

## 9. To Don Luigi Gentili at Loughborough

Stresa, 29 March 1844

. . . I was about to reply to your letter of 13 March when I received some news which, if it is true, causes me great sorrow. It is that you are opposed to the matter of the Birmingham mission which has already been conclusively decided upon by your Superiors; and that you have spoken about it unfavourably even to people outside the Institute, with the result that the project is suspended. You know well what are the obligations of the vow of religious obedience that you have taken, and what is required by the perfection of this most important virtue - what submission, humility and denial of one's own judgement it calls for. For the sake of obedience Jesus Christ went to his death; and no one can become a saint if he does not practise it to an heroic degree. Because I love you tenderly, I would like to see you reflect this virtue as in a mirror, so that I could hold you up to our brethren in the English mission as a model. So I beg you to give me this consolation, by not opposing something that has already been decided upon by your Superiors, even though it may seem to you harmful. Instead I would have you co-operate with them so as to bring about what they have settled upon. It is only in this way that you can be most useful to the Institute and be truly blessed by God. Otherwise you will be a source of discord - which God forbid! This would be the greatest harm you could bring to the Institute. Do as the saints have done, and what they would do if they were in your place, seeking not yourself but Jesus Christ. So console me with a letter, and even more with deeds: act sincerely, in accordance with the true principles of subordination and humility. Moreover give consolation to your Father Vice-Provincial by your obedience, charity and meekness. At present he greatly needs to find his brethren supporting and comforting him. Goodbye. Affectionate greetings from -

Your brother in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

## 10. To the same

Oleggio, 13 April 1844

My dear brother,

I have received your letter of 3 April, in which you tell me what you have done and said with regard to the negotiations over the Birmingham mission, for the discharging of your conscience, so that if I find you at fault I may give you an appropriate penance. But unfortunately, my dear Luigi, I find you greatly at fault, to my immense regret. The substance of your letter is that, for the good of our Institute in England, you have manipulated things in such a fashion as to bring to nothing a work that was arranged in its entirety by your Superior. Now tell me, do you agree with the principle that subjects are free to do such a thing when they believe that the work is harmful to the Institute they belong to? If you give serious consideration to this idea, you will see that it involves the destruction of religious obedience, the sole foundation of true virtue - without which not only is any real sanctity impossible, but in addition fear of God is completely lacking; and that is the sole basis for our hope that he will bless the Institute. Is it not true that you have acted on this destructive principle? How could your conscience allow you to fight against the work of your Superior? You reply that you acted so as to ward off a grave danger which threatened the Institute. But had you the authority to act in this way? Were you under such an obligation as a result of a legitimate mission from God? Why is it that you did not hold firmly to the principle of faith which assures you that the man who obeys is never mistaken, and that if he submits without exceeding his faculties he is sure of

God's help? Does not the Holy Spirit say: *the obedient man shall speak of victory*? How much more good you would have done to the Institute if you had put all your trust in that virtue of obedience which is so dear to the Lord, and believed firmly that if you had acted according to this virtue, God would not have failed to reward you and bless the Institute, turning even the errors of Superiors to a good outcome (supposing that there had indeed been an error, as you believe)? So how very deplorable is the illusion you suffered from.

But that is not the whole of your fault. So as to succeed in doing what was no business of yours you were not content to place yourself in open opposition to the judgement of your Superiors, but in addition you made use of culpable means to further your intention, making clear to important people your disapproval of what your Superior had decided upon, and in this way lessening his credit and his authority, and reputing him to be a man of little prudence, whereas in truth he is worthy of all respect. Good heavens! Who could have believed that the devil could deceive you *sub specie boni* [under the appearance of good] to this extent? I am extremely grieved over the real harm you have done to the Institute by your wretched example, and I grieve too over the deplorable way in which you have brought about discord, when you should have been the centre of union, the model of perfect obedience, and the cement of fraternal charity. Ah, my dear Don Luigi, open your eyes: recognize how imprudently you have acted, how you have gone against both the virtue and the spirit of your vow of obedience. Ask God's forgiveness and promise him sincerely that you will amend your ways. I want you to have not just the appearance of holiness in people's eyes (for their opinion can often be an obstacle to our eternal salvation), but rather I want you to become and live as a true saint in God's eyes. But you will never succeed in this unless you realize that sanctity means a complete abdication of your personal judgement and perfect obedience towards your Superiors.

Pray give me, my dear brother, the consolation of seeing you enter into yourself afresh and draw profit from these words of mine. They really are a warning which God give you through me, even though I am an unworthy instrument of his. Write to me with a firm promise that you will never again fall into faults of this kind; that you will never keep your Superiors in ignorance and act against their wishes; that you will never again use the repute you have gained in the eyes of people outside the Institute in order to attain your ends. In short, write to me in a way that will persuade me that your mistake was both grave and imprudent, yes, but at the same time a transient aberration which will not occur again. Renounce once and for all your own spirit in order to be faithful to the spirit of God. Then I will bless the Lord for giving you light, and I will once more hope to see you a worthy son of the Institute, which has for its foundation 'obedience unto death, even the death of the cross'. May Jesus and Mary bless you.

Your affectionate and sorrowful brother in Christ,  
A. R.

#### **11. To Don Antonio Bottari, Rector of the Somaschan Clerks Regular at Racconigi**

**Stresa, 22 April 1844**

Very Reverend Father Rector,

First, my apologies for some delay in replying to your letter of 11 April. This was because I was away from Stresa for a time

You rightly attribute the falling-off in the faith and behaviour of young people to the inadequacy of the teaching and education currently given, especially in the case of those destined for a military life. This amounts to an irreparable harm unless the cause of it is removed by reforming the educational system itself. It would indeed be a praiseworthy thing to bring this deficiency to the attention of His Majesty, who is a very

religious man. Now until this highly desirable change is brought about, it would be helpful if some remedy could be applied, so as to strengthen the minds and souls of the young and provide them with solid principles and teach them those things that are necessary. Among these is the *Catechism*; and this needs to be comprehensively taught so as to give the students a thorough knowledge of their religion; and at the same time the opportunity can be taken to counter the false accusations brought against the faith by the heretics and faithless who are ignorant of its teachings. This kind of apologetics, properly managed, can be most useful. There is no riposte that can be made to it; for it is simply a matter of verifying the truth and answering the objections lodged against the Catholic Church and its teachings by its opponents and exposing the false basis of their arguments. This sort of confutation leads young people to penetrate to the heart of the faith and even to savour the beauty of the religion they profess.

I would not think it good to introduce into the schools objections of another sort - those which call for subtle reasoning and the sort of thorough understanding of human affairs which the young cannot yet attain to. If there are any who are troubled by difficulties of this nature, they need to be instructed apart, with great care and gentleness. But there is no reason why, in the course of giving religious instruction, some of the most necessary principles of sound logic should not be taught. These can be opportune in the defence of the faith, and make up for the lack of philosophical teaching. And just as these principles of what might be called *religious logic* help to form the minds of the young, so too they can contribute to forming their hearts, as they become acquainted with these moral arguments which show our religion to be at once true, beautiful and human - useful even in this present life. In this connection, the teaching of Greek and Roman history, as well as that of our own country, can be so managed as to be in harmony with and confirm religious teaching, provided that the teacher of history never forgets to confront the vices and wretchedness of pagan societies with the virtues and grandeur of Christian societies. In this way he can, by suitable and brief glances at these things, succeed in bringing out and imprinting on the minds of the young what are the true criteria by which the actions of the illustrious figures of history can be judged; how much vanity often lies hidden beneath their celebrated virtues; and how the vaunted greatness of human fame is often no more than an illusion, and not such that a truly virtuous man, a really great man, would wish to pin his hopes on, and spend his energies for. So too great literature can be of considerable help in producing a sound mind and a religious heart - again provided that it is made clear that those things alone are beautiful and praiseworthy which serve to make people have a horror of vice and a love of all genuine virtue.

These things open the way and dispose the soul to be duly impressed by the things of eternity, and particularly (as you well observe) by the dreadful judgements of God and the reality of hell. And to confirm the mind so as to profit by these thoughts it will be most helpful if there are available people who can give effective retreats, as well as excellent confessors. Facts and examples have great power over the minds of young people; and since you ask me to suggest one or two authors who offer these things, I would recommend the works of the abbé Carron - who, if I am not mistaken has also a collection of the lives of military men of virtuous character.

Finally you ask me at the end of your letter to make some suggestions about how you can educate the many young people Providence has entrusted to your care; and although the confines of a letter do not allow me to speak of my many thoughts on this matter, one idea at least I will mention so as to meet your request. A very fine way to proceed would be to combine gentleness with firmness and *great reasonableness*, so that the young man must always be convinced, at least in his own mind, that the views of the educator are always right, and that he, the pupil, would always be mistaken if he differed from them. This is a very difficult thing to bring about, since it calls for the greatest prudence at every stage, together with perfect consistency in all that the educator says and does.

With great respect and religious esteem,

Your humble and devoted servant in Christ,  
A. R.

## 12. To Don Luigi Gentili in England

Stresa, 3 May 1844

My dear companion in Christ,

Your letter of 23 April took a great weight off my heart. I had been truly distressed by what had happened; but now I am fully consoled. It is enough for me that you recognize the absolute need not to oppose Superiors when once they have made a decision over a matter, even if it should appear that some harm might ensue. Indeed in such a case greater obedience is called for, along with self-denial and trust in God. These are the virtues on which our Institute is built.

As I say, it is enough for me that you recognize the deception the devil practised on you on this occasion; and I am sure that the Spirit of Christ and the help of our dear Mother Mary, whom you invoked to obtain such a grace, will forearm and defend you always from again yielding to such deceptions. The promises you make are a healing balm for me: to hear that you are ready to die rather than disobey is the finest thing I could wish from you; but I neither wish nor expect anything less. Oh how blessed is the blindness of holy obedience - the blindness of faith itself, and a practical faith at that, to which the words of Christ refer: *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe!* It is the denial of one's own judgement that brings blessings down on our Institute, and transforms into good even the harm that Superiors may inadvertently do! 'God rewards such sacrifices.' Yes, my dear Luigi, it is in this way that we shall arrive at the true holiness that we long for. *The just man lives by faith.* So I embrace you warmly in the love of Lord, and I thank you for the consolation you have given me. I wish for no further penance from you. The sentiments you express in your letter are worth more to me than any penance. I have shown your letter to Fr Vice-Provincial, and he too was most pleased and consoled by it.

I come now to the request you make at the end of your letter - that is, of being relieved of the heavy burden that you bear. You may be sure that I understand very well how it must weigh you down, and I often feel great sympathy for you, knowing the labours that you have to endure there. But be patient a little longer: continue to work and to suffer willingly for the love of your God, who carried the cross for us. I have hopes of sooner or later being able to give you some partial relief, and I will tell you how. I see the importance of arranging over there for some men to be dedicated solely to giving retreats and missions. This is a difficult ministry; and if it is to be carried out well it calls for men who are entirely occupied in this work. This thought was also suggested to me by some of our brethren in England in the reports which they recently sent me. If a time arrives when I can put this idea into practice, then perhaps I shall be able to lighten the load you are now carrying. So keep up your courage until God may be pleased to change things. Everything we do is done for God; and we may be sure that God will do everything for us. Let us have an upright intention, and suppress all self-love. Even when things are going well, we must try in all sincerity to have a humble estimate of ourselves (which is all we deserve); and let all the honour and glory be given to God (which is what *he* deserves). In order that we may do all this, let us put all our trust in Mary, and always address to her our heartfelt prayers. At the same time we must not be discouraged because of our defects, for we have him who both can and will always absolve us from them (whatever they may be), provided that we pray to him and say lovingly: *a humble and contrite heart you will not despise.*

Goodbye. I must end because I have run out of time. May God bless you all and grant that you may all be *of one heart and soul*.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. R.

### 13. To Suor Scolastica Guglielmini at Domodossola

Stresa, 5 May 1844

. . . I was hoping, my daughter, that after the instructions and the penances you were given you would have occupied yourself solely in overcoming your defects, in carrying out the duties of your state and in being obedient. But instead of that, here is a letter from you in which you propose to me that you should make yourself the founder of a house! This behaviour made me think you must have taken leave of your senses. And I receive another letter in which you declare that you want to be obedient to your Superiors. If this is really true, then leave aside all your illusions, and concentrate your thoughts on carrying out your duties and following faithfully the path traced out for you by your Superiors, which is the path by which you can reach heaven, and avoid the deceits of the devil and of your disordered imagination. I must tell you solemnly that if you continue to follow your mistaken notions and the empty illusions that keep filling your mind and distracting you with the appearance of good, you will lose your vocation - as indeed you have begun to do, as I can tell from the sentiments you express. And then poor you! What sort of account will you be able to give when you come to the moment of death?

ROSMINI p.

### 14. To the cleric Giuseppe Saiani in Rome

Stresa, 5 May 1844

My dear son in Christ,

I was pleased with your letter, which I had been expecting for some time, since it seemed impossible that you should have forgotten me. I was glad to hear about the things you do, and that there is no lack of opportunities for gaining merit, though at the same time your health has improved. In fact when I chose you, from among many others, as a companion to your dear Fr Rector, despite your being still a novice (something quite unusual), I particularly had in mind that this, in addition to helping you to merit and to learn, would at the same time be of advantage (God willing) to your bodily health. So may God bless you and make you holy, as is called for by the vocation which in his mercy the Lord gave you. It is now up to you to cultivate this great gift, with generosity and thanksgiving, for the well-being of your soul.

What you tell me about 'feeling dull in spirit, to the point where the slightest thing gets you down' will not do you harm, provided that you turn this wretchedness into a reason for being persuaded of your own nothingness, and at the same time encourage yourself to have all the more confidence in God. All our weaknesses serve to make us *humble* (though never to grow discouraged); they can be made useful, through the mercy of God, who comes to the help of the humble and contrite of heart. For these people, convinced that of themselves they can do nothing but evil, and seeking always to be made more humble, continually have recourse to God with loving, filial, fervent prayer. So take courage and have great faith in the Lord; be faithful to the calls he makes on you, persevere in the good you have undertaken, and never give the consent of your will to temptation. In these ways your spirit will be strengthened; every day you will feel more convinced how secure and delightful it is to live abandoned into the hands of divine

Providence, with that golden indifference which is the sign of holiness and the love of God. I hope that you will write to me telling me of your spiritual progress; for this is the great source of consolation I find in the letters that my brethren and sons write to me. Nothing is more pleasing to me.

Take care that you are not distracted by living in such a large city; keep guard over the doors of your senses; make sure your heart is recollected in God, to whom you are already bound by a holy vow{f}. In short, so act that my purpose in sending you to Rome is fully achieved; and that in due course I may be able to welcome you back more holy, more perfect, more solidly established in your vocation than when I sent you there. I daily implore the divine goodness that you and all our brethren may be joined with me as one heart and one soul. So when you write to me, keep me fully informed about all this.

Give my greetings to dear Fr Rector, whose precious health I entrust to you. I really was surprised that you did not say a word about him in your letter. You must have forgotten. All your fellow-novices here send you their affectionate greetings, as do Fr Master and the other Fathers. Goodbye. I bless and embrace all.

Your father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

{fs}Rosmini is referring to the *preparatory* vow - declaring the intention of taking religious vows.

#### 15. To the lawyer Leonardo Rosmini at Trent

Stresa, 5 May 1844

My dear cousin,

I have thought about the plan you mention in your letter of 12 April; but for the present I would certainly not advise you to put it into practice. My view is that you should take courage and continue to work as hard as you can in your present post, trusting without limit in the Lord. Have no doubts: you will see that in the end he will give you abundant blessings. He wants you to gain merit, and he permits you to endure those sufferings which he knows are beneficial for your soul - even though our vision is too limited to sound the depths of his merciful designs. As a friend, this is my advice: you must take courage, and keep firmly in mind the fact that God wants us to fulfil his law calmly, simply, without going in for over-subtle reasonings. *When the matter you are worried about deciding is doubtful, you can choose the course that pleases you best*, and you will not make a mistake by so acting. You would be wrong to look for a clear and precise decision, for this is unnecessary. Rather, since this would cause you distress, it is more pleasing to God if you do not look for certainty but instead do what agrees with your inclination. So do this, persuaded that in this way you will please God better than if you busy yourself looking with minute care for certitude in subtle matters that puzzle you. There would be no end to such dilemmas.

Pray to the Lord for -

Your affectionate cousin in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

PS Although I have had no direct and definite news of your Nina{f}, I am sure that she is living happily and is behaving in an exemplary fashion, since if it were not so I should have heard very soon.

{fs}He is speaking of Caterina Rosmini, the daughter of Leonardo, who had recently entered the Institute of the Sisters of Providence, where she took the name Bonaventura, and in which she persevered until her death in August 1858.

**16, To Giuseppe Fiacchetti at Intra**

**Stresa, 10 May 1844**

My dear son in Christ,

In this beautiful month of Mary, turn to her lovingly so as to obtain complete victory over your spiritual enemies. To combat the most deceptive of these, make use of the careful warnings that our holy rules suggest, and particularly *guard the gates of your senses, keep yourself humble, pray without ceasing*, and so on. Resolve to walk in the presence of God, to maintain interior recollection, to teach in school and to do everything else with devotion and the sole intention of pleasing God. I am pleased to know that the pupils are responsive to your care for them, and that you have found a way to teach effectively.

As for your coming to Stresa, although I would be pleased to see you, I cannot give you permission, because 'it is a more perfect thing if none of us makes a journey without necessity, or leaves the place where he is', and we want to put into practice the perfection which our holy Institute proposes to us as our aim. So offer up to God this small privation, and the result will be greater merit for you, as is the case with everything we do for love of him. In the coming holiday time we shall meet at length

Greet for me Father Prior, as well as all our dear brethren. Make one another holy and always give mutual edification. Goodbye.

Your father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**17. To Don Luigi Gentili{f} at Loughborough**

**Stresa, 10 May 1844**

My dear brother in Christ,

*My children, I write these things to you so that you may not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (I Jn ii).*

These precious words of the beloved disciple, my dear Luigi, must bring back serenity and peace to your soul. With utmost trust in the mercy of Jesus Christ, and with a firm resolution to behave in future in a very different way, you must try not to delude yourself, but rather to dwell with calm compunction on these truths which leave no room for doubt:

1. That you have unfortunately failed gravely in obedience by opposing a very important plan which had already been decided on by your Superiors.

2. Even worse was your fault in bringing to nothing the work of your Superiors, and speaking disparagingly of it to important people outside the Institute. This has all the marks of a betrayal, an oblique attack on your Superiors.

3. Again by your use of money in this delicate matter you quite unjustly raised suspicions in the mind of the Bishop; and this was particularly serious because it was likely to lead to a loss of trust in your Superior and the cause of endless ill-feeling against the Institute.

4. You cannot plead ignorance in a matter which you both could and should have know about.

5. You cannot make excessive self-esteem your excuse. It is true that this is a passion which blinds us, obscures our view. But far from diminishing your fault, it aggravates it.

What then is to be done? There is nothing for it, my dear Luigi, but to ask God's forgiveness and wait humbly on his infinite mercy; resolve to behave in quite a different way in future, one more conformable to obedience, humility, simplicity and abandonment to God. Further, you have to make good, *as far as you can*, the harm you have done, when you have occasion to speak to Mgr Walsh - given that your Superiors are of the same mind as regards the Birmingham mission as they were previously, when they accepted the offer which was made to them.

This is the beautiful month of our dear Mother, Mary! And it is to her that you need to direct your heart in all simplicity. She will arrange everything and will obtain for you ever fresh graces. I look to see her gracious intervention, and from you, her devoted disciple, I expect full co-operation.

Fr Vice-Provincial, through God's mercy, is well, and his health has improved. He joins with me in sending warm greetings to you and to all our dear brethren there. And I am, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus -

All yours,  
R. p.

## 18. To Suor Francesca Parea in England

Stresa, 21 May 1844

My dear daughter in Christ,

I am told by Fr Vice-Provincial, your Director, that there is no question of your abolishing your veil; merely that it will be well if you are prepared to remove it when travelling in public, until people's eyes become accustomed to seeing you wearing it. But you are always to keep it on when in the house or in school. I am pleased that you love your veil, as a symbol of modesty and purity of thought. But I find in your letter of 7 May an expression which is excessive and exaggerated. You tell me that if it was decided to do away with the veil, while you would bless God for his divine dispositions, you would ask the Lord at once to let you die. No, my dear daughter, this is too much. To die for Jesus, yes; but to die for your veil - no. To die for the sake of the beautiful virtues the veil symbolizes - I would agree with that; but to die simply for the material sign of those virtues - such a wish seems to me to show a blinkered outlook which would agree well enough with the outlook of the Israelites of old, but which is not suitable for a Christian. The Jews lived in a period of symbols and prefigurings; but we live in the age of truth and of charity. In previous times they were fond of *signs*, because they did not possess what those signs *signified*. But we, who have the reality itself of those blessings that the ancient figures looked forward to - we Christians and religious - we have no other good than Jesus Christ, his love, and what pleases him. Our law is contained in those words of our Redeemer: *The time will come when real adorers will worship God in spirit and in truth*. So do not be attached to anything material, but live a life of the spirit, resigned to everything, indifferent to everything but God's good pleasure, loving only the holy and adorable will of our Lord.

As for the prudence which you say you lack: ask it of the Lord, and continue to implore it. It was he, certainly, who placed you in circumstances in which you will be able to learn that virtue which is so important for a Superior, and indeed for every Sister. For the rest, if you ask me for some rule of prudence, I could think of none more apt and important than this: 'To show in everything the greatest gentleness and humility.' What can hold out against these virtues? Believe me, my daughter, everything yields to these

weapons. Whereas on the other hand, any harshness tears apart and ruins the work of the Lord. So be courageous in humbling yourself in all things, with great tranquillity of mind; and try to join firmness with great meekness, amiability, gentleness and interior humility. You have every reason to deplore the lack of morality in those poor girls: it is certainly something to weep over before the Lord, and to do everything possible to remedy. But for your consolation, reflect that if you achieved nothing else through your labours but prevented a single sin, you would already have spent your life very well. So think of all the merit you can gain in that difficult mission! How dear to you will be the labours and sufferings you endure, if you love the Lord! Try in every way you can to instil in those girls a great horror of any and every offence against God; speak to them often and in vivid fashion of the hideousness of sin, of the misery of the souls who abandon themselves to it and of how it is a thousand times better to die rather than offend the Creator. Make them know how loveable, how great God is, how wonderful is his justice, how admirable all his other perfections; and in this way you will gradually inspire in their hearts a love of him which will distance them from sin. One means which can help you greatly to bring back to the right path those who have strayed (and to prevent others from straying) is devotion to our Lady and to the saints who were outstanding for their innocent lives and for preserving purity. You could well recount the story of their lives and put forward their example, in such a way as to make it seem attractive to imitate them. But be sure to explain clearly the Church's teaching over the invocation of the saints, so that Protestants may not misrepresent it, and the girls themselves, at need, may be able to explain to them the doctrine that our Holy Mother Church holds to be true.

You say that you cannot yet speak English, but be patient, resigned and very humble over this. Study as much as you can: the Lord asks no more of you. He does, though, want you to be always peaceful, content, cheerful in spirit, and gentle with everyone - yourself included. He wants you, too, to bless him and to be thankful to him for his daily blessings, since everything comes from his grace, above all the gift of becoming his spouse and his helper in tilling that field in which you work.

Greet for me my dear daughter Suor Anastasia: tell her that I am not writing to her for the moment - this one letter is enough for you both. I have good hopes of the novice, of whom you give me a good report. All of you must pray for me, as I do for you. May the Lord bless you with all the blessings of the saints. Goodbye.

Your father in Christ,,  
A. ROSMINI p.

PS Give my respectful greetings to Lady Mary Arundell.

## 19. To the cleric Giuseppe Saiani in Rome

Stresa, 2 June 1844

My dear son in Christ,

I received your letter of 31 May, and after reading and re-reading it, I waited, prayed to the Lord and celebrated Mass before replying to it. Only now do I set about giving you an answer. In the whole of your letter there is nothing I find good, unless it is the statement you make at the end that you submit your judgement to that of your Superiors,

and your final sentence: 'You have only to give me a sign of what God wants from me, and I will at once conform to it.' Well, if you are sincere about this, here is my verdict on all that you say: *It is entirely the result of a temptation and miserable deception by the devil who, as usual, transforming himself into an angel of light and inflaming your imagination, wants to bring you to ruin and make you lose the holy vocation that God has given you.* That is my impartial opinion after I have invoked God; that is the decision of your legitimate Superior. If you pay heed to what I say, with determination and strenuous efforts you will be able to escape from the snare which has been laid for you. But if you fail to do this, you will make shipwreck of your soul. You would never have become a victim of illusion *if you had previously been sincere*, if you had opened your heart and all your thoughts to your Superiors (as our holy rules require) and if you had done this right from the start when the devil began to tempt you. *Complete and sincere openness* and continual manifestation of everything within your soul is the sure way to repel in good time the attacks of the devil which deceive the mind. It is because you failed to do this with proper simplicity that you have fallen into this deplorable confusion. It may well be that it is because (you tell me) you have prayed to our Lady that you have finally obtained the grace to write me the letter in which you reveal your state of mind - even though you (not unnaturally) felt *a strong reluctance* to do this after keeping silent for so long.

The appearance of evil which you say you see in the Roman clergy is largely the result of your imagination: a mixture of your inexperience and ignorance of other places, and a rash judgement of a whole class of estimable people on the basis of a few things you have seen or heard, without realizing that you are quite incapable of making such a judgement - you a cleric scarcely out of the egg! But the biggest mistake of all is to suppose, through a subtle illusion of pride, that you are the man who is destined to provide a remedy for the defects of the Roman clergy! Heavens, what deplorable blindness there is in that thought! Your Superiors send you there so that you may learn from the holy and learned men there are in Rome, and you at once take scandal, and even dare to entertain the rash notion of being the reformer of the finest clergy in the world! Once pride has infected your heart, it produces abundant fruits and distances you from the truth, under the pretext of attaining some illusory future good; and it especially takes you a long way from the humility of the religious state. So the first fruit of your temerity and of the false idea you have formed of the Roman clergy was that you began *to be discontented over remaining in the Institute*, when, if you had any humility, you should have been made more attached to it by the sight of the defects of the secular clergy. This would have followed if, distrusting yourself, you had been afraid of coming to grief outside it and in the midst of such dangers. You should further have reflected that if God had wished to make use of you to promote his glory, he is certainly not lacking in ways of making this known to you through your Superiors, and giving you the means of doing so through the helps that they could have provided you with in an Institute which refuses no good work when the will of God is duly made known. But you, on the contrary, judging rashly about the Institute, too, and knowing very little about it, and merely standing on its threshold, have more confidence in yourself, isolated from rather than united with it, and believe that God will do through your means what it seems to you he does not do through the many holy priests in Rome, the many religious, pastors, Cardinals and the Pope himself the supreme Pastor! You rate all these as useless, and form the conclusion that the Roman clergy are a spent force, and that therefore you 'have a great desire to keep your room in Rome firmly closed'! And the culmination of your blindness and self-deceit is that you say that while you do not have confidence in yourself 'you feel you are capable of anything if it should please God to use you and give you the necessary help and strength.' You speak as if God could not give you the strength and make you capable of anything, should it so please him, *within the Institute*, but only outside it, and as if you could the better hope for this strength from God if you abandoned the religious life of humility and obedience, abandoned the vocation you accepted, and broke the sacred bond

of the vow with which you offered yourself to God. The meaning of that vow was that you should have put your hopes in God, remained constant in the good you had undertaken, tried to sanctify yourself in your own vocation, grown daily in self-depreciation, humility, submission to your Superiors, and carried out humble and lowly duties. That was the meaning. But that anyone should hope to do everything in God by losing his vocation, having fantastic dreams about future undertakings, envisaging great enterprises and despising small duties . . . all this is unheard of; there is no such thing in the scriptures; no spiritual master has ever taught such things. The spirit of pride that has deceived you, cloaking itself in an appearance of false piety, is evident too in the temptation you have met with - to feel aggrieved at not being sent on for ordination to the priesthood. This is a most foolish and mistaken presumptuousness, clean against the maxims you were taught in your Institute - maxims to which you have so often declared, at least with your lips, you agree with.

If you understood what humility means, you would have gone down on your knees and begged me (as many others have done) not to promote you to the priesthood, or at least to defer this until you had acquired the high virtues proper to that state. But instead of that, instead of genuinely holding views consonant with the spirit of your Institute, you are greatly disgusted because you have not been made a priest *before you have completed the second year of your noviciate!* In the Institute no one is ever ordained before the end of those two years; and indeed this could not be done, even if we wished to take such a step, in the case of those who would be ordained by title of the common table, as would be the case with you. But despite all this, your self-love is so excessive that in face of the blow you think you have received, you believe that you would so lose face before people if you did not now receive ordination that you make this a new reason to abandon your vocation, on the pretext that you could then go on to do greater things - though you cannot say just what these wonderful things would be! No, there is no spirit of God here: only the spirit of a huge and diabolical pride.

To make things worse, you speak of 'throwing yourself into the arms of God's adorable Providence' - as if in the Institute you were not already in the bosom of Providence, and as if there were no Providence except where your self-esteem would like it to be. What a hideously perverse idea this is! What a clear case of self-deception there is here, when you take to be the spirit of God what in fact is obviously the spirit of the arch-deceiver. My dear son, rouse yourself from the wretched state of mind and heart that you have fallen into. Pray to our Lady, and she will perhaps obtain from her divine Son the grace which will open your eyes and enable you to see the abyss which is open before you. For my part, I tell you, and tell you again in the name of God, *you are deceived, and deceived in a most grave way.*

Bound as you are by your vow, set your mind on fulfilling its obligations, and repent of having given way to an evil spirit; try to rediscover the spirit of your vocation by deep repentance. I am not going to absolve you from your vow: rather with the authority which is mine I command you in the name of God to do battle against the enemy and to *persevere in the path which you have entered on.*

For the rest, I will write to Fr Rector what he is to pass on to you, and what I hope you will carry out at once, by the mercy of God and of our Mother Mary, to whom I continually commend your situation. May JESUS and MARY bless you and help you to escape from your present state. Goodbye.

Your father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**20. To Don Giuseppe Roberto Setti in Rome**

**Stresa, 2 June 1844**

My dear brother in Christ,

The letter I enclose is my reply to Saiani. Read it carefully and then give it to him - and see what impression it makes on him. Whatever his reaction is, you must send him to Stresa as soon as possible. He is to go there by himself. Tell him how he is to travel, and give him only the money that he will need for the journey. But do not give him the order to leave until a few moments beforehand, and do not permit any excuse or delay. I leave it to you to decide when to do this, since it will be necessary to find someone to help you there. I hope this will not be impossible. As regards justifying Saiani's leaving to Barola or others, I rely on your prudence. But this consideration must not change the resolution this letter conveys to you. Meanwhile we must all commend the matter to the Lord. When Saiani is here he will spend a month in retreat - he has not yet made his retreat.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A.ROSMINI p.

## 21. To Don Luigi Polidori in Milan

Sacro Monte di Varallo, 2 August 1844

My dear friend,

Since I have a little free time between the exercises of my retreat here, I want to write to you about something which grated on me in the last issue of the *Amico Cattolico*. I do this because I know well that you are greatly devoted to our Blessed Lady, whom you have not only as your Mother (as we all have) but also as your compatriot{f}. Now, how is it that you have not made any protest over what is written in this magazine: '[that] Mary, when she arrived in Bethlehem, *was overtaken by the pangs of childbirth* ? Does not this sentence offend your ears, cause you much grief? There could hardly be anything else so *offensive to pious ears*. That our Lady should have suffered pain in giving birth to the Saviour? That the Blessed Virgin, who became the Mother of God, should be subject to the same sufferings as other mothers? Where have you read that the law which was given to Eve, the sinner - *you shall bring forth children in pain* - was applicable to Mary? Do you not see that this law begins: *I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing*, and that it is therefore linked to what I might call that impure cause which multiplies conceptions in other women, a cause which could not affect her who was the spouse of no one but God, by a spiritual union which had nothing fleshly in it? Nor was Mary the mother of any but the only-begotten Son of God, so that her motherhood does not take away her virginity. You must notice also that the same law goes on: *you shall be under the power of your husband, and he shall rule over you*, and that these words express again the reasons for the multiple conceptions of other women. Now, to what man was Mary subject? For Joseph, who was juridically her husband, venerated her, there can be no doubt, as his Lady, and never thought of her as his subject. So to whom was Mary subject except to him of whom she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*? So that although Joseph, if you like, could be said to hold on earth the title of head of the house, he did not fulfil this office except as one who considered himself the mere vicar or representative of the heavenly Spouse to whom he most willingly regarded his wife as wholly consecrated.

So far from Blessed Mary having experienced any pain in bringing forth to the world the Sun of Justice, I hold (and I believe you are with me, since I hold on good authority the Virgin to be venerable, as do all those who are devoted to her) - I believe that when the time came when the Redeemer was to be born, she experienced indescribable joy, heavenly delight, and was rapt into an ecstasy of love so sublime that no one could imagine its intensity, and which gave her a taste of the happiness of heaven.

So, no, my dear friend, we must not allow to pass a phrase which fell from the pen of the illustrious writer by mere inadvertence, I feel sure. Yet it still pains Christian ears, and must not be allowed to stand (as I said) without emendation. So I beg you to see that it is corrected, for the consolation of all readers. And I ask this of you out of the love you bear for Mary.

For my part I not only see the scriptures as always speaking of Mary in such a way as to banish any thought of motherly infirmity, but as revealing her motherhood as taking place without the help of any other person; so that as soon as she had brought forth into the world the Child she had carried, she herself, unaided by Joseph, wrapped him in the poor swaddling clothes, and with her own hands laid him in the manger, like one who, far from being sad and ill, was well and full of joy. The words: *She brought forth her first-born, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger* (Lc 2, 7) mean that she did all this on her own. Who can doubt that, had she been in need of help, Joseph would have gladly given it? But instead we must think of Joseph as standing silently in a corner of the stable contemplating and adoring the great mystery, without daring to step forward to offer help to his dear Queen who, for her part, grants no mortal man a share in the motherly solicitude to which she alone, as the sole earthly parent of her Son, has the right to express. And to give you further proof of the careful way scripture speaks, always to the honour of our Lady, I should like you to look at another passage (and there are others I could quote). Consult Exodus (chapter 13) where God promulgates the law of the first-born reserved for sacrifice, and prescribes that *Every first-born of man among your sons you shall redeem*. Notice the phrase: *you shall set apart to the Lord all that first open the womb*. Now why does the law not simply say 'all the first-born'? Would not that be clear enough? You may perhaps say that this is just an idiom of oriental languages. But since those languages were chosen by Providence to express the mysteries of the divine revelation, I do not hesitate to say that that phrase in Hebrew was chosen by God not as a matter of chance, but rather because it was most apt to express exactly what God intended, and so limited the law in such a way that it should have force for all mothers until in course of time it made an exception in the case of Mary, the Mother of God. Indeed, what other phrase could have been so fitting for this intention of the divine lawgiver? Without having to name her as being exceptional, the letter of the law already allowed for that exception.

And you will find the same circumspection of speech where we find the law of purification (Lev, 12). It is clear that this law is made only for ordinary mothers, but not for her who, without ever knowing a man, became the Mother of God and remained a virgin. And so when Mary gave birth, this was accompanied not by pain or suffering but by ineffable joy. She was truly what the Song of Songs (4, 12) refers to as *a garden locked, a fountain sealed*. These words were entered into holy scripture in honour of the pure Spouse of the King of the heavenly Jerusalem, words applied by the Church to Mary, the one through whom the incarnate Word passed as a ray of sunshine passes through pure crystal; as he passed out of the tomb without breaking the seals; as he entered the room where the apostles were *ianuis clausis* [With the doors closed]. And it was Mary, finally, who perhaps suffered no other pain until that terrible and wholly spiritual pain which transfixed her soul like a sword, when she suffered along with her Son as he hung on the cross, so that the suffering of the Son was mirrored and renewed in the soul of the Mother.

I hope - indeed I am sure - that these observations of mine cannot displease the pious and illustrious author of the article in which he let slip that phrase which to me, and I think to you, is so jarring. And the same applies to the wish I have expressed to you - that it should be emended. What he writes, leaving aside the excellence of his style, and his learning, is full of love for Mary; and I believe that he himself must be pleased to hear of something which he had perhaps not realized but which makes for the honour of the heroic woman whom he graphically describes, painting her in the beautiful colours of his

eloquence and devotion. Besides, the fact that he is not a churchman fully excuses an inadvertence that could readily have come from the pen of one of us who are ecclesiastics. So if you do not care to send some note of your own to the directors of that journal, I have not the slightest objection to allowing you - indeed I ask you - to have this letter of mine printed in the next issue. Goodbye.

Your affectionate friend,  
A. R.

{fs}Rosmini is referring to the sanctuary of Loreto, the place his friend came from.

## 22. To Don Giuseppe Roberto Setti in Rome

Stresa, 2 August 1844

My dear brother in Christ - the grace and love of Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

You cannot imagine what great pain I felt at the news of your ill health. My first thought was that I must go there to you, embrace you in the Lord, stay with you a little while, and leave the next day. But when I looked in to the practicalities of this plan, all sort of difficulties came before my mind. So for the moment I fear it is impossible for me to satisfy my urgent wish. In the meanwhile we intend to make a novena in which we will beg of God the grace of your return to health, if this is for his glory, invoking the intercession of Canon Del Bufalo{f}. We will all do this, and I will get the Sisters to do likewise. You must join with us; and so that you can do this, I will postpone the beginning of the devout exercise until next Thursday, 8 August, by which time I hope you will have received this. Perhaps the Lord will be pleased to manifest the holiness of his servant by granting a quick cure. In any event, we shall not cease to sing of his mercies: *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for evermore*. I have already sent news of your state to your brother, Don Francesco; and other devout people will be able to make the same devotion there.

May God grant you patience, my dear brother! You will find it in abundance in the heart of our Saviour - laid open not by the knife of the surgeon, but by the lance of love. *With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation*. For the love which Jesus Christ has for us, and the love we have for him, are the two sources of the consolation you will find on your bed of pain. Love, trust, abandonment to our crucified Saviour - trust too in the gracious kindness of our dear Mother Mary - let these be your delights, your weapons, your strength. Bind yourself to Christ's cross and hope greatly in him: he will not abandon you, *and with a word will put all things right*.

I embrace you lovingly, and all those here with me embrace you in the heart of Jesus, too. We beg him to bless you, for the love he bears for his Mother. Goodbye.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

{fs}Gasparo Del Bufalo was the founder of the Congregation of Missionaries of the Precious Blood, and had been beatified by Pope Pius X.

## 23. To Suor Giovanna Antonietti, Superior at Domodossola

Stresa, 4 August 1844

My dear daughter in Christ,

The defects of Suor Bertoletti are not sufficient grounds for dismissing her. If you consider the matter well, you will see that they are the product of a sensitive and timorous conscience. And when a Sister shows she has great fear of God and a delicate conscience, these things must be respected, and her defects must be accepted calmly, while we make every effort, with charity and patience, to help her, comfort her, and strengthen her so that she may amend. Nothing is more greatly to be esteemed and loved than the purity of a soul who fears to offend the Lord; since in the end the greatest treasure the Sisters of Providence can have is the grace of God and holiness.

I have spoken to Suor Maddalena, and she told me that when Suor Bertoletti was at Stresa she did very well ; and it seems to her that it might have been well to keep Suor Bertoletti at Stresa not only as the doorkeeper but also as a helper for the Sister who looks after the noviciate. In short, then, keep her, sympathize with her, and try to deal patiently with her when she is at fault in any way.

May Jesus and Mary bless you .

Your father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

#### 24. To Don Luigi Gentili at Loughborough

Stresa, 11 August 1844

My dear brother in Christ,

I am adding a few lines to tell you that your letter was most welcome, and that it seems to me that we have been waiting ages to see a noviciate properly set up there. I never cease to recommend to our brethren that they should esteem their own perfection and the practising of the gospel virtues as the greatest possible good; for this is both the foundation and the one great end of the Institute. Do all you can to attain this perfection yourself and to impress on the minds of all our brethren the same aim. Each should speak of these things to his companions, since we are (as our Rule says) only poor disciples of Christ who *must help, exhort and encourage one another to personal perfection*.

As for promoting the work of the noviciate and the college, act in concert with the other man charged with this task{f}, Don Peter Hutton - whom I greet warmly in the Lord, along with the other brethren. In all you do, be energetic and zealous, though always prudent.

Here our good Signini has profited quite a lot, especially in experience. If you can manage, without upsetting people, to move our men from Oscott to the noviciate, I should very much like Belisy to come back to Italy, at least for a year. May our Lady assumed into heaven console, strengthen and guide you. Goodbye. Pray for my needs.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

{fs}Gentili had been nominated, along with Hutton, to see to the foundation of a house for use as a noviciate for the brethren and also a college for the education of boys. This was being built near Ratcliffe, not far from the railway station in Sileby. After considerable difficulties, the project was completed and the house opened on 21 November 1844.

#### 25. To Suor Placida Ruffinaccia at Domodossola

Stresa, 15 August 1844

My dear daughter,

Your first letter saddened me, but the second brought consolation. Is it really possible that you allow yourself to be ruled by your imagination? Are you not capable of remaining firm in your resolution to serve God, to live and die for love of him, as your holy vocation demands? Do you let your perseverance in religious life depend on whether or not your companions show love for you? Are you in a religious house, are you a consecrated Sister for the sake of being loved by those you are with rather than to love and serve Jesus Christ? What mistaken and distorted ideas these are! Moreover, to let yourself believe that you are not loved or esteemed by others, and to be persuaded of this as easily as you do because of every trifle - this is surely a sign of an excessively touchy self-love! Yet virtue, and particularly profession as a religious, consists in putting away all self-love, and hence being always content with everything (especially with being corrected); in carrying out your duties simply and with equanimity; in putting up, for love of the Spouse of your soul, with the vexations that others cause you, without yourself vexing anyone. For goodness' sake, make these dispositions your own, and learn to think in a way that is solidly based on humility, patience and perseverance. Otherwise you will not only be a burden to others, but to yourself as well. So bring about a change in yourself; let us thank God and our Lady for it, and hope that it will be lasting. Pray for me -

Your father in Christ,  
A. R.

## 26. To the priest Antonio Bottari, a Somascan, at Cherasco

Stresa, August, 1844

Reverend and dear Father,

In order to answer briefly your various questions I give below my replies.

Q. - Which author do I regard as the best when it is a matter of giving a retreat?

A. - St Ignatius. I am sending you his *Manual of the Retreat-giver*, which is to be found in the book called *Ascetics*

Q. - Is it well to make a retreat once a year or more often?

A. - In the ordinary way, only once a year. But if it is a matter of a brief, simple withdrawal from ordinary affairs for a few days, it is very helpful to do this a number of times.

Q. What particular rule would you suggest to me for preserving chastity among young people?

A. The rules put forward by the masters of the spiritual life are excellent, and there are no others that I would especially recommend. But I believe that it helps greatly towards this aim if emphasis is put on instilling in the young a way of thinking that is lofty, noble, spiritual and generous, as well as on purity of intention in all that they do, and on making good use of time.

Q. Is it better to be gentle or severe in directing young people?

A. The normal thing should be a gentle and reasonable way of governing them, joined with firmness. But in exceptional cases a certain rigour is the only treatment to use.

Q. When it comes to ruling religious communities, what is the best way of acting when certain individuals have little inclination to piety, obedience and the observance of the rules?

A. The course of action needed in such circumstances is: (1) to convince the religious that the Superior acts only out of love for their good, without any bias or ulterior motive, and with great humility; (2) to enlighten those governed, assiduously inculcating the truths of the gospel, and giving a good example; (3) as Superior, showing a sure and mature judgement, speaking only of things that are true and well founded, never interpreting

amiss the facts, much less intentions etc., since it is better to give few corrections over matters for which no excuse can be offered than frequent corrections in cases where the one accused may be able to find plausible excuses; (4) the Superior must be firm over maintaining discipline, but never show irritation; and where discipline has in fact become slack, he must begin by being unbending over essential points, and gradually become stricter as regards lesser matters; (5) he must always be consistent, having only one aim in all that he does, never contradicting himself, not being stern one day and easy-going the next; (6) he must be very watchful and aware of everything, though not appearing curious; he must keep an eye on all that his subjects do, not exposing them to temptations beyond their strength, and protecting them from the danger of dissipation of spirit; (7) the Superiors at various levels must be in harmony over their manner of governing, showing unity of spirit, and they must support one another's authority, always acting justly; (8) they must show shrewdness in their knowledge of men and of different temperaments, correcting anything that is out of order as soon as it manifests itself; this means that they have to take notice of small things when these can lead to greater problems; (9) in addition to these ordinary rules of government, they may sometimes find it necessary to give someone a jolt: a retreat made with the full vigour of the rules of St Ignatius and given by a holy man who is gifted with the discernment of spirits can renew the mind and heart of a religious who has become slack.

Q. How should the Superior act so as to maintain a good spirit in those he governs?

A. Valuable helps are the practice of the presence of God, assiduous prayer, purity of intention at all times, being constantly occupied in works of charity - all these things are sure means of maintaining and increasing the spirit.

My dear Father, do pray - not as for the distinguished man you believe me to be, but rather for the wretched sinner who wrote all these things only with the intention of obeying your request. It is he who, with reverence and religious affection, signs himself -

Your humble servant,

A. R. p.

## 27. To Monsignor Paolo Durio in Rome

Rovereto, 9 September 1844

. . . In accordance with your advice, I have sent our good Don Pagani to Rome, so that he may support and help Don Setti. If God restores his health, that will be a great blessing{f}. As for the *dilata* of the Congregation: leaving aside any other consideration, I find this perfectly reasonable, since you did not receive enough information to be able to form a well-founded judgement about the plan{f}. For the rest, I hope that (as you suggest) there will be a favourable outcome. But I am always resigned to and content over whatever the Lord will show to be his will by means of the decision of the Sacred Congregation. I know very well that, as you truly say, enemies are not lacking; but I look even on enemies as means which divine Providence uses for its own loving ends - that is, for our good and the greater glory of God. I experience this every day, and I bless God for it without ceasing. Deep in my heart I always take great pleasure when I receive blame, and I have a great dislike of praise. This too is a grace given to me by God, and no virtue of mine. Rather, I am firmly persuaded that I am better helped by facing opposition than by a favourable wind.

Pray for me to the Lord, in whom I have the honour of being -

Your humble and obedient servant and friend,

A. ROSMINI p.

{fs}In March 1844 Rosmini had sent Don Setti to Rome to deal with the affair of the medical college planned and founded by Prince Aremburg. But when Setti became very

ill, Rosmini sent Don Pagani to help him in the matter. {fs} See the following letter and the *Vita di A. R.*, vol. II, pp. 302 et seq.

## 28. To Don G. B. Pagani in Rome

Stresa, 5 October 1844

My dear brother in Christ,

If we foresee problems over setting up the College of St Raphael, we have to trust all the more in God, and take courage. We must never allow an important work that the Lord has put in our hands to fail out of faint-heartedness or discouragement. Rather we have to use all our energies and activity to bring it to a successful ending; because *only in this case*, should the work fall through, can we be sure that this is a kindly action of the divine mercy. Whereas if the failure were the result of our own ineptitude, this would be to our detriment. For myself, I have seen so many indications of a special Providence in what has happened in connection with this plan that I have not the slightest doubt that it will have a happy outcome. Even the way the Sacred Congregation raised the question is a favourable sign. The doubts the Cardinals feel arise because they have not a clear idea of the work - that is, from not having read the Statutes. But I hope that by now they will have received these by post, together with my letter in reply to that of Cardinal Ostini. I want these documents to be presented in good time so that they may be printed and studied by the Cardinals; and I urge that the matter may not be delayed even for a day through our fault. After that, the Lord will act according to his good pleasure, and we shall be thoroughly content.

I was surprised to read your proposal of making Don Luigi [Gentili] Vice-Provincial in your place. Do you not recall the many discussions we had over this? There is some deception of the devil here. As I have often noticed, you are inclined to give in to discouragement, to a fear which robs you of the power to act, and even of the ability to think clearly. My dear brother, you must resolve to oppose the feelings of fear that arise in you and which do you much harm. So too you exaggerate about the state of your health - something quite usual in cases of nervous disorder. No: your health is not such as to make it impossible for you to continue in your office, provided that you raise your spirits by consoling thoughts (not painting everything in black), and place great hope in the help - which will not be lacking - of Jesus Christ. This is something you must believe *blindly*, putting much trust in obedience; and see to it also that you are not cast down by these views of mine. The saints, who suffered much more ill-health than you, did great things, not through their own strength, but because they were strong in faith and hope. So you are to remain Vice-Provincial, and you must govern *without anxiety*, without useless fears about future events. When you return to England you will have a helper at hand. All the houses are to have their own local Superior, according to the decree I sent recently; and you have to (1) keep in touch with each local Superior; and (2) make sure that each acts only within his own proper sphere. Things to do with the Institute as a whole, you and I will decide jointly. It does not matter if this consultation causes some delay. What does matter is that there should be no confusion over the powers that the various individuals have; that no one usurps an authority that he does not possess; and that no one goes beyond the matters entrusted to him. The Bishops should not communicate with the Rectors except over their individual missions and the affairs of their houses. Should the Bishops write about other matters, the Rectors will make it clear that these are matters for the Provincial and the General, to whom they are requested to address themselves.

Affectionate greetings to yourself and our dear brother, Don Giuseppe Roberto. Goodbye.

Your brother in Christ,

## 29. To Don Emilio Belisy at Oscott

Stresa, 6 October 1844

My dear brother in Christ,

When Mgr Wiseman came to Stresa in the course of his recent visit to Italy, he asked me for some masters for the little college of Oscott. I replied that I could not oblige him over this unless the Superior there were a member of the Institute. He then told me that Mr Morgan wanted to join the Institute. [Presumably he was the Superior of the College]. In that case, and only in that case, I assigned to him the three of our members who were up to then at the College of Old Oscott. But now, since the condition has not been met, we have not taken on any obligation. We spoke sincerely and clearly prior to this, so no one can complain if the Institute withdraws its members from there. They were only there on loan depending on an unverified condition. Our maxim: *not to have our members serving in houses where the Superiors do not belong to the Institute* is an entirely prudent one, in accordance with our Constitutions. I am determined to observe it constantly, allowing for the occasional exceptions that occur in all prudential rules. You are already aware that for work of this kind the Institute proposes to form a separate class of members called *external coadjutors*. But so far this has not been possible. In the second place, while it is true that one of our most valued maxims is *perseverance in works we have undertaken*, this has to be applied only to works that have been begun according to our rules (which was not the case at Old Oscott, where the Superior is not one of ours), and especially it does not apply to those works that are an obstacle to something which is necessary for our existence, such as a good noviciate house. A *noviciate* is truly everything for the Institute: it is from this that it draws life and growth. So the Oscott work must be sacrificed for the sake of the noviciate, since I see the need for our masters, Lorrain and Cavalli, to go to staff the little college which we have to open at Sileby - something which is necessary for our life. So you are to come to Italy for a while, to Stresa - from where Signini will be sent back to England. Tell Don Luigi about this arrangement; and sort out with him and with some other wise brother the most prudent and inoffensive way of quitting Oscott. I do not say this must be done immediately, but *in tempore opportuno* [at a convenient moment]. And it must be done so as not to give any reasonable cause for complaint, either by the action itself or by the way the matter is handled. You can rightly refer to the precise understanding which there was between me and Mgr Wiseman in Stresa when the matter of Oscott was concluded. The Monsignor will, I am sure, recall this, because I spoke very clearly and without ambiguity.

For the rest, my dear Emilio, do you marvel that Superiors may change even a prudential decision? Is it not clear that a change is called for when new and better reasons manifest themselves? So I do not know why in your letter of 14 September you struggle to show that Fr Vice-Provincial has contradicted himself, because he first thought of keeping Oscott and later decided to abandon the work. If the state of his health was, as you say, insufficient to make him come to this decision, you must see that there were plenty of other reasons. But I repeat that I hope this decision (which I also regret) can be carried out in a gentle and considerate way, but at the same time without needless apprehension.

Warm greetings to you - and I look forward to embracing you in Italy as soon as God pleases. May the Lord fill you with himself.

Yours in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**30. To the Somascan priest, Antonio Bottari at Cherasco**

**Stresa, 9 October 1844**

Very Reverend Father,

You ask me what I mean when I say that 'subjects should not be exposed to temptation', and so I will briefly explain this. The subjects have physical, intellectual and moral powers. Temptations do not arise in them when their physical or intellectual strength is too heavily taxed, but only when this happens to their moral strength. Let us suppose that a man is holy. If his Superior, through lack of discretion, gives him something to do which is beyond his physical or intellectual strength, he will not be greatly upset over this, nor will he feel ill-will towards his Superior; nor will he be tempted against obedience or his vocation. Instead he will sacrifice himself for the love of God. But if he is not holy, that is, if his moral strength is feeble, then if a great burden is put on him, or even a light one which is contrary to his inclinations and to his personal way of thinking, this can cause great disturbance of mind and provoke him to disobey, or to obey with ill-will or very imperfectly. So there is a need for the Superior to know what is the capacity of each of his subjects, how great or small is his moral strength, so that he can temper his commands so as not to run the risk of over-straining his subject's feeble powers. But at the same time he has to use every effort to develop the virtue of his subjects and increase it daily, so that they will be able to stand hard trials and be strong enough to do great things and endure resolutely.

I think this will be enough to clarify my meaning. I hear that in my absence your Reverend Father General has moved on - I am very sorry that I was unable to pay him my respects. I hope that you and your brethren will be good enough to continue (as you promised) to pray for me to the Lord.

Your humble servant,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**31. To the cleric Alvaro Bonino in Turin**

**Stresa, 15 October 1844**

My dear son in Christ,

You must follow with love the ray of light which the Lord has granted you: it will lead you out of the labyrinth of contrary thoughts. Courage, my dear brother - be generous with Jesus Christ. *Whoever conquers will not be harmed by the second death - to everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.* So overcome, or rather let Christ overcome in you: allow yourself to be overcome by him, giving yourself into his hands for ever, as a captive, a slave, a dead man. In this way you will escape from the anxieties that now weigh you down, and you will suddenly find yourself in *a spacious place*, and you will be made immovably firm in your vocation. This vocation needs to have faced and triumphed in confrontation with the devil and with human nature, in order to be made solid.

Tomorrow I will say Mass for you, and after that will remember you warmly in my prayers every day. You must put your trust in Jesus Christ and in the intercession of Mary; in lofty thoughts and magnanimous sentiments. This is what the Lord wants of you; these are the weapons of faith which no enemy can resist: rather he will flee from them in fear.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**32. To Fr Peter Hutton at Loughborough**

**Stresa, 18 October 1844**

My dear brother in Christ,

Fr Provincial Pagani{f} sent on to me from Rome the letter you wrote to him on 23 September, and I was very pleased with the sentiments contained in it. Above all I approve of the reflection you make on the *universality of charity*. This is the badge and motto of Christ, of his disciples, of the Church - and so it is also that of the Institute of Charity. Our Constitutions tell us to follow in all things our holy Mother the Roman Church, even when it comes to external rites and ceremonies. And this is because the Church has from Christ the mission to regulate and decide the discipline of the whole Body of Christ. It could not be truly catholic and universal if it did not form a unity, with Rome as its centre. If it were a matter of deciding what are the most beautiful vestments, it could be maintained that gothic ones surpass all others in religious dignity. It would be a question of taste; and since tastes vary from one person to another, there can never be universal agreement over these things: vestments and rites would be different in the various churches of a country at one and the same time. If we followed this way of acting, we would finish up by introducing the vagaries of fashion into the Church of God. So the choice of vestments etc. must not be left to individual tastes, or decided on by anyone in general. It is a matter to be decided by the Church: the question of what kind of sacred vestments are to be approved for use can only be settled by her authority. Only in this way is it possible to establish uniformity of use as regards vestments and rites; and this uniformity is a sign of the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. In saying these things to you I do not mean to command you to oppose forcefully the tendency there in the Midland District to favour the use of gothic vestments. I leave the matter to your prudence. If all our Superiors show themselves to be indifferent over these things, the matter will not amount to much. But I do urge you, as opportunity allows, to teach our brethren that (1) the charity of Christ is universal, and it excludes all self-assertion, especially the national variety; (2) the Catholic Church is as universal as charity; (3) the universal Church is founded on the unity of the Roman See; (4) men, on the other hand, are always prone to restrict universality and break up unity; (5) our Institute, which takes its name from the charity of Christ, must oppose itself to this human tendency and foster the cause of universality and that of the unity of the Church by the universality of its charity. If these ideas are gently instilled into people's minds, they will produce the desired fruit in due course.

May our Lord Jesus Christ fill you with his holy grace. Greet warmly for me all our dear brethren - and write to me. Goodbye.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,  
A. R. p.

{fs}On 9 October 1844 Fr Pagani had been appointed Provost of the English Province.

**33. To Don G. B. Pagani in Rome**

**Stresa, 25 October 1844**

My dear brother in Christ,

I urge you to take courage in the Lord, in whom we must place all our hopes. I see in all your letters signs of undue timidity. You must realize that fear saps your strength, distorts your judgement, and also leads to temptations. So you must do all you can to conquer it by great trust in the Lord. You tell me that you think it well to pass over various things in silence for fear of causing me displeasure. No: instead you must relate everything with complete openness, no matter what displeasure I may feel. *Open communication* with Superiors over everything is indispensable in our Institute if things are to go well. So complete frankness and sincerity are virtues we have to cultivate, even to a scruple, if we wish to reach the perfection of our state. There is no perfection without simplicity.

As to the state of health of our brethren at Old Oscott: I am sending you with this a copy of Belisy's letter, in which he maintains that their condition is not as bad as it appears to you. I never wanted to put forward as a reason for our withdrawal from Oscott the failure of a promise made to me by Mgr Wiseman. Indeed he did not properly speaking make any promise: he merely gave me to hope that Mr Morgan would enter the Institute (which seemed probable). So the reason I gave - and this does not in any way reflect badly on the Monsignor - was 'my formal declaration that we could not take on the College except on condition that the President was one of our own men, and that I accepted the proposal solely in the hope that the Monsignor gave me that Mr Morgan would enter the Institute.' Saying this cannot in the least offend him, but will merely show that we spoke frankly from the start; and now we are simply being consistent with what we said then. You say that any ill-feeling on the part of the Monsignor *would cause irreparable harm to the Institute*. But this is to exaggerate. I agree that we should do everything possible to avoid giving any reasonable grounds for him to be offended. But if God permits, through no fault of our own, that we find him opposed to us, I would not on this account feel despair - for it is in God that we must trust, not in human favour. In this matter too I detect undue fear in you.

As for confiding exclusively to Don Luigi [Gentili] our negotiations over taking our men from Oscott, I would not venture to do this. I would be afraid that he would take it too hard, since he is anxious for us to do a great deal. I think instead that for a while, for this year, say, we would do well to be patient and wait for a suitable opportunity. So it will be best to leave things in the hands of Providence: it is enough if our men know that we shall have to take this step sooner or later.

I am amazed that no one writes to you, and that they write very little to me. You must write to them yourself and demand *frequent, detailed and regular reports*. I will write myself in the same vein. I hope that Don Rinolfi will keep up a regular correspondence with you and with me; and that if he does not perform wonders, he will at least avoid blunders (so I greatly hope). My dear Giambattista, I come back to telling you to take courage and not see things in too gloomy a light. Our hope is in the Lord; let us then rejoice in him, and do with complete calm whatever we can.

May God preserve dear Don Giuseppe Roberto whom, along with you, I embrace warmly in Christ. May the Lord bless and strengthen you always. Goodbye.

Your servant in Christ,  
R. p.

#### 34. To Don G. B. Imperatori at Domodossola

Stresa, 28 October 1844

. . . Say Mass serenely, without making such heavy weather of it, and go with all your sins to make yourself a prisoner of Jesus Christ at the altar. He will console you, and completely heal his sinful prisoner. How can you be afraid when you have so good a Father? You commit sins? Then go all the more readily to say Mass, because through it

you will receive complete absolution and forgiveness of all the sins which you think you fall into because of your 'wicked' will - though in reality it is your foolish imagination that is at work. This is what your Superior has to say: do not listen to anyone else, but believe him. Do you imagine that I would be so short-sighted as to endanger my soul by giving you bad advice? Certainly not, thank God. So when you think you have sinned, do not start worrying about it, but take yourself to Christ [at the altar] and say: 'I have come to receive you into my hands, Lord, and into my breast, so that you will pardon me; and I am sure that you will do this, because you are infinitely good; and I act like this because I have been told to do so by your representatives on earth, of whom you said: *Whoever hears you hears me*. Goodbye.

Yours in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

### 35. To Don G. B. Pagani in Rome

Stresa, undated, but at the end of October 1844

My dear brother in Christ,

As regards gothic vestments, our motto is to follow the *Roman Church*, and we have to be resolute in adopting her usages. Hutton's reflections are quite right. For the rest, do not treat the matter in a heated fashion or see it as a clash. We can conform for the time being, but gradually bring the matter to agree with our own norms. If Superiors show that they treat the gothic cult with a certain coolness, and emphasize the importance of the unity and universality of the Church, our men will learn not to be dominated by a silly national enthusiasm or by childish crazes. So show in your letters that you disapprove rather than approve of any such arbitrary modifications of Roman usages. I say 'arbitrary', because they are made by people who do not have the mission and legitimate authority given by Christ to St Peter and the apostles.

Let us continue to pray for our dear Don Setti. Embrace him warmly for me in the name of all of us. Goodbye.

Your brother in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

### 36. To Don Luigi Gentili at Loughborough

Stresa, 6 November 1844

My dear companion in God's service,

Fr Provincial will find a suitable way of arranging for us to withdraw our men (if this can be done) from Old Oscott. This is a matter that needs to be treated with the utmost delicacy. For it is both prudent and our duty to have every regard for the Bishops, and be in the best possible accord with them, so that we have to obey with sincere humility and affection in all that concerns their pastoral zeal.

I was greatly consoled by the report you gave me about the scope you find there for missions, and especially the giving of *retreats to the clergy*. I am most anxious that these should be given in complete agreement with the rules of the *Manual* [for retreat-givers]. I trust that God in his mercy will guide you, and not allow any spirit of vanity to enter your heart or that of your companions because of the success you meet with in that most valuable ministry. I urge you to be humble in all things - all the more if God blesses your labours. You know already that I have had it in mind for some time to form a group of men with the sole duty of giving missions and retreats. But that cannot be just yet,

because I cannot release you from the Loughborough mission. Moreover, I am about to send Signini to England so that he can help you in your labours there. He profited much from his time in Italy.

Our elementary schools are beginning to do great good in Italy; and how useful it would be if their work could be extended, and a beginning made in England too! For this reason I am glad to see that among the lay brothers there are some who could make good schoolmasters.

I must remind you that 'none of our brethren may have anything printed in England unless it has first been seen by Father Provincial; and he, if it is an important matter, will consult me too.' Finally, I urge you to observe the holy poverty of our Institute. Our vow means that 'we must not exercise any act of ownership except through obedience'. So when you write to Superiors it is never right to say 'I have given such-and-such a sum to this or that cause.' Because to give is to act as an owner, and we can never do this without violating our vow: *obedience* directs everything, not individuals.

I should like to write at greater length, but I cannot do so this evening. So I embrace you affectionately in Jesus Christ, along with all our dear brethren, of whom I am -

Your servant and brother in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

### **37. To Maria Geltrude Cerutti, Superior of the monastery of Arona**

**Stresa, 7 November 1844**

Very Reverend Mother,

Do not take it amiss if I give you this title, even though you dislike it, for it belongs to your office as Superior, and to the state of a daughter of St Francis, and is not personal. As a general rule it is as well to remember that the titles people are given do not represent the merits of the persons concerned, and are not of great account. Even I occasionally get called by fine names! But what is to be done about it? I laugh internally and carry on. But now as to your recent letters.

As for the two spiritual ideas you speak of, I will begin with the second one. Our Lord Jesus Christ gave a mandate to the apostles, of whom St Peter was the head; and to the apostles there succeeded, with the same mission, the bishops, of whom the Pope is the head. These are the pastors, the Masters in Israel; and it belongs to them to choose and consecrate priests and the other ministers. So we (and I in particular) are only disciples, and we have no mission to reform the Church of Christ. It would be a grievous thing if we were to take on this mission of our own initiative! We would be the false prophets of whom scripture says: *I did not send them, yet they ran*. It is on these principles that the Institute of Charity is founded; it was the Lord's pleasure to bring it into being through apparently fortuitous circumstances; yet everything was directed by divine Providence. Our rules teach only this: that we must be content with our status as disciples, and never pretend to take on ourselves the duty of being reformers of the Church. So what can we do so as not to go beyond our proper limits and the spirit of our vocation? First, we must devote ourselves seriously to reforming ourselves and doing as little harm as possible. Second, we must not refuse the request of our neighbour for any service - and this applies especially to any request from the bishops. Third, we must have a great desire to see that everything to do with the glory of God prospers ever better, and so we have to pray earnestly for this intention. So there you have in a few words the spirit of our Institute. You see, then, that in the words that you think you have heard from our Lord your imagination must have played a great part.

Far from finding it strange that you have made fervent prayer for me to God in his goodness, I commend you for this - I have a very great need of prayers, and I beg you to remember me before the Lord as often as possible: I promise you I shall be grateful. Pray particularly that God will overcome in me the obstacles I constantly put to his mercies.

Now I will take the opportunity to say something about your practice of calling yourself a *victim* of divine love (or of the Sacred Heart), and offering yourself as such. When I first saw that you so described yourself, it was something of a shock - and for this reason: it is one thing to *offer* oneself a victim, and something else to *be truly* a victim. The offering itself is not the consummation of the sacrifice, neither is it properly speaking that which constitutes the quality of being a victim. This belongs only to one who destines herself and chooses to be sacrificed. So calling yourself simply *a victim* seems to me rather too much; since you are not yet dead, as victims are; and you cannot even know whether you are destined to die for love of God, or that God will accept your offering. Only if he were to do so could you be said to be destined to be a victim, though your sacrifice was not yet consummated. So I should like to suggest to you now that since you want to take on so great a title (precious and desirable as it is) it would be as well, in order not to go beyond the truth, that you describe yourself rather as *a victim of desire* or *an offered victim* - but not simply *as a victim* (for this would be excessive.)

What I have said applies to calling yourself or believing yourself to be a victim of the divine heart. I am not talking about *offering yourself* as such. I thoroughly approve of the idea of your offering yourself as a victim for the greater glory of God and the sanctifying of his name. This is the greatest possible act of love; for Christ said *No one has greater love than this: to give his life for his friends*. This is entirely conformable to the spirit of our Institute. Hence in our Constitutions we read that 'our greatest devotion must be the offering of our blood', and we are exhorted to do this often. But I must add that for this offering to be made in the right way it has to be accompanied by certain dispositions, namely: (1) a rooted belief that in offering our life to God for his greater glory we are not offering anything which has value in itself, or that is intrinsically acceptable to him; and further we must mean to make this offering in conjunction with that which the Son of God made to his Father, and as being ourselves incorporated in Christ. For if we make our offering as members of Christ, then there is only one body which is offered, and only one victim - Christ, who died in himself and in us, through the intimate union he has with us, and through the fact that we have become in baptism part of his mystical body; (2) we must be persuaded too that in the last resort we are dealing with words, not facts. In other words, we are not capable of ourselves of consummating the sacrifice we are offering; but that only he may perhaps consummate our sacrifice with the fire of his love. So we need to pray at the same time that if he accepts our sacrifice by sending us death, he will give us the grace of the strength necessary to endure this in a true spirit of loving and unhesitating sacrifice. In fact through his all-powerful grace he can bring it about that our sufferings, whether in illness or in death, in no way constitute for us a temptation; for he taught us to pray to his heavenly Father 'never lead us into temptation'. So to teach us how we have to act with prudence, when we ask for what is so repugnant to our nature, he willed, in the garden [of Gethsemane] to experience all the bitterness of the chalice of his passion, and asked his Father that, if it were possible, the chalice might be removed from him, so that he would not have to drink it. And so we too must offer ourselves as victims on condition that our heavenly Father wishes this and will be pleased to accept our offering; because if he does so, a soul that wishes to be perfect cannot refuse it: in such a case the chalice cannot pass from us and we have to drink it. This is the diffidence about ourselves that our Lord Jesus Christ wished to teach us! Hence it is appropriate, when we offer our own life, to have this attitude: 'Lord, I want all people to become as holy as possible, so if my life is necessary for this, I offer it to you, provided you give me the strength to sacrifice it effectively for your glory. So do with me what you wish; do not hesitate to make me suffer so long as you are glorified, because I

hope in you ; I hope that you will give me the grace to endure this suffering.’ In this way we can offer ourselves as true victims for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ; we can offer our own body, which is of no worth, for the salvation and even the greater perfection of souls; and we can also offer the sacrifice of graces *gratis datae* [freely given by God], which do not make us more holy. I believe that the offering you make as a victim of the divine heart is accompanied by such dispositions, and therefore I approve of it. But I wanted to make it clear to you that if ever you form this intention only implicitly, you can also form it explicitly.

I will add this: that when you are inspired to offer yourself as victim for the sake of a minister of the Lord, you should never limit this to one particular person, but include the whole Church of God. For we must above all be devoted to the kingdom of God, and do all we can to bring about his reign, no matter what individuals he wishes to use as his servants in this work (for these are for him alone to choose). This does not prevent us from making the offering for those we may believe have been especially chosen by God to promote the glory of Jesus Christ; but at the same time we add in our intention all the others, the whole body of the Church - and this all the more because we must not set limits to the divine mercies or be afraid of asking too much.

As you see, this time I have written until I have run out of paper!

Your servant in Christ,  
A. R.

### 38. To Doctor Giuseppe Aimò {f} in Turin

Stresa, 13 November 1844

My dear son in Christ,

I was truly sorry to send you out (when you had only just finished your retreat) into the fresh air of the world, where you might have been in danger of catching a cold. But it will not happen; for you will be doing the will of God, in work that will make for his greater glory; and that is enough: *sufficit tibi gratia eius* [his grace will be sufficient for you]. All the same, we must not presume on his infinite goodness; so we must make frequent acts of love, entrust ourselves into his loving hands, and offer ourselves for his service. We must regard studies simply as a means of raising our minds to our Creator, and of furthering (if he so pleases) our service of him in our neighbour - a service Christ so much recommended. When we study the things of the natural world, let us contemplate the power, the infinite wisdom and the goodness of God: *For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their creator*, as we read in the Book of Wisdom. Hence physics and mathematics, which are informed by the love of God, will also be an incentive to love him.

. . . mortal things

are a ladder by which to ascend to their maker, for anyone who truly values and understands them.

To this end it will help you if you read the scriptures, and particularly the psalms. I do not think that for the present you would be helped by studying biology, which you mention. It will be well if you learn the various truths of physical science: for the moment this is your field of study. All the same, I am not against your going on reading my works (which you have with you) as far as you can, though without prejudice to your course. Greek is most important for dear Setti. He can learn Roman history by himself when he wishes. If he becomes proficient in Greek, this will come in very useful for this reason too: theology has no small need for this tongue.

Write to me often, for you already know how much I love you in the Lord, and how anxious I am to hear about what you are doing. I embrace you and dear Setti in the heart of him who is our sole good - Jesus.

A. ROSMINI p.

{fs}Giuseppe Aimo had entered the Institute a few months previously. He was already qualified in medicine, and had been sent with Don Luigi Setti to Turin, to study physics and mathematics.

### 39. To Fr Peter Hutton at Loughborough

Stresa, 13 November 1844

. . . What you say about the opening of the College of Sibley [i.e. Ratcliffe College] is quite in keeping with the spirit of the Institute, which does not like any public display. But if this ceremony has not already taken place when my letter reaches you, and if it is possible to leave out the proposed solemnity without causing any inconvenience, tell Don Luigi [Gentili] to do things quietly, or at least in a modest fashion.

Among the things that it would have been well to omit from the summary of the Sisters' activities there is the matter of the various branches of charity [that they engage in]. For it is my firm intention that, for the present and for some time to come, they are to restrict their work to instruction and education, which is the most important thing.

Don Luigi may not have seen good to communicate to you the decree in which you are appointed Rector and Master of Novices in the Calvary house{f}, because it informed you that Furlong would hold the position of President of the College or Prefect of Studies. Now he has told me that the latter title is unsuitable, and so I have revised the decree, and I am sending you a copy of the new one{f}. It is true, we have many rules for our colleges and the studies in them, and some of these must be sent to England. All the same, by means of Signini (whom I intend to send back to you soon) I will let you have some more of them. In the meantime I want you to send me a plan of your own, incorporating any good features which you find in the schools over there, and adding whatever modifications you feel are called for by the spirit of the Institute. I will study this. We are dealing with a very important matter, and I trust in God that, as you say, the Institute will be able in that part of the world to serve the Lord in a way that will be very useful to our neighbour. The Institute's schools at present take these forms: infant schools, elementary schools (which teach languages), schools which teach the humanities, those which teach philosophy, and those engaged in university teaching. Each of these categories needs special rules. Until I know more about the circumstances there I would not presume to lay down anything definitive; and I hope to receive guidance from your reflections on the matter. I fully agree with what you say about the timetable: the more you can make that of the noviciate and the college agree, the better. I give you the faculty to decide it yourself in the way that seems best to you, after listening to the views of those of our priests who will be your companions there. As for the 'rules of domestic order': where you think these cannot be followed without inconvenience, write to me about them. When I hear what these are, I will dispense you from them and tell you how you are to reconcile them with other duties. Our novices are to be kept separate as far as possible from the others, and it would help if they could take their meals separately too. In the Domodossola college, the President eats with the pupils, while the religious family has a separate refectory. One of the advantages of this separation is that our brethren can listen during meals to suitable reading; while the pupils can have reading suited to their age and state. It will be well if our brethren get up earlier than the students, and this will not seem remarkable. So too as regards recreation: if they take this separately they will be able to keep to an hour (according to the rule), while the pupils will have whatever longer period

you consider suitable - during which either the President or a Prefect will be present. One of the main rules concerning the education of the young is always to keep an eye on them, but without any trace of distrust of them. I urge you to keep to this rule: day and night the young people must always be in the presence of one of our men. They are not to be left on their own.

May God give you courage and strength. Serve him readily and joyfully, for to do this is sweet. Have holiness always in view as the scope of all that you do. Greet for me and embrace all our dear brethren, whom I entrust to the Heart of Jesus, in whom I am -

Yours affectionately,  
A. ROSMINI p.

{fs}The new house (Ratcliffe) was also called ‘the house of the Calvary’, in memory of the Calvario of Domodossola, where the Institute was born.{fs}See the following letter which contains the decree mentioned here.

#### 40. To Fr Peter Hutton at the Calvary of Sileby

Stresa, 13 November 1844

To my beloved brother in Christ, the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Since it has pleased God in his goodness to give us a house in that country of England so that we may establish there a noviciate and a college for the education of English boys, and since it is now necessary to appoint a worthy Superior, I the Provost General of the Institute, having invoked the Holy Spirit and carefully considered all the circumstances, now appoint you, Peter Hutton, my beloved brother in Christ and fellow-priest, as Superior and Rector of the whole house and college of Sileby from the day you assume this office until 31 October 1845. You will also retain the office of Master of Novices. I appoint as your Minister in this office and Minister of the house the priest Don Domenico Ceroni.

And since this college for boys calls for special provision, I appoint as assistant to the Rector and Superior of the house my dear brother in Christ Fr Moses Furlong with the title of President of the college, but dependent on the Superior for as long as the latter holds office as Rector.

It is prescribed that whoever is elected as Superior must, for two months before taking over, spend two months in reading and meditating on the rules of superiors and all the other rules that he will have to have perfectly observed. But foreseeing that in this case he will not be able to carry out this regulation, I therefore dispense from it the new Superior, Fr Peter Hutton - on condition that he makes a retreat of three days during which he will invoke the Holy Spirit, asking for the necessary courage, and the love and prudence of Jesus Christ, so as to be able to bear the burden which our Lord himself, through Superiors, imposes on him; and that he occupies himself as soon as possible in the study of all the rules, and sees to it that this is done also by all the ministers and officials who will form the community of the house.

My dear brother, receive this task with lively faith and unlimited hope in God; for whoever hopes in God and is obedient is certain to have help from above, and in the end, as scripture says, to sing of victory. We know that there are always difficulties in the beginnings of things; but for this reason your merit will be all the greater, and so will be the crown you will gain. You must not let yourself be dismayed, or consider your own weakness, but turn your thoughts to the God who must be our sole support. Keep always before your eyes the supreme rule of your direction of the college - *the end of the Institute*, which is to bring about the holiness of its members. Govern in all things in such a way that this holiness grows both in yourself and in all those who are dependent on you,

in imitation of Jesus Christ who, did not try to teach anything but holiness, and who said that he sanctified himself in his disciples. All other things need to be directed with all the prudence we are capable of, but without forgetting that they are simply *means* of pleasing God, of doing his will, and of becoming holy. In order to be a Superior it is not necessary to be infallible, but only to do all that we can, without putting a foot wrong. If we do this, God will be pleased with us; and even from our mistakes he will bring forth a greater good.

A. ROSMINI

Provost General of the Institute of Charity.

**41. To Maria Geltrude Cerutti, Superior of the monastery of Arona**

**Stresa, 17 November 1844**

Very Reverend Mother,

If you have some little thing to suffer for the love of God, it is well that you should rejoice; but at the same time you should think of the many who have greater things to suffer. It has always seemed to me a good idea to reflect on all those who at any given moment are suffering in various parts of the world. How many there are who are in their death agonies, perhaps through violence; how many struggle with fierce temptations; how many undergo an interior martyrdom. We do not know exactly who are tormented in so many various ways; but it is enough to know a little in general of what goes on in the world - this 'vale of tears' - in order to realize how gently the Lord treats us by comparison, and so to be grateful to him for this.

[The following paragraph contains thoughts very similar to those expressed at some length in Letter 37 of this volume.]

You go on to ask my advice over what reading I would recommend for you, and I will reply briefly. I do not include any writers on mystical theology, not even the very valuable works of St Teresa [of Avila]. This is because what these authors say on the subject of states of prayer, and God's workings within the soul can be of great help to those who direct others; but they offer little profit, can cause confusion, and are hard to understand, as well as possibly representing a danger, to those souls who wish to apply these things to themselves. My and your St Francis used to recommend above all simplicity in treating with both God and man; and there are great dangers in losing sight of this and involving oneself in the subtleties of mysticism. It is much better to love, to contemplate, to pray to God with the least possible attention to oneself, to what is happening within the soul, or to what our souls are doing. All our good is outside ourselves: it is God, in himself and in our neighbour. So it helps if we think of God and not of ourselves. We must seek him especially in our neighbour, and not in meticulous attempts to measure our progress. Apart from the mystics, you already know the most reliable ascetical writers, and I do not doubt that you are well supplied with their works. So I will limit myself to giving you one piece of advice - and that is to make a habit of reading *the New Testament*, particularly the words of our Lord Jesus Christ himself, which have sweetness and infinite power. They are adapted to both the learned and the unlearned; they have a heavenly savour, offer divine food, and contain perfect truth (where no merely human thoughts enter); and they embody inexhaustible wisdom. *The actual words of Jesus Christ*: here is food suitable for you, and indeed adapted to all of us. The parts of the New Testament other than the gospels serve to make us understand better the words of Christ. You could also turn to some of the books of the Old Testament, especially the psalms, the Wisdom books, Tobiah, Judith, Esther, Job and Deuteronomy. When you do this, try to relate these books to Jesus Christ and his love. For truly they all look to Christ: properly understood, they all announce and glorify the one who is to come.

To sum up then, our thoughts must always return to the words of Christ: we must dwell and repose in him with our whole soul. In his words we learn above all his own special commandment, and what was a new feature in his divine precept: the love of our neighbour. So you will be greatly helped if you turn your attention and meditations to those words. I hope you will excuse me if I have stressed these things over and above the need, and recognize that my sole motive was the charity of Christ, in which I find all my good. At any rate I think I have answered your questions. All that remains is to ask you to take pity on me and continue to give me the help of your prayers. These I consider an ample reward for the light and agreeable labour of writing this letter. Be assured of my respect and esteem.

Your servant in Christ,  
A. R.

#### 42. To Don G. B. Pagani in Rome

Stresa, 18 November 1844

My beloved brother.

I rejoice in the Lord that you have come to share my view with regard to Don Luigi [Gentili]. Be sure that in governing the Institute, we must be guided by *intrinsic reasons* drawn from its spirit, and not simply by the fears that can be caused by *extrinsic reasons*: that is, needless concern over people outside the Institute and their claims. We have to think seriously about correcting the faults of our brethren, such especially as those of Don Luigi; and not dissemble and put people who are at fault in prominent positions in the hope that they can satisfy important persons outside the Institute. If we acted on this sort of principle the Institute would soon become corrupt and be destroyed through seeking the favour of men and putting our hopes in them. It is better that the Institute should remain small, be despised, suffer blows and opposition because of its *simplicity*, rather than follow the path of human prudence, greatly sacrificing its spirit. You say that all our brethren are enthusiastic over the gifts possessed by Don Luigi; but I should like you to reflect that this is not enough to warrant making him a Superior. It can indeed be an *ignis fatuus*, a will-o'-the-wisp. It is better when a man has a modest reputation which is maintained and developed, than a great name - something which can vanish in a moment and which in any case is prone to lessen as the individual's faults come to light.

As to the directing of the Sisters, I leave Don Luigi in charge, on condition that as soon as you arrive in England you take this over from him; because in this matter too I have grave fears{f}. Leaving aside the blunder over making public the prospectus, I see from the letters of the Sisters that he accepted a postulant who had been rejected by various religious houses! And he did this without giving me the slightest inkling of the matter. In fact it seems to me that the admission of postulants was carried out at the *arbitrary* will of the director, without any examination by the Sisters themselves. So it is necessary that you should limit the faculties of the director, particularly in the matter of admitting postulants.

As for the missions of Whitwick, Barrow and so on, write as soon as you are in England about what action should be taken, and send them such instructions as you consider wise according to what you write to me. You must keep up a regular correspondence with England, sending continuously directions and advice, and *demanding precise replies*. So I shall not send any further letters over there, but await your decision over sending Signini, and trusting that you will give suitable directions over the other matters.

Yours in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

{fs}Pagani had been appointed Director of the Sisters in September 1843, but while he was away in Italy, Gentili had acted as his substitute.

**43. To Don Giovanni Stefani in Paris**

**Stresa, 23 November 1844**

My dear Don Giovanni

It is now time to trade with the talents the Master has entrusted to you, and to dig up the field in which the treasure is hidden. Remember that we have to give an account of all our actions and thoughts, and of everything we have in this world. The Lord gave us all these things not without a purpose but so that they should serve for his greater glory and the good of our neighbour. And in a sense we ourselves are the first of our 'neighbours', since: *What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world etc?* Therefore if we waste even an hour in which we could have done some good but failed to do so, this is something we must grieve over, if we have a clear understanding of the extent of the good we have lost. So, my very dear Don Giovanni, on with you! Let it be said of you, as in the psalm, *he was not created in vain*. How much there is to do in the world! How many harvests to be reaped! If only I had the helpers . . . No, if you were to come, you would not lack work: so make yourself ready; I have the spur ready. But is it true that my Don Giovanni is going to come? That he is cutting himself off from the temporal cares that surround him? Ah, get rid of all delay.

Your affectionate friend,  
ROSMINI p.

**44. To Suor M. Geltrude Cerutti, Superior of the monastery of Arona**

**Stresa, 24 November 1844**

Very Reverend Mother,

As regards the writing of the *rules* which you mention, I find no problem. I simply advise you to see to it that the devotion in question results in action, in deeds, rather than remains just a matter of words. Unfortunately it often happens that people readily join some devout association, but without taking pains to improve spiritually. However, the *sincere* offering of oneself to the Sacred Heart is the sort of action that will certainly produce an amendment in the one who makes it. The whole difficulty lies in that idea of *sincerely*. If this sincerity is present, then all the obstacles to practising virtue will be overcome; one's passions will be mastered, and one will become holy. But the *sincerity* is the work of God alone; so it is necessary to be aware of this, and so ask him for this gift.

Your servant in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**45. To Don Antonio Bottari, Rector of the Somaschans at Cherasco**

**Stresa, 25 November 1844**

Very Reverend and dear Father,

The moral proofs of Christianity are drawn from the purity and excellence of its morality; from the sublimity of its teaching - compared with which all that is said by the wise men

of this world is mere darkness. Again, from the fact that in all the ages there has never been found a single *cogent argument* against it; and that no one has been able to convict it of any contradiction in the many dogmas and hidden mysteries which it teaches. Further evidence comes from the extent of its spread; from the improvements which have come about through it in the state of the world; from the fruits it has produced, not only in relation to the future life but even in regard to this present life; from the witness of pagans themselves and of innumerable learned people; from the stability and immutability of the Church and of the Apostolic See; from seeing that the only people who are opposed to it are those given over to their passions and vices; from the number of those who have died the deaths of heroes, showing every kind of virtue; from the harmony between it and all the fine arts which it has raised to sublime perfection; from its singular and unique ability to adapt to the needs of all, both the learned and the unlearned; from the life and death of Christ - so far surpassing anything that the whole of humanity can of itself produce; from the peace and happiness which it diffuses in holy souls - and from the many other arguments put forward by various authors. If you would care to read the collection of works which I have published under the title of *Apologetics*, you will find a number of these proofs touched on - as also in my *Society and its End*.

In my view it is good to make use of both vocal and mental prayer, and to put greater emphasis on whichever of the two produces greater profit. But when it comes to young religious, it is essential to insist on their learning a method of *mental prayer* and knowing how to use it. Both perseverance and a sound guide are needed; and in order to ensure that mental prayer does not fail to yield fruit and deteriorate into fantasy, it has to be directed to *the purification of the soul*, according to the method of St Ignatius (which I have had printed for the use of our members, and which you can find in the volume entitled *Ascetics*.)

You say you would also like a plan of life for your community. But to give a suitable one I would need to know all the circumstances and the activities of the religious. However, in general I would suggest:

1. The most important thing for a religious congregation is its noviciate; because unless it produces well-formed religious it is almost impossible to expect them afterwards to follow a sound way of life;

2. A daily hour of meditation is essential, and the Superior must make sure that all make it - and help them to make it well. Again, the examination of conscience before the midday meal and in the evening; a visit to the Blessed Sacrament; and some spiritual reading - these are indispensable practices. It is helpful if (in addition to an annual retreat and confession at least once a week), there are some days of retirement, either monthly or arranged as required for those who need a time of recollection. Any time not taken up by these practices should be used in occupations *assigned to each religious by the Superior*, so that there may be no idleness in the house;

3. There should be *complete silence* in the house outside the hour of recreation (taken in common) after the midday meal and supper. No one should leave the house without the blessing of the Superior, and *for good reasons*. The common life should be lived, with no kind of ownership exercised. There must also be complete dependence on obedience;

4. If the priests have any spare time it should be spent in *study* suitable to their occupations and directed by the Superior. Office should be said in common, if possible. If it is said privately, great care must be taken to ensure that it is recited in the best possible way, given the importance of this obligation. Again there must be diligence over celebrating Mass perfectly. Vigilance must be used to ensure that the lay brothers are always occupied; if necessary a prefect should be appointed to direct them, and he must take great care of their spiritual needs.

On these principles you will be able, with the help of the most zealous of your brethren, to organize the manner of life that you wish to see followed. This is such an important matter, because without it religious perfection cannot be arrived at.

My dear Father, you have made me speak about things you already know better than I, so it is a case of *sus Minervam* [a foolish person trying to teach a wise one]. But I have done as you told me, and this must be my excuse. The reward you promise me for this slight labour is a precious one - your fervent prayers. Remember that it is a great fault not to grant the reward! So I beg you to do this, and I remain from my heart -

Your affectionate servant,  
ROSMINI p.

#### 46. To Don G. B. Pagani in Rome

Stresa, 29 November 1844

My beloved brother in Christ,

It was far from my intention to cause you sadness when I wrote that you perhaps exaggerate your health problems in your imagination. Indeed I had a quite opposite aim; for, knowing how harmful to health is a feeling of apprehension and the belief that one is threatened by a grave illness, I wanted to persuade you that you should not regard your condition as excessively worrying, basing my opinion on that of your doctor, and so I was trying to encourage you. Moreover consider, my dear brother, that it is difficult to determine exactly the gravity of our illnesses, and the doctors themselves are unable to do this. Hence I think it is good advice to tell anyone who is ill to be rather inclined to make less of his sickness than more. By building up one's anxiety over it, one is no nearer a cure but likely instead to make things worse. On the other hand if we minimize our malady, it is easier to feel resigned, and we do not give way to excessive depression (which is always something to be avoided as far as we can), but are able to cultivate serenity of mind and soul, a disposition which is most favourable to virtue and perfection. Such efforts are especially needed by those who are very sensitive and inclined to worry; and you will agree with me that your temperament is perhaps not devoid of this tendency. So I think that you need to make a special effort (but peacefully and calmly here too) to keep up your spirits and prevent your thoughts from dwelling too much on yourself and your state of health. Instead, occupy yourself with external things of a cheerful and harmless kind. We must also help ourselves in our human weakness by realizing that the bodily ills that we feel most keenly are not always the gravest, even though they may seem so - for our feelings depend on our sensibilities, our disposition and the delicate constitution of our bodies. In speaking of these things I do not mean to say that your indisposition is slight; since I am far from having the knowledge necessary to determine its seriousness. But I am of the opinion that we ought to use every precaution and all possible means compatible with our duties, to bring about a cure, God willing. At the same time we must also be ready to face death, should this be his will, as I am sure you are.

For the rest, from now on take my words in good part, since if you saw into my heart, as God does, you would know how much sympathy I have for you, and how I share in your sufferings. For I can say with St Paul: *Who is weak, and I am not weak?* And you may be sure that if I saw any way of bringing you comfort, I would wholeheartedly do so. So you must understand what I said in the light of this, not otherwise, even though to you my words seemed to mean something else. I really believe that God has allowed you to fall into the imperfection of taking my remarks the wrong way and then saying nothing to me, from whom you should have no secrets. For, as is right, I only want to know all your

needs so as to be able to satisfy you, in order that you may profit by the experience for the future, and become more humble, more simple and undisturbed in mind.

My affectionate good wishes in the Lord to you and to our dear Don Roberto [Setti], for whom I constantly pray, and have prayers said. Also to dear Don Bernardo. May Jesus comfort and bless you all.

ROSMINI p.

#### 47. To Don Luigi Gentili at Loughborough

Stresa, 30 November 1844

My dear brother in Christ,

Realizing the great need there is to have in England a Superior to whom all the brethren will be subject, so that the bond of obedience, which is the golden link which unites us to Christ and to his Church, may not be broken, I have, after much consideration and prayer to the Lord, decided (after conferring with Fr Provincial) to appoint Fr Peter Hutton to assist the Provincial, and take his place when he is absent. I have sent a decree to this effect, and this will be passed on to you. My dear brother, I urge you, as the most experienced of the brethren there, to give an example of perfect submission and obedience to this new Superior, young as he is; and by your own respect to win for him also that of all the others, seeing in him the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am assured by your words that you wish to please the Lord and to become holy, since God in his infinite mercy has set you on the way to this. So match your actions to your words: and this means humble, sincere and single-minded obedience in practice. So be careful to make no room in your heart either for any movements of self-love or for the subtle, cunning and intemperate reasonings which are the work of the devil and which do so much harm to the soul. I expect a great deal from you, for you can do all things in Christ. Your trust in Jesus Christ must be as great as your distrust of yourself. Do not rely on your own judgement. It is so easy, if we are too confident about our own reasonings, to stray from the way of obedience, simplicity and prudence. When we think we are doing something really good we can instead be causing great harm. I greatly grieved over (1) the Birmingham affair, which unfortunately left in the Bishop's mind a very unfavourable impression of you; (2) the letter, lacking in respect, which you wrote to Mgr Walsh, and which particularly caused offence to Mgr Wiseman and angered him. God alone knows how and when we shall be able to calm things down, and to whom we owe some kind of humble reparation; (3) then there was your publication of the two prospectuses - of the college and of the Sisters - without first referring the matter to your Superiors; (4) and finally you failed to let Fr Hutton have the decree over who should be the Master [of novices] which I *expressly* ordered you to pass on to him; moreover you gave me no indication that you had *not* done this{f}. Ah, my dear Luigi, I can well believe that these and other such faults of yours were merely mistakes which you committed through zeal. But they ought both to increase your fear of acting on your own ideas and to make you take great care to be *open* with your Superiors, wish to depend on them, and give up the notion of apparently doing more good by following up your own plans and beliefs. I am quite content that you should make plans, but not that you should carry them out without first letting Superiors examine them. It is for them to decide whether those plans come from God or not; and (if they are from God), what is the best way of putting them into practice. It is only by acting in this way that you will arrive at holiness and do very much good. I urge you, then to consider this: the English mission holds great promise, but it needs holy men. Heaven help the Institute if it relaxes the bonds of obedience and charity, by which alone it can be strong! So the success of everything depends in great part on your virtue. Now you have a Superior in England: this is the time to show the genuineness

of your love of God, and to say from your heart and with all trust: *nunc coepi* [Now I have begun]. My warmest greetings to you - I am all yours in Christ.

A. ROSMINI p.

{fs}As regard the various blunders committed by Gentili, see the *Life* written by G. B. Pagani pp. 313 et seq.

#### 48. To Don Vincenzo Botta in Turin

Stresa, 2 December 1844

Reverend and dear Don Vincenzo in Christ our Lord,

While I believed that you had left one religious institute for another, thus not straying from your first intention, this caused me neither wonder nor displeasure: I thought I could find an explanation for the change. But I am now afraid, since it does not seem to me that your sister's reason is valid, all things considered. And in face of so great a matter as a vocation to the life of perfection, I fear that the cause of your abandoning of your vocation was that faint-heartedness which is fatal in such matters - as I told you candidly face to face; and you yourself did not disagree at the time. Ah, my dear Don Vincenzo, if that is how things are, struggle against yourself, become little for Christ's sake, even a wretch in your own eyes, challenge yourself, overcome yourself. A vocation to the religious life is such a great thing: it needs to be valued for itself and embraced with the eagerness that it merits. Otherwise it may go away: he who gave it may take it away. Think of the words: *No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God*. Ask yourself whether something of this was present in the excuses given to the heavenly Lord for not accepting his invitation - *I have bought a farm; I have married a wife etc*. If you look into the depths of your heart and examine it in the light of eternal truth and justice you will find the answer. Forgive me, dear friend, if I speak frankly, as my love for you dictates. If you ask God for light you will receive it - the light, I say, which is not given by any book or any school, which is not to be had from any teacher except the cross. So pray yourself: I will pray for you and get others to do so. Jesus Christ is Light, and he will banish any illusions you may have. Jesus Christ is the power of the Father, and will conquer our enemies when they attack us.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

#### 49. To Don Emilio Belisy at Oscott College

Stresa, 5 December 1844

My dear brother in Christ,

You did wrong to tell your Superiors there that I had resolved to take our three brethren away from Old Oscott *without having had any order to do so*. You already know that information like this is not to be passed on of your own accord; and that if I or any other Superior confides some of his thoughts to you, you are bound to keep such matters to yourself until you hear from the Superior himself that it is time to reveal them. Otherwise Superiors could no longer confide in you without the risk of some unfortunate consequence. This *arbitrary* action of yours displeased me not a little, all the more because you could have seen with half an eye that it was an imprudent thing to do. Once it has been decided to take a certain course, that does not mean that this has to be done at once; usually there is a time lag between the decision and its execution, and in this time

there could be a change of mind, because none of us, when we make a decision is bound to treat it as immutable - that would be obstinacy. So you should have waited until the time came for carrying out the decision, until this decision had been duly prepared for by Superiors, until you or someone else was given the task of acting on it. Then and only then you could have spoken, and spoken in the way proposed by your Superiors. This was all the more necessary since if it was also decided to take you away from there, this would have been on condition that it could be done in a way that would not displease the bishops. Which is as much as to say that it would not have been done had this been against their wish. But you have forestalled all consideration, and set yourself in conflict with the bishops. I therefore say again that in this affair you have failed to show obedience, prudence and patience: in short you have shown the faults of human nature. I hope that you will never again act in such an arbitrary manner; and as a penance, to remind you of how you should behave in future, you are to recite the *seven penitential psalms with the litanies etc.* Also examine yourself thoroughly to see whether you so acted through attachment to the place, or for some other human motive, contrary to perfection.

I was pleased to have your report, which I will show to Fr Provincial as soon as he returns from Rome. From now on you must carry out punctually the decree you will receive concerning a monthly report. I was glad also to hear that there may be young men with an inclination to join the Institute. Show them all spiritual charity, so that if they are sent by God they may not be refused through any fault or negligence of ours. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

#### 50. To Fr Peter Hutton at Ratcliffe College

Stresa, 7 December 1844

My dear brother in Christ,

When I heard, with much displeasure, that our dear Don Luigi [Gentili] had used in one of his letters terms which showed little respect, and that both the bishops had complained about this, I thought it well to write a letter of apology to Mgr Wiseman, and to oblige Don Luigi to ask pardon for his action - which I am sure he will do in an edifying manner. So please read the complaints and then pass them on to him.

I am well aware that our situation is a difficult one: on the one hand we have to use all prudence in preserving *all the freedom needed so as to keep up our religious spirit, especially in those men who are as yet inexperienced*; and on the other hand we must not be in conflict with the bishops, even though at times they demand the impossible. But if we appeal to God he will help us, as long as we seek and love him alone.

I was very pleased to hear that you have moved into the Calvary House [i.e. Ratcliffe College]. Blessed be God. I pray that he will make that house a holy temple in which the majesty of the Lord may dwell.

. . . Don Luigi wrote to me saying that a good laic would be most useful; so I am putting at your disposition Sester who is the most reliable of our laybrothers, and who will certainly prove a success. So if you see a need for him, write to me. I embrace and bless all our dear brethren in the love of Jesus Christ. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,  
A. ROSMINI p.

#### 51. To the Sister of Providence Caterina Rosmini at Domodossola

Stresa, 8 December 1844

My dear daughter in Christ,

I share your joy over having put off the clothes of this world and put on the garments of a spouse of Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords. You have good reason for holy rejoicing! And so you will have a continual reminder of what you must be interiorly; for scripture says of the sacred spouse: *All the glory of the King's daughter is within*. And you see how well your outward habit symbolizes the soul's interior. The white veil, which protects your head and covers part of your shoulders and breast signifies the purity of your thoughts and affections. The black habit is a sign of the mortification which must be the ornament of the holy spouse in all her faculties and her death to all earthly things; for black is the colour of death. The cross which you wear on your breast shows that deep in your heart must dwell your beloved, the Crucified One, according to the words of the Song: *My beloved will make his dwelling in the midst of my breast*. And the cross is of wood, so as to remind you to seek and embrace the Lord in his poverty, and find him on the very cross - not of silver or gold - where he breathed his last. With this sign of the cross you will overcome all your enemies. Have no fear of them. Even if they cause you trouble, they cannot harm you. Troublesome thoughts are permitted by God in order to test our fidelity and love. You must always oppose them with the arms of faith, but with calm of mind and trust in God's help. My dear daughter, pray for me: I cannot stay longer with you, as I should like to do, because of the many affairs with which I am burdened. Goodbye.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. R.

## 52. To Don Luigi Gentili at Loughborough

Stresa, 8 December 1844

My dear brother in Christ,

Since I understood that the two bishops were offended by the letter which you wrote to Mgr Walsh, I thought it my duty to ask on your behalf for the indulgence of Mgr Wiseman, who I think most resented the expressions you used. I know that you have asked pardon of the Vicar Apostolic, but must do the same as soon as possible, in the most sincere yet prudent way to his Coadjutor too. And so that you may see how I have taken a positive initiative in the matter, I am sending you a copy of the letter I wrote to the latter. I am sure that you will sincerely do the same. Mgr Walsh does not cease to lament over the Birmingham affair. He says that you, *adopting the tone of a Superior of the Institute*, dissuaded him from approaching Fr Provincial, saying that on account of his nervous indisposition, Fr Provincial was in no shape to think about affairs. You kept many things hidden from me - among others, the annoyance felt by the bishops, and the fact that you had asked pardon of Mgr Walsh. You also concealed from me the fact that in Shepshed our brethren were teaching in a mixed school of boys and girls - something which was imprudent and contrary to the spirit and the rules of the Institute, and of which I *certainly* do not approve. So, my dear Don Luigi, how many instances of imprudence! What unlimited confidence you have in yourself! You do not treat your Superiors with the proper simplicity, frankness and spirit of dependence, and so God allows you to experience confusion. For goodness' sake, do not live in illusions: you must not suppose that you will be gaining resounding success; rather you must aim at virtue alone, and uprightness in dealing with Superiors - that is the foundation on which our Institute rests. I hope that you will correct your ways: if you do, all will go well. But you must study particularly to *depend* [on Superiors], to be faithful to the rules and the directives you are

given; and to conceal nothing from Superiors. Then indeed the words of scripture will come true: *The Lord led the just man along true paths, showed him the kingdom of God, and gave him the wisdom of the saints.* I see very well how dangerous it is when a false zeal directed by a lively imagination like yours conjures up great projects in a country which lacks solid piety and is fond of appearances and outward fuss; and I sympathize with you over the problems you face there. But if you will meditate quietly on our maxims and rules, you will understand that the humble and hidden virtue to be found in them is the only solid foundation on which to build. So take courage, my dear Luigi, and begin now to show yourself dependent on the Assistant of the Provincial as on God himself. And I say again, if you work with him in everything, all will turn out well.

I have written words of *love* to you: receive them with the same love. Goodbye.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

### **53. To the Sister of Providence Felice Stedile at Cameri**

**Stresa, 11 December 1844**

My dear daughter in Christ,

I was glad to hear that things are going well for you in that house, and that you are all living together in peace and love, actively serving the Lord in good hopes of receiving an eternal reward. See to it that you calmly overcome the imaginations that trouble you and that are the work of the evil one. God permits them in order to test your fidelity and to give you occasions to fight courageously. But if you combat them and trust in *Jesus and Mary*, whom you will not fail to invoke, nothing can harm your eternal salvation. When you tell me that the enemy of all good disturbs you with dreams, too, I am not surprised. But before you go to bed recommend yourself to God, and when you wake, think no more of the past but only of things divine and heavenly. Despise your body as an enemy: one day it will decay and suffer corruption; so do not cherish it. Greet your Superior for me, and pray, all of you, for -

Your father in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

### **54. To the Sisters Francesca Parea and Anastasia Samonini at Loughborough**

**Stresa, 14 December 1844**

My dear daughters in Christ,

I have received your letters, which tell me about your problems and struggles. Do not be dismayed by these things; for the greater the difficulties, the more the merit; the more battles you have to fight, the more glorious will be the palms of victory. Trust in God, for he is with you always, as with all who serve him. What a consoling thought this is, my daughters, and how great a comfort it must bring in even the greatest afflictions. It is certainly desirable that you should have a convent there, a real religious house. Ask the Lord for this grace, humbly and with resignation to his will; speak of it to Superiors (and now the Superior in England is Fr Hutton, with the title of Assistant to the Provincial). If they approve of the idea, take the opportunity to tell your benefactress what a great advantage this would be. I think this should be considered when your numbers grow. Already in Italy Suor Giovanna Mew has received a preparation, and she can go to England, with a companion, as soon as you have accommodation for her. For the rest, I can see that as long as you do not have a religious house, then it would be better if the

novices could be sent to Italy. Keep up your spirits: exercise Christian fortitude and the prudence which knows how to profit from all occasions to show virtue. This is why God allowed you to find yourselves in such a difficult situation: he wants to train you: he wants his daughters to become strong when faced by bad times and prudent in good. You will triumph if you are patient: beginnings are always difficult. Show gratitude and respect to your benefactress{f}, and show all charity towards her.

I will write to your Superiors there so that, God willing, something advantageous can be worked out. May the Lord bless you abundantly.

Your father in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

{fs}This was Lady Mary Arundell who, having become a Catholic, had asked Rosmini to send some Sisters to England, offering them her help and financial support. (cf. E.C. Letter 4047).

### 55. To Don Vincenzo Botta in Turin

Stresa, 19 December 1844

My dear Don Vincenzo,

I am sorry to have to give you bad news. Bonino did not stand the test. His self-love, which was his particular weakness and made him squeamish, found thorns where he should have found flowers, and he never understood that the school of virtue, which the Lord opens to us is not and never can be (for anyone who does not want to deceive himself) other than a place where we study to humble ourselves sincerely in all things so as to render our hearts meek, docile and fitted for all good. Such is the school of the noviciate, where our chief concern is to discover how sweet and salutary to one who loves Christ it is to become poor in spirit and to put on the livery of Christ. And since he did not understand this great aim, he found himself often closed in on himself, inconstant and lacking sincerity. There were moments when he seemed all fervour, and promised to make great efforts. In one of these periods of fervour he took his preparatory vows, and so committed himself to obedience. But soon afterwards his mood changed, though he could not explain this. He was then seen to lapse into various small faults against the rules, and he became discouraged. The last time he came to see me I encouraged him, explaining that no one becomes perfect all at once, and that we do not look for people who are already perfect but only those who want to get rid of their defects and are desirous of reaching perfection; that he should not give up; that Superiors loved him and supported him; that he had to persevere in his efforts, trust in God, and help himself by prayer. He seemed to be convinced; he wanted to speak to me in confession; he promised to change. But instead, on the following day I found on my desk a note saying that he was again experiencing thoughts against his vocation and that he wanted me to let him leave. I was not a little surprised at this unexpected alteration in him, and I gave him his freedom; so he departed this morning. So here are the facts of the situation. I am sorry that Bonino was not stronger and more generous.

My dear Don Vincenzo, be so good as to pray for -

Your humble and affectionate servant in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**56. To Mr Edwin Fordham at Loughborough**

**Stresa, 20 December 1844**

My dear Sir,

Assuming that the Spirit of God moves you to enter the Institute of Charity in order to arrive at the holiness which is our sole aim, and to serve the Lord with all your strength in whatever way God may require of you, and that you understand the meaning of holy obedience, I very willingly receive you into the Institute, and I authorize my dear brother Don Emilio Belisy to admit you to the First Probation. You are joining a body in which we aim to be all of one heart and one soul and, having given up all earthly motives, wish to work only for God, with such a love of our neighbour that we are disposed to do all things for love of him, without choosing for ourselves, but willing only what Superiors judge to be most perfect and for the greater glory of God and for the greater profit, all things considered, of those who are our dear neighbours. Our Master and Model is Christ; and since we aim to follow him, we wish to embrace with all our heart the conditions set out in Mt 6: 24. So enter our Institute with a great and generous heart. May God bless you.

ROSMINI,  
Provost General of the Institute of Charity

**57. To Don Antonio Gasperini at Rovereto**

**Stresa, 22 December 1844**

My dear Don Antonio,

What pleasure I received from your letter where you describe vividly the whole mission you preached at S. Ilario! I thank you from my heart for having given it with such zeal and wisdom, and I hope in the Lord that it will produce abundant spiritual fruit. I find fresh proof that the local people were well content with the mission in the fact that they attended so assiduously. The merit for it all and the heavenly glory will all belong to my dear Don Antonio. Another reason I have for joy is that this happy experience will stimulate you to persevere in this most valuable ministry of giving missions. I would advise you strongly to prefer giving them to the poor, as St Vincent de Paul and St Alphonsus Liguori so loved to do. This is a most fertile field to cultivate, though you will meet with thorns and nettles, especially in this countryside of ours, which awaits the scythe of the man of God and the spade and fruitful seed of the gospel.

But what token of my gratitude shall I give you? I certainly do not want to show it by giving you some trivial present, and thus to lessen your heavenly reward. I simply wish to show you the thanks I have for you in my heart. So I will write to Salvadori so that he may ask you what sign of my gratitude you would prefer to have, and I will then tell him to get it for you.

I will include (in case you do not already have them) two books, one containing talks or sermons, and the other dealing with matters related to the catechism. I had these printed with the titles respectively of *Predicazioni* [homilies] and *Catechetica*.

Please give my thanks also to the Reverend Archpriest, who was good enough to oversee, set in motion and direct this holy work, bringing it to so satisfactory a conclusion. Embracing you as a dear brother, I am -

All yours,  
R. p.

{fs}Rosmini had inherited from his father a good deal of land in S. Ilario, a suburb of Rovereto.

**58. To the cleric Giovanni Diehl at Calvario**

**Stresa (undated, December 1844**

My dear Giovanni,

It is difficult to believe that you are sorry to leave the Institute; for it was up to you to preserve your vocation as a treasure that the mercy of God had presented you with. Certainly you have gravely erred through lack of sincerity and frankness; for these are fundamental principles of life in the Institute, which hopes that it can be said of each of its members what Jesus Christ said of Nathanael: *Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no guile*. A lack of sincerity always leads to the loss of a holy indifference towards all that Superiors judge to be best for the individual, since when they are not fully informed, they are not well placed to assess and direct the brethren to their best advantage. At all events, for my part I forgive your faults, and I pray the Lord to have mercy on you wherever you go. The best thing would be for you to return to Monaco and there be subject to the laws of the State. I will write to Fr Rector and get him to give you the two books you want, and to let you have the money you will need for your journey. God bless you. Remember that I am -

Your affectionate servant in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**59. To Don Giuseppe Gagliardi, Rector at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 25 December 1844**

May the Child Jesus fill all our hearts with his ineffable love.

I have received the various notes from our dear scholastics there. Tell them, please, that I was pleased to have these, and that I have asked the Child Jesus to make them all childlike in spirit as he was - that is, humble and full of love - and also to give them a share of his divine wisdom. May they be obedient to Superiors, observe the rules exactly, love one another tenderly, study assiduously, and in general be able to say, each of them: [Here Rosmini quotes a long passage in praise of wisdom (Wis 7: 7-14). He then goes on to say to Don Gagliardi:] Explain these eight verses to them and give them a talk about the contents of the passage.

If it would be of help to you to have another laybrother there, I have one who would be very useful in the kitchen. You have only to ask me and I will send him. I would also urge you to be economical in all things: for the sake of holy poverty, out of obedience, and for good order. Goodbye. I embrace you along with all our beloved brethren there; and I am -

Yours affectionately,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**60. To Don Paolo Barola in Rome**

**Stresa, 25 December 1844**

My dear Don Paolo,

May the most loveable JESUS, who fills souls with love through his infant cries, spread his healing balm in the wounds of your heart. It greatly moved me to read in your letter

how severe and painful they are and, my dear friend and brother in the Lord, would that I could bring you some healing and comfort. But since I cannot do this, nor fully understand the exact nature of your ills (you speak of them rather obscurely), I intercede with all my heart for you with the Physician of our souls, now newly born, who fully knows them, and in his love will cure them with his powerful healing art, provided that we make use of the medicine he prescribes for us, namely prayer, efforts on our part, and unlimited trust. So let us approach his cradle, offer him ourselves entirely, adore him, and beg him for his grace. With this we shall receive all we desire: *All good things came to me along with her, and in her hands uncounted wealth. I rejoiced in them all, because wisdom leads them; but I did not know she was their mother.*

How pitifully poor is the divine Child! How grievously he suffers from the cold! How little he is known by men, how ungratefully treated by them! Anyone who wants to make up to him for these things by a little love will surely be content to share his poverty and his obscurity. And indeed how petty are our sufferings compared with his. Yet who are we, and who is he? We shall learn this from his dear and holy Mother, who is so happy and full of joy to be with him in the stable - not dark, but illuminated by the Light of souls; not cold, but warmed by the fire of love. Let her tell us: and the Virgin Mother will indeed speak to our hearts if we approach her. She will make us feel these things, and she will share with us the greatness of her love.

My dear Paolo, let us never lose heart; since everything that happens to us is as the divine Child disposes, and disposes purely out of love. Everything that he does is done out of love; and when we cannot see this, then his love is all the greater, so much so that often it is more than our minds can grasp. This thought is often such a comfort to me that it turns what is bitter into sweetness; and when troubles surround me, then I am the more consoled, and I can say with the apostle: *When I am weak, then am I strong.*

For the rest, it would be so dear to me if you could come here and spend some time with me, in this solitude full of peace where you would find, I hope, hearts that know how to love!

In the matter of studies: I know how great is your love for truth; and the truth we love, my dear Paolo, is that which leads to love - or rather is inseparable from love. I feel no anxiety about, and give no thought to, the success of my affairs, trusting that Providence will lead everything to the ultimate triumph of truth and the greater glory of God, whom alone I love, and who is all my good. Goodbye. I embrace you affectionately in the Sacred Heart.

Your brother in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

## 61. To the cleric Giuseppe Aimo in Turin

Stresa, 27 December 1844

My dear son in Christ,

If you can carry on in the mathematics course you have begun, that will be best. The fewer changes we make, the better. I hope that by studying hard you will be able to overcome what you find difficult, and will also acquire great esteem for a branch of knowledge which is very necessary in order to understand the wisdom with which the world was created by the Eternal Mathematician. But if it turns out that you cannot keep up with the teacher, I will allow you the help of a coach, on condition that you persevere in the course. For the rest, you may be sure that out of this study (to which God has assigned you against your will) you will derive much good for the greater glory of God; and this in addition to the merit of overcoming your own distaste, and to the mental training which your studies provide. For it is scarcely possible to have a logical mind

without a knowledge of mathematics. Try to derive help from the acquisition of knowledge so as to raise your mind to God, who is the God of all knowledge *Deus scientiarum*, as scripture calls him. So too you should feel great consolation from the thought that you are exercising obedience. Never fail, with peace of mind, to offer your every action to the Lord, and to thank him continually for his love. I pray always for you both, my dear brethren, and I hope that, helped by divine grace, you will fully correspond with your high vocation, and repay the confidence which your Superiors placed in you when they sent you there{f}. I greet you both affectionately and bless you.

Your father in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

{fs}See note to Letter 38, which explains how Giuseppe Aimo and Luigi Setti had been sent to Turin for studies.

## 62. To Giuseppe Aimo in Turin

Stresa, 3 January 1845

The gentle love of Jesus to my dear son in Christ,.

Maintain the attitude that you speak of in your welcome letter, and you can be sure that you will attain the good, *the unique good*, which you seek in your studies. In your present need it is literally true that *all who seek, find*. For God surely knows what you need, what your soul has need of; and he will supply what is necessary for your perfection. As you conquer the repugnance you feel for the studies to which you have been assigned, your heart will be enlarged, and at the same time your mind will be strengthened. So that even in speculations which appear to be most dry, God and his love will be manifest to you. We need, my dear Giuseppe, to ‘think large’; and when we do so, knowing how great God is, our repugnances disappear; we love all that is good; and all the means which lead to good become dear to us. This applies to the means which God commands us to adopt through the mouth of Superiors. And it is not the studies which most appeal to us that are the best, but those which are in accord with God’s will, according to the plan which he has made for us. He prepares his servants well in advance; and those servants have to let themselves be formed by him and be shaped as the sculptor works on the statue with his chisel. So take courage, my dear Giuseppe: put aside every prejudice and all narrow thoughts, and all your studies will become agreeable to you. For it is often the case that we, through our limited thinking, fashion for ourselves crosses even when these are non-existent. As for the difficulty you feel you have in expressing yourself, think nothing of it. Express yourself as best you can: it does not matter whether you do it well or ill. Do not expect too much from yourself; be content with what little you can manage; and be grateful for this little, giving thanks always to the Lord - for everything comes from his grace.

Meanwhile I know that in Turin you are loved and thought highly of; and this is a great deal to be thankful for. So open your heart to joy, and do not worry too much about the outcome. Do with simplicity what you can, and think no further. Write often to me. Goodbye.

Your father in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

## 63. To Giacomo Lugan at Intra

Stresa, (undated) early in 1845

My dear son in Christ,

You have wished me a happy feast, and I have returned your greeting from my heart (rather than by writing), since I know that this is what you prefer. All the same, now that I have a free moment, I want also to tell you in writing how pleased I am with you - not so that you should become conceited, taking the praise to yourself, but because when you refer it to God, to whom alone praise belongs, you may glorify him, love him ever more as the author and source of good, and recognize yourself as the author and source of your own evil, and therefore become ever more humble. I rejoice to see you busy in the holy ministry of charity that God has committed to you; I rejoice in recognizing that you know how excellent this work is - and this light, too, you owe to God; and further I rejoice that you are full of zeal as you instruct and train those souls in whom you serve our Lord Jesus Christ. I urge you to do all you can, not only to act as a faithful servant and a worthy son of the Institute; but also to enkindle the same fire in your companions, as far as ever you can. Greet for me those companions. May God bless you all.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. R.

**64. To Sister Maria Geltrude Cerutti, Superior of the Arona house**

**Stresa, 5 January 1845**

Very Reverend Mother,

I presumed your permission to confide to my companion, Don Pagani, the plan you sent to me for a pious society; and he agrees with me that this act by which a Christian offers himself, his life and his own blood to God, together with the blood and life of Christ and the sufferings of Mary, is the most beautiful and excellent thing anyone could do. So I approve essentially that this devotion should be spread, and the faithful be stimulated to make it. But because it is very hard to make this offering in all *sincerity* (which is most important if it is to be good and useful), therefore it seems best to limit it to few people, rather than to try to spread it among many (which would involve some risk of its becoming a mere empty formality - as has happened in the case of certain other devotions good in themselves.) Don Pagani also suggests that the name of this union or society should be quite short and simple; that the offering which is inaugurated should be made three times a day by the Ascribed, or at least once; and, leaving aside any other rules, let the offering itself suggest how it should be made - or (better) what feelings and affections should accompany the making of the offering. This is so that it may be recited well, with sincere love, and a realization of the significance of this offering of oneself to the Lord. It would also be an advantage if some little reflections and meditations on the blood shed by Jesus Christ, and on the Sacred Heart, and the sufferings of Mary were added. These would inspire the same feelings as those contained in the offering, and they could be more fully expounded in the form of a soliloquy, if this could conveniently be given.

May Jesus fill you with his love; and I believe this is all you want. Continue to pray for me, and for my great needs, as also those of those who serve the Lord with me

Your humble and affectionate servant in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**65. To Sister Maria Geltrude Cerutti, the Superior of the Arona house**

**Stresa, 20 January 1845**

Very Reverend Mother,

I am returning the manuscript you sent me, full as it was of praiseworthy sentiments, for which I have thanked the Lord from whom they came. Since you sent me your manuscript out of obedience to your Director, and he asks for my opinion about its contents, then although I realize I have little expertise, I will give you my frank view.

In general I have no hesitation in saying that you are, through God's mercy, on the right track, and you should go ahead with all simplicity and prudence. And so I have no objection to your continuing to write about what passes within your soul, both for your own benefit and so as to inform those who have to act as guides on your spiritual journey. There are just a few observations I would make.

The first, (though I do not think this is of any great moment), is to do with certain expressions which you use and which seem to suggest that in certain states in which you find yourself, the powers of your soul seem to be inactive. But this is not the case: rather, what is missing is any *advertence* to their workings. What they are engaged in is of a general nature, and does not admit of being talked about, or call for distinctions. But, as I say, I do not make much of this, because I noticed that in other things you have said, you have explained yourself better, saying more or less the same.

The second thing is more important, and it is this: whereas when describing certain feelings which you have experienced, you enlarge on them quite considerably, when it comes to other matters, which those who direct you should know about, you show some reluctance over talking about them. I am referring to the fact that you appear to believe that God wants you to undertake some mysterious enterprise in places outside your monastery. As long as we are dealing with good works, especially of charity towards your neighbour, while you are in the place to which God has assigned you, these must be carefully looked into, but there will perhaps be no difficulty here. But I would not say the same if it is a question of your having to go outside the place where happily you find yourself. For this circumstance alone would make the idea suspect - at least unless and until God were to give you substantial proofs of his will (for instance, should the Pope give you such a command - which seems unlikely.) So over this whole matter I think you should take great care to express yourself clearly as you manifest what takes place in your soul. This is a most important point for those who have to direct you - that is, unless you were to put aside all thought of this, and so make an end of the matter.

My third observation is about a similar topic, and it arises perhaps from my not thoroughly understanding your ideas. When you talk about the victims the Lord wants, it appears to me that you mean you feel called to form a house or society of such victims. But several distinctions need to be made here. It is certain that God sent his Son to become incarnate and to immolate himself as a victim for our sins. It is also certain that the mission of Christ is that of leading his followers to become like him, victims immolated on the altar of divine love. *I have come to bring fire on earth*, he said. And the fire is that which must set alight the holocaust. *Anyone who wants to come after me must take up his cross*. And the cross is the anguish in which Christ died, and in which his followers must also die. *I am sending you like lambs into the midst of wolves*; and here too Jesus Christ wanted his disciples to make a sacrifice of themselves. It is St Paul's wish that Christians should die and be buried with Christ; and he says of himself that he was crucified to the world, and the world was crucified to him. In short, the scriptures are full of this idea, and God has always had his victims. Such were the first martyrs, and afterwards all the holy confessors who in their hearts died to themselves, and lived and acted only for Christ. So this immolation of the whole person in honour of the Creator is the end and aim of the mission of Jesus Christ and of the creation of the universe. Therefore those souls are to be reckoned happy who can be true victims consumed by the fire of Christ and seasoned with his salt! To preach this message is an excellent thing,

because it is the actual teaching of the whole gospel. But next, it has to be said that it is quite another question whether anyone could form a whole society of such victims. In the first place, Christ's victims often do not know that they are such; for who can know the secrets of his own heart and be certain about what is in its depths, where only the eye of God can penetrate! So the victims of Jesus Christ would not allow themselves to be called by this name, as the famous martyrs of Lyons would not accept the title of 'martyrs' even though they had suffered greatly for Christ, because, they said, 'We are not yet dead: our martyrdom is not yet completed.'

In the third place, to form a society of victims, you would have to know who they were; but only God knows who are his true victims; and if anyone wished to judge who they were before seeing them crowned in heaven he would run the risk of gathering a collection of people who, when it came to the time for sacrifice, would flee from the altar.

Fourthly, religious societies aim to take people who are imperfect and to help them so that, with divine grace, they may tend towards perfection. But victims are already perfect; they have no need to be associated together, and there is no reason why they should even know that they *are* victims.

In the fifth place, victims do not qualify for this title until their final perfect act of self-immolation; and this is the work of God. So no one on earth, however much he preached, or exhorted others to good, or supplied the means for this, could thereby constitute a victim. So a society which set about forming victims would be usurping the work of God. Therefore in my view it is impossible to establish a society with this name: to spiritual people this would seem an over-ambitious project, and to people of the world (unfortunately) it would appear ridiculous.

What then can be done? The answer is, what the holy founders of religious orders have always done: gather together people who *aspire* to perfection, and give them all the means for this - through prayer, through mortification, through poverty, through solitude and so on. They encourage their members as much as possible to attain fervour, to want only to do the will of God, to try to do the most perfect thing at all times, and especially to take on all works of charity towards their neighbour, and to be ready to shed their blood if necessary to help others. It is in these ministries that they can find many opportunities to make a sacrifice of themselves, as Jesus Christ did out of love of us and for our salvation. In this way they fulfil the command of Christ to love one another; this they do to perfection - that is by giving their very lives. And it is in such exercises of charity towards one's neighbour that one can most surely show love of God. Because there can be no illusion in doing all possible good towards others, involving hard work, humility and suffering. Above all, in these actions we have the guide of obedience, the faithful interpreter of the will of God. St John says: *God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected in us . . . Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth.* Now if from among those who set themselves to do his will in all things and to spend themselves for the good of their neighbour God should choose victims, may he be blessed and praised for ever. This is what we hope for and ask of him. Let us ask the Lord in prayer to send down heavenly fire on the whole world and receive from it a holocaust in the odour of sweetness. On our part, after we have done all that we can, let us put our trust in him, hoping that he will have mercy on us for our sins; and let us repose in him. And let us also offer ourselves to his love, without believing that we have in this way already become victims. Our offering should be in the form that I wrote to you about at the end of last year; and let us encourage others to make such a beautiful offering, without suggesting that this makes them already true victims. For everything must be left to the Lord; and we should rather teach that they are in reality far from such eminence. Let us act like the martyr St Ignatius of Antioch, who only when he heard the roar of the lions who were to devour him said: 'Now do I begin to be a disciple of Christ.'

So these, Very Reverend Mother, are my observations.

Now I will tell you about the situation regarding the little book I intended to contain the exercises for *the offering of oneself*. This small work should have appeared last autumn, but my time then was taken up by various matters which charity would not permit me to leave aside. So I am anxious, God willing, to apply myself to this agreeable task. But when will I be able to do this? God alone knows. Certainly for the next few months this will not be possible. So pray that the Lord will give me the inspiration and the necessary words so that I may be of service to souls in this way.

I am your humble servant in Christ,  
A. R.

## 66. To Don Luigi Gentili in England

Stresa, 30 January 1845

My dear brother in Christ,

I gather from your letter that the devil has stirred up in your heart a great storm; but I rely on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (to whom I always entrust you) that you will never allow him to prevail over you. Put aside all passion and be ready to listen calmly to your Superior, as he speaks to you in love.

You say that in ten years you have received nothing from your Superiors but corrections and disapproval over everything that you have done. But consider this notion a little before God, the eternal truth: is it really so? You have only to re-read my letters to see how many times I have shown you the most sincere appreciation of the many good things you have done for the glory of God. True, I have also corrected you and shown disapproval of your behaviour when I believed before the Lord that I ought to do so. But at the same time I did this with all charity and gentleness, prompted by the great love I have for you in my heart - even though it seems that you do not realize this. So is it possible that the devil makes use of this pretext to delude and disturb you? Is it possible that all this so afflicts you that you are disgusted with life? Heavens! What have we come to, my dear brother in Jesus Christ? Even beginners in the spiritual life know that the corrections of Superiors should be received with joy, as acts of the most sincere charity and as precious benefits; and they realize further that such corrections should be reasons for having a greater love of Superiors combined with lively gratitude. And am I not to expect as much from you when you have for so many years served the Lord, sacrificing to him your self-love and your own will through the vow of religious obedience? Yes, this is what I have indeed looked to see - and do so now, too. I expect you to humble yourself and mortify your self-love through the powerful grace of Jesus Christ and with the intercession of the Virgin Mary, our Mother. It is that self-love alone which robs your heart of the sweetness of charity and spreads there the bitterness that weighs on you and makes you (as you say) weary of everything, and causes you to cease to love your Superiors and your brethren - whom you should instead love ever more, binding yourself closer to them in Christ. This is your main problem: it is this alone that you should fear. But who imposes this burden on you but yourself - or at any rate the tempter, the enemy of humility and peace? What you suffer through your self-love is a grave affliction, more insupportable than all the sufferings of the apostle. So *humility* is what is called for: this will wholly banish the temptation; and then what was previously a burden to you will become a matter of joy. Truly, the spiritual man finds no greater satisfaction than that of knowing that he has Superiors who correct him and tell him about his faults, so that he can make progress safely in the way of the Lord, and by relying on the anchor of obedience arrive at salvation. But to do this, it is necessary, my dear Luigi, to give up your own plans whenever they are opposed to those of your Superiors, and to renounce

your own way of thinking and your self-will, making the will of your Superiors the rule of your actions, with simplicity and sincerity.

As for the missions and retreats, Fr Provincial and I, far from disapproving of them, draw great consolation from seeing them well begun, and we hope to see them bear ever greater fruit - provided however that you are on your guard against the 'sweet poison' of praise and popular acclaim. My dear brother, do see to it that the corrections and disapproval which come from Superiors are more acceptable to you than the plaudits of others. This is how the saints acted: they loved to be corrected; they hated praise. But no one who does not love correction can ever hate praise.

You want to become a saint: you have told me this time and again, and I believe you. So follow the way of the saints. There is only one, and you will not find another, however much you study and reason. And this way consists in perfect self-abnegation, obedience, and mortification of the intelligence (as St Philp Neri puts it). It means welcoming all the decisions of Superiors, loving the corrections they give, showing gratitude to them, and drawing encouragement rather than sadness or a sense of humiliation from their advice; it means banishing from your thoughts any plans opposed to theirs (seeing these as tares sown by the devil); rejoicing when the plans of Superiors meet with success, using your best efforts to ensure that success, limiting your own activities to the ministries you have received from God through your Superiors; growing daily in charity and love of your vocation and the Institute. This is the one and only way to arrive at holiness. All others are illusory and deceptive: they mean not only failing to become holy, but they can even be the way to lose your soul.

My dear brother, *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.* You tell me that you are very sad: I am sadder than you. You make yourself sad at the thought of being reprovved over your faults. What makes me sad is the thought that you are sorrowful over something that should make you rejoice spiritually. So put away your sadness, and mine will then vanish - or rather be turned into joy. This is what I hope for, and I should grieve out of love of you if I could not so hope. And I further hope that you will learn once and for all to say that you are wrong and Jesus Christ is entirely right, so that soon you will write giving me this consolation - a consolation that will never be taken away from me. Goodbye.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. R.

#### **67. To the Mother Superior of the Visitation Sisters at Arona**

**Stresa, 31 January 1845**

Very Reverend Mother,

Your Father Confessor will probably not oblige you to read the writings of the mystics, but only give you permission to do so; and in this case you can abstain from doing so without being disobedient. So too there are other cases we have to distinguish between a mere permission and a command. Where it is a matter only of a permission, one can use discretion: there is nothing wrong in denying oneself something that is permitted, especially when what is allowed is really a concession to human nature and to one's own inclinations. Should the confessor show displeasure over your doing something that he has not prohibited, it is better in the ordinary way to refrain from so acting, as long as his displeasure continues - however good the thing may be in itself. And should the confessor be pleased at your doing something which nevertheless he has not commanded, it is not always necessary to do that thing, as long as the motive for refraining from it is both reasonable and spiritual; all the more so if in so acting one is not merely guided by one's own inclination.

Continue to pray to the Lord for -

Your humble and devoted servant in Christ,  
A. R. p.

**68. To the cleric Arnoldo Fehr at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 5 February 1845**

My dear son in Christ,

The Institute in which by the mercy of God you find yourself knows of no other good but *charity* and *humility*, because holiness consists in these virtues, as we are taught by Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. Charity and humility must never be for us mere empty words: they must form souls that are gentle and loving, casting out from them all bitterness and the poison of pride; so that, with our soul once thus reformed, we must show these two holy virtues in all that we do. And just as all our brethren have to try to acquire and practise them, so it is a duty of Superiors to do all they can to see that their subjects acquire them. One of the means for bringing this about is for Superiors to know the defects of those in their charge. And the brethren must aim at being thoroughly known to Superiors and receiving correction from them. In the absence of this sincere wish, they will not correspond with their vocation, and they will be mere hypocrites who deceive themselves and others. This is because, although they promised to live by our rules, they are unwilling to observe them.

In a spirit of charity I told your immediate Superior to keep me informed about the progress made by our dear scholastics there, especially in gentleness of heart, charity, humility, a truly godly spirit and in observance of the rules. I asked him to let me know about their faults against these virtues which our Lord taught us, and against what constitutes the *ultimate end* of our Institute. So your loving Superior was obliged in conscience to manifest to me your imperfections, your weaknesses, your faults - and all this in a spirit of charity and for your own good. What then did I hear, my dear brother? What are the things that profoundly grieve my heart? I am told that you 'showed your displeasure over merely being given the tonsure, to your humiliation; that you have even refused at times to wear clerical dress and to serve in church, saying that since you have not been promoted to minor orders, you should not be put to the inconvenience of carrying out the functions associated with these.' So you regard as an inconvenience things which, if you had even a minimal reverence for the temple of God and a spark of zeal for his service, you would have esteemed as being for your merit and for the loving service of the Lord. What sort of sentiments are these, my dear son? They are worldly sentiments, not those of a religious or even a Catholic. They come from the father of pride, the devil, by whom you let yourself be miserably deceived; they are sentiments directly opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ and of the Institute - in which you are placed, but from which you derive no spiritual profit.

For years you have heard these truths preached by Superiors. But instead of reflecting on them, instead of appreciating the love which Superior have for you, your thoughts are quite different; you resent being corrected; you return ill-will for love; you deceive us; you treat us ungratefully, you brood within yourself, like a snake deaf to the sound of the musicians - as scripture puts it all too aptly. No, my dear brother, I cannot tolerate this hardness of heart in you, this pride which blinds you. Many a time I have told you the truth; you have heard so many instructions; you cannot say the truth has been hidden from you. People have tried using both kindness and at other times a little rigour, in an effort to get you to see the truth about your state, but in vain. You do not want to understand; you trust only in yourself; you listen to your imagination instead of to the voice of God, who speaks to you by means of your Superiors. If you continue in your

extreme pride and indocility you will not only lose your vocation: you will be in danger of losing your soul. If you took notice of the good example of the humility and charity of your companions, you could imitate them. But you prefer your false and haughty reasonings. Yet you will have to give an account to God for all the graces he has given you - graces that you have made fruitless and even changed into reasons for condemning you.

My dear brother, I must finish. Do go forward and show yourself a true son of the Institute. It is impossible for you to remain in it with the proud outlook which is ruining your heart and causing you to give such scandal to your companions. While you harbour such sentiments you cannot possibly love the Institute: it is bound to become hateful to you. Whereas if you had the opposite sentiments, of humility and charity, and were determined to overcome yourself and listen to your Superiors, you would love it ever more dearly, seeing it as a heaven on earth: you would love it more than your life. Many others do this: they grow daily in love of their holy vocation; while your love of it inevitably grows colder every day. If you do not grow in love for it, this is a sign that you draw no spiritual profit from its teachings and from the retreats which you have the opportunity to make. So you must choose either the good spirit, which is that of God; or the evil spirit, which is that of the devil. For you cannot serve two masters. Goodbye.

Your father in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

#### 69. To the cleric Arnoldo Fehr

Stresa, 14 February 1845

My dear son in Christ,

The Institute of Charity needs men who are meek and humble, true imitators of Christ. This is what it was founded for. You have heard this great truth preached for five years, but as yet you show no sign of having understood it. Nor have you given any evidence of zeal to dedicate yourself to a study of what the saints show us. You are always dominated by your imagination: you are presumptuous in thinking about converting others instead of converting yourself: your behaviour afflicts your Superiors and gives scandal to your brethren. And then, ungrateful as you are, you regard as a result of ill-will against yourself what is in fact nothing but the effect of charity.

All in all, if you do not once for all renounce yourself and begin to *savour* sincerely the practice of humility, you will lose your vocation. A man who is full of himself and scornful of others is of no use for the ministry of the gospel or for the Institute. He finds everything intolerable; his heart becomes ever more bitter, lacking in love, and ungrateful. Whereas those within the Institute who aim solely at sanctifying themselves through mortification and the teaching and example of Christ come to love more and more the Institute and their Superiors (who show so much care for their good), those others who are full of themselves, and of mistaken and worldly thoughts, gradually lose their love for the Institute and their Superiors, because they are always at odds with them, and end up by leaving our Society. I find truly deplorable the erroneous nature of your thinking and your lack of conscientiousness in fulfilling the vow of obedience you made, and your repeated promises (ever since you entered, and the Memorial of the First Probation was explained to you.)

You speak of *family distractions*; and it is clear that you have in mind only families in the worldly sense - not religious families. - because these *distractions* are both necessary and indispensable to forming and testing the perfect virtue which you are seeking.

You talk about not wearing the religious habit, and not serving in church, and you have recourse to me as the judge of your stubbornness over obeying, as if (apart from this being a proof in you of a misguided outlook and a proud and ungrateful disposition) - as if, I say, you did not have there a Superior whom you ought to obey, and there was need for a decision of Father General to decide whether a subject ought to obey his Superior.

You say you are inclined to be *frank*; but frankness is one thing, and *sincerity* is quite another. When you make out that you are happy enough to have been given the tonsure, and you write and thank me fulsomely for this, where is your sincerity? In the depths of your heart there was a grave wound of pride.

To sum up: so far you have understood nothing of what you have been taught. Your thoughts are always somewhere else : never fixed on the sole end proposed by the Institute, which is contained in those words of Jesus Christ: *Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart. . . This is my commandment: that you should love one another . . . If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself.* You tell me haughtily that you know all these things. But no, my dear man, you do not know them. You are blind and you cannot know them. Merely to say the words is not to know them. In order to know them you have to relish them; you need the light of Jesus Christ; and up to now you do not have this. Because all those who have this light show it in practice by their actions. The only 'light' you have is darkness: it consists in your captious and lying imagination; and this is the basis of how you act.

My dear brother, I will try once more to support you; but I warn you that unless you pray fervently to be able *to know yourself and understand what constitutes the SOLE good that you are seeking in the religious life you have embraced*, and unless you are resolved to *be obedient* once and for all to your immediate Superior, and docile in obeying the rules, we shall get nowhere. Things will go from bad to worse; you will day by day be more culpable in God's sight, and an object of horror in the eyes of all of us. So what you need is *prayer*, intense prayer to God asking for *your own sanctification*. It seems that up to now you have given all too little thought to your state: without a deep persuasion of your defects and your faults you will never attain to sorrow and true amendment. Unless your heart becomes humble, you will have lost everything. May God bless you and enlighten you. This is what I pray for unceasingly.

A. R.

## 70. To Don Luigi Gentili at Loughborough

Stresa, 23 February 1845

My beloved friend and brother in Christ,

I am quite sure that your letter, which caused me a good deal of grief, was written in one of those depressed moments when the fair light of virtue seems to be obscured from us, and so we feel the full weight of our poor human nature. So I think no more about it, as if it had never been written. But neither must you, my dear Luigi, think any more that the warnings I give you, and my disapproval of certain rash steps you have taken, constitute some sort of persecution, or come of injustice or ill-feeling towards you. God sees my heart, and he knows that I love you! He sees that what I do is according to what my conscience dictates, and that I feel great distaste and repugnance when I have to reproach you. He sees also that I rejoice greatly over all your good work, and give boundless thanks to the Lord for it. So for your part, be happy and tranquil as you work in the vineyard of the Lord - but always with humility, without concocting great plans. Rather, enter into the mind of your Superiors with lively faith and a simple heart. Then all will go well. You will become holy, and through the mercy of God you will make others holy

too. As a sign of this hope, which is dear to me, I embrace you warmly in Jesus Christ - and I do so over again! Goodbye.

Yours in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

### 71. To Don Francesco Paoli at Domodossola

Stresa, 25 February 1845

My dear brother in Christ,

I can well see from your letter that poor Fehr is unaware of his faults, and that he has refused to accept the small penance you gave him, of asking pardon publicly in the refectory, or at least privately of the Sacristan. This cannot be tolerated at all, and so I give you full authority to dismiss him from the Institute. But as you tell him this, make clear the sorrow that is due when a diseased member has to be cut off because it bears no proportion to the body to which it is attached. If he accepts this decision without further pleas to be retained [in the Institute] and shown forbearance, you must then make him put off the religious habit and dress like a layman, and send him away. If he pleads to be given a further chance, show him the charity of keeping him for a while - but on these conditions:

1. He must ask pardon publicly in the refectory for his faults and failings and the scandal he has given, and do the same in private in front of Don Cicoletti;

2. He is to make a fortnight's retreat; and during this you will try to make him think deeply about the things of eternity - sin, hell, death, judgement and so on. Make every effort to get the man to humble himself and become aware of his own nothingness;

3. After the retreat, his penance will be to read Rodriguez for an hour each day, until he has finished the first two parts; and all this time, although you will not exclude him from the theology lessons, you will never ask him questions about them, and he will be under no obligation to learn them;

4. If he does not carry out this penance *with evident compunction and sincere signs of amending*, and if at this time he again shows disobedience or lack of respect, he is to be dismissed once for all.

So call him to you (and you may take Fr Rector Gagliardi as a witness), and in sorrowful but firm terms declare that he no longer belongs to the Institute.

But if, as I say, he does appeal for a further chance, you will tell him clearly but calmly on what conditions he may remain. Carry out all this exactly, and in such a way that the house gives rise to no scandal, but rather gives edification.

Your brother in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

### 72. To Don Antonio Bottari at Cherasco

Stresa, 4 March 1845

Reverend and dear Father in Christ,

. . . I am sorry to hear of the displeasing situation you tell me about. I know how difficult it is to find a remedy in such a case. Certainly the first and most effective means is prayer; for what is sought can only come from divine grace - and how can this be gained without assiduous and fervent prayer? Who is to make this prayer? First of all the Superior, who has to do what Christ himself did, saying: *For their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth*. This prayer of a Superior for his subjects is

extremely effective. We see this also in the case of Moses, who more than once saved the people from God's anger. After this it is necessary to do everything possible to get the subject himself to pray; and indeed unless this can be brought about, little enough will be achieved by the other means. In the case of the religious you mention it would be well to see if he can be got to make a series of retreats, which should lay great stress on the eternal truths. But these would have to be directed by someone experienced and zealous, following as closely as possible the method of St Ignatius. If this course can be followed by the poor religious you have in mind (first with all charity disposing him to undertake the spiritual exercises), then much has been achieved and there is good hope that good results will follow. If the light of eternal truths, and especially the thought of the situation at death of a blameworthy priest or religious, and the ensuing consequences, - if these thoughts really penetrate into the soul so as to shock and alarm it, then, again there is much good to hope for. The retreats should not be ended too soon, at least not before they have stirred up great compunction, and led to a general confession, with clear and specific resolutions to begin a new life. If the religious does not yet seem disposed for all this, there is no point in trying to force him. In that case it would be better to help him by milder methods, persuading him to offer up special prayers daily and to read books of piety, particularly those that speak of the beauty of the religious state and of the benefits which it offers. At the same time you would need gently to distance him from all the activities which could distract and upset him, while keeping him occupied with beneficial spiritual things. He needs to be convinced that, having once entered the religious state, he really must cultivate virtue, if he does not want to imperil his eternal salvation. Further, he must be persuaded of the emptiness of the present life and its apparent goods, and disillusioned of the false notion that his imperfections are to be attributed solely to those who have taught him about the religious life and the priesthood; whereas in the end they come of his free will. If he really wished, he could, by using all the available means, carry out his duties, gain merit, and finally become meek and docile.

Although the Superior needs to make unceasing use of all these means and others (which can only be determined through an intimate knowledge of the dispositions of the subject), nonetheless it sometimes happens that nothing seems to be gained. This is no reason to give up or be discouraged. But if after using all possible care, with charity and patience, you find that the religious still does great harm to the general good of the community, it would be better to set about prudently obtaining his secularization. For it often happens that religious orders suffer much damage through such members; and this is why St Ignatius wisely kept the door open so that he could send away those who failed to correspond to their vocation.

With regard to books which can serve as suitable spiritual food for nuns, it seems to me that the most suitable are *Rodriguez, The Holy Nun* by St Alfonsus, and certain works of St Francis of Sales intended for Sisters.

My warm greetings to you in the heart of Jesus.

Your humble and devoted servant in Christ,  
R. p.

### **73. To the scholastics studying philosophy at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 8 March 1845**

My dear sons in Christ,

Although I cannot always reply to your letters, as I should like to do, still even when I am unable, you can be compensated by knowing that it is a great pleasure to me to receive accounts of your dispositions, especially when they show great love of your holy vocation. I hope that you will all be full of this love, and that you will daily receive further light from the Lord, so as to realize the greatness of the mercy he has shown you

in separating you from the world so that you may consecrate yourselves solely to him, and become victims of the universal charity which he taught us by his words, his life, and his death. May he bring it about that none of you lags behind, but rather that each of you is zealous for the better gifts, making every effort to overcome and renounce himself, destroying all the obstacles that the flesh and self-love put in the way of practising perfectly the love of Christ. This charity, this love, must be at the heart of all your thoughts, and be the inspiration of all your actions. It must teach you to be exact and diligent in the perfect observance of your rules, and to be punctilious in making your meditation and carrying out all your other spiritual duties: these are the delight of a fervent heart. This charity must make you thoroughly obedient; and to obedience you must add willingness, a readiness to be humbled and submissive. And as charity unites you closely with your Superiors, towards whom you must be loving and full of trust, so too it joins you to one another in close friendship, making you one heart and one soul; this befits you as fellow-disciples in the school of Jesus Christ.

What a beautiful thing it is, my dear brothers, to respond generously to the vocation of love to which Christ calls you in the Institute! So too it is a beautiful thing to have nothing to do but love! For it is by loving that you will be true and perfect members of this Institute. You must act out of love, speak out of love, be silent out of love, study out of love, suffer out of love - and I will not say rejoice out of love, because love is itself a joy that mingles in all that is done out of love. Since you are scholastics, you should particularly study out of love: I mean out of love of God and of his holy will, and for the sake of that wisdom which is God himself. I say, too, out of love for your neighbour, since the Institute of Charity would have its members love God without limit in their neighbour. It takes for its foundation, for its device and its motto the precept of Jesus Christ: *This is my commandment: that you love one another. Again, By this will men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.* For our school is the school of Christ, and our aim is that of fulfilling Christ's command. We have no other occupation. Hence the Institute loves all gifts, all talents, including natural ones, all kinds of knowledge; and it requires its members to enrich themselves plentifully, with this kind of wealth, using all diligence and care over this, according to obedience. The reason for this is that all gifts, talents, knowledge (even human) are means of doing good to our neighbour, and especially to his soul, because they are informed and directed by love.

The basis of such a vocation must be a deep humility, by which a man attributes to God all the good he possesses, acknowledging that all that is evil comes from himself. He must place no trust in his own opinions and judgements, and be uncertain of the sincerity of his heart. Then he will show this salutary distrust of self by his modesty in speaking and acting. It is this humble unpretentiousness which makes a man just before God and loveable to other people. Such humility excludes all self-assertion, and is ready to yield place to others. Through it a man always rates himself the least of all and the servant of all.

May God bless you abundantly, and grant you these virtues - they are all part of your vocation.

Your father in Christ,  
R. p.

#### **74. To the Sister of Providence Felice Stedile at Cameri**

**Stresa, 21 March 1845**

My dear daughter in Christ,

Have no fear: our Lord and our Lady are near you to help you when you are tempted. It is enough to invoke them without ceasing, and tell them that you do not wish to offend them

by the slightest thought. Take the greatest care to guard your eyes; and if there should arise the evil thoughts that you write to me about, chase them away and detest them. If they return, hate them even more. Remember that you belong entirely to Jesus Christ, and that he greatly loves his spouses in their purity. I can tell from your letter that the things you have suffered were temptations of the devil, but that you did not sin, because you did everything possible to free yourself from them. So there is no material here for confession. All the same, to humble yourself more thoroughly, confess that you have had thoughts against the most beautiful of the virtues. But there is no need to be more specific. Trust in the Lord, and pray at all times for -

Your father in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

**75. To Suor Giovanna Antonietti, Superior at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 29 March 1845**

My dear daughter in Christ,

When you are giving instructions to the community, do not fail to say to them all: 'The Sisters of Providence ought to be great of heart, capable with God's help of imitating the apostles, who went everywhere in the world in search of souls.' You should get them all to understand that it is a great grace to be sent by God far from their own families and homeland to live among heretics and unbelievers in order to be co-operators of Jesus Christ for the salvation of their neighbour; and that then they truly are *Daughters of Providence* who can look to that divine Providence for all things. Goodbye. Pray for -

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**76. To Don G. B. Imperatori at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 9 April 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

My heart feels great sympathy for you in view of your state of affliction. But what especially pains me is to see how easily you could overcome the enemies that torment you, yet you do not make up your mind to do so. It would be enough if you were to hear the voice of Jesus Christ, who said of legitimate Superiors: *He who hears you hears me*. It would be enough if you would listen to the Church, which has always taught that anyone who abandons himself to the guidance of obedience can never be deceived. It would be enough if you kept before your eyes the example of all the saints, who submitted their judgement to that of others.

Make, once and for all, a resolution *no longer to act as judge of yourself, but to follow like a child what is said to you by your confessors and Superiors!* These are your judges, so why be stubborn in acting as judge in your own case? Even when it seems to you certain that you have committed a mortal sin, *you are still obliged to believe your Superiors* when they tell you that this is not so. And if you then say Mass relying on their word, you will never, never commit a sacrilege - even if *per impossibile* there were sin. Rather, you would gain the merit of obedience and the pardon of your sin. Put away entirely the fear that your Superiors are deceiving themselves, or that they do not understand you etc. All these are thoughts that you must not entertain - and far less take as guides for your conduct. Instead, when they present themselves, you must say: 'I will not think these things: let Superiors deal with them; I am sure I am doing the right thing

because I am obeying. This is the only way in which I can please God. So I will go ahead. Why should I hesitate or doubt? Lord, give me obedience; holy Mary obtain for me the grace never to doubt what I am commanded, but rather to believe without stopping to consider, even when appearances are contradictory. I entirely renounce my own judgement out of love of God. Be pleased, Lord, to accept my sacrifice.' This is what you must say, and this is how you must combat any contrary thoughts.

So take courage, my dear brother. If you carry out my suggestions you will soon be happy and regain peace of mind; and then you will be able to do much good, to yourself and to the young people whom God has entrusted to your care! It is enough if you have blind faith in obedience: then you will certainly gain the victory: *The obedient man will sing of victory*. So write and tell me that you have made a good resolution not to think about yourself any more, but simply to follow the most sure and consoling guidance of those who direct you. I expect a letter soon. And unworthy though I am, I will pray to the Lord for you, asking him to give you the light to see how excellent and salutary is the way I have shown you - or rather the way God shows you through me.

Yours in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

### 77. To Don Luigi Gentili at Loughborough

Stresa, 10 April 1845

My beloved brother in Christ,

I read with joy in the Lord your last report, although I had already seen the articles in the *Tablet*. I am certain that the missions are important for that country, and for my part I promise you I will make every effort to support them. But we must always bear in mind two great maxims of our Institute: (1) to do well whatever we undertake, especially fulfilling the *duties* involved in the ministries we take on, so as to keep our conscience clear; (2) not to assume obligations greater than our strength, because if we do, we shall not be able to meet our commitments, carry them out perfectly, preserve our spirit, or carry on for long. Fr Provincial is in agreement with me over this. So you see we cannot for the moment burden ourselves with the missions offered to us by our good friend Phillips. *Ask the Lord of the harvest . . .* If the labourers come, we shall gladly do so.

With regard to the signs Providence is showing us, it does seem that within a few years we shall not have such a dearth of men, provided that we go ahead prudently now, and do not take on too many things out of a desire to do too much. So let us set about continuing the work of the missions, which will be blessed by God if we carry them on in accord with his Spirit. We must not be anxious to make our Institute *famous* - no, for goodness' sake! Any 'fame', if it should arise, must not come from ourselves. Let us hope in God and serve him quietly and in great humility, so that the spirit of the world plays no part in what we do. We have to guard against the ways of the world, and *beware of men*. People in great position often have their own notions, but for our part we must not always go along with them. Our hope is in God: he is our inheritance.

If I could go to England I am sure I should learn many things; but for the present the Lord does not seem to want this. The faithful reports of my dear brethren will make up for my lack of first-hand experience.

Fr Provincial will soon be back with you, and this will be a great comfort for you all. The loss will be all mine; but - patience!

I am glad to hear that you have written to Mgr Wiseman, and that the Lord is making you realize your own nothingness. Indeed, what is man that he should put on airs! What madness that would be! I always pray for you, and you will pray for me. In this way we shall find ourselves together before the throne of God.

Your brother in Christ,  
A. R.

**78. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan**

**Stresa, 15 April 1845**

My dear friend,

I was sorry to hear that your niece is gravely ill and has been given the [last] sacraments. We and our Sisters will continue to pray for her to the Lord, who has already granted the gift of the patience and resignation that you and the poor husband show; and this is a pledge of the greater gift that God will give you of final endurance should he be pleased to call her soul to himself. I can well see that your good soul is prepared even for that painful farewell, like one who in the end hopes only to see that in all things there should be done the holy, just, wise and sublime will of the Creator. For all the virtue and the happiness too of the Christian soul consists in conformity with that will. Yes, I realize that however great your love, however great your sorrow, these will not prevent you from singing *Te Deum* with a devout and grateful heart even if you suffer this loss. For it is true that everything, both what we gain and what we lose, is a grace and a gift if we recognize that hand from which they come - a hand more than fatherly. *To those who love God, all things work together for good*. So I will add no more. But I yet want to believe that there is still hope of her recovery . . .

Yours affectionately in the Lord,  
A. R. p.

**79. To the cleric Fiorenzo Forzani at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 23 April 1845**

My dear Fiorenzo,

I should like to be able to comfort you in your difficulties and strengthen you in your weakness; but what comfort and strength can I offer you except by sending you to the one source of these - the example of our Lord Jesus Christ? Yes, we have to keep our eyes fixed on him if we wish to keep our footing; and should we withdraw the eyes of our mind from that divine Master of ours, we at once fall. The study of perfection consists in directing our thoughts and our affections to what is eternal. For if we place them in what is passing, our aims no longer have any substance. While we strive with all our heart for the things of eternity, it is impossible that transient events and the accidents of time should deflect us from the right path, become obstacles or take away our courage. And what indeed is a reproach, a punishment, a humiliation of any kind, even an unmerited one, but something passing and momentary? So why should we remain troubled and let ourselves be upset by something which is a mere nothing compared with the good we are seeking, since it is a matter of this world, and not of the eternity on which our minds are set? For the perfection of our souls is truly something *eternal*, being constituted by virtue and divine grace, which is both eternal and infinite. So if we do not know how to put up with mortifications and draw profit from being humbled, we do harm only to ourselves, to our souls; for these could be made rich in virtue. Yet we, for a mere trifle, prevent this from happening, and at the same time impoverish ourselves of the virtue already acquired.

Furthermore: reflect, my dear Fiorenzo, that one of the dispositions most favourable to growing in perfection is to take great account of even small faults. When we are really convinced that any moral defect is of very great importance, far more so than

any physical ill, then we do not think we can ever be too severely punished, or sufficiently humbled for the defects we have committed. This conviction, both true and praiseworthy, was fully verified in the souls of the saints. And I believe that no one can become holy unless he is anxious that even his slight faults should meet with due punishment; unless he has a great desire to be humiliated, and co-operates with divine justice by receiving readily and gladly reproaches and penances for his defects, even though these are not grave. Oh, if only we were spiritually enlightened, how slight a thing it would seem to us to receive humiliation, and how inadequate would seem the penances we were given in comparison with the seriousness of our shortcomings! Only when a soul realizes this truth does it become large-hearted. And this, my dear Fiorenzo, is what I wish you to be.

Another thing: why do you not look less at the perhaps outward severity of Superiors but more at their gentle charity and their zeal over your perfection? What is it that Superiors do, what is their aim, if not to see you become good and if possible perfect? So why stop at the exterior appearances instead of corresponding with gratitude and enlightened love to that apparent severity which comes solely from their love? Why look on them coldly because of what, if you judged rightly, you would see as reason to feel the warmth of affection?

I hope, my dear brother, that you will understand how true are these reflections, and that you will write to me about the good effect they have had on you. May God bless you. Goodbye.

Your father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI

#### **80. To Don Giuseppe Toscani at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 24 April 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

I am sorry if the little note I sent you has upset you. But notice, I am quite sure that the punishment you gave the boy was deserved. So too I am sure that your only motive in what you did was a holy zeal for his benefit and for the general good. So where did my doubts arise? I will speak to you frankly, as you wish, and as I usually do. What concerned me was that your perhaps over-severe and rather angry manner may have raised a storm in the poor fellow's mind; whereas a more fatherly (and if you like, motherly) approach would have avoided this and had a better chance of bringing about his amendment. What you did was just; but we have to look not only at the justice of what we do, but also at the effect we want it to have - which is moral improvement. We have to do everything possible to convince our pupils that we have the greatest love in our hearts for them, and that everything we do is motivated by this gentle love. And to this end it is helpful to reason calmly with them - to punish them, yes, when this is necessary; but to do so not with a show of authority but rather with real affection. If once we gain the hearts of our pupils, we are able to do much for their good.

So do not be disturbed about that reservation of mine: it was no more than a certain doubt. And if it had no foundation, so much the better. Even if it was wrong in substance, it will not have had an ill effect if it gives me an occasion to do what I felt was my duty, and give you an opportunity to perform a beautiful act of humility. I embrace you warmly in the Heart of Jesus.

Your brother in Christ,  
A. R. p.

## 81. To Don Francesco Paoli at Domodossola

Stresa, 29 April 1845

My dear brother in Christ,

I have received the report on our students of theology and on that house. As for what you say about striking a balance between being strict and being lax - this is a good maxim, properly understood. Yet it is not all that has to be said. After taking thought about what my experience suggests that I might offer you in the way of advice about how a Superior should behave, I have decided to put these points to you:

(1) In dealing with those in your charge, make sure that you are never hasty or curt. Instead, speak to them always gently, reason with them in an unhurried way, showing willingness to explain things in detail; listen patiently, and reply patiently. It is true that all this takes quite a lot of time; but it is time well spent. For this way of acting is a great way of winning over their affection and their trust - which is the *main thing* that a Superior must study to gain by the way he rules;

(2) Speak frankly and sincerely from your heart. At times one may think it prudent to keep quiet about some defect, yet later, after long silence, suddenly break out into bitter reproaches - bitter at least in the curt and summary way one expresses them. This is a grave mistake. Instead of doing good it causes much harm. Subjects should never encounter any sudden change of attitude in a Superior, such as would be an abrupt transition from having kept too silent to speaking out too strongly;

(3) Aim at maintaining an even disposition, always calm and patient, even when you have many things to see to, and when you are interrupted or taken by surprise;

(4) Be sure that your replies and your decisions do not seem to your subjects to be irresponsible, or taken on a sudden impulse, without mature deliberation. There is nothing that so effectively earns the esteem of subjects as the conviction that their Superior never thinks or acts thoughtlessly, but always with reflection, giving due weight to matters. If he acts like this he will rarely need to alter a decision previously taken, and never lightly.

Yours affectionately,  
A. R.

## 82. To Don Luigi Gentili at Loughborough

Stresa, 30 April 1845

My dear brother in Christ,

I have received another letter from you, again exhorting me to visit England. I am convinced by the reasons you give for such a visit, but for the present it is impossible. And given that the Lord does not afford me the opportunity, or inspire in me a resolution to make the journey, we must put our trust in him alone, and hope that he, who knows everything, will give us the light to see how we ought to proceed. I regard it as absolutely necessary to trust in God; and the people who show that trust are those who trust in obedience to their Superiors, and allow themselves to be guided blindly with real faith. It is in this way that they save their souls.

Fr Provincial will be leaving within a few days: he will then be among you, and he counts for much more than I. It is he who will make known to all of you the will of the Lord, and be the instrument of each one's eternal salvation.

I will never make any decision regarding that country off my own bat, but will very gladly listen to the advice and information that my brethren give me. But when I have reached a decision, after taking account of what I have been told, I expect humble submission from all our men, and the perfect obedience (with no arbitrary interpretations)

which alone can obtain abundant blessings from the Lord. I am most anxious to promote the work of the missions, which do so much good; and I put much trust in your zeal. You must though, always act not with a view to pleasing men, or from merely human considerations, but instead trust in the solid and unchangeable maxims of the gospel. Among these is the call to perform exactly one's duties and obligations. This is how our Lord himself acted: he performed the duties of an ordinary Israelite, *so that he might fulfil all justice*.

I pray God most earnestly that he will, while giving you great success in your work for his glory, keep you *under the shadow of his wings* so that your heart is never puffed up by pride, and the corruption of vanity does not take away from your merits. I hope that you pray similarly: God will surely give you this grace. He will also give you the great enlightenment he gives to his saints, so that you will be able to see and understand that a single act of simple obedience is worth more than the entire conversion of England. I am sure you will imitate the obedience of St Francis Xavier and all the other saints, not trying to use your reason when you are tempted - since it is always through specious *reasoning* that the devil seduces people, and so it is the one who refuses to reason with him who gains the victory.

As regards the young Welsh lady : by no means think of making her a religious; instead, simply encourage her, with prudence and caution, to follow the invitation the Lord offers her interiorly, so that she may re-enter the Catholic Church. If God wishes more from her, he will not fail first to work in her heart. When it is the Lord's pleasure to give our Sisters a home of their own, vocations will manifest themselves in due course. For the rest, Fr Provincial, who will soon rejoin you, will arrange everything suitably on the spot.

I embrace you warmly in the Lord, and ask you to make sure that during your missions the people say at least a 'Hail, Mary' for me.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,  
A. R.

### 83. To Don Giuseppe Gagliardi at Domodossola

Stresa, 11 May 1845

My dear brother in Christ,

I hope that you will have found Don Vincenzo improved in health. I think it will help if you treat him with the greatest patience and when necessary listen to his detailed accounts of things. I have learnt from experience that it is very necessary for a Superior to listen patiently to those in his charge so as to gain their trust, and dispose them in due course to accept his decisions, in the conviction that he has made them not lightly but with due consideration and maturity. So it would be well if, after you had weighed the matter well, you made your decision, relying on no other reasons than obedience and the will of God, and then said what was to be done, without adding anything further. All this should be done gravely and calmly. Should the subject begin to object and argue, he would perhaps have all the more difficulty in obeying. Again, be as reasonable as you can with him; but *do not give him any chance to stray outside the limits of his position or to take on tasks not included in his office*, as I have told you before. May the Lord bless you all.

Yours affectionately,  
ROSMINI p.

### 84. To Don Fortunato Signini {f}

Stresa, 14 May 1845

My dear brother in Christ,

[Rosmini gives some spiritual advice in point form.]

(1) Take as your model the cheerfulness of St Philip Neri, imitating him by acting simply and without any ceremony, avoiding excessive seriousness and a solemn and heavy-handed way of acting.

(2) Cultivate a low opinion of yourself and a constant internal self-depreciation, not expecting other people to treat you otherwise than as someone worthless; and have a great relish for the slights we meet with and which make us like our Lord Jesus Christ.

(3) Allow yourself to be directed by Superiors as they please and as they believe necessary to exercise you in virtue and help you to become holy; never fail to discern their good intentions and their love.

(4) Be sure to love your Superiors, and to lighten their burden and problems by a disposition of filial good will and gratitude, and by serving them in any way you can and according to their wishes.

(5) Do not give any substance to your imaginings, or treat slight and childish difficulties as if they were huge. Learn to think in a large and manly fashion

(6) Listen humbly even to something you already know, with a wish to learn more, and do not interrupt your Superior by saying, 'I know what you mean', or making any other presumptuous remark.

(7) Try to keep a calm mind always, a peaceful and gentle disposition through immense charity; act in an orderly fashion, without anxiety or confusion; and do not imagine you are already perfect, especially when it comes to external, material matters. To act so would be to show presumption and lack of experience; and here it is apt to remember what scripture says: *Do not be over-just*.

May Jesus and Mary grant you all these things.

A. ROSMINI p.

{fs}Fr Signini was due to return to England with Fr Pagani

## 85. To Don Giulio Ratti, Provost of San Fedele in Milan

Stresa, 24 May 1845

Very Reverend Provost,

During the Easter retreat I listened very willingly to what Don Giambattista had to say. I was very sorry to hear about the anguish of mind he is suffering, and am anxious as far as I can to help him. He has already begun his retreat, which he is making very earnestly (a few days ago I heard his confession), and it should be over in four or five days' time.

As for deciding over the religious state, it does not seem to me that at the moment, when his soul is inevitably disturbed, the idea should be put to him, since he would not be able to make a decision with the proper maturity; and he might afterwards repent of it, thinking he had been sent to the cloister through outside pressure, or out of desperation. Things would then be worse than ever, and public opinion would take the matter amiss. So my advice would be that he should defer the question till later, when his troubles have been sorted out and he has recovered peace of mind and calmness.

As for what you mention to me - that I might admit Don Giambattista into the Institute of Charity: I am sorry to have to say that even if he were to choose this course in all calm of mind and with the most pure intentions, I could not at present accept him. You can well understand the reason. If the Institute had a house that accommodated those who

wished to do penance, on the lines of those of the purely contemplative orders, I could most willingly receive anyone who had been cast upon the rocks of this world, and in all innocence had lost public repute, and wished to repent sincerely of his faults, and through a mortified life atone for them. But the Institute at present does not have one of these houses, very valuable as they are. Instead it is engaged in works of charity towards others; and these works cannot usefully be done by anyone who has lost public esteem.

It would be another matter if, after a few years, and given public proof of a complete change of life, leading to the recovery of a good reputation through edifying activities, an individual genuinely felt called to our way of life. I would then have no difficulty in receiving him, because to lapse is only human, and when failings have been compensated for by constant repentance, they are forgotten not only by God but by men themselves, conscious as they are of their own fallibility.

But I cannot in this way sufficiently show the esteem in which I hold you; and charity towards poor Don Giambattista leads me to propose another refuge where he could go to make up for what is lost. You might consider whether you think this opportune. His Majesty King Charles Albert has given me the abbey of San Michele della Chiusa, telling me of his wish that to it might be admitted certain guests who, without taking vows, might wish to pass all or part of their lives out of the world, and to do so in that spot. So my offer is that I am ready to receive Don Giambattista in that house among those guests who pay a modest fee, should he be inclined to adapt himself to the common discipline of the house and put up with the discomforts of the situation as part of the penance which, if he becomes a changed man, he will wish to make.

So, my dear Provost, think about all this, and if you think good, write yourself about the idea to Don Giambattista. I have not myself mentioned this plan to him so far; and it is much better that the thing should not come from me.

I hope that you will be able to arrange and conclude the proposed deal with the creditors, and I beg you to let us know at once if this is the case, for our consolation. Giambattista himself would regard it as a great grace if you were to make a trip and visit him. I promised him that I would write to you about this wish of his.

Although I sincerely regret the matter which has caused me to get in touch with you by this letter, it is at the same time a great pleasure for me to have the opportunity to take up again an old relationship, and express to you my esteem, as I sign myself -

Your humble and devoted servant,  
A. R. p.

## 86. To Don G. B. Pagani at Ratcliffe

Stresa, 2 June 1845

My dear brother in Christ,

I have heartily thanked God for your safe journey{f}, and for the news that our men are well and spiritually sound - this greatly cheered me. Yes, take every care to see that they, and especially you, do not suffer from the cold and the damp. See that Lockhart, who is absent too much, is not disadvantaged spiritually{f}. As for the necessary temporal means, God's promise never fails, my dear man - *all these things shall be added to you*. And although you rightly use all the means within your power to supply what is needed, you must not be anxious about anything: this would be to distrust God's loving Providence, whereas we should repose calmly in it. So be sure that you faithfully go by the words of Christ: *Do not be anxious*. When we trust in them, our heart is relieved of the thorns of all disquiet and worry. I should like to see you perfect in this matter, as the saints are, and as is wholly reasonable when we believe in God. He will provide for us to the extent that we put our trust in him. So not only must you have peace of mind (while

doing all you can to help yourself), but you must infuse a total trust in the others as regards temporal needs. Should you incur debts, then pay them. Has the Institute ever lacked what is necessary? Never in the past; and it never will in the future if we serve God and put our trust in him. So be guided, in this matter as in others, by the sentiments and teachings of Instruction 5 of the *Maxims*. These principles must form one of the foundations of the Institute. I hope you will act on them and seek help in this through meditation and acts of faith. In this way your heart will be made stronger.

Yours affectionately,  
A. R.

{fs}Pagani had left Italy on 15 May to return to England. {fs}Lockhart had not up to then completed the second year of his noviciate.

**96. To the subdeacon Giuseppe Fiachetti at Intra**

**Stresa, 1 August 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

. . . That would certainly be a good place for the School of Method - a project dear to my heart. But if it was a matter of assuming responsibility for the renting of the house, I do not know how I could manage this. We should need the help of benefactors. Another consideration is this: great caution is needed in speaking of the idea; and we must never lead anyone to believe that we have any plans as regards the house of the Oratorians. This is because we must avoid upsetting anyone or giving any cause for ill-feeling. Charity, which is what we profess, dictates this; and charity requires the height of prudence. So be very circumspect and diplomatic over all this.

For the rest, treat your companions with unlimited patience, now that in some sense you are their Superior; for patience is the greatest gift a wise Superior can possess. Rouse up afresh their love of God, (from whom comes all that we do), and their diligence in observing the holy rules. Encourage their charity towards their neighbour, and get them to see that they are blessed in being able to serve Jesus Christ in children. And see also that they understand that to serve him well it is necessary to give every care to learning and putting into practice a sound method of teaching, and to acquiring the gifts of a perfect instructor. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**97. To the cleric Arnoldo Fehr at Stresa**

**Stresa, 4 August 1845**

My dear Arnoldo,

I am sorry to say that I cannot accept any of the proposals you make to me in your letter. What you have heard me say, and what I have written in so many letters (which you have perhaps kept), must convince you of my opinion. But I will say again: no one can be kept in the Institute (1) who does not profess universal charity; (2) who is ambitious for dignities. (This applies especially to the priesthood: a brother should rather wish for humbler occupations); (3) who is stubborn in his judgements and who wants to decide on his own what he shall do, instead of falling in with the opinions of his Superiors; (4) who is inclined to criticize his brethren and find fault with his Superiors instead of being concerned to amend and reform himself; (5) who is more concerned with study and

gaining intellectual knowledge than with the practice of the evangelical virtues; (6) who thinks in a human, worldly way, and gives weight to the nobility of his family (which he exaggerates); or believes that certain things, honourable in themselves, are not suited to him because he is well-born; (7) who is unmortified and does not know how to make the sacrifices necessary to live the common life and carry out his duties.

I do not know what the Institute has received from you; but I know very well that it has kept you for six years. I know too that you have taken vows, and so you have no right to speak of what you brought and what is no longer yours. Rather you should speak of what you have received, and of what well-disposed people would remember with gratitude. There is nothing I can do for you in relation to the Congregation of Propaganda in Rome. For the rest, if you will not follow the advice I have already given you, I shall not be surprised, knowing all too well how difficult you find it to change your way of thinking; but I trust the Lord will enlighten you if you pray to him. But in the meanwhile, remember that before the coming holidays you must have found yourself somewhere else to live. You will only be deceiving yourself if you imagine that things can be otherwise. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**98. To Suor Giovanna Antonietti, Superior at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 13 August 1845**

My dear daughter in Christ,

Remembering that up to now you have always obeyed me, I could only feel sorry when I read in your letter the request: 'Do whatever you like with me, but do not make me Superior any longer.' I really do sympathize - more than you know - with what you suffer. But remember at the same time that a woman who is a servant of God has to be *strong*, and rise above the difficulties that, with God's permission, she meets with in her ministry. So you must be brave, because in this matter there is *a snare of the devil*, who is envious of your spiritual good and that of the Sisters. Do not let him entrap you: chase away the *gloomy thoughts* he puts in your mind, and cling to the words of your Superior, since these certainly make known the will of God to you. Be patient, then, and trust in God. You will never be sorry you obeyed, for this alone makes you holy. The reasons which you have for being downcast will gradually be taken away: for now, you must be patient. The new Vicarress will give you much more help than you receive at present. In conclusion, for your penance you are to go before the Blessed Sacrament and consider for a while that Jesus Christ offered himself to his Father for you. After that you are to *make him a generous offering of yourself*, asking pardon for your faint-heartedness and your lack of resignation, and promising him to be more courageous in future, relying on his help. I await a consoling letter from you.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**99. To the Marquis Gustavo di Cavour in Turin**

**Stresa, 6 September 1845**

My dear Marquis,

I wanted to give you the thanks which were your due, for all the kind attentions I received from you during my stay in Turin, and for your delightful company which made those

days pass so agreeably; but you have forestalled me with your letter. I am greatly touched by the wish you express in it of our finding ourselves together in the heavenly Jerusalem. Yes, we shall be united in eternity, my dear Marquis: of this I harbour the deepest trust. And we shall be filled at the source of that truth, ever old and ever new, which forms our delight even here on earth. We shall drink from that spring where truth, which is contemplated and perceived in its ineffable beauty, is at once love and eternal life. That one object of our affections and thoughts which now forms the bond between our souls will then unite them completely. That object, at once utterly simple and infinite will then no longer be known simply by faith, as it is now, hidden behind a veil through which a few rays penetrate, but will be seen as it really is, in its infinite light, and perceived substantially, possessed, enjoyed and (as it were) felt . . . and, more still, be our nourishment for ever. This is my hope, or rather our most lively hope, *which shall never be disappointed*.

I embrace you heartily, and I beg you to remember me before the Lord.

Yours,  
R.

**100. To Don Cesare Flecchia at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 28 October 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

In reply to your letter, first of all, I find displeasing the word you use at the beginning when you say you have been *banished* from the noviciate house. You have not been banished from it - merely transferred to another, as is normal practice when Superiors judge in the Lord that such a move is for the greater glory of God and the greater profit of the brethren. To say that Superiors have 'banished' you, when they have merely changed where you are to live, is to do them wrong; for they have no intention of treating you amiss; and you on your part show very little indifference to the various offices of charity - though such indifference is so essential to our holy vocation. So do not take things in this ungracious way; rather, be always content and happy over every decision, with your whole heart and soul intent on fulfilling devotedly the duties attached to whatever post Providence assigns you to, and on sanctifying yourself in it. Certainly if you do this you will give rise to love and joy in the family in which you find yourself. This is what you must aim for: to maintain both calm of mind and fervour in yourself, and in a kindly spirit, to encourage fervour in your companions. Goodbye, my dear Cesare: keep up your courage, your trust in God and your union with him. Pray for -

Your affectionate brother and father,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**101. To the cleric Pietro Caire at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 31 October 1845**

My dear son in Christ,

The coldness and slackness you show over your duties and over your vocation and the good works you are engaged in make me greatly fear for you. I have not even found you fit this year to take your scholastic vows along with your brethren. What are you about, my dear Pietro? Do you not realize that a vocation to the Institute of Charity calls for fervour of spirit, a generous heart, and the resolve to fulfil with love and diligence the various duties attached to the ministries given to you by obedience, seeing these as the

means of your own sanctification? Even the small trial I made of you when I sent you into the elementary schools was not a success. If you do not exert yourself more in practising virtue you will not succeed in this sort of work. I will try you out again this year by giving you a quite easy charitable work, in a small school, and I shall watch to see how you do there. You need to pray earnestly for spiritual fervour and a realization of the beauty and importance of your various duties. Fr Rector will tell you as soon as he can where you are to go.

In the lively hope that you will give me greater satisfaction in the future I ask the Lord to bless you abundantly.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

**102. To the cleric Bernardo Morre at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 1 November 1845**

My dear son,

You must make up your mind to aim at solid virtue. A brother in the Institute of Charity is obliged to recognize Jesus Christ in every Superior, and to love and reverence him: this is the spirit of obedience. You ought to want to be treated with complete candour by Superiors and to be corrected by them; and if you are not able to take in good part what they do for your good, and to recognize that they show charity even when they reproach you, and so on, - solely, as I say, for your own good - and if you are not capable of overcoming yourself and your imagination, your sensibilities and fastidiousness, I tell you that I shall not be able to keep you long within the Institute. You have made your noviciate; you have studied; and yet you are still a CHILD: everything frightens you; everything disgusts you and lessens your love for Superiors! No, I cannot tolerate these things in you. Either you really want to overcome yourself and hold in check your crazy fantasies, or you do not. I will give you another test this year. Superiors have treated you up to now with too much tenderness and delicacy; and as a consequence you have become over-fastidious. I will not allow things go on like this. I will instruct your Superiors to treat you with less consideration so as to test your virtue and see whether you can remain in the Institute or not. So my decision will depend on your conduct this year. Goodbye.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. R. p.

**103. To Suor Bonaventura Rosmini at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 3 November 1845**

My dear daughter in Christ,

It does not surprise me that the fact that the Mistress you love has been moved has caused you some disturbance of mind; but this trying experience shows that the change was necessary, and that divine Providence (which we must adore in all things) has brought it about for your good. My dear, we have to learn to love without becoming attached. What does this mean? It means loving God and loving in God: it means loving spiritually. When we love people in God and for God's sake, it does not grieve us if we are separated from them by distance; because it is not their physical presence that we love; rather we love in them the work of God, their God-given gifts, the virtues with which God has endowed them. These are all spiritual things which we can love equally well whether they

are near us or far from us. We have to learn to remain united in spirit with those we love; and the spirit can join together hearts that are far apart. It is our senses which wish for their physical presence; but we must mortify and defy our senses with a holy detachment of soul. If God wishes someone who is dear to us to serve him elsewhere, should we not wish it too? If we love God, we shall. If we love his holy will above all things, then we shall rejoice over any way in which it is done. And how can we know whether perhaps God, by separating us from some individual, is using this to lead us to acquire greater merit in heaven and greater graces now? We must be quite sure that this is the end and object of what God disposes; for he does everything for our good. So if the love we have for someone is good (and to be good, it must wish for *their* good), we must be altogether happy when God disposes of that person according to his own good pleasure. Think about these reasons, my dear daughter, and you will become calmer and more steadfast should anything of the kind occur again.

My dear Suor Bonaventura, I know that for some time you have been teaching in school; and this is a fine field in which to exercise charity towards your little sisters in Christ and to gain great merit! I am happy on your account. I hope you will never forget to pray for me, your affectionate father in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Goodbye.

A. R.

**104. To Don Giacomo Molinari at the Sagra di San Michele**

**Stresa, 6 November, 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

Bear in mind that the Lord wants us all to become perfect in meekness and gentleness: *Learn of me for I am meek and gentle of heart*. I hear these words more and more every day in the depths of my heart, and particularly when I meet with contradictions and attacks; for I recognize in them the training-ground in which our beloved Lord wants to exercise us in virtue. So win over the brother you tell me about by using the weapons of untiring gentleness and love, together with calm but firm reasoning. And if you do not succeed in changing his views (and I believe he is difficult as a result also of the physical constitution of his brain), say to him simply: 'My dear brother, obey for the love of God; and then if you think I am wrong, tell me so. And if I do not altogether agree with what you say, write to my and your Superior. As soon as he tells me his will, I will blindly put aside my view and readily obey him. And in this way both you and I will make ourselves holy through obedience.'

For the rest, whenever you can, be inclined to go along with his opinion; and even when you cannot do this, always show him esteem, listen patiently to him, make him see that you respect his reasons and look into them carefully. This much is owed to him on account of his good faith and sincere piety, even though it may not change his pigheadedness and his coarseness of judgement. As for settling the matter with a suitable decree, I do not think this is the time for that, since the brother might be rather hurt by it, and that would mean a lessening of the charity that I should like to be strong and lively among you. When the time is right, I will see to it. Greet everyone warmly for me. Goodbye.

Yours in Christ,  
A. R.

**105. To Don G. B. Imperatori at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 7 November 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

When your Superiors decide something you have doubts about, you must believe that they have taken into account *all possible circumstances*; and to say that perhaps they think things are different from the reality, perhaps they are lax in their teaching, and so on, is to do an injury to your Superiors, and through them to God himself in whose name they speak. So when I decided and commanded you *to think no more about vows, whether in the past or in the future*, and have disqualified you from making any - as I now again command and disqualify you - then you have heard what is THE WILL OF GOD, and you must think no further, nor make objections, nor put forward arguments or further reflections. Rather you must BELIEVE BLINDLY AND OBEY. If you fail to do this, despite the fact that God himself speaks so clearly to you through the voice of his ministers and removes all ambiguities, how will you ever be freed from the web of fantasies in which you so stubbornly wrap yourself? So do not talk to me about vows, past or future: I do not want to give you a hundred times over the same decision and the same command. If you do not obey the first time, you will not obey the hundredth. So abandon yourself to the word of your Superiors, who when they speak to you certainly do not want to lose their own souls so as to save yours. What is needed from you is ABANDONMENT, not REASONINGS. So I again forbid you to read *any moralist*, or even to ask advice over your doubts. Your morals teacher is God himself, who speaks and decides matters through the mouth of Superiors. *He who hears you, hears me*. I hope that you will take new heart and resolve to become wise. Goodbye.

Yours in Christ,  
A. R.

#### 106. To Doctor Pusey in Oxford

Stresa, 13 November 1845

Reverend Sir,

In the French newspaper, *L'Ami de la Religion* of the 6th of November this year a letter is printed concerning the conversion to Catholicism of Dr Newman, and this letter is attributed to you. I thought that, if indeed the letter was yours, you would not be displeased if I yielded to the desire of my heart, and let you know what a great consolation that letter was to me and to and to many of my friends. That letter showed the trust you place in prayer, the wish to get rid of heresy as an obstacle to union, the desire to be guided by the Spirit of God into truth and conformity to the divine will, a lively faith in God's mercy, and a thirst for justice. All these things are gifts from the Lord; and your letter contains unambiguous expressions of them. So I hope that you will allow me, a Catholic priest here on the Continent, to say that in the love of God I consider you as a brother. May I then open to you entirely the feelings that the reading of your letter arouses in me?

Above all I was consoled to see that you recognize *the power of the keys* which Jesus Christ left with his Church; and I could do no less than say to myself: 'Yes, the good God who gave such enlightenment to this sincere friend of the truth, will also make him know that the separation of England from the Catholic Church resulted from an act of this power.' And when I read in your letter the view that what keeps religious people in England away from the Catholic Church is not its doctrines but certain practices of the Roman Church, I conceived the most lively hope that God, in his great mercy, may make it known to such persons that the Roman Church, which declares itself the enemy of all superstition, does not approve of the less acceptable practices of certain individual Catholics. And there are many practices, which though not wrong in themselves and not

against true teaching, it does not impose on the faithful. Yes, indeed, all Catholics, in many parts of the world, are now looking to that great country and praying together without ceasing that the Lord will have mercy on it; and we hope that in due course he will hear our pleas and restore that branch cut off from the vine of the divine Master, which can only be one, according to the words of Jesus Christ. And then that branch must bear much fruit. We believe that God has a special love for that land, and that his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of unity, is at work in many people of good will, so that they pray to the Lord in their uprightness of heart, and that this divine working cannot remain unfulfilled and will lead these persons into unity. We hope that before death claims them they arrive at this unity to which they are motivated by the Spirit of God, without their free will being infringed. We hope this especially for those who, already acknowledging the power of the keys, can appeal to it and ask that it may be open to them (if hitherto it was closed), and recognizing that power to bind and loose, can ask to be loosed (if up to now they have been bound). And this is just what was done (as you recognize in your letter) by the Spirit of truth. This divine Spirit certainly gave you the light to see that if there were not within the Church a supreme power of the keys, but that instead this power was given to many in equal measure and on the same conditions, it would be exposed to contempt and would certainly be useless, since while one person opened, another would close; while one would bind, another would loose: there would be binding and loosing in turn. I trust in your right understanding and in the light which the Lord gives you, and will continue to give you, that you will recognize as a fact that those who re-enter the Church of Rome do not simply recognize the power of the keys, but see in it the supreme power of St Peter and his successors, since Jesus Christ expressly gave the keys to him, the first of the apostles, and ask that this power may open to them the door of the kingdom of heaven, which formerly was closed to them. This is the fact: such is their belief. If this belief were false, it would be a heresy; and you yourself recognize that there are no heresies within the Church of Rome. If there were a heresy, or even simply an error professed by the whole Church, how could the Spirit of God have led into error him of whom you speak in that letter of yours, and others in whom you yourself recognize the work of God and the will of God? And if in such persons the grace of the Lord, given in all likelihood as the result of their prayers and those of others, as you justly observe, were to produce this fruit, is it not to be believed that the good seeds which grow within the Anglican Church are precisely gifts of God, who does not abandon the religious souls within that Church - gifts which can gently lead to the same end, namely the one sheepfold of the one Shepherd?

Just as no one can deny that the separation of England was brought about by an act of the power of the keys, so it cannot be denied that there was good reason for this - namely the heresy which you, with the light given by the Lord, recognize as existing more or less within the bosom of the Church of England. Again, it cannot be denied that heresy was always considered by the Church as a just reason for separating the infected parts, depriving them of ecclesiastical communion; and that the faithful, in such a case, would recognize themselves as being seriously obliged to keep themselves united with the healthy part of the Church and cut themselves off from the other. So too it is certain that the part separated from the Church can only be joined once more to it by the power of the keys, opening the door to them once more. May it be God's will that all the separated bishops in England, together with their dioceses, should return to unity! And it seems to me that your heart, full of zeal for the glory of God, aims at this, awaits this, and that you ask earnestly for this with your prayers. If the Lord hears you, we will all join you in blessing the Lord for ever! But if anyone was called at the first hour, at the third hour or the sixth hour of the day, I would not wish him to wait to come to work in the vineyard of the Master so as to enter together with those who were called at the eleventh hour. When the Lord calls a people, there tends to be a sort of discernment which separates those whom he takes and those he leaves. It is difficult for all to respond to his call - *some*

*believed his words, but others did not.* The first led the way for the others. I believe that those who recently joined the Catholic Church found the quickest and most sure way to restore the Anglican Church to new life. My prayers, or rather the prayers of all of us Catholics, look for this; but we pray specially for him whom the Lord makes use of to purify the Anglican Church of heresy, him by whose means God has brought about a movement which is so consoling. We pray earnestly that the Lord may deign to make him one of the sheep whom he entrusted to Peter when he said: *Feed my sheep.*

I have the honour to profess myself with great esteem your humble and devoted servant in Christ -

A. ROSMINI

**107 To Suor Geltrude Amodini at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 13 November 1845**

My dear daughter in Christ,

I was not able to reply earlier to your welcome letter. Consider, my daughter, that when you go out from the Central House you are as one sent by God; so you must go on the wings of charity. And I very much hope that in future you will do this; because to be slow to go and to be upset by going where the Spirit of God sends you (as was the case with the prophet Jonah) does not lead to a good outcome; and a Sister who wants to remain in the Central House when she is sent forth is like a disobedient prophet, and can raise a storm against the boat of the Congregation. But this will not happen again, you promise, since you will have more faith and a greater desire to fulfil the most loveable and adorable will of the Lord.

So dismiss entirely the thought of past confessions, with entire obedience to your confessor, whose word is that of God himself. Occupy yourself wholly in loving and serving God, being displeased with yourself for having offended him, and trusting without limit in his infinite goodness.

As for permission to return to the Central House to celebrate Easter, I leave this to the decision of the Central Superior. Pray, and have prayers said for certain English people who seem near to being converted to the faith - and also for -

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. R.

**108. To the cleric Costantino Comollo in Turin**

**Stresa, 16 November 1845**

My dear son in Christ,

You did well to tell me about the state of your soul. The Lord is testing you to see if you love him and are renouncing yourself. So take courage. These are the weapons with which you must fight:

(1) Use all diligence to preserve serenity of mind and calm of soul. And to help in this, do everything without haste, or anxiety, or fear of the outcome. And as regards the outcome, be at peace and maintain a holy indifference as far as possible. Do not be concerned about esteem or the lack of it, or worry about what Superiors may think. Simply do calmly whatever you can, and do not try to do too much. In this way you will please God.

(2) Keep a guard over your eyes; resist temptations and your imagination; make frequent ejaculatory prayers; have a deep devotion to our Lady and keep in union with the

heart of Jesus Christ. Banish all fear, and do not confuse sensations with consent; have the greatest trust in God, but total distrust of yourself; be most humble in obeying and yield to your companion. By these means you will win the battle through the grace that our loving Lord Jesus Christ will give you, and the intercession of your loving Mother, Mary.

(3) You must be very careful never to be upset when you commit some fault or imperfection. In this connection read Scupoli: let this golden book from now on be your spiritual reading. (I take it you do this in common.) It is very important not to be disturbed over your defects, and I urge this on you. A man who does not get upset over his shortcomings but calmly feels sorrow is someone who trusts in God and has a low opinion of himself. For it is no wonder if we lapse.

(4) When you feel aridity of spirit, offer this to the Lord as a penance, and say often: 'O Lord I love you: I want to love you with the whole of myself. Make me love you, and I will not seek anything else. I shall be rich enough if I truly love you.'

(5) Be as sociable as you can: speak with all simplicity, giving edification and avoiding all gloominess. Try to keep cheerful, saying often with St Philip [Neri]: I will have no scruples or melancholy in my house.'

In all, then, what you need is a little courage and nothing more; a greater trust in God, abandoning yourself to him and entrusting your self to him without taking thought for the outcome. So take heart, my dear Costantino: you are a servant of Christ, and if you call on him he will certainly help you to overcome all your enemies. They may lie in wait for you and cause you fear, but they cannot devour you if you oppose them with prayer and faith. God bless you.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

#### 109. To Don Paolo Barola in Rome

Stresa, 28 November 1845

My dear friend,

I was much consoled to read in your welcome letter that your health improved considerably as a result of your autumn pilgrimage. At the same time I sympathize with you over the afflictions and anguish that distress your soul. I keep hoping that the merit you have earned there and at Propaganda, and in your faithful service of Cardinal Pacca (as well as in the good works which constantly occupy you), if these things are made known to those in positions of power, will obtain for you sufficient reward for your needs. I wish and pray for this. We must not neglect the means that Providence places in our hands. If they are insufficient, then the eternal and infallible truths of our religion become our comfort. If the very pagans learnt through experience that *patience lightens the ills that cannot be avoided*, how much more must we Christians, gifted with the light of faith, abandon and resign ourselves into the hands of God, knowing that all his ways are holy and best, and are always lovingly directed so as to bring our hearts back to him alone, leading us to attain the end for which we were created? You who are so well instructed have no need of lessons from me. But just as it is a great comfort to me to remember that, although our present life brings many evils, it is of short duration and may come to an end from moment to moment, when I least expect it; and that if I can be assured of the salvation of my soul, I will call myself ever content - so I judge that faith and the effort to reach our eternal end are enough to bring peace to anyone's heart when things are grim, and to restore that peace also to anyone who, with his soul detached from everything transient and deceptive, puts all his treasure in God who can never be taken away from him, and his hope in God's unfailing mercy.

This detachment of your soul from the world is perhaps the great aim of divine goodness in allowing you to experience hardship and be without the consolation of certain studies, so that you are unable to see the way forward. And yet, my friend, we must co-operate as far as we can with so lofty an end, so good and loving a divine intention for us. We must surely be ready even to suffer during these few years (if indeed some years remain to us) so as not to suffer hereafter - but rather rejoice eternally, repaid with interest for our present sacrifices. We must revive our trust in that loving Mother who desires for us only our true good, and nothing false and merely apparent. She will certainly listen to our prayers if we ask her favour; she will obtain for us the grace we need in order to overcome our enemies and to go forward as victors into her presence to thank her for ever for her great goodness to us. How glad I would be to hear from you that spiritually all goes well for you, that your confidence and fervour are renewed; that interiorly you are content, and that you thank and bless God, even kissing the hand which, out of pure love, strikes you! If you have such good news to give me, do not withhold it, do not hide it from a friend who loves you dearly in the Lord, and, however unworthily, prays for you. Goodbye.

Your friend in the heart of Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**110. To Don Giuseppe Gagliardi at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 2 December 1845**

My dear brother in Jesus Christ,

This letter of mine concentrates on the last sentences of yours, which are to do with the most important matter of all. Unfortunately, if we do not take great care, our various preoccupations dry up and destroy our spirit. But we have to remember for our consolation that the cares which arise from what we do for God are quite different from worldly cares; and that Jesus Christ himself, who so greatly recommended contemplation to his closest disciples, entrusted to his apostles all the worries of the episcopate: *I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches*. He [Christ] saw the great merit which comes of such cares, because of the love that they contain and put into practice - a love which is an immense spiritual treasure, and is the end and perfection of the law. *This is my command* . . . What then shall we do, my dear brother? First we shall make every effort to have abundant love in our hearts - a love which will be the spring and source of all our actions. And to obtain this love we have to make frequent acts of love, of trust, of faith; we must pray humbly and give thanks; and these acts must be mingled at all times with our activities, so as to be habitual. In this way they become easy and they greatly console and strengthen us. Next, examine yourself to see if you are faithful over making your holy meditation and examination of conscience and your other spiritual exercises. These, if they are performed with fervour, are a considerable help to us. Above all, do not be content until you arrive at great devotion in celebrating Mass, preserving the spiritual warmth you receive during it, and increasing it with as long a thanksgiving as possible. We can and must be faithful to these spiritual devotions even when we are weighed down with cares, because the time devoted to them is precious, and is of benefit to all our other occupations - which receive from them spiritual graces. So be very jealous of this time of union with God, and make every effort to be constant in guarding it. God will look after the rest, and will note in the book of your merits all that

you do for him. He will help you to overcome your enemies, either by taking away their power and boldness, or by giving you greater courage and strength to subdue them. Your Breviary, too, you must recite as well as possible: it will become delightful and consoling food.

These are the weapons you are to use, my friend, as well as concentrating your mind on holy thoughts and good desires. You must not let your mind be dissipated and spread over many things, like water which slips away and is lost. These, I say, are your invincible weapons: make use of them and have no fear of anything. I believe you have made your retreat during the holidays as required; but it would be as well also to take a day each month and spend it with God, refreshing your soul so as to feel reinvigorated. Before you go away you need to make provision for your absence, anticipating what may occur, so that you will not need to be disturbed. To sum up, then, let us bind ourselves closely to God with all our might, and put unlimited trust in him. He will never abandon us: of that you may be sure. Deny yourself some reading for pleasure and give the time to spiritual reading, something to warm the heart with piety. I hope all this will be acceptable to you. Let us pray to the Lord together - you for me, I for you, all for all. Warmest greetings to you from -

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. R.

**111. To Don Giuseppe Burdet at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 10 December 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

As regards Moral Theology, I would wish you to give great attention to acquiring a sufficient knowledge of this very necessary science, bearing in mind that you are a priest and a priest of Charity. If it is timidity that prevents you from facing the examination, you need to overcome yourself and conquer your fear, because it is a defect. Also some self-love may enter into the situation, making you unwilling to run the risk of [failing and] being humiliated. If this is the case, then you need all the more to overcome your doubts and offer yourself generously to the test. When all is said and done, it is of no great consequence if you do not appear in the eyes of the examiners any more learned than you really are - or even if you seem to be *less* so. So in this matter too, try to have a lively concern for the greater glory of God; trust in him and make your obedience heartfelt - a heartfelt obedience has no time for half-heartedness. You know the mind of your Superiors, so act accordingly. Goodbye.

Your brother in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**112. To Don Francesco Paoli at Intra**

**Stresa, 10 December 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

Since I am not sure whether I shall see you before the 12th, when you have to be in Arona as the 'extraordinary' confessor, I think I had better put in writing a few pieces of advice. So here they are:

- (1) Control the defects of your tongue - you tend to speak too fast and glibly, which makes you seem somewhat thoughtless;
- (2) Instead, speak little and to the point ;

(3) Make sure that in your advice you do not in any way conflict with what is said by the 'ordinary' confessor;

(4) Encourage the nuns to have great esteem and love for their Superior, and try to counter anything that seems to be 'difficult' or fickle in the feminine character, urging especially mortification as the virtue essential to the good order of a religious house;

(5) Let the few words you address to them be strictly relevant to the gospel - i.e. concerned to inculcate the love of God and neighbour, and nothing more.

Goodbye.

Your brother in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**113. To Suor Giovanna Antonietti, Superior at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 11 December 1845**

My dear daughter in Christ,

Your letter consoled me: the devil laid a snare for you; had you fallen into it, you would have been lost, and perhaps have drawn other souls to perdition. I was always hopeful that the Lord would give you light, and would not let you fall into the pit; and I asked him for this grace. Now you must thank God, and let what has happened be an important warning. Hold fast to the anchor of obedience, and banish melancholy. You must realize that any gloomy thoughts which deter you from your duties do not come from God but from the enemy. Do not expect everything to go according to your wishes. Pray to the Lord for the Congregation, and then be resigned to whatever his all-wise Providence may permit. Do not be like the soldier who, having no love for his king, flees when he faces fire, instead of fighting. You have to sacrifice yourself as a victim, because this is what Jesus Christ did for you; and this you must do with a good will, remaining cheerful in the hope of his all-powerful help, and infusing cheerfulness also into your companions. So now forget the past and begin a new life. For your penance you are to say the *Te Deum* three times, in thanksgiving to God for the victory which he has given you; but you must repeat the last verse a hundred times. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. R. p.

**114. To Don Leonardo Terribilini at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 12 December 1845**

My dear companion in the service of God,

The Superior has written a lovely letter to me - one which gave me great consolation, and took away a painful thorn from my heart. I always hoped that the Lord would help so good a soul; and this he has done through your ministry. Let us thank him together. This experience will make you realize how much it helps if a retreat is directed to overcoming one single defect. It will be valuable for you in future.

I am very sorry to hear that the scholastics there have such a struggle to keep exactly the rules of religious discipline and observance, and have made but little progress in the *mortification* which is absolutely essential to religious life. Make every effort to put this right, to make them more fervent, and to realize the importance and unavoidable necessity of *mortification*: see that their talk is always of spiritual matters or their studies, and correct them if they act otherwise. Spare no effort to bring this about. I grant you the faculty (should the need arise) to interrupt the studies of all or some of them so that you

can give them a short retreat. It will also help if a day each month is spent in spiritual retirement.

As for Calvario: I wrote to Fr Rector there saying that I wished it to be well looked after; and I could see no one other than yourself who could act as confessor. I also told him that the scholastics too could go there on feast days with you. But I now realize that this cannot be the norm. So try to find someone who can look after them in your place while you hear confessions. Whoever supervises the scholastics must see to it that they keep the silence and adhere exactly to the timetable.

It seems to me that this could be done by Aimo, or Imperatori - whichever you consider the better choice. Pray to God, and do all you can to promote the religious spirit of the scholastics. Goodbye.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**115. To the cleric Pietro Caire at Intra**

**Stresa, 14 December 1845**

My dear son in Christ,

I was pleased to get your letter, in which you tell me that you are happy in the position assigned to you by the will of God, and say other consoling things too. You need to do all you can to increase your love of God and your neighbour, and to grow in fervour so that you may become a living embodiment of the high perfection which your holy rules speak of. Without a *great desire for perfection* and the resolution to practise mortification to acquire it, one cannot arrive at it. So *prayer*, fervent, humble and continual prayer, is needed in all that you do. Humble yourself before God, hope in him, send up to him lively aspirations, and you will be heard. This is the great secret: to have God and eternal life ever present to your mind, and to make no account of anything else. This is the way to fulfil Christ's command: *Abide in me as I abide in you; apart from me you can do nothing*. So aim at habitual union with Christ, heart to heart, love for love. He will help you in this, and you will soon become perfect, as he wants you to be. He has called you to this: he gives you the means; and if you stay alert within yourself you will feel the urging of his merciful workings. Blessings and peace to you!

Your father in Christ,  
A. R.

**116. To the teacher Giuseppe Aimo at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 15 December 1845**

. . . I was very pleased to hear from your letter that you are making every effort to draw profit from the work that has been assigned to you and from the opportunities it offers, and so to arrive at holiness. This is precisely the spirit of your vocation - to believe with firm faith that the ministry of charity you have received through obedience is the means ordained from all eternity by the goodness of God for your sanctification. Within this spirit lies a rich mine abounding in merit and virtue, since God associates with that ministry the abundant graces he has destined for you.

As for the problem you experience over speaking: I think this arises in part from treating things with too much seriousness, and with too little ease and familiarity. It follows that if you were to speak plainly and with greater simplicity you would (it seems to me) find it easier to be fluent.

For the rest, if at times you find things difficult, that is not surprising, given that this is your first year of teaching. But take heart, my dear Giuseppe. Put away all fear and all presumption. Prepare well, and then go into school as if you were merely going to talk to the bookshelves in your library. Do not be too anxious about whether the lesson has gone well or not; because it certainly will have gone well enough if you have done your best. May God bless you greatly.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
R. p.

**117. To the deacon Giuseppe Fiacchetti at Intra**

**Stresa, 20 December 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

Your letter of the 17th was very welcome, since it told me about the state of your soul. As for the disturbance of mind you speak of having suffered, it would have been at least halved if you had obeyed that admirable rule of ours - the rule of the Lord himself, who tells us not to give thought to the future or worry about it. Why wonder whether your Superiors may promote you to the priesthood? Why occupy yourself in talking and speculating about their possible future intentions, thus giving much scope to imagination, which always strays into the uncertain and vague future? Restrain the wings of that imagination, and that will quickly put an end to many imperfections and worries. The perfect man limits his thoughts to his present duties, and remains tranquil as regards the future. He is filled with fervour and takes courage so as to be able to cope with the tasks he has received from divine Providence, and in all this he sanctifies himself.

It is certainly important not to leave out our exercises of piety, but rather to perform them as well as we can. If you find you have insufficient time for them, I will tell Fr Rector to give you enough free time. And as for carrying them out well: you need to take care over your preparation and avoid any voluntary distractions. At the same time we need to become accustomed to maintaining union with God in all we do - to keep our hearts fervent in this union in the midst of everything. We can learn to do this little by little, by using frequent interior acts. It is very pleasing to God when a spiritual man makes efforts to remain united with him in heart and affections in all his activities, even material ones. This endeavour is part of the obligation we all have to become perfect. But we must not be upset if we do not become perfect all at once in what we wish to do.

May the Lord bless you and give you the light to serve him faithfully and with spiritual fervour.

Your father in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

**118. To Don Giuseppe Gagliardi at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 24 December 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

Although I know that you have a great deal to do, and I sympathize with you over this, all the same you will understand that I am greatly concerned that money affairs should be managed with the greatest exactness, even to a scruple. This is not only because it is necessary to good order, but even more because of the danger that we may offend against the poverty we have professed, and that abuses may be introduced little by little. This would lead to the neglect of our decrees and rules over poverty, and consequent harm to

religious perfection and obedience. So I very much hope that all Superiors, in a spirit of mortification, will not be afraid to put their hands among these thorny matters, even suffering wounds in their flesh, so to speak, for the sake of the love of God. This would earn them great merit. When I speak of sustaining wounds and cuts over their worries and troubles I have in mind temporal, not spiritual hurts.

Again, consider, my dear brother, that if our domestic affairs are conducted with great exactness, both by keeping all the books accurately, and by seeing to it that no decision exceeds the faculties given to you, then everything will go more smoothly, and you will experience peace of conscience and interior consolation. Since you are relieved of the administration of the bookshop, it would seem that you can cope with the various duties of the bursar (many and troublesome as they are), since these properly belong to every Rector and Superior. If you shoulder this burden with courage it will make a real contribution to sanctifying you. If you have to start the year with outstanding accounts and balances, this need not dismay you. It is enough if you add the figures which show the original situation in separate annotations, though in the actual accounts they may and should appear under their own headings as balances and matters outstanding. As for the books, these certainly need to be kept with exactness, but this is the case in all business matters.

The changes in the doorkeepers and ministers are a nuisance; but all the same, if you carefully instruct in detail the new holders of these posts as soon as they begin, and get them to keep the books accurately (seeing to it that all is kept in order), then it seems to me that even this difficulty can be overcome.

But what I particularly urge on you is that the statement of accounts must not any longer be left to approximations and guesswork, but must be subjected to rigorous certainty in the calculations (as you yourself say.) These accounts must be true down to the smallest details. If there are gaps or errors in the books, these must be shown plainly for what they are. You can easily understand that if things were done differently, the keeping of the accounts would fail in its object, and this would constitute an offence against honesty, because of its untruthfulness. What we want to see in financial statements is not a pretty page of neat figures which do not correspond to reality - imaginary, not real. What we need is to know truly and exactly the state of our finances. So whoever has the duty of rendering these accounts must be scrupulous not to fake them or use 'discretion' to fudge them so as to make them appear correct. I want to impress all this upon you as much as possible; and I hope - in fact I am sure - that you will no longer act as you have done hitherto, without reflecting on the harm that this sort of thing can cause.

The other thing I urge on you is this: never spend the least sum that exceeds your ordinary faculties without asking permission. This is entirely necessary to observe perfectly a life of poverty, such as ours should be - with no acts of ownership.

I wish all happiness from the coming of the Child Jesus, to you and to all our brethren. I hope to greet you in person soon. Keep some little room available for me, and since I do not want to fall ill, see to it that it is warm. This is an affliction, but we must be patient over it. My warm greetings to you, and I have many things to tell you by word of mouth. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. R.

**119. To Don G. B. Ratti at the Sagra di San Michele**

**Stresa, 28 December 1845**

My dear brother in Christ,

I heartily reciprocate the good wishes for this holy season you send me in your letter. From what you say it seems to me that you are happy in your present situation, and that suggests that you are making progress in virtue - that is, in the love and service of God. The solitude in which you find yourself is very suitable for this, even allowing for the privations of the place and the consequent mortifications. These are indeed precious means of benefiting spiritually. I have no doubt that it was a loving design of divine Providence to take you away from the tumult of a great city and to place you on a mountain where you can enjoy, through prayer and meditation, the sublime things of God, and give your attention to disillusioning yourself and detaching yourself from the world *in which all evil dwells*. I think of you also engaging yourself in composing sermons and meditations which can be of use for your neighbour. So I rejoice over all these good dispositions and holy activities, and I encourage you to seek ever greater union with God and to find in his service all your treasure. Yes, my dear Don Battista, aspire after perfection, - the great secret which, though perhaps frightening when seen at a distance, yet enchants us with love when we follow its way closely and see it near at hand. Greet all the dear brethren for me. For them too I ask the same abundance of blessings and the gift of fervour.

Your affectionate servant in Christ,  
A. R.

**120. To the Sister of Providence M. Felice Stedile at Cameri**

**Stresa, 28 December 1845**

My dear daughter in Christ,

Your troubles are slight, by the grace of God, and will even disappear entirely if you form your thoughts in a firm and mature way, and chase away all imaginings and trifles, taking no notice of such things. Watching over the girls, keeping a careful eye on them, with their good in mind, does not mean making rash judgements, because caution is necessary. So do not upset yourself about this. You need to use prudence in foreseeing possible dangers so as to avert them. Show that you do not approve of their going to dances, and as occasion offers, try to dissuade them from doing so. But as regards giving them a direct order - that depends on local custom and circumstances. Before doing so, consult with the Superior and the confessor. (I think the latter is the archpriest, and he will know the situation). Then act on their advice.

It is well to prepare your catechism or history lessons if that is possible; but if you lack the time, why worry? Go ahead in faith, and God will help you to teach well, if you are humble.

As regards ejaculatory prayers, take up their use a little at a time, renewing your intention of doing everything for the love of God and for his greater glory: try to have him in mind in all that you do, and make efforts to grow in love and fervour through acts of love for him, in him, and through him for your neighbour. Goodbye, my dear daughter: pray to the Child Jesus for -

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**121. To the Sister of Providence M. Crocifissa Besana at Cameri**

**Stresa, 29 December 1845**

My dear daughter in Christ,

The troubles and temptations Suor Felice experiences are really of a slight nature. I have already written to her, telling her what she must do. If she shows you my letter, emphasize what I have said. For the rest, she is a good soul, but still somewhat childish. So you must treat her accordingly; but keep impressing on her that your vocation is to become perfect, and that you must take great pains over reaching perfection in all things. Yes, tell her about her defects: do not be afraid to do so; but say to her always that you do so only out of love of her, and because you believe that she would want you to do this. If at the time when you reprove her she seems a little vexed, take no notice. A little while later, act affectionately towards her, and show her some sisterly attention. Praise her at times when she does well; like a spiritual mother, adapt yourself to her needs - but do not let her fail in observance. In these ways you will be able gradually to achieve everything - though *not at all moments*, for at times it is necessary to dissimulate a little.

I wish you every heavenly blessing in the New Year. Goodbye.

Your father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**122. To the theologian Don Lorenzo Gastaldi in Turin**

**Stresa, (undated but at the end of 1845)**

Very Reverend Father,

Those kind thoughts in your letter, in which you wish me a long life as the feast of Christmas approaches come from your good heart. As I thank you for the sincere love which you show for me, I am most grateful and I return your good wishes abundantly. My debt to you also extends to the fatherly care you show for my two young sons [Luigi Setti and Costantino Comollo] who attend the classes at the University.

For the rest, with regard to your mention of the difficulties truth meets within spreading far and wide, I have to admit how right you are: it is one of those facts which, when we consider them well, make us realize the condition of that poor human nature which we all share. But if God in his mercy makes us speak or write important truths which are useful in his cause, we must be grateful to him for this, trust fully in him, and not cease to sow the good seed which the Lord of the harvest gives us, to see whether others after us, rather than we ourselves, will reap the fruit. Indeed this always was and still is the great law of all-wise Providence: one man sows; another reaps. This thought greatly comforts me; and I ask two things of the Lord. First, that he will never allow me to mix any of my tares with his wheat; and second, that he will give the increase to his wheat and make my tares die - should any escape from my bag - before they germinate. So the harvest-time does not make me anxious, since I know that God does all things in his own good time (*for all times are in his hand*). And again, the early fruits can be immature and poor. So my dear Don Lorenzo, pray for my soul, not for my poor earthly life which for me is an encumbrance, and perhaps is also an impediment to the good which God wishes to do for the world if I did not present obstacles to his action. And this truth, which I feel deeply, I would wish you also to feel.

With warmest affection, I am -

Your servant and friend,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**123. To Antonio Carli at Intra**

**Stresa, 8 January 1846**

My dear son in Christ,

I sympathize greatly with your sufferings; but let us have in mind the cross carried by our Lord Jesus Christ and unite ourselves with his sacred Passion. This thought must give us strength to suffer with resignation for love of him! If I could relieve you of your cross I would gladly do so; but the only comfort I can think of is precisely that of turning our thoughts to the Crucified One and offering everything to him and trusting in him. Both good things and bad come from him; and if he sends us bad things, he does it only so as to make us do penance for our sins, to purify our souls, and to give us the opportunity to merit heaven.

My dear Antonio, a change of place would not afford you any relief, and it would cause grave inconvenience to that house for no good reason. You know that when you were here you were not happy. The disquiet you feel, and your wish to go from one place to another - I sympathize with these things but take them as an effect of your state of mind. But you really must see that it is an unhealthy disquiet; and so you must manage to overcome yourself, stand firm, and be content with the place you find yourself in.

You know very well that I am heavily burdened with affairs, to the point where I have no breathing-space. For this reason too, try to be calm, without causing me to take thought uselessly and without making me write letters that you could spare me. If it were to do with a matter in which I could really help you, I would say: 'Do not spare me'; for I am ready to be useful to you in any way. But a change of house would in fact be pointless - all the more so at this season of the year. So let the winter pass in peace. The days go by, and with them our troubles pass too. A more pleasant season will come, and (God willing) you will feel better.

So I urge on you resignation and trust in God and in your loving Superior. Then you will acquire great merit. May God bless and console you.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. R.

**124. To the deacon Domenico Cavalli at Ratcliffe College**

**Stresa, 8 January 1846**

My dear son in Christ,

I was pleased to receive the report in your letter of 25 September. I have not been able to reply to it before because of my many preoccupations. I ask the Lord to bless you and to infuse in you that great spirit which aspires in all things to what is perfect and infinite. For this we were created. Because this is God's intention: that our *nothing*, our *sinful nothing*, must look to him for everything without exception which is truly good. So it is necessary that we should raise ourselves from the abyss of our wretchedness through faith in the eternal and infinite goodness of the Creator, preparing ourselves to do great things for his glory - all the things that he will prepare us to do through the ministry of Superiors - and to do them in the most perfect way. Above all, I want the distinctive mark of all of us to be unlimited *charity*, and the *prayer* that is the source of this. Embrace for me all our brethren in the Heart of Jesus Christ. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,  
ROSMINI p.

**125. To Don Angelo Rinolfi at Ratcliffe College**

**Stresa, 8 January 1846**

My dear companion in the service of God,

I was greatly comforted by your letter, in which you tell me about the consolations you experienced during your retreat and the good progress of the noviciate there. May God be ever blessed ! You cannot imagine what joy I feel when I see among our brethren the spiritual fervour and discerning charity which must constitute the character of our Institute and of our holy vocation. We shall always have plenty of opportunities to humble ourselves and bow down as penitents, crying out unceasingly for God's mercy and bounty, if the Lord will give us the light to know how lofty is the perfection taught us by our Master, Jesus Christ, and shown forth in him - and at the same time to know ourselves, and realize how far we are from that perfection. But we must take courage and put our trust in that Master of ours, who is able to make us carry out all that he has commanded, and who wants to bring all this about in us, provided that we pray to him. So *prayer* is essential for us: if we are men of prayer we shall succeed and arrive at all holiness. Our Lord cannot refuse us any spiritual good, if only we ask it of him without ceasing. He has pledged his divine promise to this. How great a consolation it is for a disciple of Christ when even he can say, in union with his divine Master, *for I know that you always hear me!* Yes, we can obtain everything if we really wish it. We have to expand our hearts, raise our thoughts to what is infinite; we must never let ourselves be disturbed, but live in the certainty of the faith which exhorts us: *Let us lay aside every weight and the sin that clings to us so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.*

My dear Angelo, you are doing great good - the greatest possible good for the souls of your brethren. The Lord has called you to this: he has deigned to want this of you. I hope that you will see in paradise the abundant harvest of your deservings. Greet all the brethren for me. Goodbye.

Yours in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**126. To the priest Giuseppe Gagliardi at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 12 January 1846**

My dear brother in Christ,

. . . As for what you say at the end of your letter, concerning fears over your eternal salvation, bear in mind that no one who put his trust in the Lord has ever perished. So put your trust in God: and to increase this further, meditate day and night on the person of Jesus Christ, on his Sacred Heart, on the love which animates him, on his infinite goodness, on the merits of his Precious Blood - so that you will always have the image of our crucified Saviour before the eyes of your spirit. And to strengthen even more our confidence in him who is our promise of salvation, we have to set great store by the sacrament of penance, confessing our sins with great humility and childlike simplicity. Further, it will help you greatly whenever you fall into sin, even venial sin, if you confront this with acts of sincere contrition and renewed resolutions, never feeling discouraged but rather having even great hope, founded wholly in God, saying: *The right hand of the Most High has changed my grief: now I begin anew.*

But lest we should have any confidence in ourselves and so become negligent, we have to make frequent acts of humility to God, confessing our wretchedness, poverty, nothingness and sinfulness, never tiring of this, never believing that we have sufficiently shown these sentiments. There are so many fine passages in the psalms which can help us in this - especially those in which the soul speaks from the depths of humiliation and

raises itself to greater confidence: *Many are arising against me; but you O Lord are a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head . . . I lie down and sleep; I wake again, for the Lord sustains me.* These sentiments serve to keep the mind recollected in the Lord, and to restrain the imagination, which is the source of all evil. It must be confined and starved, by getting rid of anything that can feed it with what is harmful and deceptive. Unworthy as I am, I do not fail to pray daily for you, and for all our dear brethren. *Holy Father, keep them in your name: sanctify them in the truth.* May the peace of Christ be with you and with all the household there. Amen.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. R.

### 127. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan

Stresa, 20 January 1846

My dear friend,

Pagani writes to me saying how consoled he was by the edification which was given by Mr Newman to our novices there, when on the Vigil of the Epiphany he made his confession and received Holy Communion in our chapel. ‘What a heartening spectacle it was,’ he writes, ‘to see Mr Newman kneel to receive Holy Communion along with the laybrothers and behind our clerics, among whom was our Lockhart, at one time his disciple and spiritual son!{f} Although he was the parish priest of the University church in Oxford, and is renowned as the foremost intellect in England, there are no pretensions about him, and he wishes to be treated as the least of the converts.’

He sent me also the most recent work published by Newman, entitled: ‘An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine’. In this he shows that the principles of Christian doctrine, which are the same at all times, show greater development, as regards the consequences that can be deduced from them, as time goes on. It seems to me that this is an original work and one that shows a noble understanding. He began to write it before he became a Catholic, and finished it after he had embraced the faith. This is why he prefaces the work with these words: *My eyes yearn for your salvation*, and ends it with: *Now you dismiss your servant in peace, for my eyes have seen your salvation.* Goodbye.

A. ROSMINI p.

{fs}William Lockhart was born at Warlingham, near London. He was a Scot by birth and of noble lineage, related to Sir Walter Scott. At first he had, along with Newman, shared the erroneous views of Dr Pusey; but after reading Rosmini’s *Maxims of Perfection*, and having conversations with Gentili and receiving spiritual guidance from him, he renounced his errors and was received into the Catholic Church by Gentili in Loughborough in August of 1843. Both Newman and Manning disapproved of this decision of their disciple and friend; but a little later they followed his example and themselves became Catholics. They retained kindly memories and sincere affection for the fervent disciple who had become their teacher by first recognizing and professing the true faith. Lockhart, when he embraced Catholicism, became a humble disciple of Christ in the Institute of Charity, and did much missionary work in England and Ireland. He was the author of *A Life of A. Rosmini* as well as other valuable works. For many years he was in charge of our London mission, and eventually was made Procurator General of the Institute. Because of his great virtue and outstanding gifts he was more than once invited to become a bishop; but he always preferred to remain a humble disciple of Christ.

### 128. To Don Emilio Belisy in England

Stresa, 25 January 1846

My dear brother in Christ,

I am sure you will not make a practice of writing so little. Rather, your motto must be: (1) to send exact reports at the due time; (2) to make them full enough, so as to inform your Superiors about everything, both good and bad, with religious simplicity and diligence. I say that this is the way in which you should act, both because this is what obedience requires, and also because you know well how desirable it is that in a society there should be constant communication with Superiors through letters and reports. This is extremely useful for good government and for union. A further reason is that Superiors greatly wish to hear full and accurate news from their subjects. So it is reasonable that they should be shown this charity and that their wishes should be satisfied.

For the rest, I urge you to have a holy liberty of conscience, a lively trust in God, and an ardent apostolic zeal for the salvation of the souls that the Lord has put in your care: you are to be 'a fisher of souls' [in the words of Christ], and you must look after them and nourish them in the 'fish-pond' of the Church. May God bless you.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

129. To the cleric Fiorenzo Forzani at Intra

Stresa, 3 February 1846

My dear son in Christ,

I was pleased with your last letter, because I see from it that now there is less of the *childish vacillation* that you showed last year, when for trivial reasons you allowed your mind and soul to be much disturbed. I pray God that he will make you a *man*, and give you manly fortitude, together with mastery of your volatile imagination which creates so many difficulties for you and exaggerates things to the extent that you seem to be struggling with giants, while these are really only empty shadows.

So as to attain to the highly desirable constancy in good that you need, get used to considering good as it is in itself. If you do this, nothing will be able to deter you from your good resolutions, because good is always good, whatever the external circumstances: it is enough if you love it with all your heart, without limits.

In the second place, if we are to be firmly consolidated in good, we have to nourish a lively faith in God and ask him ceaselessly to help us, while we confess our sins and realize our own weakness. Indeed, anyone who trusts in God will never perish. For he, if we are humble and loving, is always ready to give us the grace of constancy in good if we beg this of him; and he will also enable us to overcome our spiritual enemies.

In the third place, we have to grasp sufficiently the greatness of our vocation, love it daily ever more, and develop great esteem for all the activities of our ministry and for obedience. Everything must be done for God and for our neighbour - in whom we love God. There can be no doubt that if you put away all human considerations and embrace the divine sentiments I have explained above, you will become a real religious in actions, not just words - a real disciple of Christ, one who loves to imitate him and one who loves his cross. But if you are to overcome your self-love, you must have respect in your heart for your Superiors and be loving towards everyone. For self-love and pride are the things that get in the way of both charity and a proper affection for your Superiors, coupled with humble obedience. It is God whom you must revere and love in your Superiors.

So take courage, my dear son! Make war on all feelings of self-love; and then you will soon be meek, and happy to be so. For meekness spreads gentle feelings in the heart, and brings unspeakable peace and tranquillity at all times. While on the contrary, every feeling of rancour, envy, ill-will, irritability and bad temper comes from pride and damages our soul, robbing it of peace, charity and the grace of our Lord - which is all sweetness and humility. And it is these latter things that I wish for my Fiorenzo.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. R.

**130. To the Sister of Providence M. Serafina Silvetti at Cameri**

**Stresa, early in February 1846**

My dear daughter in Christ,

I was pleased to hear that this year your soul makes further progress and enjoys peace and tranquillity; also that your health has improved. May the Lord be praised! Show your gratitude to him by often renewing your consecration to him, and by cultivating a great desire to arrive at perfection, constantly asking God for this grace. So take courage - but courage wholly founded on God and accompanied by true humility. Then all will go well. And if it seems to you that you have been a little lacking in trust in your central Superior, take this as a penance for your faults: do not hope to be well thought of by Superiors. Rather rejoice if they seem to have a low opinion of you, for this is a good sign of humility. But the best thing is not to think about or wish to know what opinion Superiors have of you. This is a quite unnecessary preoccupation. They will never take as low a view of you as you will have of yourself if you are humble. So I recommend you to have courage and humility - courage in God, who will lead you to become perfect in carrying out your holy duties, and in corresponding generously with the grace of your sublime vocation. Your humility must see that you never take away anything that is owed to the Lord, and never rob your Sisters by attributing to yourself what is theirs; for it is right to be humble in face of both God and your fellow-creatures. You must be zealous to help the children in whom you serve Christ himself. You will merit much if through faith you see in them the face of Christ!

Padre Setti is in much his usual state, much afflicted: do pray for him. God, who gives him the grace of an invincible fortitude, is able to give us the grace of seeing him cured, and this is what we hope for from the prayers of the faithful. Pray for me too. With my blessing, I am -

Your father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI

**131. To the clerics L. Setti and C. Comollo in Turin**

**Stresa, 6 February 1846**

My dear sons in Christ,

I am replying to your questions, but first I must say that I was pleased to see from your letters that you are yourselves aware that it does not do for religious such as you - young students - to have visitors needlessly, especially those who relations. As all the saints teach us, such visits weaken the resolution in our hearts and take away from us that sweet interior solitude in which God alone is present to the soul, as the sun of justice, the consoler of our love, and (as scripture calls him), our *Omne Bonum* [all our good]. So notice what follows from these thoughts:

(1) I do not permit you to go to Chieri during the scholastic year. When it is over, before you leave your religious house you may go there once;

(2) Comollo may prudently tell his parents that they may visit him, but they are not to do this too often;

(3) If they offer presents, he must tell them that he may not receive them but that they belong to your brother, Setti - who represents the Superior there as far as you are concerned. Setti may then accept any Mass offerings, but nothing else, unless they are very insistent - in which case he must tell them that he will accept it as being an alms offering;

(4) As for any other visits that may occur, make sure that they are short and infrequent; make it clear that you are busy. But you yourselves are *not* to pay visits to anyone, apart from the teachers and the other people already approved of. You must make your excuses as graciously as you can.

Have no fear that acting in these ways will make you appear ill-mannered. The effect will rather be to give edification. Furthermore, remember the rule you were given by word of mouth: 'I hope you follow no other path than that of the church and the school, like St Basil and St Gregory in Athens.' Keep strictly to these rules, and do not stray beyond them at all. May God spread in your souls his devoted love.

Your father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**132. To Suor M. Crocifissa Besana at Cameri**

**Stresa, 14 February 1846**

My dear daughter in Christ,

I was sorry to hear what has happened. This experience must teach you and make you more cautious over admitting people without absolute necessity. Read the letter I am writing to Suor Felice and be guided by it. I am sure that what was said was mere calumny; but as I gather from your letter, you made a mistake in allowing that person to come to you over trivial matters. You have to find a way of making it clear that you are displeased, and even say openly that you have no time to spare for such an encounter; and in a word you must make it well understood that you are far from liking needless visits of any kind.

For the rest, how can you say that you are afraid that of being dismissed from the Institute for such failings? Do you think that Superiors lack understanding and are incapable of sympathizing with you over your inexperience? If you think or say such things you are wronging them. No, my dear daughter, Superiors are not like that. They can take into account the sometimes difficult circumstances in which you are placed. So be of good heart; put your trust in the God whom you serve with a pure and upright intention; work for his glory, in all harmony and peace with your sisters. May Jesus Christ bless you.

Your father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**133. To the Sister of Providence M. Felice Stedile at Cameri**

**Stresa, 14 February 1846**

My dear daughter in Christ,

You did wrong to delay reporting to the Superior there the rumours that you heard about. So too you should have written at once to me about them. From now on you must be more open with your Superiors, because keeping quiet about such things causes great damage. Furthermore, this experience should teach you how necessary it is to proceed with caution, prudence and much deliberation, avoiding (as I told you by word of mouth) any and every needless conversation with anyone. I repeat that you have to live as if you were an enclosed religious: the internal enclosure of the heart must be continual; and the external enclosure must be as great as possible. All of you are consecrated to God, and you should not say a word to anyone beyond what is necessary. Much less should you look for light relief or conversation. All your time and all your thoughts should belong to God. If you want advice, there are Superiors to turn to. So let my counsels guide you. May God bless you.

Your father in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

PS When you write to me, do not hold back the names of people. You must be entirely frank, for this does not offend against charity.

**134. To the teacher Giuseppe Aimo at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 8 March 1846**

My dear son in Christ,

I am sure that all is well with your school, as you yourself believe; and I have no doubt that God is with you and helps you. Just go ahead with courage and simplicity, without reflecting too much about yourself - for this can give rise to feelings of panic which confuse you. If things go well now, in future they will be even better.

All of your letter was pleasing to me, but especially the later part, which shows me that God has brought you to see on what solid principles and on what great confidence in God we have to build up our virtue. This is what our good Lord called us to when he separated us from the world. This coming year will be very profitable for you. I never fail to remember you all before God, dear as you are to me. So you must do as much for me. Write to me about everything that comes into your mind and which it will be helpful for me to know; and love me as I love you in the same Lord Jesus. Embrace everyone for me. Goodbye.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**135. To Don Fortunato Signini at Loughborough**

**Stresa, 9 March 1846**

My dear brother in Christ,

You did well to tell me about the principles you keep before your mind in directing the mission which Jesus Christ has entrusted to you. But do not pay too much heed to following them to the letter; for as you accumulate more experience, that, and pastoral charity will always suggest new things in practice, and will make you ever more diligent in gaining souls for the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and in preserving and bringing to perfection those you have won over. Above all make use of the great means of prayer: it is by this means alone that the pastor can make his labours fruitful. So recommend the souls in your care to the Prince of Pastors who was crucified for love of them, and shelter

them in his pierced side. Draw all your prudence from this fountain of water and blood, and then it will be enlightened by a strong and burning charity.

My dear Fortunato, you tell me that as far as natural feelings are concerned, 'you would feel a strong antipathy, and suffer distress if you had to be again in the company of Brother Crosbie.' In saying this you in effect accuse yourself of nothing other than an excessive fastidiousness which comes of self-love - and this you have to conquer. You will never become perfect, my dear man, unless you overcome and totally master yourself over this most important point. It is not enough to think that this is a defect coming from *nature* rather than from your *will*. It is not enough, because true humility and great charity destroy all the natural antipathy that arises from wounded self-love, and instead give rise to great gentleness and sweetness of heart. The saints were more than willing to be with those who most looked down on them, even with those who reprimanded them and blamed them; and we have to imitate the saints, and never be content with ourselves until we have done so. Self-love and our deep pride - much more than nature - causes all sorts of susceptibilities and feelings of repugnances; it is easily offended, and then finds excuses with which to conceal this great defect. So let us not deceive or delude ourselves: we know very well the poisoned root which exists within ourselves; and we have to attack it until it is eradicated, and until there reigns in us only the most gentle and unalterable CHARITY of our Lord Jesus Christ. This alone will make us good and constant in good works.

So too we have to set about destroying in ourselves the other feeling you express in these words: 'I should certainly find it very hard if anyone else were to come here as my Superior'. There is no greater grace I can wish for you than that God should infuse into you a contrary attitude, so that you would show great readiness and spiritual contentment if Superiors were to send to the mission someone else to take charge of it, and that you would recognize it as your duty to be humbly subject to him and obey him gladly. I pray for such an outlook, for you and for myself, and for all our brethren, because nothing could give me greater joy than to see that all of us imitate the sentiments of the meek and humble heart of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be sure that the devil does not spread *his* attitudes among us. He sows his tares among the good seed of God's word; and these tares, these weeds, are mainly of pride. He sows these evil seeds *at night* - that is, without our noticing it. We awaken, as if from sleep, and we find these weeds growing in our hearts; and alas for us if instead of feeling grief, and preventing them from smothering the good seed, we go about saying to ourselves: 'I do not know that I have ever consented to such a suggestion; I am not aware that I have ever positively caused it to arise in myself.' No indeed: we are *not* so aware; because our spirit was asleep when the enemy gained access to us. Can we suppose that the one who did the sowing was not evil? And so perhaps the seeds were not tares? Can we believe that presumption, self-love, pride, and all the other sentiments that go with these monstrous passions are not pernicious and hateful? How terribly we should be deluded if we thought along these lines! I fear for myself and for you, my dear brother; and I beg you as forcefully as I can to bring it about that there is in you no desire or pleasure except in humble things (not wishing to know high matters), but delighting in obedience and self-abasement before others, in simple dependence, and even in being despised and suffering the disgrace of the cross of Jesus Christ. Think about the sentiments which so filled the humble, meek and loving heart of Jesus, and model your attitudes on his. If in your heart you find different sentiments (whether you freely admitted them or not), then make war to the death against them, using prayer, mortification and acts of every kind of humility and charity. Without these things, the gentle sweetness of Christ will not be found in you; but with them - and only with them - you will have a foundation on which to base a most lively trust that Jesus Christ will work for the good of that flock of yours, provided that you first bring it about that he works for the good of your own heart. I certainly hope that you will follow this path and leave aside all subtleties of self-excuse that can detract from the integrity of

the holy and generous resolution that is needful for you. May our Blessed Lady bless you. Goodbye. Give my warm greetings to Father Pagani, your Provincial.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. R.

**136, To Padre Antonio Bottari at Cherasco**

**Stresa, 10 March 1846**

Reverend Father,

As a postscript to the letter written on my behalf by my secretary, I will reply to the most important of the queries you put to me in your letter of 6 March. The *Observations on Catholic Moral Teaching* by Alessandro Manzoni is an excellent book, like all the others he has published. Manzoni much prefers the book on *Morals* of Padre Natale to that of St Alphonsus (good though this is in general, apart perhaps from certain questions concerning conscience, about which I wrote an explanation in the *Treatise on Conscience* which I published. )

A genuine religious never has the *right* to be idle while he lives, but must humbly allow himself to be set to work by his Superiors. He may certainly tell them respectfully of his circumstances; but he should then be content to leave himself in their hands. If a religious has behaved badly in the past, he must guard against being disturbed by this: it is enough if he asks pardon of God and resolves to do better in future. We have a God of infinite mercy. Should the religious be scrupulous, he ought all the more to avoid becoming upset, or sad, or afflicted. Rather, he must put his trust in God and be attentive to the guidance of his spiritual director. Any moral offence he thinks he may have given to his Superior, he can make reparation for by prayer. Both predestination and human free will are dogmas of the Church; but it is not necessary to understand how they may be reconciled, and the Church has made no pronouncement about this. Hence the theologians differ in their views, as you know, and there are books which can be consulted over these matters. It is of faith that every Christian is given 'sufficient grace' [for salvation]. It is not an article of faith that such grace is given also to all those who are not Christians. That penitent who wrote anonymous letters in the case you refer to is not obliged to retract; and to do so would not be prudent; but he ought to put away all resentment, and use greater charity towards those he has insulted, to make up for the wrong he did them. A religious should not leave his own community for the sake of peace, but should rather bear everything patiently, exercise virtue, and sanctify himself in his proper state. One may help him over this, but never help him to leave the religious state. I hope that you will continue to help and have prayers said for -

Your loving servant in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**137. To Maria Geltrude Cerutti, Superior of the monastery of Arona**

**Stresa, 13 March 1846**

Very Reverend Mother,

I wrote to you in my last letter that the Canon will have told you to hope that certain of your thoughts came from God. Because in fact it is better in these matters to be content with hoping. We can thus better exercise the virtue of abandoning ourselves to God, rather than by seeking absolute certainty - which God may not wish us to have in some matters. If there were any one thing over which we should feel it important to know with

certainty, it would no doubt be that of our eternal salvation. But it is not God 's will that even the saints should be entirely sure of being saved while they are in this world. Instead, their state is concealed from them - to the point where even St Paul would not say that he was justified. So if it is God's will that we should always be in some uncertainty over the state of our souls, may he be blessed - for he sees that it is better for us. We must live contentedly in his loving arms.

So there is no need to be disturbed, dear Reverend Mother, over reading in my letter expressions beginning with *alcuni* ['some' or 'certain']. You already knew that sometimes such a word has to be used, since you recognize that many thoughts come from our nature, and can also come from the devil - even though these can do us no harm provided that we do not consent to them. You know also that the holy prophets themselves did not always speak from inspiration, and not all their thoughts came immediately from God. Again, you know that no one in the world is without sin, as scripture tells us. Yet without thoughts there can be no sin. Hence if we have defects, it is certain that the thoughts which give rise to these and are their source do not come from God, who is the source of all holiness. And since you know all this, why upset yourself? The sentiment which gave rise to this disturbance of mind is one that I should like to see banished from your soul once and for all, since it cannot be at all good. So you did well to tell me all about your reaction to my last note, since this has given me the opportunity to warn you, as you wish, to preserve greater calm of mind, and neither to be too readily fearful nor too presumptuous. I have already told you that you may be the victim of imagination (or even if you like, of delusion); but that these things cannot do any harm to a soul who through humility and trust in God, together with obedience, avoids these dangers and walks securely. So go ahead peacefully in the love of the Lord and in charity towards your neighbour; and do not worry about anything else. Just be content to ask yourself if your thoughts are good and reasonable, or whether they are bad and arbitrary. For the rest, you do well to reveal them, so that they can be assessed by those who guide you, while you suspend your own judgement as the Lord may inspire you. So too the fear that you sometimes feel is, I believe, the result of some deceit or deviousness in you: and this you must put away and get rid of entirely. For even if I were to make such a judgement about you, it would not in any way harm your soul; and it is about your soul and about pleasing God that you must be concerned. Moreover, I can assure you that I have never thought any such thing. And although at times it has seemed to me that the safest and most perfect thing would be for you to open yourself to your ordinary confessor, I do not feel obliged to advise this.

As for your query as to whether I consider it to be the will of God that you should take a vow of obedience, my answer is what I have already said: that if your confessor or the Bishop disapproves of the idea, I do not think it is something from God. But should they in fact give their approval, then I would put the matter to the Lord, so as to obtain the light to know whether I ought to receive your vow.

The booklet I promised you has not yet made any progress. The Lord will have to give me the necessary time, and what is more important still, his Spirit. In the meantime you must continue to pray and to get prayers said for you. This is bound to produce much fruit.

I am, in the heart of our Lord -

Your humble servant.  
A. R.

138. **To the same**

**Stresa, 20 March 1846**

Very Reverend Mother,

I confirm what I said before: that even if you experienced deceits and illusions, these would be innocent, and could do no harm to your soul unless you harboured thoughts of pride, vanity or some other passion. Are we not all subject to deception, poor creatures that we are? It is not the deception that harms us, but only sin. But as long as we go ahead in all simplicity, without wishing for certainty in such things (in which to be certain is not necessary for our eternal salvation or perfection), not only do we not sin, but neither do we fall into error. For whoever leaves things alone, without forming any judgement, is certainly not deceived. Nor are we bound to reach the opposite conclusion: that is, it is not necessary to attribute to some deception of our imagination any sentiments that occur to us in prayer. We have to let them stand as they are, using them to help us to love the Lord more and serve him better. And when it comes to distinguishing what it is useless to know from what is useful, the following rule is a guide.

‘The love of God always comes from God, whether this love shows itself in the form of faith or of hope or of charity. This, and this alone, we must attribute to God, and not to ourselves. But all the rest - our imaginations, our visions, any internal voices and so on - we do not have to have to see as coming from God. We leave them alone, without making a judgement, only taking care that they do not introduce in us any culpable affection, and in this way making them serve to increase our love. This alone is our good; and it is only this that we must take account of, while ignoring the rest.’

Continue to pray to the Lord for me.

Your humble servant in Christ,  
A. R.

139. **To the same**

**Stresa, 3 April 1846**

Very Reverend Mother,

I gather from your letter, and from the manuscript which I am returning, that all went well with your manifestation of the desire you felt to take a vow. And this was necessary, because in the meantime you have come to know for sure what is the will of God - which is that you should defer the matter, and for the present neither think about it nor mention it to the Bishop. In the reply of the Canon I admired the prudence he showed, the careful attention he gave to what you wrote and the prayer with which you prefaced it, asking for the light of the Holy Spirit. This will certainly be given you. So go forward in all peace and tranquillity of mind in the love of the Lord, since nothing else matters for you but to love God more every day, in accordance with the rule I gave you in my last letter. This aim alone is important for you: the means are a matter of indifference. We have with us the words of Jesus Christ: *True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth*. If your confessor thinks you are a visionary, do not be upset by this; for to be a visionary without ceasing to love God does no harm to a soul. And what man is there who can say that he is never subject to any illusion or play of fancy? But we can also make use of our imaginations to love God more, and this is enough. Nothing can harm anyone who loves the Lord: and anyone who practises humility does love God; for any small gain in humility is worth more than a hundred moments of fervour. Believe what I say; and I hope that I shall always have a place in your prayers.

Your humble servant in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,  
ROSMINI p.

140. **To the same**

**Stresa, 13 April 1846**

Very Reverend Mother,

I probably did not express myself clearly enough in what I said about reading books on mysticism. I am far from disapproving *in general* of such reading. To my way of thinking, they are useful for those who direct souls, and for certain persons who receive direction. But I do not think they should be read indiscriminately. All must depend on the prudent insight of the Director. I willingly defer to the view of the good Canon in the particular case in question; and if the Canon tells you to read such books, I make no objection. But if he leaves you free in the matter, and you would like to hear my opinion, it is that you should forgo such reading and be content with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, on which you may meditate as much as you please, and in which you will find the hidden manna which will give you the strength not only to reach the mountain of God but also to climb it step by step until you reach the summit

Pray and have prayers said for Don Setti, so that God may, if it makes for his glory, give him back to us, even though the doctors find that his ulcers are beginning to damage his vertebrae.

May the Lord fill you with consolation in this holy season.

Your humble servant,  
A. R.

**141. To Don Giovanni Cavarero at Stresa**

**Stresa, 16 April 1846**

My dear brother in Christ,

I am replying, though somewhat tardily, to your welcome letter. Even if it is true, as you fear, that you are lacking in some of the qualities that are desirable in those who are in charge of others, all the same the office you hold now should not cause you the slightest disquiet of conscience, because you took it on out of *obedience*; and just as it was not through your own initiative that you did this, so too it is not for you to disburden yourself of it. So what remains, my dear brother? Only to employ well all your powers so as to fulfil the duties attached to the position that God himself has given you, while you remain unconcerned about the outcome of your efforts. And if this obliges you to a certain watchfulness, and to act to see that order is observed and the rules kept, as well as have zeal for the good of souls and give good example - well, these duties do not go beyond what you are capable of. Again, your duties should be a delightful stimulus to acquiring the gifts which you think are lacking to you. So from this point of view, your position can greatly help you to improve as a person - and still more to become holy. So it only remains for me to encourage you to work well in the field the Lord has assigned to you, doing all you can to find in it the treasure which at the moment is hidden from you. So see to it that you are diligent, outdoing the others especially when it comes to the common practices of piety, and directing all your companions with both gentleness and firmness (that is, by continuous and persevering efforts) to live in perfect order and observance. Show an interest in all that is done within the house, or in school, by each one. Also, within yourself meditate on suitable means by which to win over all those with you to the same pursuit of holiness.

I take this opportunity to urge you to give special attention to and exercise prudent vigilance over the young man who is being educated in the house. You must keep your eyes open, as does one with a loving heart, who nonetheless is not without fear.

Take courage and chase away those scruples. God bless you.

Your brother in Christ,  
A. R.

**142. To the deacon Giuseppe Saiani at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 24 April 1846**

My dear brother in Christ,

Before I decide over the important matter of your being ordained to the priesthood, I should like you to write me a letter in which you reveal candidly your feelings about this, and in particular tell me:

1. What spiritual progress have you made in acquiring solid virtues?
2. In particular, how have you advanced in humility, self-abnegation and obedience - not just in theory but in practice?
3. Do you find yourself firm and resolute over your holy vocation, and in your determination to fulfil the duties belonging to it?
4. How far do you possess a religious spirit, and especially are you detached from the world and its allurements and honours?

When I receive your reply, we will together pray over the matter to discern what is God's good pleasure. Goodbye.

Your father in Christ,  
R. p.

**143. To the cleric Gioachino de' Tartarotti in Trent**

**Stresa, 5 May 1846**

My dear Signor Gioachino,

In order to give sound advice over the matter you wrote to me about, I should have to examine the vocation of your friend at close quarters; and if he would like to come next September to Rovereto, I will gladly do so. So for now I will limit myself to saying some things that apply in general, and may perhaps throw some light on the matter for Sig. Toresani. They are these:

First, the work of the missions is a most holy one, a particular grace, should God call anyone to this lofty ministry.

In the second place, it is also both hard and dangerous; and this means that three conditions must be satisfied. The missionary must be very sure of his vocation: anyone who is going to undertake this work must prepare himself for it by holiness of life; and in carrying out this work, great prudence and caution must be used, both to safeguard against the spiritual dangers and also to ensure that the most abundant fruit results from his labours.

If a young cleric feels himself called to missionary work among infidels, there are two ways in which he can offer himself for it. The first is by offering himself to some bishop, or to Propaganda; the second is by entering a religious order. I would not recommend the first way to anyone who was not: (1) of a mature age; (2) well-grounded in all Christian virtues; (3) of robust health. This is because, without these qualities, he would risk exposing himself to grave danger to his soul, and perhaps also to failing to do any good to the souls of others. But on the other hand I should not hesitate to advise a young man who did not meet all these conditions to dedicate himself to God in religion. And this is because, *being under obedience*, (1) his vocation could be tested by the Superiors who, before sending him on the missions, would be able to ascertain that his

vocation came from God; (2) in a religious order missionaries are first formed, and then sent out only if it is judged that they fully possess the necessary gifts; (3) further, they are not exposed on their own, and without any guidance, to the dangers involved. Instead they are accompanied by their brothers in religion, and are always watched over by their Superiors, who have care of them, body and soul.

So tell your friend *to pray much*, and to prepare himself by a life both spotless and fervent. Then God will not fail to guide him along the right path. And if he would like to consult a wise person in Trent, I would suggest Don Angeli.

I ask both of you to pray also for me -

Yours,  
A. R.

#### 144. To Martino Epp at Stresa

Stresa, 6 June 1846

My dear brother in Christ,

Having invoked the Holy Spirit and the help of the Virgin Mary, and after considering carefully what would be most conformable to perfection and the glory of God in the matter, my answer to your letter is as follows:

(1) I cannot agree to your using one of the seven hours allowed for sleep so as to pray or do other things; (2) if at meals you wish to eat and drink less, I agree to this - provided that you use discretion over the matter. But if you want to fast on days when this is not of obligation, then so as to have the merit of holy obedience and wise direction, you must ask permission on each occasion from Father Master, your immediate Superior. And the same applies to taking the discipline and other such mortifications; (3) you may give alms provided that you do this through your Superior (which will be more meritorious). Should you have some money to be so used, hand it over to Father Master. This will help you to foster the spirit of holy poverty and humility, which you must profess; (4) as for studies: for now you need to use great moderation over them, since while you are a novice, your energies should be devoted to the holy practices of the noviciate (in the words of the Spirit, *all things have their time*), and you must be peaceful in mind over so acting. All the same, you are not forbidden to consult from time to time a book of moral theology, whenever you need to resolve the cases that come before you in the confessional, and to read the missal and ritual; (5) it will be very meritorious for you to accept *as a penitential practice* the common exercises of the noviciate, and to try to find in them spiritual savour, for the love of God and of your vocation. But in all this you must do what you can and act with liberty of conscience; (6) remember that praying in common with your brethren is a better thing than praying alone; (7) it will help greatly in your present situation if you avoid intense concentration, and make use more of vocal than of mental prayer. Do this with a lively faith in the precept of obedience that counsels you in this way; (8) each day you are to do what Providence puts before you as your duty, without any anxiety concerning the future and with a sure confidence that the same Providence will lead our steps to a happy conclusion, even when we do not understand its workings; (9) it is important not to impose any obligation of conscience on ourselves in matters where neither the law of God nor commands of Superiors require anything of us. We must have no scruples or anxiety in such a situation; (10) when Superiors consider it useful for us, it is as well that we should busy ourselves with moderate manual labour, so as to train ourselves in humility and simplicity. *Do thus and thou shalt live.*

Your brother in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

145. To Count Giacomo Mellerio

Stresa, 7 June 1846

My dear friend,

Alas, we have suddenly been deprived of the physical presence of our beloved Holy Father! And if this news is bound to cause sorrow to all true children of *Holy Church*, think how grievous it must be to us who have lost our true Father and special protector . . . and imagine what must be my personal sorrow at the loss of one who always gave me such proofs of special trust and affection. I found him just the same after he had become Pope as he had been when simply the Abbot of S. Gregorio. We are preparing to celebrate fitting obsequies for him in all our houses. I hear from Rome that his sudden death may have been caused by the rapid growth of a cancer. Now we have to wait and see who will take his place at the head of the Church. At any rate I hope that we shall soon have a new Pope elected according to God's will. In the meantime there is greater need than ever to pray *pro Pontifice eligendo* [ for the election of a Pope].

Greet Don Luigi for me, and keep me informed about everything that is of importance to me - that is, everything that may affect the Church. All here greet you individually. I embrace you in the Lord, and in haste am -

Yours affectionately,  
A. ROSMINI p.

146. To N. N. in Milan

Stresa, 10 June 1846

My dear Sir,

I read with sympathy the description you gave of your situation. And since you ask me for some helpful advice, this is what it seems to me in the Lord that I must say to you. (1) Persevere in the career in which you find yourself, trying to carry out the duties connected with it, and to practise the virtues that are proper to your situation, such as justice, honesty, a busy life, and charity towards your neighbour; (2) do not fail to receive the holy sacraments, as far as your commitments allow; (3) get rid of any exaggerated and mistaken ideas you may have; and to get to the root of things, show great docility over obedience to your Director, and conform your thinking to the general sense of all good Christians; (4) make use of some form of honest recreation, following the example of the saints, who regarded such things when used in moderation as often useful and indeed necessary for the attaining of perfection. They revive our energies and they calm our minds; (5) although giving some time to literature is not incompatible with a commercial life (and indeed we have examples of merchants well-versed in literature, such as Davanzati), still, we must not let literature prove an obstacle to our professional obligations, but follow the maxim: *Do what has to be done*; (6) finally, the advice of some good doctor could help you: let him prescribe the sort of diet you should follow, and advise you over the moderation to be observed in all things. This is because the symptoms you mention suggest to me that you may be suffering from undue anxiety about your health.

Your affectionate and humble servant,  
A. ROSMINI p.

147. To Mgr Luquet in Rome

Stresa, 10 June 1846

Very Reverend Monsignor,

You say in your much appreciated letter of 30 May that I may well have thought that the wise decree of the Congregation of Propaganda on the establishment of a hierarchy and the introduction of indigenous clergy in the Indian missions could have found met with entrenched opponents to its being carried out. No, Monsignor, I never had any such thought. Rather, I thanked God from my heart for leading the Holy See to reach a decision over a matter so vital for the growth of the Church, and I was convinced that from now on, all missionaries without distinction will be in agreement about putting into practice those two great maxims, following faithfully the way traced out to them by the Head of the Church. Now I learn with sorrow and wonder from your letter that indeed the opposition continues, even though it cannot now be *bona fide*. But what would make me most indignant, if it were admissible to be so over something that God, for his own high ends, allows to happen, is the vile and dishonest way in which the opponents you tell me about have behaved, resorting to calumny. In putting you to this ordeal, hard as it is to nature, the Lord surely means to perfect you; since one of the most admirable and necessary apostolic virtues is precisely that of enduring with firmness and trust in God such slanderous imputations, opposing simplicity to cunning, truth to falsehood, benevolence to hate, meekness to arrogance and injury. Yes, indeed, the Lord wants you, as he wanted St Paul, to serve him *in good fame and bad*. And this sort of treatment, which you may not have experienced among pagans, he wishes you to suffer from Catholics, rejoicing that you are found worthy to *suffer insults for the name of Jesus*.

What you have been told, that the Institute of Charity would not at present accept a mission in Oregon or Ceylon, is quite true. Some years back, Cardinal Franzoni was good enough to offer us a mission in Filippopoli [sic The reference is obscure]. I replied that, although I was always ready to obey whatever the Holy See might command me, for my part I felt that I had with all respect to decline, since I did not think the time had yet come for the Institute to take on a work of such broad scope. The Institute of Charity exists, you could say, especially for the great work of preaching the gospel to unbelievers; but at the same time it feels the need to make long and serious preparation for this. Although I have little experience - and indeed just for this reason - I am firmly persuaded that to take on foreign missions lightly causes great harm to those who are sent out on them, and to the cause of the gospel itself. Again, I believe that if the missionaries who have already been sent to the infidel countries were fewer in number but greater in virtue, a much bigger harvest would be reaped. The Institute of Charity at present has a foundation in England, and there the fields are already white with the harvest. My intention is not to disperse the missionaries too much, but rather to keep them united. So when I am asked by those in that important land for ever more men, I prefer for the time being to send there those who are not needed by the houses in Italy. All the same, do not think, Monsignor, that I fail to give thought to the pagan nations. I long for the time when I may be able to establish a missionary college specifically dedicated to this work; for I want to found a house for the training of those who may be called to an apostolic life, so that they may receive there the necessary preparation. *It is good to wait in silence for the salvation of God*. For now, I have neither the means nor the opportunity; nor have I a suitable place. It would certainly have to be nowhere else but in the capital of the Catholic world. I hope that all this may come to pass through the prayers of good people, who always have in mind the words of Christ: *Ask therefore the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest*. So I hope that you too will help me with your prayers and advice.

The last part of your letter raises a very important question for me. I have always wanted to see the Holy See reach out with its powerful hands so as to support and give

more help to the Oriental Catholics and the Slavs, who because of their remoteness from Rome do not perhaps sufficiently feel its salutary influence. May the Lord give to the Church a Head gifted with the insight and force of apostolic spirit equal to the immense needs of the times! Jesus Christ is always invisibly present in his Church: we must beg him for this grace, and trust that he will answer our prayers.

Recommending myself to your prayers, and asking your blessing, I am -

Yours respectfully  
A. ROSMINI p.

**148. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan**

**Stresa, 23 June 1846**

My dear friend,

I had only just received your letter when, in the midst of our religious family gathered in our chapel, I ordered a joyful *Te Deum* to be sung for the double grace the Lord had granted us in giving us a new Pastor for the Holy Church, and doing so with welcome speed. The rapidity with which the election took place must be an admirable thing for the whole world, showing as it does that the Cardinals were led not by any natural ambition but solely by thought for the good of the Church and the needs of the times. It is also a pledge that the best possible choice was made. I knew nothing about Cardinal Mastai Ferretti; and although I was a little displeased about this, it did not at all lessen my happiness at what took place or my confidence in the new Holy Father. If you get to know anything about his attitudes and early decisions, do tell me about them.

Warmest greetings in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Also greet Don Luigi for me.

Your affectionate friend,  
A. R.

**149. To Fr Peter Hutton in England**

**Stresa, 23 June 1846**

My dear brother in Christ,

I was greatly consoled by the news of my beloved brethren who are serving our Lord Jesus Christ and the Church in England. I am equally pleased both to know what great fruit, by the mercy of God, our itinerant missionaries are reaping (may God increase their number!) and also to hear of the active zeal of those who do not move from place to place, and the devotion of our novices among whom you and Fr Provincial live. I pray continually that the Lord will grant them all the true spirit of our Institute, which is one of humility which finds all its delight and treasure in the secret life of the soul in God, and reckons as rubbish the praise of men and talk of external honours; but it is also a spirit of *charity*, which makes those who are clothed with it quick and active, always ready at the least sign from God and from obedience to take on the greatest and most heroic works. It is the joining together of deep calm and peace of spirit in God with much activity in accordance with the will of God that forms the perfection which is the aim set for those who are disciples of our Institute.

I hope that the new building has made good progress. How I should love to see the beginning there of a college devoted to education! May the Lord grant us this consolation, and judge it to be a good basis for the Institute in England.

May God bless you all. Greet each one individually from me.

Yours in Christ,  
A. R., Provost General

150. To Giuseppe Rosmini at Rovereto

Stresa, 1 July 1846

My dear brother,

With the loss of Pope Gregory XVI I have certainly lost a father, and I could say also a friend. All the same I look to receive from the newly-elected Pontiff the kindness and charity which are never-failing in the one who occupies the Chair of St Peter. Good Christians are bound to offer fervent thanks to God for having provided the Church with a new Head on earth in so short a time, so that she does not feel widowed through the loss of a Head who was so greatly esteemed and praised all over the world. I am sure that both you and Adelaide, as true children of Holy Church, will have carried out the threefold duty of praying for the soul of the dead Universal Pastor, of praying for the election of a new Pope, and of thanking God for the grace of giving us Pius IX.

Madam Bolongaro and those of my companions who know you send their greetings; and please greet the good Adelaide on my behalf. Both of you pray for -

Your affectionate brother,  
ANTONIO

151. To Suor Costantina Menzio at Domodossola

Stresa, 2 July 1846

My dear daughter in Christ,

Take care that your imagination does not make you see faults where there are none, and so cause you unending distress. This sort of thing is much to be feared; but you can avoid it entirely if you let yourself be ruled blindly by the judgement of your confessor and your Superiors. The rules you must follow so as not to be deceived and suffer needless anxiety are these: (1) take it that what arises within you against your will and without any consent on your part is not a sin. That is the meaning of the saying that what constitutes sin is not a matter of *sense* but of *consent*; (2) if you think you have fallen into sin, see whether this was to do with an external, deliberate and malicious act, or was solely an internal act. In the first case, do not stop to consider what sort of sin it was, or how grave, but simply confess it humbly; and after you have been absolved, give no further thought to it or upset yourself; (3) if the thing was wholly internal (thoughts, taking pleasure and so on), it is enough if again you tell your confessor about it, and refrain from thinking about it further or trying to judge whether you really gave consent or not. Absolution will purify you afresh, if you have need of this. Jesus Christ instituted the new baptism of confession because he knew very well that his disciples would be weak, alas, and fallible. Have great faith in the *efficacy* of the sacrament: each time you receive it you will be purified and strengthened by it, until your spiritual enemies will finally be defeated. When you have told the matter to your confessor, leave him to judge it, and submit to his decision, receiving Holy Communion as he directs. Then the matter can cause you no harm, even if some defects remain in you. There is no need to speak to your Director or others about it. Rather, I hope that you will not; for it is enough that you have opened your conscience to your confessor and to me. It does not help, but rather does harm, if you speak to too many. If in spite of all this you remain somewhat doubtful over a particular matter, write to me as freely as you like, sealing your letter in a further sealed envelope; and I will send you a reply. So that you may feel more free in mind, I dispense you from the obligation

laid on you by the Director to receive Holy Communion, but at the same time I urge you to be guided by what your confessor judges right in this matter from time to time.

Take courage, my dear daughter: do not allow yourself to think back on your past confessions. You already know that I understand the state of your soul and your situation, so I speak from comprehensive knowledge, and there is no need for you to make a further general confession to me. What you have to do now is to *keep as tranquil in mind as possible*, and to go ahead with *patience and resignation*, putting great trust in God, our Lady, your guardian angel, St Aloysius and your other patron saints. So once more - courage. May God strengthen and bless you.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

### 152. To Baron Meysenburg in Vienna

Stresa, 2 July 1846

My dear Baron,

If it pleases divine Providence to bring to a happy outcome the plan for a foundation in Verona, I shall be very pleased to see the Institute of Charity called to give some service to others in the neighbouring Austrian States; and this will perhaps open the way for it to spread to other regions - as for instance, Hungary, which you mention. For the rest, I shall be content in the knowledge that our good Father in heaven, who knows the times and the moments, will dispose everything according to his wise and all-holy will. So however much I might wish to see us go to Verona, I wish even more that God's will may be done.

Certainly I have lost in Gregory XVI a loving father, one who showed a rare example of a man who was to me just the same when he was on the throne of Peter as he had been when he was a simple religious. He takes with him both my love and my gratitude, and these will last as long as I live. I ought truly to say with holy Job: *The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.* But I experienced one sudden and unexpected joy to mingle with my sadness - through the news of the rapid and edifying election of Pius IX. His praises are sounded everywhere: all with one voice rejoice in so happy a choice of Pope. We had hardly finished singing the *De Profundis* when it was time to sing *Te Deum*, So may unending thanks be offered to the Lord who both strikes and consoles us.

My dear Baron, remember before God especially the one who signs himself -

Your humble and affectionate servant and friend,  
A. ROSMINI p.

### 153. To Don Lorenzo Gastaldi in Turin

Stresa, 7 July 1846

Very Reverend Sir,

Your letter gave me much consolation, giving me to understand that God is calling you to the religious life, so that you may become *foolish for Christ's sake*. This in my view is a grace so great that it can be said of it what holy scripture says of love: *If a man were to give all that he possessed for love, he would think of it as nothing.* I am fond of that article of the *Summa*, the last one of the Second Part, in which St Thomas shows that when it comes to choosing the religious state there is no need to ask advice from others, for the advice has already been given by Jesus Christ. So although our divine Master did not make it a precept for his disciples, nonetheless it is certain that those who take this path purely out of a loving desire to follow Jesus Christ more closely and perfect themselves

can never be deceived. I believe that all those who have been given light to appreciate how valuable is the happiness of spiritual perfection not only do well to follow the counsels of Jesus Christ in order to obtain it, but also have in themselves the grace and the strength to overcome all the obstacles which they will soon meet with, provided that they use prayer and determination.

From this you will see, my dear Sir, that not only do I want to encourage you to go ahead with your magnanimous resolution and welcome with a great and generous heart the invitation you have received from God's goodness; but I am also convinced that if you accept it, you will be able to surmount any difficulties that present themselves. For the Lord will give you the virtue and enlightenment to cope with them with the help of that spiritual prudence which in this, as in all other matters, must be our guide. And since I feel I must give you the advice I would be guided by myself, and that indeed I was guided by when I found myself in circumstances rather like yours (though I hope this advice in fact came from God), I have no hesitation in suggesting to you that you ask the Lord for the holy prudence you are in need of in order to arrange the financial affairs of your family in the best possible way, so as to preserve peace and amicable agreement, as well as to provide for the education of your younger brother, to whom you can perhaps also offer useful spiritual counsel.

As for the good you are at present doing to the souls in the place where you now live: this does not seem to me a reason for renouncing the greater good you can do to yourself - a good which is not a temporal one, but promises an increase in yourself of the love of God and of your neighbour. This is all the more important since by making yourself more perfect and uniting yourself more closely with God, the author of all the good that man is capable of, you will make yourself a more fitting instrument for working for his glory. This consideration gives good reason to hope that God, should he so please, may draw from you greater profit also for the good of others. This is not to say that what little you may now seem to lack in perfection comes from your tepidity rather than from your present state [i.e. as a layman], for our Lord gave his counsels precisely for this purpose - that is, to help us in our tepidity and weakness. He did not say: *Be more fervent; be stronger*. Rather, he said: *If you wish to be more fervent and stronger*, that is, if you wish to be perfect, *profess poverty, chastity and obedience; deny yourself; take up your cross, and follow me*. In saying this he wanted to give us the grace of perfection on condition that we made use of such means as these. You know that this is how the saints understood all this. It is wonderful to see how persuasively this doctrine was put by St Bernard in his letters, by St Thomas, by St Alphonsus, and by all those who have written about it. So too it is admirable to see with what generosity they made their deeds correspond to their words, as they freed themselves from all the hindrances and arguments that human prudence put forward. A particularly striking example is that of St Aloysius, who would not give ear to what was said to him about the harm that would follow for his family and his position if he were to abandon the world and the status God had given him for the benefit of his brothers and those in his charge. And such examples are common in the annals of sanctity. So I can do no less, as I said, than to advise and exhort you to accept God's invitation. For the smallest scrap of extra holiness that a man can acquire has an infinite value, and one does well to sell everything and buy so precious a treasure and the field in which it is hidden. That field I take to be none other than the religious life. It is here that (in the beautiful words of St Bernard) -

Here man more purely lives, less oft doth fall,  
More promptly rises, walks with nicer heed,  
More safely rests, dies happier, is freed  
Earlier from cleansing fires and gains withal  
A brighter crown.

[This translation is to be found in Wordsworth's lines on the blessings of a life in the cloister.]

It is certain that, even if there were no other advantage in religious life than to fight the battles of the Lord incorporated in a united body of men, this is preferable to fighting as individual soldiers divided and scattered; and this reflection alone (for anyone who is seeking God's greater glory) must weigh very heavily; for a larger body of people has greater power for good, as well as for evil. So that as wicked men join forces for evil ends, it is all the more desirable that the soldiers of Christ should bind themselves together and organize themselves strictly for good.

So that, my dear Father, is my advice. As for deciding about religious life, pray, and the Lord will give you light. If you would like to know more about the Institute, let me know, and I will send you any information you want. If you are able to pass a few days in solitude here, that would be better still. Then I could explain things in more detail. In the meanwhile, pray also for -

Yours affectionately,  
A. R.

**154. To Don Giuseppe Fiacchetti at Intra**

**Stresa, 24 July 1846**

My dear brother in Jesus Christ,

It is quite natural that parents feel sorrow when their sons are far away; but if those sons are called by God to the high state of religious perfection, the parents must bear their grief with resignation, and the sons have to attain a holy detachment from them, so as to have no one on earth but God as their father, and religious poverty for their beloved mother. Moreover, since Jesus Christ said that anyone who has once put his hand on the plough must not look back, but must go ahead on the path he has chosen and complete the furrow he has begun, we are obliged, with the higher part of our mind, not to wish to return to the family we have left, but rather to be afraid of such a thing, realizing that unfortunately rejoining our family is apt to enfeeble the soul, cloud the mind, weaken our supernatural powers, lessen the merit we have acquired, make the practice of virtue more difficult, and render heavier the sweet yoke of the religious and spiritual life. For this reason I am glad that you have put yourself in the state of golden indifference, and that you will accept with equal if not greater joy the reply I am about to give to your request to visit your family in the holidays. And that reply is that I cannot allow you to do this, because I do not think it would be beneficial either to your *health* or to your spiritual *perfection*. You have said you are determined to dedicate yourself and all your strength in the Institute; and I do not believe that it would offer either edification or good example to the other brethren [if you were to go home.] Instead, busy yourself during the holidays with growing in religious fervour and with rousing in your soul the spirit of the priesthood, which obliges you to attain great perfection, and to conform yourself wholly to the one who was at once High Priest and the victim, the one who died for us on the cross, Jesus Christ. So pray to the Lord for your parents; but for the present, abandon the thought of visiting them. Rather, grow in detachment from all the things of the world, thinking only of loving and serving our Lord perfectly, and for his greater glory.

So take heart! Be both happy and resigned in mind, and God will bless you. I embrace and bless you in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Your father in Christ,  
A. R.

**155. To Don Leonardo Terribilini at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 29 July 1846**

My dear brother in Christ,

I am very sorry to hear that you again tell me you have dropped the retreat work that was given to you. It is your duty to fulfil it, and let it be over and done with.

I regret that you sent the scholastics to supply for the teachers, without first asking my permission. Your duty, as regards the scholastics, is to direct them and see that they do well the things they are given to do. You are not to give them anything new; and in particular they are not to be allowed to meddle in work that belongs to others. Not even Fr Rector can authorize that. Take care not to exceed the scope of your authority, for perfect obedience forbids this, and because to do so leads to disorder and discord. It is a fault to be unwilling to do what has been assigned to you (or to do it negligently, failing to obtain the greatest possible good from it). And it is equally a fault if you arbitrarily do something you have *not* been commissioned to do. So I urge you to examine yourself on both these points and to be on your guard over them.

An effective way to unnerve the teachers and lower their morale and their commitment to their own work is to get them to believe that there is always someone who can replace them at need. So just as soon as possible, take our scholastics out of the schools, and make the teachers take up their work as before. This is especially important because it is the teachers, and the teachers alone, who must get the pupils ready for the approaching examinations. So rather draw profit from these days in which you will have the scholastics with you to arouse in them spiritual and religious fervour.

May God bless you and all the scholastics.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**156. To Suor Costantina Menzio at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 4 August 1846**

My dear daughter in Christ,

Take notice of my advice, and God will help you and bless you. Shut your ears to the voices which come from the enemy of your soul and which tell you that you are rejected, while the truth is that you have the blood of Jesus Christ to wash away your sins and save you. So too resist the instincts which prompt you to behave badly in spite of those who love you as their daughter and treat you as such. So cultivate patience and resignation: make use of ejaculatory prayers; and especially declare firmly that you wish never to offend God. These are the invincible weapons with which you can overcome the devil and, despite him, be assured of gaining heaven. Take courage, then, and trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and in the intercession of his holy Mother, to whose care I commend you.

Your father in Christ,  
R. p.

**157. To Don Giuseppe Fiacchetti at Intra**

**Stresa, 13 August 1846**

My dear son in Christ,

I am anxious, God knows how much, to see you advance in the way of perfection to which you have been called, according to the spirit of our Institute; and I notice that the thing you must attend to most is to become perfectly obedient, and to give loyalty and

perfect submission to your immediate Superiors; for without this there can be no humility, no charity, no calmness and peace of mind. Accordingly I have decided before the Lord not to give you any specific task this year except *to obey totally and in all things* your immediate Superior, allowing yourself to be directed by him for the love of God, as our holy rules prescribe. This is the only way to arrive at the holiness we seek. So resolve to banish all protests and internal displeasure with regard to what you may be commanded or forbidden to do. Be ready to interrupt carrying out what you have been told to do should a new directive come from your Superior. Give no scope to the movements of your imagination, which may, out of the pride which dwells in our hearts, tempt you to split hairs and reason in a human fashion - even at times in a diabolical fashion. Apply yourself to acknowledging and grieving over the faults you have committed this year, showing no little ingratitude towards your loving Superior, when you took offence because he did not make use of you, having the crazy idea that the office{f} he gave you had the effect of tying his hands and taking away his freedom to use you or not, as he saw fit before God. In this way you gravely and for some time (that is, while you entertained such sentiments, until God gave you the grace eventually to banish them, to my consolation) failed to observe that golden rule which begins: *Let all leave to the Superior and Father the free disposal as well of themselves as of all they possess, as true obedience requires . . .* You would do well to meditate on this before the crucifix.

I hope that you have humbly asked pardon of your Superior for conduct so opposed to humility and religious obedience, and that you are resolved, in the time when you are still with him, to give him certain proof of your amendment, your affection and gratitude towards him, as well as to give a good example to all, serving the Lord faithfully in peace of mind and a tranquil spirit, humble and truly poor, as our Institute requires of its true disciples.

The Institute, by promoting you to the priesthood, hoped that you would become more humble, more perfect, more committed to fulfilling the duties of your vocation. Should you fail in these things, you would have to render an even greater account to God. I hope that you will become a solid religious, and take the most direct path to this, to your own great gain, and to the consolation of him who signs himself in Christ -

Your affectionate father,  
A. R.

{fs}Fiacchetti had been made Inspector of the elementary schools of Intra.

### 158. To Suor M. Bonaventura Rosmini at Domodossola

Stresa, 13 August 1846

My dear daughter in Christ,

As I am about to leave here, I cannot do more than write you a few lines to tell you that I will give your mother and father your letters when I arrive there. Be of good heart, because the *carissima madre*{f} loves you greatly, and is concerned only for your true good. Try to raise your spirits above this earth to heaven, and especially to *abandon yourself* so as to seek only God and his good pleasure, in trust, peace, simplicity and holy joy of heart. All the bonds of human attachment have to be broken for the love of God and your dear and bountiful spouse, Jesus Christ.

Offer a Holy Communion and three 'Hail, Mary's for me each day until I return. May God bless you and keep you in close union of heart with your Superior and your sisters in Christ with whom your life will be lived. Goodbye.

Your affectionate father in Christ,  
ROSMINI p.

{fs}The title given to the Central Superior or Mother General was ‘Carissima Madre’.

**159. To Don Giacomo Molinari at the Sagra di San Michele**

**Rovereto, 11 September 1846**

My dear brother in Christ,

I have sent Don Cesare [Flecchia] to San Michele, because I am afraid that the religious ordering of that house is not all that it should be. I notice that you have the best intentions of regulating everything well, but then you forget about it, and when it comes to carrying out your ideas you do not behave consistently and keep on an even keel. And so it happens that abuses gradually creep in, a certain laxity develops, with a lessening of mutual agreement and charity. It is most important that a Superior should be persevering in his government until he ensures that there is a religious observance of all the rules and the directives he has received. It is necessary to maintain all the practices that have been introduced, with exactness and a spirit of fervour. He must neither cause or allow irregularities, dispensations or exceptions from the order laid down. To this end you must try to be firmer in character and vigilant over the consistency of your thinking. I realize that the lack of order I have mentioned is partly the result of your often having to be away from the house. But surely this problem is covered by the rule already laid down: ‘The house must never be left without either the Rector or the Vice-Rector: one of them must always be present.’ Besides these general norms, I must draw your attention to some particular matters:

1. You should show an equal affection towards all your companions, so that none may think you prefer (or confide in) any one person;

2. You must be more concerned about cleanliness, beginning by keeping your own room clean (and indeed showing a good example in this), as also your person - and requiring others to imitate you in this;

3. Keep a close eye on financial matters, especially as regards the expenditure on bricklayers - choosing men who are honest and hard workers. It would perhaps be a good idea if you gave preference to those employed by the Rector of S. Ambrogio, and asked the advice of your Consultors about this.

My greetings and blessing to all of you there, dear as you are to me in Jesus Christ.

Yours,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**160. To Eugenio Andreotti, a student in Vienna**

**Rovereto, 22 September 1846**

My dear Andreotti,

Much as I should like to welcome you as someone genuinely converted to the Lord and wholly dedicated to his service, all the same I have fears over the stability of your new resolution. The regrettable nature of your past behaviour and your repeated faults make me afraid that you let yourself be deceived by your lively imagination; and that, not knowing yourself thoroughly, you have failed to develop that low opinion of yourself and that deep sorrow for your past failings which alone could furnish a sound foundation for the new building of humility, holiness and sacrifice - the virtues aimed at by those who enter the Institute of Charity with a generous heart. I leave it to you to think about these things at the feet of our crucified Lord and sort out your relationship with him. As for me,

having asked for light from above, I have decided not to send you the money for your return from there, since you can make for the love of God the journey you made for love of the world. If, despite the obstacles, you present yourself to the noviciate at Stresa, you will be received with all charity; and this will be a first proof of the genuineness and sincerity of your good resolution. May God bless and strengthen you.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**161. To Suor Giovanna Antonietti at Domodossola**

**Stresa (no date) October 1846**

. . . Suor Filomena has told me that your father is ill, and would like to see you before he dies. If it were possible for you to go to him and return within a day, I would have no difficulty in allowing you to visit him. But since this cannot be done, and since I have to be careful over granting such requests, so as not to introduce abuses, I consider it more perfect (and a better example to the other Sisters) if you content yourself with commending his soul to God, and remaining in the convent. I am perfectly agreeable (if this can be done) for you to send on a visit to your father, in your place, the Fr Director, Don Terribilini, to console your father. I hereby give permission for this, after telling Fr Rector about the matter; and you can send with Don Terribilini a loving letter which he can read to your father, to comfort him and help him towards making a happy death.

Your father in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**162. To Don G. B. Pagani at Ratcliffe College**

**Stresa, 22 October 1846**

My dear brother in Christ,

I am sending you a copy of some reflections that Don Luigi Gentili makes about our Sisters, so that you can let me know your views. There is one thing in these reflections that greatly displeases me. It is where he says: 'there are some very well-educated postulants from well-to-do families for whom it is not fitting that they should (as the others do) go to work in the small villages.' You must remember that our Sisters should be ready for any work, and should all be treated in the same way. Otherwise they have no vocation; and to introduce distinctions would irreparably ruin the Congregation. This does not preclude Superiors from using judgement over adapting people's burdens to their powers. Indeed it is their duty to do this. But heaven help us if some Sister considers herself to be someone special because she is of noble birth! Such a one would have either to be corrected or dismissed. For goodness' sake, do not let yourself be deluded by such things as high birth or a rich background; and do not let the Sisters be so deluded. Rather, speak to them plainly about the matter, and continually instruct them about humility and evangelical charity. For the rest, you know my view: I do not want the Sisters to be sent to work with sick women, but instead to restrict themselves to education. There are Sisters in other orders to help sick men and women; and these should do this work - not our own Sisters. These can perfect themselves spiritually, provided that they are employed strictly within the sphere of education. I mean education in the broadest sense of the word, embracing all classes of people, from peasants to those of high rank; and covering the whole age range, beginning with infants; also in all types of education, including public schools and boarding colleges. I am very keen that you should enter into my way of thinking over this, and not let yourself be influenced by what others may say.

I send you my affectionate greetings, and ask your prayers and those of all the brethren. My God bless you!

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI p.

**163. To Giuseppe Maria Rosmini-Serbati at Rovereto**

**Stresa, 23 October 1846**

My dear brother,

I received your letter of 11 October, and although this was a reply to one of mine, and so did not call for a further letter, I want to thank you for it and at the same time add a further thought. You say that it would have been inconvenient to have received Don Fusari into your house would have been too much of a nuisance, since he is unwell and delicate. Now what I wish to remind you of is that we are in this world to help one another, and that neither charity nor even courtesy can be practised without some inconvenience. In fact charity which does not involve any trouble is of very little worth. So if we want to obtain many graces from God, we have to put up with some inconvenience when we show charity to others. I should like you to consider this well and become generous in doing good, and willing to endure some disturbance of your own comfort for the sake of other people, our brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greet for me Adelaide and Salvadori, and all the domestic staff. Pierino too, the Fedrigottis and so on. I embrace you warmly, and am -

Your affectionate brother,  
ANTONIO

**164. To Don Giuseppe Gagliardi at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 24 October 1846**

My dear brother in Christ,

I am afraid, from reading your letter, that you think our college there has gone down in my estimation, as if I consider that the boys who live there are (as you put it) undisciplined and out of control. Certainly not. It is not like that. No one has made any such disapproving remarks. Rather, I am fully persuaded that our little college is, by the grace of God, one of the best in this region. All the same, we have to make continual efforts to run it ever more perfectly, as far as our powers allow, and to put right any defects we notice about it, even slight ones - and to do this without for a moment losing heart. God will give you ample help in the labours of your office there, since you do everything for his sake, and for him alone. Trust in God and prayer: these are the great means to obtain everything we need. For the rest, it would greatly grieve me if your crushing burden were to injure your health; and to avoid such a danger you need to be very ingenious in sparing yourself and saving time, not neglecting to give yourself the necessary bodily rest. You need the full seven hours laid down in the Rules of Domestic Order - and you perhaps need a further half hour.

How are you to manage this? Here are some suggestions: (1) Deal quickly with visitors whose affairs are of no great moment; (2) Make good use of the services of Fr Minister, and delegate him to deal with any matters that do not have risky consequences; (3) Never act in any matter which is within the competence of others, but get them to carry out their tasks, while you merely keep a general eye to see that they do so. I realize that at times they may fail in this, and it will be up to the Rector to supply personally what

needs to be done. But this will seldom be the case if he is strict - that is, if he is punctilious in seeing that others carry out the duties assigned to them; (4) Postpone things that can wait till another day, when this can be done without harm, and when they cannot be carried out on the day itself without omitting more important matters, such as one's spiritual duties. In such ways one can with a little ingenuity gain time for the rest and sleep which are so necessary.

The advice given you by Fr Setti is of great value, and entirely my own view and recommendation, so you will not be mistaken in following it. I send you warm greetings and commend myself to your prayers.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. R.

### 165. To Don Paolo Barola in Rome

Stresa, 26 October 1846

My dear Don Paolo,

Your welcome letter of 12 October greatly consoled me when I read that your health is perfectly restored. And surely we can see the Lord's hand in this, my dear Don Paolo? And we see too the kindness of that dear Mother of ours whom we have constantly invoked? The action of heaven is clearly seen in your recovery, and all the more clearly in the admirable means used by the divine wisdom to bring it about. And with this God did not only bless you, but at the same time the whole Church. And for my part I can never sufficiently give thanks to God who in his mercy gave us Pope Pius IX - an event which filled the whole world with joy. I continue to pray, and to get others to pray, that the Lord will heap on him an abundance of the graces and heavenly gifts which he will need to carry out his sublime mission. And since you have links with him through friendship and habitual intimacy, what is a joy shared by many becomes for you a special cause for rejoicing. What more agreeable medicine could there be for your ills than this? No earthly doctor could give you this - a remedy that, as you tell me, has made you a new man. So let us give unbounded praise and thanks to our supreme Benefactor, to whose service we dedicate the life and physical well-being that he was pleased to grant us in so kindly a way.

I think I saw Mgr Mastai-Ferretti in 1829 when he was getting ready to go to Chile; but my memory of this is rather dim. However, I should like you to know that after he became Pope he was kind enough to take under his protection our little Institute of Charity, and to inform me of his fatherly disposition by a letter which he sent me in reply to the one in which I congratulated him on his elevation to the papacy, and offered him with all my heart our devoted service. As for what you tell me - that the Institute may perhaps establish itself in Rome - I have no knowledge of this. Certainly the centre of an Institute like ours ought to be in Rome, since we propose to exercise universal charity under the immediate direction of, and in entire obedience towards, the Head of the Church. But God knows the times and the moments, and you know my motto: *It is good to await in silence the salvation of God*. This is the key to all that I do, and I have had it put over the door of the cell I live in at Monte Calvario di Domodossola. Gregory XVI, of dear and holy memory, promised me that in due course I should have a house in Rome. God did not wish for this during Gregory's pontificate, and therefore neither did I.

My dear Don Paolo, help me with your prayers both in my many present needs, and those of my brethren, and also in my needs at the hour of my death, which is perhaps not too distant! Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. R.

166. To Maria Geltrude Cerutti, Superior of the convent of Arona

Stresa, 9 November 1846

Very Reverend Mother,

With regard to the work for the glory of God that you have in mind, you can be sure that I always approve of such projects, as long as they genuinely make for God's glory. And I think that all the holy founders, especially St Francis, were content that their spiritual children, if they had any worldly wealth to spare, should use it for the good of their neighbour, rather than save it up; and this is because Christ's own command is to exercise charity - the most perfect work, and that which most gives glory to God. Only act with spiritual prudence, and ponder well the work you wish to do.

The temptations you endure, as long as in the higher part of your soul you reject them - for example feelings of envy - always come from our lower nature, from our base desires as St James says, and are repugnant to our will. They are the product of the remnants of original sin which (as St Augustine says) linger on in us even after we have been given new life in Christ. They are like the dregs left over in a glass after the liquid has been poured out. Hence they are a reason to humble ourselves, and a means by which God makes us know more clearly what sort of beings we are. These dregs which always remain in us are at times (when God allows this) stirred up afresh by the devil, and they can on occasion cause (so to speak) a foul smell which is revolting to us. But the dregs, the remnants, have the useful function for us of preventing the glass from being broken - in other words, this body of death which we carry with us as we continue our pilgrimage, far from our homeland. But God is always with us, and he wins the victory in us and with us. In this way he gives us new cause for the gratitude which so rightly keeps humble the recipient of such blessings. Your self-offering as a victim to the Lord has no direct connection with these temptations, You might at times think they had, seeing the trial assigned to you by the Lord as an aspect of an impending martyrdom, or some other anguish that might afflict you at the moment of death. But I advise you to reject the notion that such temptations are caused or allowed because of the offering you have made of yourself to God. Rather, be content to know that they all proceed from the evil root of our corrupt and corruptible nature; and to know moreover that the Lord is with you, ever ready to help you and make you triumph through his grace.

And is this not enough? Is not any further thought superfluous? How does it help to look too closely into the reasons of God's working - hidden from us as they are? Jesus Christ led his disciples and apostles by this simple, plain and safe way to perfection. He never encouraged their curiosity; instead he repressed it, when it was opposed to the divine counsels. So it is my belief that there is nothing to be gained for your soul if you are anxious to know exactly to what rung of the ladder you have attained by the goodness of God. It is enough that the Lord knows it. He truly knows this; and we, who have no need to know it, can all too easily deceive ourselves. Instead, then, of turning our thoughts inwards on ourselves, let us focus them solely on our Lord himself, the sure way to guide our footsteps, the *truth*, the *life* of our life, our whole good. above all other goods. In short, let us LOVE, and seek nothing more - not even what the results of our love are for us; but be content to love Jesus alone in himself and in all his brothers and sisters, all the members of his mystical body, the Church. So I entirely approve of the resolutions you made during your retreat, summed up in those two beautiful words: *love* and *fidelity*.

When you pray for my own soul and your own, what are doing except carrying out the command of Christ: *Love your neighbour as yourself*? I thank you then for your charity, and I beg you to continue it to me without anxiety, extending it to the souls of all our neighbours. In the Sacred Heart of Jesus I am -

A. R.

167. **To I. Drivet in Lyons**

**Stresa, 20 November 1846**

My dear brother in Jesus Christ,

[After consoling Drivet over the death of his wife, Rosmini goes on to speak of the health of Don Setti.]

Out good Don Setti is still with us; and although he has many afflictions, they make him like the Crucified One, from whom he draws strength of soul to be tranquil, even joyful, in his continuing sufferings. However it seems that rather than getting worse, he is very gradually recovering; so much so that the doctors in Naples (in whose care he now is) see the prospect of a cure. At present he is in Pozzuoli, near Naples, with the Capuchins; and should you wish to write to him, send your letter there. And he, and all of us, will pray for the soul of our good sister who has died, sure in the knowledge that she will also pray for us. We shall pray too for our dear confrere, Drivet, that the Lord will amply reward him for all the sufferings that he has borne with so much resignation and constancy. Remember in the Lord him who warmly embraces you, and declares himself -

Your affectionate servant in Christ,  
A. R.

168. **To Don Bernardo Fusari at Rovereto**

**Stresa, 22 November 1846**

My dear Don Bernardo.

I had great pleasure in reading your letter. It is certainly something heavenly to enjoy the company of a friend and, together with him, serve the Lord in everything from prayer to mealtimes. *How good and pleasant a thing it is when brothers live united.* So I come in thought on the wings of Christian friendship to place myself in your midst, particularly in those moments when you speak together of our dear St Francis, whose life you are reading, and when you pray to the Lord together. I should like you to see me in spirit, and to offer my heart along with yours to God. Indeed I hope you do this.

My dear Don Bernardo, look after your health. You need time to do this, and I think you ought to leave the college of S. Vigilio for a while. {f}

Your friends here send their greetings, and I embrace you and Don Antonio Gasperi in the Lord. I am, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Yours affectionately,  
A. R.

{fs}Don Bernardo Fusari, the Vice-Rector of the College of St Vigilio, which had been founded at Trent by Don Rigler, was recalled to Rovereto for the sake of his health.

169. **To Don Giacomo Molinari at the Sagra di San Michele**

**Stresa, 22 November 1846**

My dear brother in Christ,

You certainly did well to express candidly and in good time your views upon the two rules over which you now write to me. You must resolve always to use complete

frankness when expounding your opinion, for this is part of the perfection to which we are called by the Lord. For the present no change can be made. For the rest, as regards substituting a sermon on scandal for that on eternity, I do not recall having done so. But even if I have, there is nothing said in the rules which obliges the givers of missions to stick exactly to the order given for the sermons. This is merely advisory. It is enough to look up No. 5, where the four series of subjects are proposed, and nothing more. All the same, it is well to follow what is proposed - but not with such rigour that anyone who prefers to give as the first sermon of the sixth day the one on eternity (as noted in the second series) may not do so.. He must only avoid turning topsy-turvy the order of the successive meditations.

The other rule, which you dislike, was suggested to me by the Rector of the Oblates of S. Gaudenzio, and I think it is a good one. For to give leave to missionaries to make little devotional presents establishes in practice a custom which is full of inconveniences - one of the least of which is that it gives rise to jealousy among those who do not receive such presents, or receive less. It also gives scope for ill-natured gossip, as if there were less than admirable discrimination taking place. Such petty tittle-tattle must be avoided. If you had given missions in cities or large centres you would have seen this sort of thing. And the drawbacks do not stop there. So over this point, rest content: refraining from this custom is in conformity with the prudence which relies more on the word of God than on little childish devices. To give out, say, holy cards as mementoes of the mission is not necessarily excluded, but it is better to do this with the agreement of the parish priest: not all favour this. Again there is nothing to prevent having such mementoes given out some time after the mission - but again with the consent of the man in charge. Further, it is permissible to suggest to the parish priest the names of certain people to whom devotional books may be given, and these can be left with him.

I give you permission, if this arrives in time, (since I realize that I was late in finding your letter) to spend 15 or 16 lire on notices about the mission. May the Lord bless it!

Greet for me dear Don Cesare, to whom I will reply as soon as I can. I hope that permission has come for the printing of the Rules of the Sodality. Let me know, because I am anxious for news of this. I greet, embrace and bless all of you in the Lord. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
R. p.

**170. To M. Geltrude Cerutti, Superior of the convent of Arona**

**Stresa, 4 December 1846**

Very Reverend Mother,

You ask me whether I think it better that you should manifest your interior concerns to your confessor, or put up with the spiritual trials they cause; and in reply I tell you sincerely that I see no harm in your telling your spiritual guide all these things so as to be advised by him. To that let me add that I do not mean this to be an obligation. It would be better if you could learn to cope with these spiritual trials on your own, making use of a few little rules for discerning good from evil - such as (1) anything that come simply from pure love can never do any harm to the soul; (2) whatever serves to humble us or promote any other gospel virtue, against our natural instincts, is always something good; (3) we can never sin unless our will consents - and so on. A person who makes a practice of solving for herself any internal doubts by relying on the words and maxims of Jesus Christ gains more profit and becomes stronger, because she puts her trust in God alone. And God, through his word, teaches her, so that the prophet's words are verified, when he

said of the disciples of our redeemer: *et eritis omnes docibiles Dei*. In other words, you will be fit to be instructed by God himself.

I would not say the same if it were a question of *acting*, of doing something external, or concerned with a work of penance or of charity towards your neighbour. For these it is always better to seek advice from your director. But as regards internal matters, *in your case*, you can very well (as I said) confer with your director. But you should act as though you had no great need for this. If you do so, do it out of devotion more than anything else. For it is very desirable that you should learn to deal on your own with any anxieties that may arise within your spirit through such causes. Should you feel a good inspiration to perform some work of charity, then first examine the matter for yourself. If it seems to promise good, do not go any further without asking advice. But if the matter, looked at with a cool head, is ill-conceived, keep quiet about it. If it is doubtful, ask about it.

I am sure that you will continue to do me the charity of praying for me. I am, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus -

Yours,  
A. R.

### 171. To Mgr Luquet, Bishop of Esbon, in Rome

Stresa, 7 December 1846

Very Reverend Monsignor,

I hope I shall see Mr Newman (whom you mention in your letter) when he returns from Rome. Manzoni let me have the letter of Mr Phillips, who suggested that he [Newman] should visit me at Stresa, and I am sorry that I had no opportunity to be of some service to him here. [Newman did in fact call on Rosmini, but they missed one another.]

For the rest, you mention the obedience which we members of the Institute of Charity give to the hierarchy, and indeed this is a vital feature of our Society. I could see very well that an institute with a general and unrestricted aim simply could not exist if it were subject to the jurisdiction of the bishops of individual dioceses (who naturally give priority to the interests of their own flocks) and were not employed for the general good of the Church, which is of greater importance. As such, this service must represent the aim of such an institute. I realized, too, that the diocesan bishops could not govern an institute with the same approach, in the same spirit, and with perfectly consistent policies. What is more, busy as they are with looking after the souls in their care, they cannot find the time (as things are at present) to foster, in the way that is called for, the religious and spiritual life of the members of such a society. Yet this life is the very root and foundation of the virtues that must inform all exterior works. On the other hand, though, since the bishops are the legitimate successors of the apostles, having their mission from Jesus Christ, how could anyone rightly do anything within the Church other than under their direction, and with a mandate from them? I therefore set about reconciling, in the Institute of Charity, this submission, obedience and religious service to the order of the hierarchy with the universality of the Institute, with the independence needed to exist as a closely united body, and therefore a strong one, internally ordered and animated by one single spirit, with no danger of allowing the interior life and spiritual perfection of its members to suffer.

To fulfil this double aim, the Institute was exempted from the bishops' jurisdiction so that its Superiors could freely apply themselves to forming their subjects in holiness. But at the same time its rule and fundamental maxim was to live a hidden and retired life, looking to Providence to supply occasions of exercising charity, without seeking these out; and at the same time it looked to the bishops for the necessary *mission* to take on the

care of souls and apostolic preaching. It undertook such activities always according to the wish of the bishops; and in everything to do with exercising charity it lent itself to fulfilling their requests in preference to calls from any other source. Hence whenever the parish priests and bishops were themselves members of the Institute there would be no difficulty; for it was also laid down as a primary rule that whenever a member of the Institute was called by God to look after a parish, he would be both the parish priest and the Superior of the Institute within the bounds of that parish. And if he were made a bishop, he would at the same time be Superior of the Institute within his diocese. These things were always to be so, provided certain conditions laid down by the Constitutions were met. It follows that the Institute is divided by parishes, dioceses, provinces and so on, in a similar way to the divisions of the hierarchy which it must serve.

Coming now to the matter of the Oriental rites - the main subject of your letter: I have no hesitation in confiding my view to your prudence and friendship. It is this: the attachment people feel to their own rite is so great, and (if I may say so) so blind, that I believe it would be impossible to get the schismatic and heretical countries of the East to re-enter the Church if at the same time one aimed to change their rite and induce them to accept the Latin rite (or any other). In my judgement at least, it would for these countries be much more difficult to change their rite than to change their creed. This is clearly evident to anyone who examines the facts. Hence the Church and the Holy See in their wisdom told missionaries always to respect the Oriental rites. Your Lordship is aware in particular of the Decrees of Benedict XIV. So, given the enormous attachment of the Oriental peoples to their ancient and venerable liturgies; and given also the effect that public cultus has on people's religious outlook, I believe that one of the main guiding lines of the Catholic Church when it comes to inviting within itself those Christians who are at present outside it, should be that of maintaining or restoring to those rites all the dignity that they may have lost in the eyes of the West, as you yourself say so well. So too I consider very apt your idea of introducing the various rites into those Catholic congregations which are destined to become missionaries and pastors to those separated sheep.

As regards the Institute of Charity, its name alone, and its characteristic motto, 'all things to all men', betoken the response it must give to your request. But so that there shall be no confusion over such provision, it would be necessary to set up missionary colleges for the benefit of the people who use these rites. And the Institute of Charity would be all the more inclined to do this, since it divides its members into as many training houses as there are main branches of charity which it exercises. Hence it would be wholly in accord with its foundation and spirit were there to be, for instance, a college of missionaries for Russia, another for Greece, another for the Armenians, and so on for each of the different schismatic rites. It is true that our rule requires us to use the Roman rite; but this was meant simply to exclude the various Eastern rites that differ from the Roman - it being highly desirable that the Western Church should have one single rite. It was not intended to exclude the Oriental rites as such. Moreover, as you observe, the approval of the Apostolic See would always be needed in the matter.

We shall not cease to pray to the Lord that your wise views and ardent zeal for the future of God's kingdom may produce an abundant harvest.

Asking Your Lordship's blessing, and with profound respect, I am -

A. ROSMINI p.

**172. To Don Giuseppe Fiacchetti at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 12 December 1846**

My dear son in Christ,

Whenever I see those whom Christ has given me for spiritual sons follow faithfully their vocation and make progress in the various gospel virtues, my soul is filled with consolation. But by the same token, I feel great sorrow when I see one of them take a different course. I had hoped that you would be one of these sons who would increase my joy and delight in the Lord, my dear brother. But on the contrary, your short letter, curt and without explanation, in which you simply tell me that you are rapidly losing the spirit of the Institute and at the same time your vocation, causes me the greatest sadness. Reflect, my dear Don Giuseppe, that you must no longer act like a child, or let your virtue depend on external circumstances; you should no longer need little props to help you to keep your footing. Should you depend on such things, it would be a sign that neither true virtue nor the spirit of the Lord had ever had root in your soul. And when the seed of the divine word has no roots it withers within the soul - or rather the soul itself is lost. Can you say that you are unable to do good, or to make progress in virtue? Certainly not. It is enough if you really will this. God has given you free will; he has put before you water and fire, death and life. The choice depends on you. God, for his part, is always ready to give you his grace: you have only to ask for it. Pray, then, and you will obtain it; knock, and it will be opened to you; seek, and you will find. I fear that you do not pray enough, or that you do not pray with due humility; that you fail to pray for what you need - justice, perfection, holiness, strength to resist your passions, victory over your self-love, the virtues of the gospel, strengthening in your vocation. All these things are to be had from God, if we ask for them with an upright and generous heart. *If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to you . . . you ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss.*

So when I hear you say that you have lost your vocation, I tell you sincerely that I am horrified to see how easily and how lightly you, from one day to another, distance your heart from what ought to be your treasure and your salvation, and feel yourself inclined to reject the most sublime grace which the Lord has given you. And what is more, how can you possibly say that you have lost your vocation - you who have bound yourself by the most sacred perpetual vows to the Lord? Can you say that it is no longer in your power to follow your vocation, when it is your duty to carry out what you have once and for all, for your lifetime, for all eternity, promised to God, on pain of losing your soul for ever if you fail in this? How is it possible that you can so lightly and capriciously make your fidelity to your promises, made to God and accepted by the Church, depend on external circumstances, on being in one place rather than another? Surely this is something that must horrify anyone who fears God and is in awe of his justice? Consider well that the perpetual bonds of your vows (bonds which are most dear and blessed to any heart which loves God) cannot be loosed without preferring hell to heaven, the devil to Christ! I cannot believe, for all that you tell me that you feel you are failing in your vocation, that this can be true; but at any rate, be certain that here we are concerned with nothing less than the loss or the saving of your soul.

So do as I say: chase away and overcome such temptations with the arms of faith; and for this purpose, submit yourself to the hard but most salutary yoke of holy discipline; and above all vanquish that self-love which is the enemy most to be feared, the most hateful to God; the self-love which deceives the imagination and upsets the calm of reason; which kills the soul with its subtle yet sweet poison, and which can only be fully conquered by continual acts of humility and the renunciation of one's own way of reasoning and indeed the whole of oneself. There are two things I particularly urge on you:

(1) To love God for his own sake, and to be unconditionally faithful to him - not making your virtue depend on place or circumstances, but resolving to practise virtue *in every place* and *in all circumstances*, striving with *interior resolution* to be virtuous at any cost (for there is no virtue without struggle);

(2) To have recourse to continual and humble prayer, always blaming yourself, and begging with tears and groans that you may be able to fulfil the vocation which God gave you, and preparing yourself daily for death; so that when God calls you, and you have to render an account of all the graces you received, he may find you a faithful servant. The matter of fidelity to one's holy vocation is the pearl which you have to buy by selling and sacrificing everything else. Have no thought for anything except carrying out your duties; let everything else go, but be faithful to God; nothing matters provided that you can make progress in perfection, in the imitation of Christ, who entered into his glory through suffering. If you devote yourself to carrying out your duties, to becoming holy in the place and the position which God has appointed for you, to bringing forth fruit for that mother, that religion, which has up to now nourished you and brought you up with such care - and finally to consoling your Superiors, who omit nothing that they think may help towards the good of your soul, then you will be happy, you will find yourself content, you will help yourself and your neighbour, all to the glory of God. But if you remain angry and obstinate and slip backwards, you will be unhappy in this life and the next. I repeat: everything depends on your resolution: this alone can bring it about that places, circumstances, people are a help to you and offer opportunities for becoming ever more virtuous and perfect. I hope that you will make this resolve and never go back on it. May God give you light: this I pray from my heart. May Jesus and Mary bless you.

Your father in Christ,  
A. R.

### 173. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan

Stresa, 13 December 1846

My dear friend,

It is a great step forward towards complete restoration of your health that the main cause of your illness is overcome - the stomach upset. I hope that very soon all will be well. We pray to the Lord for this, for it is only from him that we can look for every good; whatever does not come from him is *not* good. You are entirely right when you say that the greatest of gifts is Christian conformity to the most loveable will of our heavenly Father in everything, now and for ever. This was the supreme rule that directed all the thoughts, all the affections and all the actions of our divine Exemplar while he was on earth. It is the one way to peace and contentment of heart, to the sole happiness which we can enjoy in hope during our mortal life, and enjoy supremely and to the full in the future life. This is what I ask for myself; and if God hears my prayer I want nothing else. And this is what I ask for you, my friend, whom I should and do love as I love myself. So especially at this time when we prepare to celebrate the feast of Christmas, and the birth of that divine Person who, to do the will of his Father, came down from heaven to earth to die so as to redeem us - at this time when friends customarily exchange good wishes and prayers, I can certainly find nothing better to wish you than that God's will and yours, or rather ours, and that of all men, be one will alone, so that we may come to perfect unity. We shall be happy, happy for ever, if this wish comes true, this prayer that your heart and mine make! Let these be our Christmas greetings, my very dear Mellerio, and they will really be good wishes.

I shall not fail to pray that the Lord, in his love for that great Church of Milan will send it as a pastor a new St Ambrose or a new Charles [Borromeo].

Here is a loving embrace in the Lord from -

Your most affectionate friend,  
A. R.

**174. To the Sisters of Providence at Domodossola**

**Stresa, 24 December 1846**

My dear daughters in Christ,

Your letter of 21 December brought me the joint charity of your good wishes for the approaching feast of Christmas and for the New Year, and I know that these are the sincere expression of your affection. I thank you for them, and if our Saviour, the Child Jesus, is not hindered by my unworthiness, he will accept the prayers I make for you, and will continue to make, before the Crib, and will bestow on you in great abundance every kind of blessing. And there is no doubt that he will be generous with gifts to each one of his spouses, since to enrich all those who believe in him with heavenly graces, he made his first appearance on earth in such poverty (as the apostle says) *so that through his poverty we might become rich*. But yes, my dear daughters, let us be united in trust with our holy pastors, and let us by favour of Mary, the Virgin Mother and St Joseph, enter into the cave which became the royal palace of the King of Kings and the Lord of glory. Let us approach with humble reverence, but without fear, so as to offer our homage to the Son of God, the eternal Word made flesh for us and born in a stable, placed in a manger among the cattle (such a mystery of love, a miracle of mercy!) Let us approach, I say, the divine Child, our redemption, our justice, our salvation, our joy, our love - and therefore our one hope, desire and consolation. Let us be endlessly enamoured of his kindness, and feel tender compassion for the infant who suffers such indignity! But as we wonder at seeing him so humbled and so suffering for love of us, let us hear in his infant cries the first lesson he gives us from that Crib: a lesson of profound humility, extreme poverty, generous and heroic love for the poor human race he came to save - and especially those children (at an age still tender and innocent, at an age that is nearest to his infancy) to help whom, as co-operators in his immense love for mankind, he condescended to call you, bestowing on you this great honour. So in these sacred days let us offer him our hearts, ready and docile to receive his divine teaching, free from all attachment to the things of earth and to ourselves. He will then fill them abundantly with his treasures, with his spirit, with himself. In this way our hearts will become his cradle, acceptable to him, fitting and delightful. In this way too the divine Child Jesus will receive warmth to relieve the coldness of the stable - or rather the coldness of our souls will receive the fire of the heavenly love with which that divine heart is aflame.

And so I wish that all of you may with holy joy celebrate this beautiful feast of the Child Jesus; and I ask that, especially when you embrace your beloved Spouse in Holy Communion, you will with fervent souls say a prayer to him for the soul of -

Your loving father in Christ,  
A. R.

**175. To the Sisters M. Gertrude Vavasour and M. Cecily McCabe in England**

**Stresa, 26 December 1846**

My dear daughters in Christ,

Since I wanted a little peace and quiet in which to reply to your welcome letters, I had to wait until now. But I did not want to let this joyful season, so full of consolation for our faith, and in which we celebrate the birth of our divine Redeemer, pass by without writing to you and sending you my heartfelt wishes for your sanctification and eternal happiness. I thank the Child Jesus who, by choosing you for his spouses, drew you out from the world and consecrated you entirely to that love of him which finds expression in charity

to your neighbour. For he said that whatever we do for the benefit of our neighbour is done for him. He so loves mankind, and particularly those who believe in him, that he takes whatever good or evil we meet with as his own. How immense, then, is the grace of the holy vocation, by which he chose you, in preference to innumerable others, so that under the standard of his Providence you may use all your energies in serving him and doing unlimited good to your neighbour! How great is the grace of a religious vocation, what a precious pearl, of such worth that in order to obtain it, everything else is to be sold!

And so I earnestly pray the good Lord to make you firm in your undertaking, since the crown goes not to those who begin but to those who persevere. You will not lack the grace for this if you ask for it with humility and trust; for God, who calls souls to his special service, never abandons them, is always with them, and himself guides them in their struggles, and fights on their side. He may at times hide himself momentarily, as the unseen watcher over their battles and the victories which he himself brings about in them.

Your letters are to me a pledge of the blessing which the Lord will give you, and of the happy outcome of your generous resolution to put the world under your feet and to live and breathe only for Christ in our small Institute of Providence. You are full of daughterly affection towards your Superior, even though you do not know him and have never seen him with your bodily eyes. This pleases me immensely, and you may be sure that my affection for you in the Lord is no less, for I have a great desire to see you arrive at a high state of holiness. Certainly this cannot be attained without great disesteem for human things, without leaving aside the prejudices and false maxims of the world, without renewing in oneself the attitudes of the gospel, without humbling oneself, denying oneself, loving poverty, welcoming slights, loving the cross, bearing no resentments, and loving all those who do not love us. I want to see all these virtues in you, as I do for all my daughters in Christ; and I ask for them from that God who became Man, whom we see with the eyes of faith at this time, hearing his infant cries as he lies on the hard straw of the cave at Bethlehem. I want all these virtues for my daughters, because I want to see them made holy.

Meanwhile I warmly congratulate you and the other two Sisters on the grace God has granted you as you put on the sacred habit, a perpetual memorial of your renunciation of the world and your consecration to God. Again, I am pleased to see the esteem you have for your Provincial: while you adhere to his advice you will know the will of God in all things. And I rejoice to see the affection you bear to your Carissima Madre. Whenever you write to me, that will give me pleasure; and I am pleased to know that you are studying Italian, which is needful if we are to exchange our sentiments, since I do not know English. Greet for me in the Lord the whole family, beginning with the Superior. I have written one letter to you both, for all the Sisters of Providence are like one soul in Christ. Pray for me: I have so many needs. If you knew how many affairs press on me and how many needs I have you would be sorry for your father. When you receive this, offer a Communion for me. May the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless you.

Your father in Christ,  
A. R.

**176. To Don Pietro Bertetti at Tortona**

**Stresa, 26 December 1846**

Very Reverend and dear Canon in Christ,

I am writing this after praying to the Lord and saying Mass, as well as consulting over the matter my two brethren, Toscani and Puecher. Now here is the upshot. If you will come to me I will receive you and embrace you in the Lord as *one sent by God*. What seems to be

the main obstacle - that of the good you can do there - I make no account of. Anyone who offers himself to God unconditionally and allows himself to be used by means of a Superior does the greatest possible good, both for himself and also for the Church, when one considers the matter as a whole. No other good can be compared to this. All the same, although you can see from this what I believe, I do not intend to give you any positive advice: only God must motivate you and give you the courage and the strength to put the idea into practice. But still I do not hesitate to tell you my view. The first step would be to leave the post you now occupy, without revealing your purpose in doing so, and giving the Bishop sufficient time to find a successor{f}. After this the rest could easily be done, quickly and quietly.

My dear Canon, pray to our Saviour; we too will pray to him, that his will may be done in us, calling on Mary to intercede for us.

I will say no more now, but I warmly embrace you in the Lord, who said: *This is my commandment, that you love one another.*

Yours affectionately,  
A. ROSMINI p.

{fs}Canon Pierluigi Bertetti was the Rector and a Professor of the seminary of Tortona.

### 177. To Don Alessandro Pestalozza at Monza

Stresa, 30 December 1846

Very Reverend and dear Professor,

The death, or better, the passage to a better life of your holy mother, leads me to share with you both your grief and your spiritual consolation. Human nature of course weeps in such situations, being made aware of its fleeting existence. But the spirit is able to rejoice, conscious of its immortality, which is brought out all the more in contrast with the things that perish. And in the case of your good mother we are not looking only at immortality, but at what is much more important: the immortal happiness of which we read: *I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even though he dies, shall live; and anyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.* How great are the consolations of our holy religion - how precious, how certain, how abundant! It is a poor philosophy that does not make itself the inseparable handmaid of this wisdom!

I have prayed and had prayers said for the dear soul of your mother, who was blessed with the grace of a good ending to a good life. [I have prayed,] since we certainly owe our prayers even for the best of souls, given that they were united with a body of flesh infected with sin. It was for this reason that St Augustine recommended his mother to the prayers of the faithful.

I should have very much liked to be between the one Alessandro and the other during that agreeable conversation you mention. Greet for me the good Barnabites there, and continue to remember me before the Lord, in whom I am -

Your humble servant and affectionate friend,  
A. ROSMINI p.

### 178. To Don Giambattista Pagani in England

Stresa, 31 December 1846

My dear brother in Christ,

*Caritas urget nos* [the love of God compels us]. I have read in the public press the heart-rending descriptions of the famine which is afflicting the poor Catholics of Ireland. My dear brother, we belong to the Institute of Charity - and are we to stand aside, indifferent and with our hands idle, at the sight of the evils which oppress our Irish brethren? Is there nothing we can do for them? It is when we are faced with the greatest calamities that we have to exert the full force of that charity which burns in our hearts; that we have to make every effort, to the limit of our powers and beyond, trusting in the Providence and goodness of God. We must even show a holy rashness, attempting the impossible - since nothing is impossible for that God who told us: *This is my commandment, that you love one another*. For indeed nothing is impossible for the love which burns within us.

So understand my mind: with all my heart I want you, after praying to God, to think seriously about how you can undertake something great for the relief of Ireland. Those thousands of poor, exhausted people ask this of us with their groans and their last sighs. The appeal which it pains us to hear is the desperate plea of a whole country. So we must not shut our ears; we must not close our hearts. What is needed is an extraordinary effort. You who are on the spot will be able to decide what are the best means, the best ways [of helping]. I tell you, I exhort you, to try them all. If you have to go about begging in England, do that. If it will help, set up organizations that can promote this work, and then stimulate them to do so with great zeal. If you think fit, let our missionaries devote their sermons entirely to obtaining alms for Ireland. In conclusion, the greater the scale of our operation, the greater our sincerity, our perseverance, and the greater the importunity of the needs, the more subjects engage in this work, the more will God bless and abundantly reward the labours, the trials, the rebuffs and the disesteem we may meet with. For he has said: *Whatever you do for these little ones of mine, you do for me*.

It is up to you to arouse and direct the brethren; and up to you and them to do the same to any outside helpers. I will add no more. I hope that the compassion you feel in your heart and the concern in your mind will supply the rest. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,  
A. ROSMINI