one would hear them propose initiatives themselves. Nothing perhaps is better recommended than these home visits and of these researches in view of formation of the social sense. On this matter, confront the booklet: *Il senso sociale e la sua educazione (The social sense and education to it)* - Leroy - (Published by the *Azione sociale popolare* - Via Legnano 23 - Torino - L. 0.50).

The famous Belgian Fr. Rutten⁵ in order to better understand, feel and remedy the ills of workers, set aside his Dominican habit for sometime: he went down into the coal mines, and worked with the miners' picks for some time. There he came to take part in the miners' conversations, listened from their own lips what their aspirations were, studied in detail their moral, religious, domestic lives. Having gone out of it, he started his great work of organization and social restoration: his words reflected the workers' sentiments: his works perfectly met their needs.

297 The illustrious Le Play⁶ and, after him, his disciples were trained in the social science of conversations, done with the

⁵ Ceslas Marie Rutten was born in Terremonde (Belgium) in 1875. He joined, at a very young age, the Dominicans, pursued his higher studies in Louvain. Having obtained his Licentiate in Theology, he graduated in Political and social sciences with a thesis entitled: *Nos grèves houillères et l'action socialiste* [The strikes of our coal miners and the socialist action] (1900) which won him a merit citation at the Parliament by the socialist Vanderveld. To document himself, Rutten did not hesitate to go down the mines and accurately describe the conditions therein in a detailed report. (1901).

⁶ DA has *Le Play*. Frédéric Le Play, engineer and professor, precursor of the Catholic Social Movement, was born in La-Rivière-St-Sauver on 11 April 1806 and died in Paris on 5 April 1882. From the revolution of 1830 he understood the gravity of social issues and dedicated himself to studying the life of the workers and above all the family. He conducted a survey of sample of 300 families from 1829 to 1853 (*Les ouvriers européens*, 1855). Le Play blamed the French revolution at least of three errors: a) faith on the original perfection of man; b) the conviction of the infallibility of the individual; c) absolute equality. Also three were the remedies proposed by him: a) respect for God and for religion; b) obedience as respect to the paternal role; c) moral chastity as respect for women. In spite of his social vision, Le Play remained little in favor of associations, coherent to his expectations for a reform of authority. His risk was paternalism.

workers of the two worlds. He warns us of the serious danger that there is for those who aspire to do some good: *to follow preconceived ideas, a priori methods*. Rather, he emphatically points out how many more remain inactive because they do not know that there are things to do: they do not hear the sighs of persons who languish under the bad dream of their ills; they move in the world while judging this from what they see on the road and in squares. These are dangers that do not exist for those who know how to listen to the lessons of life, how it presents them, in their marvelous and always instructive simplicity. Here is one example:

Fr. Du Lac⁷ narrated that one day he was surprised to see a young woman worker of the *Sindacato dell'ago* (*Needle workers' union*), with her eyes very red. "My daughter, have you been crying?" "Oh no, Father: I have not." "What of these red eyes?" "It's because of the boiling water." "What? Do you wash up with boiling water?" "No, but when work hours are extended, and I no longer could see well to guide the needle, I burn my eyes and this keeps me awake. It is a fact: it opens the way to knowing the painful sacrifices to which certain young women are condemned. Let surveys be made, home visitations too, let affectionate and discrete questions be asked: these are a very good means of learning and training for zeal!

More than aiming on the minds of women, it is better to aim at their hearts. Not all enters in man through the intelligence: much passes through the will, much through feelings. In women, perhaps two thirds of convictions follow the road of the heart. The miseries of abandoned childhood, of threatened youth, of a vicious generations, of a despised old age, these move them. The sweetness of doing good, the examples of saints, the greatness of the reward, these lift them up. Women are made for being mothers: and it's impossible to think of mothers without thinking of big hearts. And it shall be that the

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⁷ Probably Stanislas Du Lac de Fugère, Jesuit, born in Paris on 21 November 1835, son of Louis-Albert, councilor to the Court of Counts. He finished his studies with the Jesuits Brugelette, in Belgium, and joined the Jesuits in 1853. He died in Paris in 1909, leaving behind different books, letters and translations from English.

priest, appealing to hearts, shall succeed in making women experience their responsibilities at home, in society, before the Church, before God.

The mission's nobility. It is said that when Buonarroti had finished the statue of Moses⁸ he felt so crushed by his work, and in admiration he is said to have addressed it these words: *Speak! Why can't you...?* Silence followed his question. He worked but on matter.

299 Instead, women are artists on souls...! How unfair is the world! It raises monuments to authors of canvasses and of cold marble artworks: and why should none be made for them who form living, sensitive souls?! The women educators, or the women of zeal in general, are the true hidden benefactors of humanity. Meanwhile, there is this beautiful affirmation | of a member of the English parliament when the postulates of the suffragists were being discussed: "Women, remaining in their places, have stronger influence on laws, than men in the parliament: every law becomes possible, responding to the soul of the people, hence necessary, when women have prepared its hive, by forming customs."

We admire the strength and the ingenuity of men: but man is born of woman: as a baby he is carried in the arms of a woman and fed by her milk; as a young child, she shapes his soul; as an adult, he adjusts to the likes of the woman with whom he finds joy and repose; as an old man, his angel is always a woman who sustains him, comfort him, points heaven to him, finally closes his eyes.

Then, in Christian thought, the mission of women is yet much more sublime. To cooperate in the salvation of men is something divine: to provide not for this earth but for heaven, not for the world but for eternity. To cooperate with the priesthood, in his vocation, whose comparison cannot be found on earth: to teach the truth, to teach the holiest of morals. Something divine is it, so to say, to be associated with the work of Je-

⁸ *Mosè*, the famous statue that Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) sculpted in 1515 for the necrological monument of Pope Julius II, and which can be admired in the San Pietro in Vincoli Church in Rome.

sus Christ himself: *Veni ut vitam habeant*.⁹ The work of God is perhaps not sublime enough...?

Women shall draw great courage from these | fragmentary considerations, adjusted to their intelligence. Very often women become embittered in the persuasion of having too much inferiority face to face with men. Let them feel elevated, let their self-esteem be lifted up: it is God, not for any of their merits that they are made so. And God made them so for the purposes of His loving Providence: let them not become proud, nor should they feel embittered.

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The mission's being easy. Very often, also women who understand¹⁰ their mission and their nobility allow themselves to be beaten by getting scared: how can one ever succeed to hear this broken society? Raised this way, the objection would not be wanting of bases. But let it be known: every woman is not called to do everything, but only a small part. In the world, the Lord assigned to each one her place, her part of the work, her sphere of influence: and adjusted energies and attitudes to them. It is only according to what one has received shall give the proof. Well, each woman has but to do her share: at home, among neighbors, among acquaintances, in organizations she participates in, without jeopardizing her duties.

But are there needs general in nature, perhaps on the provincial, national or world level? Most true, and women must bring in their contribution to the entire work: but it remains to be a limited contribution. If the work is broad, many shall be the workers: if | the organization is general in nature, many shall be the members. To each would be allotted but a small part, according to¹¹ her strength and her circumstances. Rather, it is precisely in such associations that she is enlightened, comforted, sustained in work.

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Nothing is more useful in clarifying the ease of women's mission than a practical exposition of the different activities

⁹ Cf. Jn 10:10: "I came so that they might have life".

¹⁰ DA says: *anche quante donne comprendono...* = also how much women understand.

¹¹ Italian DA: *giusta* = right instead of *secondo* = according to.

that they could assist. Here are the means: present easy and short books; introduce statutes and programs; make an orderly commentary on them. There must be no hurry, though; let one not expect to persuade everyone in the same degree; nor should one entertain the illusion that all of them would be on our side.

An idea presented is a seed planted: before one could see the fruits ready for harvest, months have to pass first. Contradictions and disapproval were promised by Jesus Christ to his apostles. The humility needed for the priestly ministry is often fruit of very little success: trials are the signs of a special love of the Lord for a soul.

302 *Education.* – To educate is worth as to cultivate the habit, so it has been said. The entire science of pedagogy and of physical and moral education consists in forming good habits. The child trains his eyes to readily distinguish letters, syllables, words: the philosopher trains the mind to formulate reasoning: the soldier | trains his hand to speedily operate the gun; the musician trains his fingers to play the keys... Indeed, the child will learn little if he listened to a dry description of the letters of the alphabet: the philosopher, without exercising his mind, would not know the structure of a syllogism. And who would call one a good general if he spends years and years closed in a military academy and studying the mechanics of a gun, the topography of a country, tactics? How would one be taken as a professional if he has done nothing but study his duties? Exercise, apprenticeship, trials, retrials are a must. And when, with infinite repetitions, errors and corrections, one has reached ordinarily doing things well in an art, then, one is educated.

Neither has this principle less importance when applied to moral and social life. Virtue is a habit: and to form virtue is the purpose of education. Zeal is a habit: social sense is a habit; to develop and guide them means to educate in zeal, to educate the social sense.

We admire learned conferences; we advice books, newspapers, magazines; we still believe private propaganda, based on conversations, as useful. If we do not lead others *to start doing*

something, we shall always obtain little fruit: just like how could one pretend to produce a good musician by merely describing to him musical instruments... Let a woman take up an ignorant girl, give her catechetical instructions, lead her to communion; let a woman pray for the salvation of other persons, let her do the heroic act of charity, let her offer herself as victim for the salvation of sinners: let a woman remain in communication with the association for the protection of young women, for informing on the emigrant women; on Sundays, let her assist the girls of the patronage of workers, let her take part in the union of Catholic women...; with these activities, she shall be *more effectively, more quickly, more practically educated in zeal*. Without them, one perhaps may have a broad and profound instruction, but never true education.

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In some English parishes, next to the sacristy, there is often a small booth for selling religious-social publications, the so-called little penny bookstores. The parish priest at times admonish people to buy something to give as gift: alms of truth!

A young woman was poor, but she so much desired to do some good. For about a year, she placed inside a small bag those petty sums that she happened to receive. With her small savings, she bought different kinds of good books and made them circulate among about fifty girls. A saintly work! It was advised to her by her confessor who wanted to put her on the path of zeal. A priest, speaking of his vast parish, used to say: "Finally I have managed to let into the hearts of a number of ladies that today so many paths for doing charitable works have been opened, that today we need modern devises. A countess left me as inheritance a big place to turn into an oratory; an elderly lady, her friend, established a fund for the yearly catechetical prizes; I know of another woman who already thought of a parish bulletin! It takes, however, a long work of persuading! It took as well so much effort to let such a conviction mature ever more! I began by inviting them to teach catechism, then to take part in the parish activities, then I organized¹² a patronage for children, etc., etc."

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¹² The Italian *DA* has *costitui* instead of *costituii*.

One does not immediately walk with sure and accelerated steps. In getting down to work, there are two practical rules that assure good effect of the activities and the formation of women cooperators.

305 *Take aptitudes in consideration*, by providing occasions for setting them to work, according to particular tendencies. Generally, teachers are better catechists:¹³ and, with the parish priest making them interested in these, they would take it to themselves to also teach in school. There are women who, for their social position, can have a special influence: thus for example, the wives, the mothers, the daughters of the town or provincial councilors: likewise some nobilities whose example and word can, also during our times of democracy, be of strong stimulus. Some, for example, may just be able to distribute the parish bulletin | to families, others can, through *modern devises*, lend a strong help to the good press; all can pray. A woman shall consider it a great honor to speak in a conference. Another woman, humble and pious, shall be better equipped to spread devotions and religious groups...

In the second place: *let the work be gradual*.¹⁴ It is not just possible that one who did not have any task in behalf of others can, at once, assume position in a cultural circle or in a school of home economics. It would be exposing her to failure, and to the exercise of a tyrannical manner of governing which would end up in alienating others from the priest. The first step should be to recite the ordinary prayers with the spirit with which they were composed, that is, for the common interests: *give us today our daily bread... forgive us our debts...*¹⁵ *pray for us sinners...* Then, the idea that on earth there is not our *I* alone! Then shall follow the special prayers for sinners, for priests, for the pope: and, little by little, with each one's spirit allowing it, the organization of victim souls and of the apostolate of prayer would be reached.

¹³ The Italian *DA* has *catechistiche* instead of *catechiste*.

¹⁴ Alberione is particularly sensitive to this pedagogical principle of gradualness.

¹⁵ Cf. Mt 6:11 and Lk 11:3.

To assign some work of zeal at home, where intimacy and familiarity, make the way easy, will not be difficult. Rather, the priest shall often have people asking for directions, who would confide a holy pain due to the uselessness of his efforts, who would confide to him little victories. | Having to do with an external organization, the first step is made up by purely religious organizations: Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Living Rosary, etc.; the second, by those organizations that, having purely religious purposes, include also material goals: Ladies of Charity, Conferences of St. Vincent the Paul, child-care centers, etc.; the third, by those that have social goals: homes, assistance to travelers, cultural circles; the fourth step, made up of those that aim at prevalently material objectives: trust funds, school mutual funds, workers' funds...

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It helps to notice, however, that among the different levels, the works of *pure beneficence* ought always to be on the first positions; Christian women, as we come to know them today, more easily understand them.

It has not been long since a woman, among the most advanced in the religious-social sphere, pointed out these three steps for the training of speakers. Assign them: to read a passage of a book good for the meetings; to write something that they, at first, will only read, then they shall prepare things by themselves; to speak onstage and then to deliver *little speeches on occasions*. It is well understood: while it is aimed to train them to deliver speeches, intellectual and moral training ought not to be wanting: rather, this should precede the other.

It is *among the young ladies* that the priest has greater bases to hope for success in this work. In the girls' oratory he finds the easier way of leading women to zeal: there, he could train the most capable cooperators. Among the older ones and the most assiduous in the oratory, he could easily establish: a school of perseverance or a finishing school: the Association of the Daughters of Mary; the school of the good housewife, to entrust to sisters or teachers: a sewing or embroidery school, etc. If a discrete number of students is reached, a class of religion would be providential: and if there were many workers, an employment office or a workers' patronage would be useful; if emigra-

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tion has become a part of the people's mindset, attempts should be made to stop it with social workshops, or else evade the sad consequences through suitable instructions.

Meanwhile among young ladies, more than among young men, a roving small library would be more successful: enrolment in the national social security system could be provided for; other similar activities could be thought of, like the funds for women workers, funds for dowries, etc.

308 While these keep united together the young ladies, they often offer occasions for the priest to approach them and to give them, through conferences and advice, religious instruction proportionate to their needs. Union will make them stronger in preventing | what is evil: they will go out of the narrow circle of selfishness; they shall think of the mission to which they are destined.

Youth is also the sweetest and strongest bond through which he could keep close to himself the entire population. It has been seen before and it is not useless to remember it again.

Shall it remain a dream?

I quote from *Settimana sociale (Social weekly)* (1912 no. 11) as follows: "For a time now, I dream, I long for an institution that my imagination draws as something beautiful and achievable, and which I have not revealed to the public yet considering that I am glad to refer to it just in case someone would tell me: *Let's try it*. The project that I dream of would be a school, a *social economics for women*.

1. In said school would be admitted those girls who are older than 16 years, and young widows, who would demonstrate themselves inclined for pious and charitable Christian works.

2. They would be contemporaneously taught:

a) The more necessary and useful manual work for women.

b) Home economics (school of the good homemaker)

309 c) The art of taking care and assisting the sick (nursing school).

d) The method of teaching well the Christian doctrine.

e) The social propaganda in favor of women, for example, conducting small conferences or readings of good materials, etc., to girls and to women of the masses.

3. At the end of the course – the duration of which would be decided more or less long according to what is wanted – these young girls, gone back home, could do great good in the village, in the small town, in rural municipalities, especially there where there are no sisters or when these are driven away because of the ill-will¹⁶ of the times.

4. They could:

a) Teach catechism.

b) Gather the more grown up girls, in turn teach them work for women,¹⁷ home economics, read to them good literature.

c) To assist the sick, prepare them, when needed, for the last sacraments.

d) To become in their village of origin industrious propagandists and the connecting link between a given village and the central committees of associations of Catholic women or other similar organizations.

e) To lead local pious associations or institutions like the Daughters of Mary.

These are the broad directions of the institution that ought to possibly have a boarding house connected to it. The school's life ought to be good, without fanfares,¹⁸ food ought to be abundant, but simple. The trainees would have a certain freedom to go out at given hours, alone or accompanied, as the case may be. Too much rigor would be out of place: inasmuch as they are called to the apostolate; a certain freedom shall benefit their formation that ought to be quite serious and religious, without affectation and nothing of nunnishness.

All would be paying fees from their own pockets or with the help of benefactors. Parish priests and wealthy persons ought to encourage good girls to attend such schools. Leaving such schools, they could ask, for services rendered, a small compensation, although, when they are wealthy, they might want to do it for free.

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¹⁶ Original Italian *tristizia* = *cattiveria*, *malvagità* = *ill-will*, *savagery*.

¹⁷ Original Italian *donneschi* = *femminili* = *womanly*.

¹⁸ Original Italian *DA* has *sforzo* = *effort* for *sfarzo* = *fanfare*.

Some observations now follow. *Shall it remain a dream?* Let it be known that in Rome Miss Turton directs a boarding school for the training of nurses: numerous sisters are attending the courses. The *Social school* would have a similar program, but much more extensive.”

ZEAL IN PRACTICE

Here we have arrived at a very delicate matter. Let us take note immediately that what follows is *especially addressed* to parish priests. It is our most strict duty | to respect the institutions of the Church: now, as it was said above, the fundamental and central organization is and must be the parish, and the parish priest is and must be the soul of the entire pastoral action. In order to be more clear, I believe it good to divide the subject matter in different points.

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1. [Positive method]

In all the pastoral works and organizations it is a must *to follow the positive method.*

A *well defined and precise* program is not just possible before one comes or has just come to a parish; a *broad* program, instead, is always necessary. In fact, the first would comport a harmful *presumption*, while the second is included in the very mission of the parish priest. One who pretends to come into a parish with a list of things to accomplish and wants to start doing would soon fall into numerous illusions. Not everything that is praiseworthy in theory always comes easy in practice: not everything one has done well in a parish equally succeeds in another. How many times has it happened that after one has made serious sacrifices of time, health, money soon gets convinced that he has made the wrong turn...?

A general program is, instead, necessary as I have said. It consists in a most firm will to do to women and for the sake of women what is good: in the spiritual as well as material order.

If this resolve were wanting, the real notion of duties of the parish priest would also be wanting, or else would be wanting the vocation for becoming one. One who is chosen to be a parish priest cannot say: finally here I am with the reward and the rest for so many labors! On the other hand he could take for

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himself the statement of a saintly parish priest: *The cross has been placed on my shoulders: it is a heavy cross, and yet sweet! I will no longer have peace on earth: I must work and die on the field of work in behalf of souls.*

In this kind of general program the parish priest must understand all the work which the other free priests have to do: he has some obligations more, but he is not dispensed from their duties. Hence, what could be done from the confessional and those other things that can be done without an external or local organization, these already fall within the scope of his work. Here, we mean to speak only of parish activities that comports public associations; and with what criteria could the parish priest choose them?

Two rules:

313 a) *Let him study first of all the needs of his parish.* – In some places, mutual assistance may be necessary and in others, cooperation: here there are the female students, there the workers: there are places where subversive parties dominate and others where indifference rules. More: every center has its own mentality, its own customs, its own habits. Some populations are diffident, others indifferent, others full of enthusiasm. | At times very serious ills exist in the parish: one cannot cure them without studying their causes first. In the *Diary of a country priest*, the author narrates himself that, having entered a parish of about 600 souls, he immediately noticed the religious indifference and the deep division between the people and the priest. By means of visits, conversations, friendly relationships, he started a diligent investigation of their material, individual, and social ills. Four he especially noticed: no money for buying things; mortality among farm animals; difficulty in marketing products; lack of a health officer. He resolved the problems with a rural mutual fund,¹ an insurance association against the mortal-

¹ In Piedmont, but also in the rest of the kingdom of Italy, the problems of agriculture come in the first place. Farmers need credit lines at low interests to finance the necessary improvements in dwelling places and in farming. In order to oppose the liberals who establish here in there the rural banks according to the Wollenborg system (which Count Caisotti of Chiusano, during a meeting held in Cuneo on 14 April 1896 defined as “diabolical tool of liberal

ity of farm animals, a cooperative, a night school. It was a long and burdensome work, but not an unrewarding one: inasmuch as, after a few years, the people was in intimate relations with the parish priest: the parish priest was a real father and counselor of his people: almost all the men were doing their Easter duties.

Not precisely the same, but quite similar should the study and cure of moral ills: what counts is in order that one achieves the purpose of uniting souls with God through the practice of religion! It is repeatedly heard: *Let a parish priest who has come to a village, for a year, observe more than work.* And what are the means for achieving knowledge of one's own surroundings? Diverse: and, first among them, is *home visits.* With just | announcing it would perhaps make some wonder: but wait a minute.

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There are visits that are useless, others harmful and others spiritual and advantageous. The useless ones are those that absorb a notable amount of time, without any advantage, for merely human motives. The harmful ones are those that include unreasonable preferences for one family to another, those that hide a danger for the priest, those that elicit petty talks among the people. Spiritual instead are those visits that are directed to knowing souls, to establishing intimate relations with them, in order to do some spiritual or material good. Jesus Christ ran after the lost sheep,² sought the company of sinners,³ invited himself for a meal at Zaccheus' place.⁴ When a shepherd does not know his flock,⁵ what traps are set, ignores the quality of the

Freemasonry”), Catholics promote the birth of their own rural banks according to the method of Reiffeisen. The first of these, in the province of Cuneo, were formed precisely in the diocese of Alba by Cesara Algranati and Fr. Luigi Cerutti, president of the Italian rural banks, who came on purpose from Verona. In about ten years, the network of rural banks would be so tight to reach almost all the villages of the Langa and Monferrato area, where the Federations of rural banks would be established, one of them would have its office in Alba, the other office in Casorzo. Considered the apostle of the rural banks of Monferrato is Fr. Carogli, parish priest of Altavilla Monferrato, so-called the don Cerruti of Basso Piemonte.

² Cf. Lk 15:4ff.

³ Cf. Lk 5:30.

⁴ Cf. Lk 19:2ff.

⁵ Cf. Jn 10:3ff.

pastures and the sources of water with which it feeds, how can he guide them through good paths? From the confessional, one knows only the better part, and one who narrows himself in that would surely run the greater risk of committing a mistake in his evaluations.

315 Because of this, in Germany, in England and now also in France and in some parishes in Italy, among the priest's occupations, has been included *also the home visits*. They are visits that in some place is once in fifteen days, in others monthly, in others once every two months or once every six months. It is a visit done | methodically, with a specific purpose, promptly and cordially. Especially in Germany, there are forms to fill: concerning the number of members of the family, frequency of attendance in church and especially in the catechism of children, the publications being read, the associations of which they are members, special needs, etc. Among these pieces of information, and without seeming like an inquisition or a policeman, those that refer to women assume an important place.

Aside from the visit, one could undertake: *conversations*. A parish priest, who does not keep himself in his convent, who does not limit himself, when he goes out, to greeting left and right with an aristocratic tipping of the hat or of measured and directed greetings, a parish priest who, instead is hospitable, affable, gentle, finds frequent occasions to speak with his parishioners. Loved, he gets visited in the convent, stopped along the way, detained by his people in many circumstances that he artfully conceives. Esteemed, he enjoys the trust of his children who open their hearts candidly to him. Saintly, he knows how to raise those questions that, without putting him in embarrassing situations, raise the veil also over the more serious wounds.

Then, in the third place, there are the *surveys*. These are done for particular reasons such as: the Sunday rest, the observance of the laws of work of women and of children, the morality in the boarding houses of workers and students, emigration.

316 With all these things, the parish priest shall have before him, as if in a picture, all the work that needs doing in his parish, those that are necessary to cure the ills at their roots. And so he

shall have to measure his strength and not only his but also that of his male and female cooperators. Here the second rule becomes handy.

b) *Let him study the aptitudes of his men and women cooperators.* – The first condition is that they should be living good lives, that one has to demand a more perfect life the more delicate and religious are the works. Then follows the need for adequate instruction, love for souls, the desire for making oneself useful.

Neither shall the parish priest *prudently believe words, but he must observe life*, if he does not want to run the danger of falling into serious mistakes. Granted as well that each one sincerely wanted to candidly reveal himself, the fact always remains that everyone commits mistakes, more or less, in judging himself. To watch life means to observe the spirit of humility, of sacrifice, of goodness that is manifested in works: to observe what is the strength of character, what dominion over one's heart is exercised, what constancy is manifested in doing good: it means to observe the spirit of piety, the seriousness, the withdrawn lifestyle of women cooperators.

Neither should one pretend to find many of them: it is enough to find them as they should be, very few of them are enough. Neither should one want to add others to them too early. When the first ones are truly guided by the right spirit, they shall become true apostles: the new ones, arriving few at a time, shall assume the spirit: while a too sizeable mass could overload the first ones and seriously endanger the work.

Then⁶ if one should want to give to the same work the necessary stability, then one should *think as well of successors*. Among the works, there are those that are temporary, but there are also those destined to outlast the founders. Now for these, to train personnel that is capable of guiding them is a great wisdom. To infuse to this personnel love for work, to cultivate the ability to daily care for what is there, to instruct them regarding the defects, the dangers, the projects: this is all that is needed for the purpose.

⁶ The Italian *DA* has *puoi* = you can for *poi* = then.

Also here, history is the teacher of life, as Cicero said it: life tells us of great founder, of religious orders, of pious institutes, of charitable organizations all intent in training successors. Rather, there are not a few of these organizations that, having begun well the works, gradually relieve themselves of the occupations, of tasks, of offices, and pass them on to others, narrowing themselves to a kind of overseers or even mere onlookers.

2. [Two warnings]

Having known the needs of his parish and the forces on which he could count, two things remain to get done in the parish:

318 *Above all, possibly make use of what already exists.* If, for example, one desired to establish a roving library, because people love to read, one could supply a few chosen books for the older ones of the oratory. Perhaps, brought home, they would be read by the mother, by the sister, by the father, by the brother: they have to understand that the books should also be lent to them; all it takes would be a request. Thus in this oratory for girls, it would not be difficult to choose the more pious, more serious, young ones, who have ascendancy over others, for setting up the foundation of a group of Daughters of Mary or of a school of sewing, of home economics, of volunteer catechists.

319 A most zealous priest said: “We need to expand the goals of old associations according to the needs of today.” And truly so: because no one has to doubt this truth: to choose the most convenient means to the intended goals to reach. Today, it would be ridiculous to persist on using the primitive systems of navigation, of the press, of military tactics, etc. Religion, dogmas, Christian morality, are unchangeable in their substance, but our manner of knowing and applying them progresses. The Catholic Church is indefectible and from the word of the Gospel, not even an iota and neither a dot: but the Church and the Gospel possess marvelous ease | in adapting to times and peoples... The more one can say this with regards to religious groups, associa-

tions and congregations. Explaining his thought that parish priest said: “Today, a fraternity of tertiaries could assume the task of spreading the good press, of promoting, when occasions arise, gathering of signatures against parliamentary bills adverse to the Church, of obliging themselves to support with all sorts of assistance the oratory, etc.”

This manner of doing shall bring about numerous advantages. Advantages in the negative since is avoided that spirit of novelty that feeds the vanity of one who works, almost always alienates a certain number of persons, stirs murmurings; to be avoided are the creation of duplicates, of encouraging competition, of leaving inactive precious energies.

Positive advantages: *older* cooperators shall have a new area for their zeal, the *modern ones* shall see themselves included, in their right aspirations, and agreement of minds, of wills, of action shall be had; the goal shall be reached sooner inasmuch as less work of persuasion will be required; there will be more confidence for stability inasmuch as it has to do with a foundation that has already overcome the great trial of time.

In the second place: whether one *utilizes what is old* or *creates something new*, just *distribution of work is most important*. This is a principal part of one who governs: not only for those who occupy eminent positions in the hierarchy, but also for those who find themselves at the helm of a limited parish work.

Look for those who have the capacity for specific roles and place them in the possibility of accomplishing their mission: do not leave anyone with no occupation, a brooding critic of the others: use well the precious energies that are hidden in that which, more than self live ought to be called *personal dignity*, or the foundation of sociability. God sends good workers to his harvest: should one think that He would not give the adequate human means?

It is the task of the harvest master to repeat what the Gospel landowner said, referring to his vineyard: *Quid statis tota die otiosi?*⁷

⁷ Cf. Mt 20:6: “*Quid hic statis tota die otiosi?* – Why do you stand here idle all day?”

*Let all have*⁸ *something without being a burden to anyone.* There are those who would be more visible and those less; those who have to lead and those to obey; those who will be engaged in works of mercy, others in charitable activities and there are those who will fall within the name of women's social action. Thus it is not difficult to understand that one who is married and a widow can attend to the more difficult things than one much younger: that a teacher enjoys much more ascendancy over children in catechism classes than a country girl; that a noble woman is more ordinarily followed than a woman of the masses: that the mayor's wife has an influence that is well beyond that of ordinary women: that a soul, which is very much into things of the spirit, better understand the "victim souls" than those who attend less to virtues... And the examples could be expanded to infinity.

321 An inactive person would not be on the parish priest's side, and one who is not with him sooner or later will be against him. It is the task of the parish priest to keep gently the lineup of pastoral work, unite it, lead it to his ends: but every worker is one more resource.

3. [An objection]

At this point perhaps a difficulty would be raised by some. *Would it be practical to suppose to find the woman so docile under the guidance of the parish priest?*

The objection is already answered in part this soon: when it is said that women have to train themselves in humility, to the spirit of sacrifice; when the importance of pastoral solidarity among the clergy is noted: nonetheless an observation still proves useful. *Before availing with her services, the priest shall bind the woman to him not only with prudence and amiability but especially through the confessional.* Inasmuch as one has a soul under his direction, it is most easy to let her perform as wanted: she becomes a most docile instrument of her spiritual

⁸ The Italian *DA* has *abbiamo* = *we have*, instead of *abbiano* = *(they) may have*.

father whose counsels are commands for her. The parish priest shall then pay much attention on the confessional although leaving much freedom in it: he shall spend long hours therein, waiting and welcoming all with paternal kindness: otherwise, he communicates his pastoral designs to other confessors, he shall have them as cooperators also in this holy ministry: to them the occasion to say | a good word regarding the parish priest and his works would not be wanting.

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4. [Priority]

Much work is perhaps needed in a parish. *Which has the precedence?* We have *four rules* in this regard. *Prefer the most urgent ones: prefer the strictly religious: prefer the most welcomed and secure; prefer the most neglected.* Above all the most urgent ones: and this is understandable by all. If fire is burning and threatens to reduce the house to a heap of ruins, I am not going to go on painting a fresco on the hall's vault: if the ship is about to sink due to too much weight, I am not going to throw into the sea the little bread left to me, but the superfluous, the artful, the comfortable, or also simply useful.

In the second place, the strictly religious works. Everything that the priest does should be called *religious*, at least after the set goal. He does not establish a cooperative purely for material purposes: through that he aims at souls. Nonetheless, there are activities that are strictly, or better, *by nature religious*, as are the Union for the communion of children, the associations of the apostolate of prayer, of victim souls, etc.: there are others that are religious only *for their goals*, like the dowry funds, the workers funds, homes for the aged, etc.

Well, all of us understand that the first ones | become part of the parish priest's program, the second ones instead only indirectly, inasmuch as they are necessary, or useful for the moral-religious purposes.

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Prefer the most welcomed and secure. Because it is especially in making the first steps that one has to make sure of not going out of path, or to alienate the population. One would endanger the entire pastoral work that should be following later.

Prefer the most neglected works. It is well understood: when they are truly useful. On this norm, Frassinetti insists so much in his book *Industrie spirituali* (*Spiritual works*). There are activities, so he says, that enjoy universal favor, either because they are better understood or because they are better known, or because they largely satisfy egos. Others, instead, no less necessary, are neglected by many: hence it becomes more meritorious to work on them. On the other hand, one will have the advantage of a broader welfare inasmuch as the first will continue having the general support, while the second ones will not be without the indispensable help.

* * *

I am transcribing here some of the results of a long study of a new parish priest on the moral-religious-material state, its causes and its remedies: while I forewarn however that I am skipping what refers | exclusively to men. And this according to my goal.

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Status of the parish

1. There are 400 boys and 450 girls to catechize. Catechism classes are held in church, by the parish priest, two assistant priests, four unmarried women: on the average, attendance is scarce. Many of them are neglected and on vacation days from school they are almost abandoned.

2. For girls aging 12 years till they get married, there is a group of Daughters [of Mary], with one-sixth of the total number of girls enlisted. They take part during processions and on burials. Only about twenty of them go to communion. Majority of them work in the factory: a certain number of them also come from the nearby villages.

Majority of them are superficial, a few truly bad. The number of marriages is very limited.

3. Mothers have a pious sodality under the protection of St. Ann: about one third of their number participate.

In large part they neglect their duties towards their children.

4. Many of the men are given to wine and card games. Among them, many of those who do not work in the factory do

not observe holiday rest. They generally come to mass but very few listen to the parish instructions.

They are not hostile towards the Church, but they are indifferent: also at the moment of death, one does not see any concern to having the comforts of religion.

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5. There is a notable group of pious souls, among whom are unmarried women,⁹ many teachers, charitable single ladies, a music amateur.

6. There are a dozen students in junior high school; every year about thirty persons, men and women, emigrate, mostly to Germany.

Causes

1. Wanting is not only an oratory, but also any catechetical organization;¹⁰ children stay far from the priest; parents are indifferent and the catechists, demoralized due to limited success. Communion is neglected.

2. There is no special religious instruction whatsoever. Serious dangers for young girls¹¹ are numerous pastimes, readings, common factory entrance and exit of young men and women.

There is no preparation whatsoever, material or moral, for marriage. Those who come from surrounding villages are gathered in a lay boarding house.

⁹ Original Italian *DA* has *signore celibi = celibate ladies*.

¹⁰ This organization is one of the interesting themes in the Italian Church of the time. Only two months after taking over the diocese, for example, Msgr. Scalabrini addressed to the clergy and faithful his first pastoral letter, dated 23 April 1876, precisely on *The teaching of catechism*. "During our days, there is so much talk of constitutions of this or that nation. Christian humanity's constitutional document is the catechism." To Msgr. Scalabrini is also owed the first catechetical magazine, *Il catechista cattolico (The Catholic catechist)* (from July 1876). In the parish of the cathedral of Alba the "Society of Christian doctrine" was organized. Every child had the "personal booklet" with stamps to mark attendances; monthly posters were shown with the names, addresses and grades of each child, etc.

¹¹ The Italian original *DA* has *per essi = for them (masculine)*. But the reference is to young girls and the idea of separation of young boys from the girls going in and out of the factory is repeated in *DA* 327.

3. There is no organization.

Awareness of one's own duties is lacking.

Social and religious instructions are wanting.

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4. There is no organization.¹²

Wives do not adequately fulfill their part at home. They do not feel the benefit of religion and the obligation to practice it.

5. There are many special devotions, but almost none of the pious souls thinks of the religious welfare of her neighbor. Among them there is no organization whatsoever.

6. Neither the students are given directions as they go to the city looking for good schools, nor the emigrants for their safety during the trip and for their jobs.

Remedies - programs

1. To convince parents, catechists, children of the importance of religious instructions through sermons, advice, conferences, visits to families.

Classes for catechists, volunteers, held by the teachers and by the parish priest.

A practical organization of teaching, with precise rules, solemn awards, projections... To aim at establishing an oratory, pious union for the communion of children.

2. Spiritual exercises and special conferences for girls.

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A cultural circle for women not only with religious purposes, but also social (clean entertainment, songs, classes for becoming good housekeepers, dowry funds) and religious (special instructions, particular conferences in preparation to marriage). A pension house for immigrant girls, maintained by the sisters. To insist upon the separation of the young men from the girls entering and going out of the factory.

3. Organize them with religious and moral purpose. Instructions and conferences on their duties, in order to make them aware of their responsibility before God, the family and society.

4. Special instructions (not excluding the brief Gospel commentary or also the instruction in every holy mass). Spirit-

¹² The lack of organization, here repeated as in no. 3 (by mistake?), is already pointed out in no. 1 and would be taken up explicitly at the end of no. 5.

tual exercises for them: extraordinary occasions for them to go to confession: insisting on women that they solicit the participation of their husbands. Avail with women as well to group men together in an organization with material and moral purposes. Care for poor people who are sick with the purpose of informing the parish priest of those who, although serious, fail to ask for the priest.

5. Apostolate of prayer, victim souls for the welfare of the parish.

Patronage for catechism and *pro erigendo* (for establishing) the oratory, especially among those well off.

6. Choose a teacher or an educated woman to get in touch with the secretariats of the families for students and with the organizations in favor of emigrants in Germany. Choose a woman collector for the works of the Propagation of the Faith, Holy Infancy and St. Peter's Pence.

In order to obtain gradually this Christian women's work activities and these organizations one | has to first of all establish among the excelling women a local committee of the Union of Catholic Women in Italy. Cultivating it with every diligence, it will be easy that out of it and for the persons who make it up, all the rest of the work would be conceived and accomplished under the guidance of the parish priest.

7.¹³ It is not generally difficult to understand the need of local work: it can be seen, it can be felt, it can be touched. What comports some difficulty, however, is to understand the *urgency of work on the national and also international levels*. And yet it has to be seriously thought of: general interests should precede the particular ones: many local works could not be promoted effectively without some conditions on the national level. How can the whole work regarding the young have good results if, having passed the administration of the elementary schools of the State, they would send us teachers who are not religious? How can preaching have good effects if, with the spread of bad press, our listeners would read errors every day? With this: comes the urgency of joining the na-

¹³ The original Italian *DA* has 5.

tional movement, and for some works also the international movement.

329 The general directorate of the Catholic Action,¹⁴ composed of the heads of the different branches, the Popular Union, the Electoral Union,¹⁵ Catholic Youth, Union of Catholic women, etc., studies, in complete agreement, the more important problems and draws the path that all have to follow. Then it communicates its deliberations in so many publications to the adherents: thus it is possible to have an only secure, enlightened guide during difficult times. Division, lack of discipline, selfishness are always the preludes of failures. No priest, however, could reach these considerations and develop this conviction without keeping himself updated to the great questions and without reading the publications of the different general unions that deal with them.¹⁶

8.¹⁷ Few works, but well cultivated. “At times it is better to step on the brakes also in the care (of souls) and in one’s good desires; this, in order not to fall victim of mental dissipation because of restlessness...” The loss of energies would immediately follow while one needs to condense them in order that they remain effective. Thus workers, also the formidable ones, do not leave anything but miserable rough drafts; they did nothing to multiply and leave to languish or stop undertakings, perhaps before dying they remain pressed down and almost buried under numerous commitments.

Every work comports worries, conversations, relations, cor-

¹⁴ The Italian Catholic Action [*Azione cattolica italiana* (ACI)] was the national organization of the Catholic laity for special and direct collaboration with the hierarchical apostolate of the Church. When this organization was born towards the middle of the 1800, the conditions of Catholicism in Italy were especially difficult.

¹⁵ The *Unione elettorale cattolica italiana* (The Italian Catholic Electoral Union) was an organization formed after the suppression of the *Opera dei Congressi* following the encyclical *Il fermo proposito* of Pio X (11 June 1905) and at the tempering of the *non expedit*, in order to coordinate and direct the Catholic forces during electoral competitions wherein they were called to participate.

¹⁶ The original Italian *DA* has *la = it*. Reference, however, seems to be the “great questions” earlier.

¹⁷ The original Italian *DA* has 6.

response, visits, etc. How could an individual's forces not get exhausted? – One would say: but I shall also distribute the work... Very well: great wisdom, instead, is God's. But the parish priest, having to unite pastoral | work,¹⁸ has to be its soul. And thus he would be agitated every day by a fever that shall consume his fiber and corrode his intellectual and spiritual patrimony since every priest needs discrete time for nourishing his mind and his piety. With nourishment of the mind wanting, he would become a man of the past, narrowed; his judgment would no longer mature and be premeditated, but fickle; his action would dominate him instead of it being an emanation like a beautiful work of freedom. With nourishment of the spirit wanting, he would become arid, deprived of effusion with God and the perfume of priestly piety.

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Few and well: this was not only a maxim of the saints, but also of great men. He who does well one thing does enough. The venerable Fr. Cafasso, a great saint, a very good formator of the clergy, an assiduous worker, has left this written: "The priest's life has to have more of the spirit than of action if one wants action to multiply in effectiveness and in fruits."

The Sisters

This is a very broad and very delicate subject matter: which, today, is acquiring an ever greater importance. It truly seems that what is happening is like what was happening to the deaconesses of the first centuries: with the difference, however, that their life comes to be regulated by practical norms and by common exercises, and that | their goals are expanding according to today's needs. Rightly have they come to be called *sisters of the priestly zeal*. And where don't the sisters of today go without bringing the Christian sense? In schools and in child-care centers, in prisons and in conservatories, in youth hostels and in home for the aged, in correction houses and in prisons, in oratories and in hospitals, in shops and among boarding schools, in boarding houses, in civil countries, in mission lands:

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¹⁸ The original Italian *DA* has *lavorio* = *intense activity* instead of *lavoro* = *work*.

wherever there are lots of things to do: beside the priest you will see the sister. – Let us touch on some current or more significant elements according to our established purpose.

*Vocations.*¹⁹ – There are or, at least, there can be two opposite errors. Others would never give any advice to a young woman to become a sister; they say: it is a step that is most subject to dangers, that also in the monastery there are pitfalls, that in the world good mothers are much more than ever needed, that in the parish it would be a loss, etc. Others, instead, terrified by the scarcity of vocations on one hand and, on the other, persuaded by the usefulness of the religious state, they exhort very easily and, at times, with badly understood zeal, that girls took the veil. There are some exaggerations on both sides. It would be a lot better to recall here what the periodical *Religione e civiltà (Religion and civilization)*, regarding a related question writes: | “There is no argument whether having more or less members of the clergy is better: it is necessary to examine if there is true vocation or not in those persons who present themselves. If there is, it will be a duty to cultivate it: if there is none, or is lost, it is necessary to exclude them. The Lord, the true master of the vineyard, does not give the vocation to so many, nor to so few workers: he gives to as many as he believes necessary: it is up to us not to unworthily get into it and that those called do not remain outside.”

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The religious state is said, by St. Thomas, to be a state of perfection: the work of the sisters can not be substituted by servants, or lay sisters and hired personnel: so much so that even the revolution respects them; their spirit of sacrifice makes them become true angels, the zeal that enflames them changes them into apostles, they are the most brilliant glories of Christianity. Hence, let us thank God if he sends them to his Church.

On the other hand, let no one believe as doing service to an institute by sending, or by welcoming, those not called: there would be lukewarmness, discontentment, the deterioration of

¹⁹ The emphasis that the Author gives on the sisters in this context and, in particular to vocations, is the prelude to the foundation that would take place in 1959 of an Institute exclusively dedicated to the vocation pastoral: the *Queen of the Apostles Institute for Vocations (Apostoline Sisters)*.

discipline. And neither would one obtain the temporal happiness of the young person not blessed with divine vocation: she would always be like a dislocated bone that ends up causing endless pain. It shall be a good thing to speak in sermons sometimes of the perfect life of the religious, not so much with long exhortations, as much as with thoughts expressed | almost in passing. The occasion may be given during conferences to the Daughters of Mary, during confessions, the ceremony of the religious clothing or profession, or when the girls themselves show some inclination to it. A good thing as well is to let girls read some biographies of saintly religious, or of missionaries, or some bulletins. If, however, in a village there are sisters, this part is sufficiently taken care of.

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A certain risk of deceiving himself is run, however, by that priest who, in ordinary cases, would immediately admit as a sign of vocation any desire for it whatsoever: often it does not indicate anything but a good will to live a pious life; a more or less long trial is almost always necessary: rather, the *internal forum* is almost always not enough. The final responsibility is to leave to the superiors of the order or religious congregation, to whom one has to refer everything, according to the whole truth: there ought to be no pressure whatsoever on them: no one knows better than them the spirit of their institute and the qualities required. (See *Il gran passo* - Martinengo - Libreria Salesiana - L. 0.50).

Guidance of the sisters. – I set aside what concerns the spirit and the superiors of the different institutes: I would get into an area that is so vast, and already ventured into and cultivated by others. I limit myself to a few practical points. In almost every parish there are sisters: now how many times does it not occur hearing these words | from those souls: I have chosen this state in order to be better guided in the path of perfection, and meanwhile I need a director and even a confessor in confidence, or freely chosen! Now the spirit of the last pontifical decrees is that this freedom, right, dear, necessary, be given: and while caprices are fought, let not the sacrament of mercy be changed into torture to souls.

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Not only has the Church seen to it, but most learned men, saints, tried ones have written most beautiful pages: they could be consulted. Neither has egoism, jealousy, a badly understood zeal puts a veil on it.

335 There is, however, something that makes somehow reasonable the fears of him who wanted to restrict too much the choice of confessor of sisters. Something is to be feared not only in view of the beautiful virtue, but also in view of spiritual direction. Not all know how important for a sister is the fidelity to the rules of her own institute: many tend to dispense from all, or almost, the particular practices, and to change the sisters into *merely, common pious souls*. This is a disastrous mistake inasmuch as when they neglect those rules that, in the eyes of the profane are nothing but trifles, or even ridiculous, they as well lose the spirit of the institute, they no longer enjoy peace, they no longer work for the desired welfare, they become inferior to mere pious single ladies. What characterizes the congregation is not a trifle to set aside, | it is the spiritual resource of a sister; it is not something of little value; it is something that with the religious profession one is obliged to observe.

Neither should one conclude in this that one ought to use serious rigorousness: above all there ought to be prudence, charity, discernment of the spirits.

To shed light on these virtues, it would be very useful to read the rules of the sisters that have to be directed, to consider them attentively in their spirit, to consult as well some commentary.

Other things concerning this direction can be found in books of asceticism, among which I would advice, aside from those that are already commonly used, by St. Teresa, St. Francis of Sales, St. Alphonsus, etc., also the following:

*Prova religiosa sopra l'umiltà (Religious test regarding humility) – Prova religiosa sopra l'obbedienza*²⁰ (*Religious test*

²⁰ Cf. MAUCOURANT F., (priest of the Nevers diocese), *Dell'ubbidienza. Riflessioni e pratica (Regarding obedience: Reflections and practice)*. New Italian version edited by the priest D. M. A., Torino, Società Editrice Internazionale, Corso Regina Margherita, 174, 194 pp., 1924.

regarding obedience) – *Prova religiosa sopra la castità*²¹ (*Religious test regarding chastity*) – *Prova religiosa sopra la povertà* (*Religious proof regarding poverty*) - Ab. Maucourant (Tipografia Marietti - Via Legnano 23, Torino. L. 0.60 each volume).

Then as regards zeal it would be well to remember the letter sent by Princess Cristina Giustiniani Bandini,²² president of the Union of Catholic Women of Italy, to the institutes of religious women. With the full approval of the Holy Father Pius X, she invites the religious communities of women to adhere to the general Catholic-feminist movement. And this has a singular value: | inasmuch as there is no doubt that the aforementioned communities constitute a truly considerable force: on the other hand, it is very clear, for him who looks at things from up, that there are cases wherein it is absolutely indispensable to be a single body, all guided by the same head. It is well known: each institute shall contribute to the common goal, according to each one's spirit and according to the sphere of one's own action, but unity of direction, unity in common interests, is what constitutes the strength that individuals do not have. And are not religious institutes under attack perhaps by anti-Christian sects? Now it is just right and also duty-bound that they defend themselves with all their strength. In Italy the religious congregations for women are strong: if they should take account of themselves, they would be afire; if they should act, *in outward action*, with a single direction, they would obtain much.

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It is enough to say that out of 100,000 female students of the secondary schools, well about 80 thousand are in religious educational institutions! Now consider these words of Card. Merry

²¹ Cf. MAUCOURANT F., *Prova religiosa sopra la castità (Religious proof regarding chastity)*, Torino, Tipografia pontificia Pietro Marietti, 1905, about 210 pages.

²² DA has *Giustiniani-Baudini*. During the years immediately following the reform of 1906 subsequent to the encyclical of Pius X of 11 June 1906, *Il fermo proposito*, women were organized also along the ranks of Catholic Action. Princess Cristina Giustiniani Bandini presented to the Pope her project and obtained consent dated 21 April 1908. Thus was born the Union of Catholic Women (MM).

del Val:²³ “To protect a perfect unity of direction and of action, it is the Holy Father’s desire, already expressed in other occasions, that the organization of Catholic women belongs singularly to the Union among Catholic Women of Italy.” And this unity shall be obtained if one took care of following up all the different publications of the aforementioned union.

337 Another necessary thing is: to instruct the sisters in the local works of zeal. To let them know the environment to which they are destined, show the dangers, the possible and convenient works of zeal. This becomes even more necessary inasmuch as they are more often far from their principal superiors, they are in limited communication with the people, and they are rather shy. Teach them how in the hospital they can prepare the sick in resignation, to the holy sacraments, the last step, and how they ought to persuade them to remain good if, having reacquired health, they would leave the hospital again. Teach them how they ought to train, in the child-care centers and in the first grades, the children in prayer, in obedience and in virtue, how they ought to prepare them for the holy sacraments, how through the little ones they could arrive at their relatives. It would not be short here to mention all the advice, the directions, the suggestions that a parish priest can give as regards the prac-

²³ Rafael Merry del Val, Cardinal, from a Spanish family, was born in London on 10 October 1865 and died, suddenly, in Rome on 26 February 1930. Having finished his studies in England and in Belgium, at 18 years old, having decided to embrace the ecclesiastical state, enrolled in the college of Ushaw (England) and transferred in 1885 in Rome, at the Pontifical Scottish College. Leo XIII decided that he entered the Pontifical Academy of noble ecclesiastics, where he was ordained priest on 30 December 1888. Even before ordination, however, while he was still a subdeacon, he joined different missions in the courts of London, Berlin and Vienna, with the title of monsignor. On 1st January 1892, still Leo XIII called him at his side as a secret participating Camerlengo, in order to send him, at 32 years old and not yet a bishop, as his extraordinary apostolic delegate in Canada. Merry del Val became Secretary of State under Pius X and remained a most faithful interpreter of the papal will. He conducted a tough struggle against modernism considered by him as the synthesis of all errors, and against liberalism. He infused a great impulse to Catholic Action, and then to lay apostolate, and enacted incisive reforms in the dicasteries of the Apostolic See. For more than 25 years he uninterruptedly dedicated some afternoon hours to a youth Catholic association in the Trastevere area of Rome.

tice of zeal of sisters. The local circumstances, the tasks they carry out, the aptitudes of each of them: these shall suggest many things. What matters is not to neglect them, draw profit from their good will and offer occasions for work. It is said that congregations for women have defects: most true: but who has none? But they as well have virtues and energies: and it shall be the better manner of correcting their ills by giving work rather than leaving them inactive. If one knows | how to appreciate what is good, a just correction shall almost always be welcomed.

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It's good that we do not have illusions: one needs to work well with what instruments the Lord sends; the best is enemy of what is good; he who aims at perfection of methods and workers shall never achieve any good results.

It's good not to entertain illusions: there are works that require a spirit of strong piety, others that require patience and sacrifice, others that require disinterest: ordinarily there are no sisters who are capable of doing them.

It is good that we do not have illusions: the Lord makes use of very weak²⁴ instruments like us, he allows us to work through his great condescension. Should we be more demanding than how God is? Humility is necessary also in this area.

²⁴ For this theme of "weakness" as instrument or condition for accomplishing God's work, cf., for example, Jgs 6:15ff; Ps 72:13; Jdt 9:11; 16:11; 1Cor 1:18-31; 4:10; 15:43; 12:5.9-19; 13:3-4,9; Heb 11:34. It seems that this is also the message of canticles like the Magnificat (cf. Lk 1:46-56; 1Sam 2:1-10). The weakness of man and woman could indicate the habitual manner of God who chooses the old man Abram and insignificant Israel as his people. Jesus chose simple people with limited means like him in order to make them his apostles.

FINAL ADVICE

The apostolate of the press and the apostolate of the word have the same purpose: *to do good*. Before God I seem to have had, in substance, this understanding. Before those who shall deign to look at these pages, I would dare express some fear and make a prayer.

339 The fear is that, after having read it, this book is cast aside in a corner, just like we do with the water with which we have washed ourselves, without it | bringing *practical, lasting fruits*. A most discomfiting thought! Hence I would plead to the reader to make these two questions, in the manner of an examination of conscience, before putting down the book:

1. “In my spiritual action in favor of women, can I say I carry out all my duties? Do I train them in the practice of true individual, domestic, social virtues? What benefits can I count after that certain number of years of work?”

2. “Based on the principle: the woman is not only material help, but also moral to man: have I led her to her true mission, domestic, social, moral and religious?”

Let us dispassionately reply, before God, who shall judge our judgment; before Jesus who shall make us render an account of the great mission with which he has honored us; before society that has the right on our best zeal. We shall have difficulties, made by the world, by the demon, by the flesh, by the environment, by the enemies, by false friends.. But may those words of Psalm 125 urge us on: «*Euntes ibant et flebant, mittentes semina sua. Venientes autem venient cum exultatione, portantes manipulos suos*».¹

¹ Cf. Ps 125:6 of the Vulgate (now 126:6): “*Euntes ibant et flebant portantes semina sua; venientes autem venient in exultatione portantes manipulos suos*. – Those who sow in tears will reap with cries of joy. Those who go forth weeping, carrying sacks of seed, will return with cries of joy, carrying their bundled sheaves.”

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Stampa: 2005
Società San Paolo - Alba (Cuneo)
Printed in Italy