

A selection from
THE ASCETICAL LETTERS
OF
ANTONIO ROSMINI

Volume II
1832-1836

Translated and edited
by John Morris Inst. Ch.

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TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

Much of what I said in the Foreword to the first volume of the Ascetical Letters applies here too — I have followed the same general lines in the translation of the letters of the years 1832-1836. A few letters have been included because of their historical interest rather than ascetical content — such as No. 57, which throws light on the breadth of Rosmini's reading in one particular area. Again, the story of the Institute's acquisition of the abbey of San Michele della Chiusa makes interesting reading.

It is perhaps not my place to comment on the ascetical teachings contained in the letters: but I cannot forbear from remarking (after very many hours spent with Fr Founder's letters) how striking I find his insistence again and again not only (as we might expect) on such virtues as humility and obedience, but on *gentleness* and *cheerfulness*.

And if I may risk one other observation, it is that he bore so willingly the very great burden of his extensive correspondence with his brethren (a burden that he acknowledges, for instance, in letter 93) in his anxiety for their spiritual welfare. He is always insisting that they write to him very frequently and in detail, even though this entailed the laborious task of dealing with their worries, their errors of judgement, their complaints, their scruples and so on.

To conclude: a few minor points. Rosmini customarily added to his signature p. (meaning 'priest'), and I have preserved this feature. The *Epistolario Completo* is referred to as E.C. And finally the *Vita di A. Rosmini* often referred to in the footnotes is the *Vita di Antonio Rosmini: scritta da un sacerdote dell'istituto della Carità* (Torino 1897) — written in fact by Don C. B. Pagani.

J.F.M.

1. To His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI

Trent, 10 January 1832

Holy Father,

[Rosmini first says that he feels an obligation to keep the Pope informed of the progress of the Institute of Charity, since Gregory XVI, even before his election, had shown a kindly interest in it, and had helped and encouraged its founder; and since a fundamental characteristic of the Institute was its dedication to the service of the Holy See (says Rosmini), he wants to ensure that he never takes an important step without the Pope's approval. He goes on:]

So I venture to inform you that through the divine mercy the Institute of Charity has, in the course of this last year, extended its activities into the diocese of Trent, where very soon it has gained as members quite a number of priests; and it is clear from both the quality and the number of these that the Almighty wishes to be generous towards this region So that... blessed with such subjects, the Institute finds itself busily occupied in the things that make for the glory of God and charity towards our neighbour. Hence I humbly ask for your approval and apostolic blessing on this new foundation and its members.

[Rosmini then goes on to renew the request for various indulgences which the previous Pope had shown himself willing to confer (just before his death) but which Rosmini had delayed to press for until the Institute had taken shape.]

I would ask that these spiritual blessings be now made available not only to those members of the Institute who are in vows (and either live in closed houses or work outside these as *external coadjutors*), but also to those who belong to the Institute as *Adoptive Sons* or *Ascribed Members*. Such people, though not under vows, benefit from spiritual direction and help given by the Institute, and co-operate with its members in the exercise of charity. And finally I should like the indulgences and so on to be made available also to the *Aspirants* -those who are being tested to see whether in due course they can be admitted to membership in one or other grade of the Society.

As regards my own situation, may I humbly inform Your Holiness that since my return from Rome, faithful to the guidance given me by Pope Pius VII of holy memory and confirmed also by yourself, I have not so much occupied myself in particular works of charity (such as hearing confessions and preaching (apart from particular cases where this was required of me), but have rather devoted myself to the general direction of the Institute and the writing of books. In this work I had in mind not only to refute present-day errors but also I have tried to develop and establish true doctrine, in the light of which erroneous teachings would thereby be invalidated. One of the books I have published had for its title *Principles of Moral Science*. This I humbly offered to Your Holiness

through the intermediary of the Cardinal Vicar. The book had for its aim to refute the theories of the *Utilitarians*, who pretend to base moral duty on utilitarian considerations. This system, insinuating itself in various forms everywhere, in matters of both public and private concern, continues to cause great harm to both religion and society in general.

It is my further aim to attack the other dominant errors of the day in a series of books; and given your approval (and provided that God gives me the strength), I intend to publish these in course of time.

[The letter concludes with the usual elaborate formalities.]

Your most obedient servant,

ANTONIO ROSMINI

2. To Don Sebastian De Apollonia at Udine

Trent, 23 January 1832

My dear friend,

I think you already have a concise description of the Institute of Charity, but in case that is not enough I give below another one brief but comprehensive.

Here, by God's mercy, the foundation is greatly blessed. I would recommend you, though, to be prudent in the use you make of the knowledge you have of the Institute: do not be led astray by your imagination, or let empty hopes deceive you. If you come across reliable people -that is, people who genuinely want to become members of the Institute — then confide in them as you judge fit.

But apart from such cases, I should like you to keep quiet and not to speak unnecessarily about it to anyone. The world, unfortunately, is always the enemy of Christ; so we have to be careful not to give it scope. *Cavete ab hominibus*. [Beware of men]. Let us steadily sanctify ourselves: in this consists all our good, my friend.

I share with all my heart in your troubles. Goodbye.

Yours,

ROSMINI p.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTITUTE OF CHARITY

1. This Institute is a pious society made up of priests and laypeople who unite together to work for their own sanctification and, in due order, that of others.
2. The disposition proper to the Institute is mainly the wish to help the bishops in all the needs of their dioceses and parishes.
3. In pursuit of this end the Institute does not exclude any occupation, duty or branch of charity; but it undertakes all that the bishops (in the first place) ask of it, as far as its resources make this possible.
4. So the Institute has for its fundamental motto that saying of St Francis de Sales: *To seek for nothing and to refuse nothing*. And this means that its members have no specific work in which they have to employ themselves; nor do they take on anything of their own accord. But if they are asked for help, either by their ecclesiastical superiors or by the faithful, they give their services as far as they are able — for example in the giving of missions, the care of souls, in schools and colleges, helping in prisons, in hospitals and so on.

And their preference is for works which are the humblest and which are least looked after by others. But if their help is not thus requested, they restrict themselves to working in their own churches, where they preach, hear confessions, and actively promote divine worship. At the same time, within their own houses, apart from fulfilling their religious duties, they pursue studies suitable to their state.

5. The members of this Society take simple perpetual vows (from which they can be released at the discretion of the Superior). Certain chosen members take also a fourth vow, to undertake any mission given them by the Pope. In addition to the members who take vows, there are also certain of the faithful who form part of the Society, though without taking vows. They join it out of devotion and with a view to co-operating in the works of charity which the Institute may undertake.

6. The Superiors of the Institute comprise: first, a Superior General, who lives in whichever of its houses he chooses (at present this is the foundation in Trent); and secondly, the Local Superiors whom the Superior General appoints according to need.

7. Should the Bishop, the parish priest, or any of the faithful wish for some service or work of charity, they apply to the Superiors of the Institute; and these are obliged, if they have subjects suitable to undertake the work requested, to supply what is asked of them. They take on such works without any thought of temporal advantage or any other human consideration. But it may happen that the Superiors have no subjects suitable for the work who are free of prior obligations; and in this eventuality they have the right to decline the work they have been asked for.

3. To the deacon Don Clemente Alvazzi at Domodossola

Trent, 27 January 1832

My dear brother in Christ,

I have received and read to my great consolation your letter in which you manifest your conscience, because I can tell from it what efforts you are making to correspond with divine grace. 'Perseverance wins the day', and so your spiritual struggles will have a happy ending. Confirm yourself in your vocation, and thus you will daily find that you have greater strength. If you resist external temptations generously, and (I would almost say) with a certain contempt, you will overcome them. May the Lord make you perfect in humility, obedience and charity. Be most careful not to judge people. God alone is the judge of our brethren: only he sees into the depths of the heart, where good and evil lie. We cannot discern these things; and merely external signs are not sufficient evidence on which to judge. Hence we have to refrain from making judgements, and where we think we see defects in other people, this must not lessen our esteem for them — and certainly not our love. So submit from your heart and allow yourself to be directed, particularly by your Father and Master. Be grateful for all he does for you, and co-operate with the various helps he offers you, such as advice, corrections, and commands; and so too of penances and modifications. How greatly it helps us to be humbled! And what love our Superiors show us when they go against our natural wishes, humble us and break our self-will! You have to see all these things with the eyes of faith, and if you do so your heart will find it difficult to feel sufficient gratitude to correspond to the full worth of these benefits conferred on you.

Carry on writing to me from time to time. Pray for me; and greet everyone there in my name and that of my companions who are not known by sight but are yet so closely linked to you by love. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

4. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Domodossola

Trent, 8 February 1832

My dear brother and companion in the service of the Lord,

Do not be so quick to believe that I want you out of the Society, or even that I am angry with you over your defects. No, rather I want to keep you in the Society: there is nothing I would regret more than that God should allow the one who was the first to come to Monte Calvario to fail to persevere in his vocation. Since I myself have numberless defects, I know how to be sympathetic to other people; and if I were to judge others severely I should be condemning myself before God; and your soul is particularly close to my heart. So who knows? — perhaps I may one day have to give an account to God, should you through my fault leave the Institute. What is to be done, then? Only to search for all possible ways to ensure that with God's help you do not fall again into such very serious faults. You need to have much less confidence in yourself in future: to be firmly persuaded that the way to salvation lies in humility and obedience even though our corrupted imagination suggests differently. So from now on you need to guard yourself and sincerely serve God (as scripture says) *corde perfecto atque verissimo* [with a true and perfect spirit]. In the meantime let us pray and remain humble — we who have no reason to be proud. Goodbye. I shall see you soon: I await news of your travel arrangements¹.

A. R. p.

¹ Rosmini had written to Loewenbruck, telling him to pay a visit to Trent — which in fact he did a day or two after the date of this letter. (cf. E.C. No. 1623).

5. To Don Pietro Bruti (curate at Praso)

Trent, 19 February 1832

My dear brother and fellow-priest,

[Rosmini first speaks of Don Pietro's desire to enter religion (and, it would appear, to enter the Institute of Charity), and encourages him to pray for the great grace of a vocation.]

... But, you will ask, 'When may I hope to join you [the brethren at Trent]? Is the future quite uncertain?' My dear Don Pietro, all I can say to you is that at present we are working at trying to detach ourselves from everything, purifying our consciences, and acquiring solid virtues to the best of our ability. I would think that at the latest you could come in the autumn and spend a week or two with us, making the Spiritual Exercises here and, in the light of eternal truth, arriving at a decision; and at the same time we could confer together over the best way of putting into practice whatever conclusion you reach. In the meanwhile, let us regard ourselves as brothers in the Lord, closely united in spirit, our prayers made together to God... our sole aim is to become one in him and to detach ourselves from every created thing.

You wish me to command you to dispose of all that you own, and I do not hesitate to do this, since I trust in God that you will certainly be supported and consoled. I will ask Fr Rector to let you have a copy of the description of the Institute which you have seen in his possession; but I do not want you to let anyone else have a copy of this without first writing to me about the matter — and this goes also for everything else I have confided to you (or shall confide in the future). It would also be a good thing if you were to write to me each month, giving me a candid account of yourself, coming down to detail in whatever you judge I should know about. In my absence, have every confidence in Don Rigler, and write to him as you would to me. You will find in him a spiritual Father and a wise guide.

We acquire great merit when we put our trust entirely in divine Providence, and this is something I commend to you at this time. Do not be curious to know the times and moments of God; do not slacken in your spiritual fervour, but rather send up prayers more and more day by day, looking to receive help from above, and forming the habit of practising regularly and exactly the prescribed spiritual exercises and the way of life you have undertaken. I embrace you warmly in the Lord, as does Don Rigler and indeed all the brethren here. Pray constantly for all of us — and particularly for the least deserving of all —

Yours sincerely,

ROSMINI p.

6. To Don Giacomo Molinari at Domodossola

Trent, 27 February 1832

My dear companion in the service of the Lord,

By now you will have Don Giambattista [Loewenbruck] back with you. He was eager to get there soon (and I to send him), so that he would be there for these last few days leading up to Lent, to wage the war of the Lord.

As regards the two points you ask me about, in your desire to be directed in everything by obedience (for which I praise you): so that your obedience may be more and more perfect, I direct you to do everything the Vice-superior commands you. There is greater merit and perfection in obeying an immediate Superior; so submit with great humility and self-abnegation not only to the Vice-superior but also to his assistant, the good Don Gentili. See and honour in him the God whom it is so delightful to serve. May neither the mere appearance of spiritual good nor the fervour which comes of false zeal ever in the least have the power to render us less attached to obedience. Rather, we should have it engraved on our hearts that zeal is only good when it is obedient; and that whatever good we may be able to do for souls, however great it may seem, will not be acceptable to God if it leads to the neglect of that first and most excellent of religious virtues — obedience.

You will hear our news from Don Giambattista, and by the grace of God it is good. Let us continually thank God for having withdrawn us from the world, and for the unlimited benefits he grants us. All the brethren here greet warmly those at Calvario. Before long we shall have here our little church, that of the Crucified Christ, to whom I want our oratory to be dedicated, as it is at Monte Calvario. I personally embrace Gentili, Alvazzi and all the rest in the love of God. Goodbye. *Oremus sine intermissione* [Let us pray without ceasing].

Your affectionate brother,

ROSMINI p.

7. To the priests Lissandrini and Teruggi at Arona

Trent, 28 February 1832

My dear fellow-priests and friends in the Lord,

I am somewhat late in replying to your welcome letter because of various pressing affairs. In the meanwhile Don Loewenbruck will have conveyed my greetings to you, since he paid me a fleeting visit here. So here I am at last, to spend a little time with you, my friends.

The account of yourselves which you sent me gives me good reason to believe in your sincere wish to make progress daily in virtue and to advance in perfection in the delightful service of the Lord. Your perseverance... will undoubtedly have its reward. We must make use of every means to put a brake on our changeability and to set firm bounds to our natural tendency to consider too lightly the affairs of our soul, my friends. We shall be greatly consoled if instead we take these things seriously, and frame for ourselves resolutions that we will not thoughtlessly break. At the same time we have to restrain in fetters the arrogance of our flesh and the capricious ways of our spirit. I think it would greatly help you if (since you are united in an unlimited fraternal confidence in Jesus Christ) each of you were to take the other as a sort of monitor or supervisor. In this way you could establish a mutual obligation to warn one another to observe faithfully the rules we have laid down — each manifesting his own failings and asking a suitable penance. Moreover suggestions concerning the times dedicated to carrying out the two rules you have received might well be worked out between you with a certain formality — for instance during a day of retreat specifically devoted to reaching a deep understanding of the need to work manfully at the things of the spirit. In addition you might promise one another to observe whatever small rules you may see fit to adopt; while each could make himself responsible for never passing over whatever defects or failings he observed in the other in the keeping of these rules. But there is something which, it seems to me, would be still more helpful spiritually, and for the acquiring of solid virtues: and that is, if you were to take a little leave so as to spend some time at Monte Calvario, and there make a retreat I can see several advantages in this idea: one would be the great profit to your souls of being in a retired spot very suitable for contemplation (surrounded as you would be by reminders of the mysteries of Christ's Passion); another would be the power of the retreat meditations themselves, given according to the order laid down by St Ignatius, and highly effective in purifying the soul; and besides these and other advantages, a particularly important one would be this: you would be able to gain a greater understanding of our little Society of Calvario and unite yourselves more closely to it, and establish links and friendly relations with it. From our own experience of being thus united, I would expect you to receive many graces and much

mutual help. And from all this would flow not only benefits such as the amendment and strengthening of your souls, but also charity which, according to the order of divine Providence would benefit your neighbour. This virtue of charity is the mark of the disciple of Christ, and it is our privilege to take it as the title of our little Institute — which came to birth at the foot of the cross.

One further matter: it seems to me time to add a third rule to the two you have written down in your booklets. It concerns precisely the Spiritual Exercises that are to be made each year at Monte Calvario. I have already spoken about these to our dear friend Mgr Scavini. So if you would like to add this third rule, here it is: *Omnes alieni domui societatis adscripti erunt, et in ea opportuno tempore exercitia spiritualia peragent annis singulis* (All external members shall be ascribed to a house of the Society, and here, at some opportune time, they will make a retreat each year]. This third rule you may if you wish add to the two you have already written down; and please also pass it on to Mgr the Vicar. These three rules, when thoroughly meditated on, should form the basis and the source from which are then drawn the other three more particular ones which I said earlier you may impose on yourselves, and for the observance of which you will be mutually responsible. It is my hope that the divine mercy will greatly bless these small beginnings. Let us at all times act uprightly and generously, and if we are truly humble this will support us in our shortcomings. We must never cease to acknowledge our faults and humble ourselves over them. Our attitude must be that of poor people who groan and ask alms. Certainly to be poor is to have a great claim on the mercy of our heavenly Father: we must say from our hearts: *Inclina, Domine, aurem tuam et exaudi me, quoniam inops et pauper sum ego* [Incline your ear, O Lord, and hear my prayer, for I am poor and wretched]. And please pray for me, who am the poorest of all.

ROSMINI p.

8. To Niccolò Tommaseo in Florence

Trent, 10 March 1832

My dear Tommaseo,

You ask me what is the nature of this small society. It is of a religious nature: some of its members are in vows; some are not. Its scope is entirely moral — that is, its members take on the duty of endeavouring to achieve moral perfection, and of helping one another in this. This is the entire concern of man, and it is a gift of *God* which comes of grace, and grace comes of prayer. Everything else is really vanity, leading to a waste of energy and a thoughtlessness which gets in the way of understanding that great truth. So our wish is to dispose everything in such a way as to arrive at this one end: our own moral perfection. There is nothing ambitious in the plan of our Society: everything in it is simple and evangelical. It is only circumstances that can complicate things; but may *God* see to it that the Society remains true to the gospel. Someone who has but one aim in the world, one supreme concern, one Master alone — such a one feels both greater strength and greater tranquillity: all his thoughts and all his actions are endowed with order and consistency.

This account shows you the intention and the end of our small union — which I recommend to your prayers.

A. ROSMINI p.

9. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Domodossola

Trent, 10 March 1832

My dear friend and brother,

Thank you for the news you sent me from Milan and Arona. As for what the Cardinal said, do not be put out by it. Our trust is in God: we should do him a wrong were we to lose faith in him: *Brachium Domini non est abbreviatum* [The Lord's arm is not shortened]. For the rest, if we allow ourselves to be disturbed by what people say, we need to enter into ourselves, my dear friend, and see that this is a sign that we are putting too much trust in human judgements. Anyone who has renounced all hope and confidence in human means and patronage and looks only to God's protection cares nothing for what he hears people say. Moreover, we must always return to that comforting principle — that all our good consists in doing the will of God, in sanctifying and perfecting ourselves. If we let this principle guide us we shall experience both tranquillity and constancy, and we shall accept with holy indifference whatever loving Providence may be pleased to bring about. May the Lord make of us and our Society whatever he pleases, and we shall be content. Is it his good pleasure that the Institute should remain humble, obscure, very small? May he be blessed. For (I assure you) the smaller it is, the more beloved it will be in his eyes — precisely because it will have reason for greater humility, and will not be the subject of human eulogies, which always tend to corrupt our hearts. Or is it God's pleasure that our Society should meet with opposition, be attacked, be persecuted? Again may he be blessed, provided only that this does not happen through our unworthiness, our lack of prudence or earnestness, or our presumption — in short through our own fault. Or it may even happen that our small union takes root and grows in numbers. May he equally be blessed.

Let these be our thoughts and convictions, my dear Loewenbruck. If they are, then we shall never be disturbed; we shall be strong against any temptations that may assail us. Recall to your mind the undertakings we made at Trent, the promises we made. Judgement Day will certainly require us to render an account of them. As far as externals are concerned, the divine mercies have blessed us to overflowing. I should like to say something of the same sort about our internal state, were it not that my own wretchedness and imperfections are so opposed to the operation of God's goodness. Tell Gentili that things are going ahead well over the English mission: in due course he will hear about everything. All that remains is for us to pray much, and to get others to pray, for the success of the project. Greet lovingly for me all my dear brethren. Let them pray fervently for the salvation of our souls. I myself am beset by miseries, my friend. Yet I trust in the Lord, who hears the cries of the wretched and listens to my voice as it goes up from the depths of my misdeeds *De profundis clamavi!* [Out of the depths have I cried...]. So pray, all of you, for —

Yours in Christ,

A. R.

PS Before this letter left I received yours from Calvario (of 6 March). Two things in it gave me consolation: first, the good news of our brethren; and then the promise shown by the young women you sent to Portieux². May God be abundantly praised. I have already told you that I give permission for you to deal with the matter of the Daughters of Providence in Switzerland³; but I charge you again: be prudent in your words and actions; beware of impetuous and over-hasty zeal. Stay calm in all that you say and do; do not take on obligations, and keep clear of promises. God will effect everything if you keep to the right track. Otherwise we shall have fine notions and unhappy consequences. I embrace you from my heart and bless you in the Lord.

² Rosmini refers to the four young women sent by Loewenbruck to the convent of Portieux (the foundation of the abbé Moye) to learn the Rules and be formed as Sisters of Providence. (cf. Vita di Antonio Rosmini, vol.1, p.504.)

³ This affair was the projected foundation of the Daughters of Providence in Canton Ticino.

10. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Domodossola

19 March 1832

My dear brother and friend in the Lord,

I approve of your plan over the Daughters of Providence, though I urge you as strongly as I can to abide by the rules I have laid down, Act with great prudence, with complete fidelity to the truth, and in spirit of obedience such that you are prepared to give up any particular work that you may have undertaken. Strengthen your resolution over this last point, and be quite certain that this way of obedience was the practice of the saints. Keep before your eyes the example of that great apostle St Francis Xavier, who was ready to abandon all the good work he was doing, simply at the prompting of obedience — and would in fact have done so, had he not died before the order reached him to leave the great eastern mission. Believe me, until you attain this disposition of *indifference* in your labours and gain the mastery over yourself (so that you are ready to abandon a work you have begun), you must greatly fear and doubt whether what you do is truly pleasing to God. And what would it avail you, were you to exert yourself, to undertake great labours, and then find on the Day of Judgement that you had not in fact done anything that found favour before God? So in all that you do as you labour away, examine yourself seriously to see whether what you really want is to appear to be a great man, an active and enterprising missionary, so famous that you would be much talked about, set on gaining a great reputation among men. What a terrible danger lies here for our souls! How deceptive can be an appearance of zeal which really has its origin in a feeling of vanity and pride! We must fear greatly this sort of thing, my friend, in all our undertakings which purport to be for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. And so that we may not one day be derided, let us aim to distance ourselves as far as possible from the praises of men, from any thoughts of complacency, and sincerely wish instead to remain obscure, ignored, even looked down on. If we wish for them, we shall not lack occasions to exercise true humility and to hide from view even the-graces, that God bestows on us. Finally, meditate on what our Lord Jesus Christ says in chapter 7 of St Matthew, where he teaches us precisely this — that we can in fact damn ourselves when we think we are doing great things for him: *Multi dicent mihi in illa die, Domine, Domine, nonne in nomine tuo prophetavimus, et in nomine tuo virtutes multas fecimus?* [Many will say in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and do great things in your name?']. They were deceived; they trusted in a false zeal. *Et tunc confitebor illis, quia numquam novi vos.* ['I shall say to them, I never knew you.']

This is a great lesson which Christ teaches us here: he shows us that it is not enough to do good, but that we have to do good in the right way, if we are to merit being saved. We can save others and damn ourselves. How does St Paul

describe the labours of a missionary who does not work uprightly, according to truth, justice and solid virtue? He says he is like a man who runs without knowing where he is going; he compares him to someone who strikes great blows, but only beats the air (...) This is not how the apostle acted: *Ego igitur sic curro, non quasi in incertum; sic pugno, non quasi aerem verberans*. ['I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air'].

And why did he act like this? We must listen — and tremble! *Ne forte cum aliis praedicaverim ipse reprobus efficiar*. ['Lest after preaching to others, I myself should be lost.'] (1 Cor.9). What must we do to avoid such a fearful danger? Keep ourselves in the safety of obedience and the law of God in everything; build our house as Christ recommended, founded on rock. Since he goes on to say that it is not the one who does great external deeds who builds on rock, but the one who remains faithful to his word. *Omnis ergo qui audit verba mea, et facit ea, assimilabitur viro prudenti, qui aedificavit domum suam supra petram*. ['He who listens to these words of mine and carries them out, will be like the man who built his house on rock.'] So make sure that you are this wise man. Do not rely on your own judgement; it means taking on a great responsibility if we follow our own notions. If you were to do this you would have no peace of mind; you would never be truly happy. So I beg you to give me, often, and in detail, an account of yourself, of your dispositions concerning all these things which are so important for you, so that you will not take a mistaken course. For the rest, may God bless the work you have begun.

I give joyful thanks to the Lord for the good news about Calvario. Embrace for me all my dear brethren. Here things are going wonderfully well. Love me as I love you from my heart in the Lord, to whom be all honour and glory. Amen.

A. R.

11. To Count Giulio Padulli in Milan

Trent, 26 March 1832

My dear friend,

I was about to write to you when your letter came; and it confirmed what our friend Mellerio had told me of your sad trials. It is with these that God tills our souls to make them fruitful. Our divine Master has already told us that he will treat us as the vinegrower treats his vines — pruning them to make them bear more fruit. We see only a fraction of that life of ours that will stretch into eternity; we see no more than the present But God sees the whole, and it is on this all-embracing view that he bases his designs for our greater good, looking not merely at this present life but on all that is yet to come, with its greater importance.

When we think about this with faith we must be greatly comforted; for faith gives us a glimpse of that greater part of our lives which is as yet unknown to us. Yes, my dear friend, this is something you experience daily, I am sure: faith raises our eyes from here below to eternity, to that perspective in which God himself sees things. And seen like this, from above, how different present earthly realities look: how different the scene is; how the colours change... How many apparently good things are now seen to be harmful; how many apparent evils turn out to be in reality true benefits. And certainly this will be true of those trials and tribulations which at times test our patience and our resignation — and which at the same time make us more like the suffering Christ God, who loves us, who never acts other than out of love, allows these trials only as occasions that can purify us, help us expiate our sins, grow in merit in his eyes. And this is because he knows well that *non sunt condignae passiones huius temporis ad futuram gloriam, quae revelabitur in nobis* [The sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory which will be revealed in us.] But I can well put myself in your place and feel the extent of the grief which humanly you are undergoing.

PS I was interrupted at this point, and only now (four days later) can I take up again the thread of that line of thought by which I was glad to put myself by your side. I will not try to add further comforting thoughts — you are well able to suggest these to yourself.

Just lately I have had to work at expounding the works of St John Chrysostom, as a commission from our Bishop. And oh, what strength one can draw from the writings of that man who was so magnanimous in all his misfortunes! I would strongly recommend you to read him yourself: I am sure you would draw no little spiritual strength from what he writes, and especially from that little work of his in which he shows that 'no one can injure us, if we do not injure ourselves.' This book, viewed with a Christian outlook, is full of consolation.

When we read it we are raised above ourselves: we forget our earthly attachments, and we find delight in the immortal part which lives in us — and which indeed is the most important part.

But as I said, I do not want to add any more to my letter, and I will not take up any more of your time.

Yours affectionately,

A. R.

12. To Don Andrea Fenner at Pomarolo [a suburb of Rovereto]

Trent, 29 March 1832

Dear Don Andrea,

It seems to me that your letter contains something that is both consoling to me and a great gain for you: that God has enabled you to grasp how valuable and necessary it is to deny your own will, to mortify yourself, to live under obedience. It pained me when earlier you seemed not to have understood this teaching -which was that of all the saints and of Jesus Christ himself; and that you were too fond of being a free agent and being directed only by your own inclinations. My dear Don Andrea, we have to overcome ourselves for the love of God in all that our chosen Superiors say, since *violenti rapiunt illud* [The violent take it — sc. the kingdom — by force. Rosmini interprets this text in the sense that we have to exercise 'violence' against ourselves if we are to enter the kingdom of heaven). So I thank the Lord from my heart if you now see better than before. Never lose sight of this truth; keep going steadily in this way of self-denial, and submit like a lamb to everything that you are told, especially where matters of conscience are involved. This will lead you to peace and salvation.

I have considered all that you said in your letter; and it may well be that God has destined you to be one of us. Pray with all your heart for his light and I will continue to pray for you. I have also reflected much over your question; and here is what it seems to me I should advise you to do for the present go for a while to Don Gasperini in Rovereto, accepting the offer he made you; serve in every way you can at the church of San Marco; overcome your scruples, and say your Mass and Office. If you have the advantage of a companion, so much the better. Do not dissipate your spirit, and steer clear of the wrong sort of recreation. Finally, give yourself seriously to attaining perfection, every day making your meditation, the two examinations of conscience, some spiritual reading, and a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. You could take as your spiritual director Don Slanz, the curate of San Marco's. As far as you can, spend the rest of your time in good works: visit the sick, whether in hospital or in their homes (and this you could do together with Don Slanz, allowing him to guide you, or with Don Gasperini). Develop an interest in sacred music; study the Roman Catechism, dogma and ecclesiastical history; compose sermons which, if you do not make use of them yourself, could be useful for other priests or clerical students, and so on. Engage in other priestly works.

Direct all that you do to the glory of God. As a change from your duties you could go and see my mother, my brother and Don Orsi. Read more than once and meditate on the *Maxims of Perfection* and Rodriguez' *Practice of Perfection*. And finally, pray as much as you can. All this will be a preparation for your entry to the Institute whenever God wishes this and opens up the way for you. In the

meantime we shall be united in spirit as if you were already one of ours. Send me an account of yourself at least every fortnight; and speak openly to Don Rigler, who will be able to give you good advice. (He is the Superior of the Institute in Trent.) I embrace you warmly. Share this letter and the advice I have given you with Don Gasperini. It may be that we shall see one another shortly, since I have to pay a visit to Rovereto, perhaps next Monday. Goodbye. Pray for me.

Yours,

ROSMINI p.

13. To Mr Ambrose Phillips at Garendon Park, England

Trent, 3 April 1832

My dear Phillips,

From what you tell me in your letter of 3 March I have fresh reason to wonder at the boundless mercy and Providence of the Lord. For only God, doubtless with the intercession of our beloved Mother Mary, could have put into the heart of Fr Hulme such apostolic charity over the work you mention in your letter⁴. When I consider that we are entirely unknown to this good missionary, I can only conclude that such holy zeal will win for him great merit in the sight of the Almighty — zeal which can only derive from a pure love for God and for the salvation of souls. I can do no less than offer my prayers (feeble though they may be), and get my brethren to pray, that God may liberally reward him.

As for the reply you received from Mgr Walsh: it is altogether prudent, and he could not have given a better answer. I am very pleased that he is going to ask for advice from Rome, for it is from there that the divine will must be made known. And so that the matter may remain just between ourselves I think it best not to say anything to the Cardinal Vicar in Rome, or to give advance notice to the Holy Father. And this is because I find that in cases of this kind, when I take no action myself, I always have greater peace of mind, and it seems to me that I discern the holy will of God more surely. But I must tell you, for your consolation and spiritual profit, that today I have had the favour of a new Brief from the Holy Father, Gregory XVI, full of the kindness and love which fill his heart, and which I have so often experienced. In this Brief he says that he rejoices over the foundation in Trent and encourages me to go ahead. In the same Brief he grants quite a treasury of spiritual blessings (that is, indulgences); and I want to tell you what they are, because you too, if you wish to become an Ascribed Member, can share in them (since they are extended both to the Ascribed and to those who are trying their vocation to the Institute).

[Rosmini then gives a list of the indulgences granted by the Pope. He goes on:]

So we have much reason to rejoice, my dear friend, over the liberality of God and his Vicar on earth; and it behoves us to correspond generously in every possible way with his mercies. May the Lord make us worthy of his gifts; and may our dear Mother Mary intercede for us, so that when we come to render an account of these many favours, we may not be found to have put obstacles in the way through our sins, our infidelities, our coldness (...) though in truth I should rather speak of *my* rather than *our* wretchedness.

⁴ See Letter 15 below.

For the rest, what I said about not wishing to press the cause of our project in Rome does not apply to your mission. [He is distinguishing between the cause of the Institute and Phillips' aim regarding the English mission.] So if it seems good to you, after taking thought, to write to Cardinal Weld, I raise no objection to that.

As regards the wish you have told me about, of becoming an Ascribed Member — and I shall be very pleased to admit you to membership — I will send you on another occasion a booklet about ascription to our Institute. In the meantime I am sending you a short description of the Institute itself, and this, since you want to improve your Italian, you may like to translate into English, and pass on also to Mgr Walsh. If there is anything more substantial that he would like sent, I will see that this is done at once.

Our dear friend Gentili is preparing himself at Calvario by the exercise of virtue (in which he is progressing well) for the mission for which it seems God destines him. Your letters please me greatly, and it will be well if you go on in the same way. I embrace you warmly in the Lord. Pray without ceasing to our Lady also for —

Your affectionate friend,

ROSMINI p.

14. To the deacon Clemente Alvazzi at Domodossola

Trent, 4 April 1832

My dear brother and companion in the Lord's service,

I took your welcome letter as a sure sign of your wish to amend your defects — a wish that is always granted if we persevere faithfully, with all our trust in God. Yes, my dear Alvazzi, take heart: the Lord will lead you up to the summit of his holy mountain. But for this to happen we must always have a low opinion of ourselves; great esteem for others; deep gratitude towards those who have care of us; and show perfect obedience from our hearts. Take advantage of the care your Vice-superior has of you, and that of your Master, dear Gentili; take their words as coming from God. Resist the enemy of souls manfully, and resist the temptations he is always inciting us to, showing a constancy which never yields, because it is always strong in the name of Christ. And may Mary, too, fight on your side.

As regards your ordination to the priesthood, when you receive the call from Mgr the Vicar, accept it. Were I to write to him, I am sure he would dispense you; but for various reason which I need not go into, I prefer not to do this.

Approach the imposition of hands with all the more holy fear. Remind yourself that an angel could scarcely be worthy of this dignity — or rather that the priesthood surpasses even the dignity of the angelic nature. So from now on you have to become a new man: you have to live with your mind and heart raised to heaven, to commune constantly with Christ, and to disesteem and flee from things merely human. Prepare yourself as befits so great an elevation; be sure to make your retreat fervently and generously. You receive the priesthood once in a lifetime; so on this unique occasion be generous in acts of virtue, in sacrifices acceptable to God. He will enter them in the Book of Life. Overlook no way of making your conscience more pure, your heart more full of love. Come back to Monte Calvario a saint, an apostle, a man 'deified', if I may so express it. How much I expect of you when you return! I look to see you outdo everyone in the progress you make towards holiness; I hope that you will be pre-eminent in your love of labour, of humiliations, of sufferings; that you will be a perfect model of obedience; that charity towards your neighbour will burn in you like a flame that will set fire to the whole of Monte Calvario. Oh, my beloved Calvario! How I should like to see you become like the burning bush, a holy place that no one could approach without first taking off his shoes. May the Man-God who has breathed his inspiration here bring these things about! *Utinam!* [May it be so].

I look forward to hearing all about your ordination when you return. Remember that when you are a priest you hold God in your hands: you have become 'in

charge' of God. What slackness it would be not to make full use of such a privilege, such a treasure.

No more for now. I embrace you warmly, and as I said, I await your news after the ordination.

Your affectionate father,

A. R.

15. To Don Luigi Gentili at Domodossola

Trent, 4 April 1832

My dear friend and brother...

First, tell your Vice-superior (to whom I have not time to write just now), and so the whole house, that the Holy Father in his great kindness has granted us many indulgences.

[Rosmini here gives details of these, adding that the Pope, in the Briefs he has issued, constantly refers to the Society as the Institute of Charity. He goes on:]

The Holy Father ends his Brief with these affectionate words in which he encourages us to continue in our work: *Age, vero, Dilecte Fili, studium curasque tuas ad Dei honorem Ecclesiaeque utilitatem impendere pergas, copiosam deinde pro laboribus tuis accepturum in coelo mercedem. Interea paternae, qua te in visceribus Christi complectimur, charitatis pignus sit Apostolica Benedictio, quam tibi ex intimo cordis depromptam impertimur.* [So continue, beloved son, in your zeal and your labours for the honour of God and the benefit of the Church, and for these things you will receive an ample reward in heaven. Meanwhile, as a pledge of the love with which We embrace you in Christ, We gladly and from our heart impart to you our Apostolic Blessing.] So we must be grateful for all God's mercies to us.

Mr Quinn has written to me again: he thinks he will have to return to Ireland, since it was for this purpose that he received maintenance during his training in Rome. This was the advice he received from the Jesuits, who took a different view from that of the Franciscans. At all events, this need not conflict with his spending a year with us prior to his departure for Ireland. You could console him with this thought: write to him as God may inspire you.

That good man, Mr Phillips, has also written to me. He tells me (and this is something that makes me wonder afresh at the way God disposes matters) that the missionary priest, Mr Hulme, has received permission from his Bishop to go all over England to raise funds so that a house can be built for us. This I find amazing. The Bishop also said that he was writing to Cardinal Weld to ask for further information about our Society. You see how Providence works!

Don Giovanni [Loewenbruck] must study English with your help: he must prepare himself. I have no time to write more now. Goodbye, my dear friend. I will write at a later date about what you were asking for.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

16. To Mgr Pietro Scavini at Novara

Trent, 4 April 1832

Very Reverend Monsignor,

In your last letter you urged me not to leave Monte Calvario. Could I possibly do so? Could such a thought enter my head? I feel the greatest affection for that sacred place and gratitude towards it; so that to leave it would seem to me to go against the will of God. Monte Calvario, if it is the Lord's will to give enduring life to the infant Institute of Charity, will always be its birthplace; and for us it will be that sanctuary to which pilgrims will come even from afar to fulfil their vows. But as you know, we have only a precarious existence there: no part of it is our property. The church is in other hands, and our house is only rented. But unless we are driven away we will never leave it. A good deal will depend on the attitude of our Cardinal; because as long as we are in his favour (and his kind words and the favours we have received from him make me believe that we are), he will certainly be able to establish us definitively in our humble retreat. So he has the power: everything then depends on what God inspires him to do for the best. And so I realize too that should divine Providence be pleased to have us come to Novara (and in your kindness you give me a hint that this may be possible), that would go a long way towards giving us a firmer foothold at Calvario, and so perhaps (though I do not wish to guess at the designs of God) enable us to take a greater part in serving that diocese in which the Lord has placed us. On the other hand I would not want our Cardinal to be too apprehensive; we have to bear in mind that it is in any case God alone who will see to this work; and we act amiss if we lack confidence in him. We have to beware of lacking faith! Every religious order, when it first appeared, seemed an impossible venture; they all initially met with opposition. But God saw to it that they prospered; and God has not changed. No, certainly, *Brachium Domini non est abbreviatum* [The arm of the Lord is not shortened]. It is my rule to follow divine Providence in everything that I am faced with, without worrying about the outcome. It is true that many people are unjust and even wicked these days: all the more reason to trust that God will provide for his Church in special ways. I have no intention of letting myself become inert or passive out of empty fears. The Lord would call me to account for any good that I had impeded out of my lack of faith or a too-human prudence. On the contrary, I see continuing signs that God in his mercy is favouring his work new companions are joining me; bishops are asking me for foundations in other dioceses; and governments themselves are showing that they are favourably inclined. In a new Brief which reached me recently the Holy Father encourages me to go on with the work, using the caution I have observed up to now, and he grants me many indulgences for our members and our Ascribed. I would ask you to submit these considerations to our Cardinal. I have high esteem for his judgement, and I will listen to him with all respect. So too I have in mind to let him have a much

brief version of the Constitutions than the one I sent him earlier. This shorter summary in now way differs in substance from the long version — it is simply a compendium of it. And should His Eminence approve of them, I will lose no time before initiating the matter in Rome. Now is the moment to set about the whole project in a purposeful way; and I hope the Cardinal will console me, provided that he sees nothing amiss with the Constitutions. Any difficulties that may arise in carrying out the work need not hold him back from this [sc. giving me the go-ahead]. Let the difficulties be left in God's hands. Should the scheme be impossible, God will leave it alone. There can be no harm in making an attempt, observing every precaution — as with the help of divine grace I have so far done. Be so good as to write to me about this affair, which greatly concerns me. I am longing to go to Novara and speak with you personally, but there are so many matters that demand my presence here for the next month or so. I assure you that I very much wish to bring matters to a conclusion by going to Novara; but in the meantime we shall pray earnestly to God that whatever pleases him may be done.

Please greet warmly on my behalf Pagani and any others who remember me. May the Lord bestow abundant blessings on you, and make you more and more his own. Think of me as the most wretched of your servants, and (I may say) the poorest, but still —

Your sincere and affectionate friend,

A. ROSMINI p.

17. To Emilio Belisy at Domodossola

Trent, 13 April 1832

My dear Emilio, beloved in the Lord whose service is our greatest joy,

Your short letter was most welcome, not only because it always gives me pleasure to hear from you, but also because I see from it that the Lord is helping you greatly to stand firm against the enemy who is envious of the happiness we find in God's service. But no one can prevail against us if we put all our trust in our heavenly Father alone! For he, as Christ says, is greater than all, and so no one can snatch us from the Father's hand (Jn. 10: 29). So we must distrust ourselves and trust in God. The Father will see in us his divine Son, whom we have put on through our baptism and through the dedication we have made of ourselves to his glory. And where he sees his Son he can do no less than give his love. Doubtless, if he did not see in us the image of his Son he would not see anything that was lovable. So let us put no trust in ourselves, but keep before our eyes the vileness and malice which we inherit from Original Sin. My dear Emilio, we must willingly endure the trifling sufferings we meet with — a little mortification here, but an eternity of glory!

You must be an example to all in the house; surpass them all in humility and in love; and then put off all anxiety about yourself: *lacta super Dominum curam tuam, et ipse te enutriet* [Cast all your anxiety upon the Lord, and he will look after you]. Oh, if only we kept our eyes fixed on him; if we never took away from his face that gaze of our mind which is so apt to wander and be taken up with earthly things! If we did so he would, by the beauty of his countenance, make himself our Master, and from him we should learn more than anything that mere men can teach us. And what should we learn? Humility, meekness, obedience, poverty of heart! Men will never teach us these things; this knowledge is hidden. There is nothing haughty or proud about it, but it is the science of holiness, the science of salvation. And what a favour God does us when he makes us his pupils in this school. Let us always see it as the grace it is; and may the school of the world never lure us away from the hidden and solitary teaching of Calvary.

Talk about these sentiments of yours with your companions; speak often among yourselves about the beauty of humility, of poverty of spirit, of being willing to yield in all things and to nourish yourselves with the holy bread of mortification. You can both learn a good deal about yourself and also do much good to others by this practice. It is particularly valuable for those who live together with the sole aim of making themselves good and faithful servants of the Lord. This is how St Aloysius acted during recreation with his brethren; and his conversation was in effect as good as a sermon. Act in the same way yourself with all those who are one heart and one soul with you, in your

recreations at Calvario. Our good Don Gentili and your Vice-superior will show you how. I embrace you in the Lord and bless you from my heart. Pray for —

Your affectionate brother and Father,

A. R.

18. To Don Giuseppe Maria Suryn, S.J., Professor of Philosophy in the College of Novara

Trent, 14 April 1832

My dear Father,

My hearty thanks for your letter, which was so full of kindness and charity. May God bring it about that the cause of virtue and religion may advance; and I harbour an unshakeable conviction that it will do so, even in the midst of the dangers it faces and the desperate exertions of the enemy of mankind. For in the end it is the cause of Jesus Christ, to whom is given all power in heaven and on earth. It is my belief that a sound philosophy would be a great help to this cause in our day, and that those who devote themselves to making such a philosophy *convincing* will earn a great reward in heaven, if they are moved by a sincere love of God. I should like to see the Jesuits take on this work, and I should look to see great fruits if they were to do so. If good men and those who work for God do not undertake this, who will? It is true that many people think that this approach [sc. through philosophy] is too indirect a way to benefit society, and they prefer means that seem closer to hand and more practical. That is all very well; but it remains true that there is a great need to bring Men's minds back to health, so to speak, by infusing in them sound ideas. It is necessary to go a long way round in order to do this, because people have gone a long way off the right path. There will be no one to employ better means — nor people to respond to them — until we succeed in emptying minds of false ideas which are inwardly corrupt. Also, our human feebleness needs even small helps, especially nowadays. Religion, which has been so damaged by false philosophy, has need of a sound and true philosophy if it is to show forth in unequalled brightness through and through. Or, to put it better, if men are to be in a position to perceive its beauty. Oh, if only I could persuade the Jesuits of my belief and my diagnosis! I call it a diagnosis, because I can claim to have thought not a little about the needs of mankind and about the ills that afflict it. I do not think it is a mere vain persuasion on my part if I am so driven by this belief and this hope. I am certain that if St Ignatius were alive today he would understand what I am saying. But even from his place in heaven he can bring about the enlightenment that is needed for his children⁵. You will be doing me a great favour if you write to me about your own views and about your studies.

I shall be grateful if you will fulfil your promise to remember me in your prayers to Jesus and to our dear Mother, Mary. (...)

⁵ Rosmini had previously written in a similar vein to Fr Rootham, the General of the Society of Jesus. (cf. E.C. Nos 1477 and 1523.)

Please convey my respects to Fr Rector, Fr Minister and to those of your brethren whom I had the pleasure of knowing when I was at Novara.

Yours sincerely,

A. ROSMINI p.

19. To Mgr Carlo Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona

Trent, Monday of Holy Week 1832

Very Reverend Monsignor,

I am well aware that there exists in the world a great spiritual enemy of the gospel: it is he who (as we recall in this Passiontide) brought about the death of our Saviour. But these thoughts do not arouse fear in me, because *The Father is greater than all*. I hope that this small Society of ours is a work of the divine mercy. If I thought otherwise I would withdraw from it at once, as from something impossible and rash. But, given my persuasion, what reason have I to fear? What harm can men do to us? Nothing, in the end. True, they can raise obstacles, cause us problems, even persecutions. But what will be the final outcome? If we are faithful to the divine will, the sequel will be what it has always been after the first beginnings of religious orders: strife and opposition have in the end been overcome; the institutes have survived, and at last calm has ensued.

My dear Monsignor, who knows whether the Lord has, in his goodness, chosen you to undergo some suffering for his glory during the consolidation of this Institute as it comes to birth? If this is what God has ordained, I am sure that you will know how to receive it with gratitude, and willingly bear such suffering, which will win so much merit and glory in eternity. If you are persuaded that this little Institute of Charity is the work of God, and you consider it useful to the Church — and in particular to your diocese — you can have no fears. As a bishop, too, it especially belongs to you to do battle if necessary, and to suffer much for the Lord. You will certainly gain the victory if you are guided by God and his love; and if, simply relying on this love and supported by a never-failing hope, you confront the various schemings of men. Also it may be that the struggle will be much less severe than we expect, because I can discern a general attitude — even among governments — that offers a welcome to religious orders that are adapted to the times; and in the Institute of Charity it seems that there are less obstacles than some other orders present. In Turin, both the King and the Minister of the Interior have shown themselves most favourably inclined.

For your consolation and spiritual benefit, I must tell you that recently the Holy Father, Gregory XVI, has been so good as to grant us various indulgences (...) These apply to our members and to those who are preparing to enter the Society (which of course includes yourself). And with the indulgences the Pope sent also a most kindly Brief.

Your obedient servant,

ANTONIO ROSMINI p.

20. To Mgr Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona⁶

Trent, 25 April 1832

Very Reverend Monsignor,

I think I understand very well the view you expressed in your much appreciated letter of 21 April. You wish to make a clear distinction between your own entry into the Institute of Charity and the establishment of the Society in Cremona; and I fully accept that these are quite separate matters. As regards the first, since I believe that you are inspired by God to take this step, and that it is his wish to sanctify you and make you ever more his own, I see no problem. And this holds whether you decide to relinquish the heavy responsibility you carry as Bishop (a step over which I do not doubt that you will both seriously deliberate and seek guidance both in prayer to God and from wise heads before making a decision) or you continue in your present post. In either case I see no difficulty; because the Institute, while on the one hand it admits private individuals (even though they may be infirm and able to do no more than pray), also welcomes men who serve the Church in various posts — as you will easily understand when I am able to explain matters further *viva voce*. So too, the other two matters can well be regarded as quite separate — your entry into the Institute (if God inspires you to go ahead with this), and your giving up the episcopate. Thus you can be perfectly tranquil in your approach to the one as to the other, and be resigned and at peace over how divine Providence may dispose things in the event of your resigning as Bishop. And since your only aim is to be more fully assured of your eternal salvation, (as you say) through the retired life you seek, it is my belief that you will be the more sure of gaining this benefit the more calmly you proceed in this grave matter of your renunciation of your present position, and the more fully you place yourself before God in a state of perfect indifference, intent only on doing whatever is most pleasing to his divine majesty — even should this mean your bowing your head and sacrificing yourself (if this is what God wants) and continuing to bear the heavy burden of episcopal duties.

If we take it that your renunciation of the episcopacy is as yet undecided in the workings of divine Providence (and would, even if it came about, require quite a long time to make the necessary arrangements), it seems to me that it would be easier and less complicated for you to arrive at a decision over your entry into the Institute. In my letter of the 16th I confined myself to speaking about this second matter, and I suggested that to minimize delay, you might be

⁶ Mgr Sardagna did in fact resign as Bishop of Cremona; and wishing to go into retirement, he lived (as will be seen later) in one or another of the houses of the Institute. But after a good deal of hesitation he took himself to Somasca and then to Rovereto. He died there among his relatives in January 1840.

one of those members who take annual vows, accompanied by a sworn promise to enter the Institute at such time as the Superior might judge opportune. All this could be kept secret, however, until it seemed expedient and prudent to let it be known. But over this point I shall be glad to hear what the Holy Spirit may say to you interiorly.

As regards that other matter, of the introduction of the Institute in Cremona: it is entirely for you to decide whether to attempt this step or not. I say 'attempt', because there would be no question of making a formal and public foundation, but simply sowing the seed by sending a couple of priests, one of whom could be Don Giulio⁷. And this seed, should Providence make it fertile, could in due course produce its fruit. We have to consider well that if this project is the work of God, it will succeed — even contrary to human expectations; so we must put our faith not in the means we use but in God alone. All that I am saying applies only if the Lord should move you to sanction the experiment, to see whether a foundation may prove of use to your flock. Should you do so, and decide to ask for Don Giulio, send for him whenever you think good. We can find someone to replace him in his post. I would think it no bad thing to call on him fairly soon.

In the meantime, do please recommend me to the Lord recommend all of us — so that we may do nothing that is not simply and solely the will of God: *sive morimur, sive vivimus, Domini sumus* [Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's]. I hope to be able to greet you with due respect this coming June, if that suits you.

Asking your blessing,

Yours sincerely,

ANTONIO ROSMINI p.

⁷ Don Giulio Todeschi taught dogmatic theology in the Trent seminary.

21. To Don Luigi Gentili at Domodossola

Trent, 6 May 1832

My dear brother and friend in Jesus Christ,

I am replying at once to your welcome letter. If it saddened me through my compassion for those who are suffering from the epidemic which is threatening the region, it consoled me and gave me far greater joy to learn of the unanimous wish of my dear brethren at Calvario to use every effort and even risk their lives in order to serve Jesus Christ in the sick. It is a wonderful opportunity that the Lord sends you, out of his love. You will gain an immortal crown should you die in this service⁸. And what consoling words you will hear on the Last Day — 'I was sick and you visited me.' Surely there can be no more certain way than this of assuring your eternal salvation. I myself, if I possibly can, will certainly come to your help and share with you, the fortunate ones, these labours for Christ.

As regards the house of which I hold the lease, I put it entirely at the disposal of the public, to be made into a hospital; and I am enclosing a letter to Bianchi to this effect. But we must manage everything both energetically and prudently, as our Master and model would wish. In other words we have to take every precaution for both our bodies and our souls. I say for our souls', because at such times as these (of widespread illness) there are greater dangers than usual for our souls because of the circumstances. Superiors, then, must use vigilance and foresight. Think over this matter, and let me know your ideas over how our brethren should behave during the epidemic so as to protect themselves from the various kinds of danger. I charge you expressly with this responsibility. The Vice-superior must also propose to me a plan of action. But you are not to confer about the matter: each of you must think for himself and write to me. Then, if necessary, I will send you some guidelines.

Goodbye. Pray fervently, and greet everyone from me, telling them how much I am consoled to hear of their generous attitude. Here we are all of one mind, and we have already offered our services to the Bishop. I should like you to do the same: send him a letter telling him that you are available for any purpose and in any place in which he may like to employ you to give spiritual and bodily help to the sick (though this latter does not apply to women patients). And say in your letter that each of you is acting spontaneously, after due consideration and with your Superior's consent. Then all of you must sign the letter, the Vice-superior first, then yourself, Molinari, and the others, the laybrothers

⁸ It will be remembered that in the end Fr Gentili did in fact die in the spiritual service of the poor in Ireland, after contracting the cholera that was rife in Dublin. (This was in September 1848.)

included. In this way all our brethren, with no exceptions, will be of one heart, united in making the one sacrifice.

Goodbye. I embrace you warmly in Jesus and Mary.

A. R. p.

22. To Niccolò Tommaseo in Florence

Trent, 20 May 1832

My dear Tommaseo,

You speak of a great plan, and promise to tell me about how it is to be implemented: do keep your promise! God will bless your good and generous aims — and they will deserve this description if you keep God always in the forefront of your thoughts, and take little account of the praise or blame you receive from men. Otherwise human adulation will affect your thinking and your words, and if bitterness and satire once win you praise, you may be tempted to earn these easy plaudits by employing them again⁹. In this kind of situation it is inevitable that anyone who has devoted himself to letters as his ultimate aim will waver. Oh, how hard it is to remain upright and not go to excess! But God alone has the balance in his hands. For my part I believe that a man who does not take for his fulcrum, his point of reference, the afterlife, will not be capable of giving a new direction to society, but will merely follow feebly in the swim, and will be carried along with others wherever the wind blows, like the fickle crowd. Do not misunderstand me: my intention is to confirm you in the religious feelings which animate you, which you must never lose touch with throughout your life; in which you must find everything, and without which you will find nothing.

Pray for me. It is from prayer that we can draw power while we are in the midst of so much contention and fury. All too easily in this life our hearts are taken over by such things: we become victims and are devoured, like a lamb in the lion's mouth. Goodbye.

Yours,

ROSMINI p.

⁹ The whole passage is rather obscure; but the general sense seems to be as above: it seems that Tommaseo may have got some cheap praise by writing in a bitter, satirical vein; and Rosmini is warning him that as a consequence he may be tempted to *continue* to write satirically, and be confirmed in this bad habit, going to excess and so losing his balance.

23. To Mgr Luschin, Bishop of Trent

Trent, 29 May 1832

My Lord,

I am afraid that the people to whom you entrusted the examination of our Constitutions have not sufficiently grasped their spirit. They seem to have an exaggerated fear concerning the grave obligation these impose upon consciences. But, my Lord, you have only to re-read paragraph 168 (at the end of the Constitutions) to ascertain that there is nothing at all in them that binds under pain of sin, even venial sin, except the vows and matters that are already made obligatory by other legislation. No religious congregation (in which vows are taken) can be established without this minimum of obligations in conscience. It may be that the fear I referred to was occasioned by the directives and recommendations (which are found in one chapter after another in the Constitutions) requiring great perfection and the most complete obedience. But it is one thing to propose these things as the aim to which members must strive, and quite another to demand that this ideal should be completely attained. Moreover, while it is true that this high ideal is certainly put forward, at the same time Superiors are directed to show all gentleness and discretion, and to command no more than is proportionate to the capabilities of their subjects, in such a way that what these subjects do is always voluntary on their part. This kind of authority — wholly spiritual and gentle — is, I would say, a special characteristic of the Institute of Charity; it is nothing other than the purely spiritual and persuasive authority of a spiritual father, a spiritual director. I doubt if in any other religious congregation the authority to command is conditioned by such gentleness as in the Institute. In practice this approach is wonderfully successful: it is a real consolation to me to see the happiness of my brethren, who all without exception give thanks to God for the contentment which they enjoy. The Superiors, too, can release the members from their vows; and they are instructed to do so whenever they believe that any member is under excessive strain through his vows, and so in spiritual danger. The reason for this provision is that the end of the Institute is nothing other than the salvation of the souls of its members.

I hope that Your Lordship will be entirely reassured over this matter, and that you will again give me the full sympathy, support and co-operation which you have previously extended to me. I hope, too, that you will do this from conviction: the work is, I believe, apt for our times, and should certainly succeed if you are in favour of it. I do not say that this will be without any difficulty, because difficulties are inevitable; but at any rate without meeting with any that are insuperable...

ANTONIO ROSMINI p.

24. To Don Pietro Bruti at Praso

Trent, 8 June 1832

Reverend and dear Sir,

There are times when the Lord is better pleased with our intention than with the actual carrying out of a deed; and this is your present situation. Have no doubts; and go on daily making a total sacrifice of yourself and increasing your closeness to God. If we abandon ourselves to him, we can always live contented and in perfect peace, even while we wait. And this is because the perfection we seek consists solely in being always content with what God wills, and with being united with him in everything. This precious union of our wills with the divine will is the way to find peace. If it seems good to him, then in due course God will call you into religious life. In the meantime, thank him for everything; deny yourself; prepare yourself by prayer for whatever he may ordain for your future. Sometimes, in order to give us certain graces, he wishes us first to make ourselves worthy; sometimes he would have us ask for these favours with perseverance and resignation to his will. You will find thoughts like these expressed in the *Maxims*; read and re-read these things. And pray for me too — I am united with you in heart.

Yours,

ANTONIO ROSMINI

25. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Domodossola

Trent, 11 June 1832

My dear friend...

Yes, go to Turin in order to establish the Daughters of Providence there. I very much hope that all will go well with this, God willing. My advice, which I am sure you will not take amiss, is: (1) act with humility and simplicity; (2) no deviousness; (3) use firmness and prudence; avoid anything in the way of haste or exaggerated promises, and do not stand on ceremony; (5) be on your guard against imagination and false zeal... nothing over-complicated or on too big a scale; (6) keep me informed exactly of all that occurs not just the things that go well, but any problems that arise. If you are careful to tell me about things that go amiss, whether through your own mistakes or through no fault of your own, this will be for me a sure sign that you have made spiritual progress. And if I find you open and diligent in these ways, it will give me tremendous consolation and high hopes for the future.

Before you leave Monte Calvario, make all the necessary arrangements and leave directions so that all may redound to the glory of God.

There are two things I have to tell you about in confidence. The first is that I have heard that the Cardinal has decided to give his formal approval to our Institute; and the second is that I shall probably be presenting myself to the Emperor [of Austria] within a few days. So you see the very great need we have of prayers. For on the outcome of my audience a great deal will depend: the possibility of much good. So do me the charity of praying fervently yourself and of obtaining the prayers of all those good souls you are in touch with. All of us here are busy with prayer and penance. No one needs to know the precise reason for the appeal except Rigler. If you think fit, confide in Gentili, to urge him to even more fervent prayer. But say nothing to the others.

I have, to my consolation as usual, heard from Gentili and Flecchia. (Tell Gentili that, with the threat of cholera removed, the offer of ourselves to the Cardinal can for the present be suspended.) I will reply to them both when I get the chance; but at present I am extremely busy. I embrace you in the Lord with all my heart. *Oremus incessanter* [Let us pray without ceasing].

Yours,

R. p.

26. To Don Luigi Gentili at Domodossola

Trent, 5 July 1832

My dear friend and companion in the service of the Lord...

From his letter of 25 June I gather that Don Giambattista took with him to Turin three Daughters of Charity, had them dressed in black, and presented them as teachers¹⁰. Don Giovanni tells me that you had advised him to take this step — or rather that you positively declared that there was no need for hesitation over this, and that he should go ahead. Even though my fear that this was a mistaken move causes me much worry and sadness, I do not want to reach any decision until I have been informed in great detail about the matter. So I ask you to let me have a very thorough report, telling me about everything that happened. And I charge you to do this without any consultation with the Vice-superior. Write the letter yourself, and do not show it to him; describe out of pure love of truth just how things stand before God, who must be our judge. Do this as soon as possible, informing me about all the circumstances which you consider may help me to reach a right judgement about the affair. My dear man, for goodness' sake let us act with prudence and a cool head in these matters. We must resolve to behave maturely and without any undue haste. There should at least have been a written account of this whole business... I have no time to write more. Keep up the prayer and penance until you have further news from me (which should be soon.)

Goodbye, my dear friend: I embrace you warmly in the Lord.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI

¹⁰ Loewenbruck had presented the three young women to the Marchese and Marchesa Barolo, who were great philanthropists, and were looking for teachers to help in the Infant School which they had founded in Turin. But the girls that Loewenbruck (having first clothed them as nuns and had their hair cut) offered for this work had no training, whether religious or academic, and could neither read nor write. In the event Rosmini removed two of them, replacing them with two others who were better instructed. The third who remained, was to become Sister Maria Antonietti, who went on to be a co-foundress of what was later a separate Institute under Rosmini's guidance — the Sisters of Providence. And clearly Providence was at work in all this, bringing it about that (as a result of Loewenbruck's blunders) Rosmini found himself the founder of another religious order — one that quickly spread in Italy and soon established houses in England. Sister Maria Antonietti, on whom Rosmini came to place great reliance, was appointed by him Superior of the Sisters, and governed them until her death in 1872.

27. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Domodossola

Trent, 5 July 1832

My dear brother in Christ...

I cannot conceal the fact that the letter you wrote me from Turin surprised me. I cannot understand why, before you took the step you tell me about (of clothing three of the Daughters in black and taking them to Turin to act as teachers), you did not write to me and wait for my reply. What harm could there have been in waiting a fortnight or so before carrying out your plan? Was your conduct consistent with the practice of obedience? And if you abandon the way of obedience and follow the impulses that come into your head, do you imagine you will be blessed by God? I must confess that I am frightened for you. But I do not want to make an absolute judgement. So in the meanwhile I beg you with all the force at my command to gather your thoughts and try to reach a state of calm and tranquillity: pray fervently; put self aside; and then frankly and with complete candour give me an account of what has taken place. Let me have the names of the Daughters you took to Turin, together with particulars of their families and so on.

May God bless you, guide your thinking, and move you to self-denial.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

28. To Don Clemente Alvazzi at Domodossola

Trent, 5 July 1832

My dear fellow-priest in Jesus Christ...

Your letter, in which you tell me of your ordination (and of the priesthood with which God the Father and Christ have just now clothed you) filled me with joy — on your behalf and ours too. I hope that by the mercy of God this high dignity to which you were predestined will be ever before your eyes, and that it will act as a stimulus to take giant strides in the way of Jesus and of the apostles and the other holy priests of the New Law, whose names are written in heaven. I hope too that, as you offer the bloodless sacrifice of the altar, you will placate God, who humbled himself for our sins and those of the people. I hope that the bread of life and the chalice of salvation, which you will daily eat and drink, will produce in you the pledge of immortality, progress in holiness, and heavenly love, so that day by day you will become more worthy to bear the title of *Priest of Charity*. Oh, my dear friend and brother, may the altar of the Lord be our chaste delight, our joy and consolation! There is no sure refuge apart from the altar, this treasury of souls in love with God; nothing else that holds savour for them, no other source of joy. I thank you from my heart for your kindness in offering three Masses for me, and I feel that I have already detected their efficacy in regard to a very serious affair that I have in hand, which (although it is not yet over) seems to be taking a turn for the better. I beg you, guard the holy fire which you have received into your heart; stir it up, so that although it already bums, it may burst into flame, and you, aflame yourself, may go forth and set fire also to the whole world. May that Jesus who came into the world to bring fire, and wished only that it might blaze out, be the one who, after he has set fire to your heart, will through you set ablaze every other heart. How blessed you will be if you are destined to do this! But remain humble and subject to your Superiors like a child, and let Christ alone do everything.

I should be pleased if Don Luigi [Gentili] could go with you to Varzo¹¹, and if everything could be done in a way suitable for religious

You have renounced nature to belong wholly to grace; and you have left your father's house and home to have no house but God's, no father but God, no possession but God, no hope but in God. *Deus meus et omnia!* [My God and my all!]. How apt this saying is in the mouth of a priest of Christ, a priest of Charity. How dear to us must this thought be, since it transports our whole being into God alone. There we shall find Jesus; there too Mary, our beloved Mother; and in Jesus and Mary we shall equally find God; for Jesus is God, and

¹¹ Clemente Alvazzi was from Varzo in the Ossola.

God is in Mary, as Mary is in God. So we are with Mary in Jesus, and with Jesus in God, now and for all ages. Amen.

Continue to pray for the grave matter over which I have written to Monte Calvario. It seems to me that it will be ages before I shall be able to embrace you in the Lord — you and the others. But in the meanwhile you must embrace them for me, especially dear Molinari. Goodbye. May Jesus and Mary rule all that is within us.

Yours,

A. R.

29. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Domodossola

Trent, 8 July 1832

My dear friend and brother in Christ (may his Holy Spirit guide you),

The news you give me of Calvario consoles me greatly; the good spirit there gives me good hopes, and I thank the Lord for this from my heart. I would like you, though, to hold *Gentili* back, so that his health does not suffer through his penances: this is something I am anxious about. Do everything you can to see that he keeps well, so that he may give the Lord long service; do not let him stay up too late or go in for excessive fasting. I make you entirely responsible for this. I am happy, too, over the news you give me about the Spiritual Exercises.

With all this good news about Calvario, there is still one thing that disturbs me: the matter of the Daughters of Providence. The whole affair seems to me wrapped in mystery; it does not seem to have been handled in that spirit of obedience and religious wisdom that should mark any work done for God. And most of all I must disapprove of your having taken three of the Daughters to Turin to act as teachers without giving them even the minimum of religious training, and without writing so much as a word to me. My dear friend, this is not the way we should act: this is not the way the saints behaved. In a previous letter to you I asked you to inform me in great detail about the matter; if you do this fully and candidly, I will let you have my reflections on the step you took.

The very important matter that I wrote to you about, and which took me recently to Innsbruck, seems to be taking a turn for the better, but it is not yet over.

Embrace for me our three beloved fellow-priests, the clerics *Belisy* and *Flecchia*, as well as *Giuseppe* and *Pietro*. As regards the latter, do what you think best. If you have not yet come to a decision, we can do so together when I arrive. Goodbye.

Yours,

R. p.

30. To Giuseppe de'Rosmini Serbati in Rovereto

Trent, 10 July 1832

My dear brother,

I strongly advise you (as I have done previously) to get used to the company of other people. I would not have you live a solitary life, but one that is both social and retired. In other words, mix in society, but preserve the tranquillity of mind that you would have if you were alone. But assuredly I recommend you to be politely open to any suggestions that are made to you. Someone invites you to take a stroll? Do so; do not refuse, saying, 'Some other time perhaps'. Because this would give offence and discourage people from inviting you again. Naturally, others will no longer make kindly overtures to us if we refuse to correspond to these. This is the great secret of civil behaviour: to show kindness and politeness to others. This is a great virtue, and one conformable to the spirit of the gospel! Resolve to cultivate it, my dear brother, as one specially dear to you, and take pains to attain it. Put all your trust in God, and take courage from the thought of his goodness. Anyone who does this and abandons himself to the Lord will never be put to shame. But we must never trust in ourselves — we who are poor, wretched and all too sinful. May God give you the strength to carry your cross with real resignation. I always pray to him for you. And you in your turn, pray for

Your affectionate brother,

ANTONIO p.

31. To Don Luigi Gentili at Domodossola

Trent, 16 July 1832

My dear brother in the service of our Lord,

I am suffering a great affliction sent to me by God for my sins: it is the affair of the Daughters of Providence. How far Don Giambattista [Loewenbruck] has strayed from the safe path of perfect submission and obedience! I do not know what the outcome will be, but I foresee that it will be bad from every point of view... Meanwhile, there are three things I charge you with: first, you must find a way of discovering just what steps he took, and you must let me know at once all the details of what occurred; second, for three days I want you to take your dinner kneeling down in the refectory, telling everyone that I have imposed this penance on you *because of the imprudent and ill-advised counsel you gave to your Vice-superior* (and you must make sure that he is present on the days when you carry out this penance); and third, I charge you to speak to the Vice-superior with great charity and humility, urging him to act with circumspection and moderation, with holy submission and sincere obedience. You must be constantly at his side to see that he does not take any step that is not safe and well-considered. Carry out this important duty with great gentleness, adapting your words to the state of mind of Don Giambattista, which I fear has changed; and do not let him out of your sight. Do not be afraid to speak to him with much gentleness and tact in order to find out about the things I need to know; and do all this as if of your own accord, out of the friendship you feel towards him and out of a desire for his own true good, as well as out of zeal for the glory of God and the good of our Society. I really feel that the Vice-superior may well do it great harm should he not change his ways — I am very much afraid that he may already have done so. Use much wisdom and make every effort over this matter, which calls for great application.

I do not want to write to Don Giambattista before I hear from you the results of your efforts, and about the present situation. Try to see that he does not take any other Daughters of Charity away from Domo, and let me know how many he has up to now taken away and where they went; also who their parents are, and how much money has been spent over all this. Write to me faithfully and without exaggeration, telling me everything that you prudently consider may help me. If it were possible, I would go there immediately; but matters of great importance will hold me here for a few days longer. May God enlighten you and guide you; may he inspire you with his own wise counsels and put his words in your mouth. My dear friend, be careful that you do not injure your health by too many penances; and act always in obedience to your Vice-superior. Goodbye.

A ROSMINI p.

32. To Don Luigi Gentili at Domodossola

Rovereto, Feast of St Mary Magdalen 1832

My dear brother in Jesus Christ,

I shall be leaving here on Tuesday, and I shall spend a few days at Cremona; but by the end of the week — or at latest early the following week — I shall be at Calvario.

For my sins I am experiencing a great deal of distress as a result of the wrong and headstrong behaviour of the Vice-superior. For goodness' sake act calmly in the meanwhile, and if possible avoid taking any steps before I arrive. I realize that things are in such a tangle that it may easily happen that in trying to put right one blunder, you make others, even worse ones. Use all charity, gentleness and prudence in trying to console and calm down Don Giambattista. I can see very well that he feels sorely afflicted; but that does not alter the fact that he caused a great deal of harm through his presumption and lack of humble submission. Anyway, I shall be there soon. Meanwhile, no new moves, please: let things stay as they are for a few days longer. Let the Vice-superior know that I shall be coming soon. Goodbye. May you be guided by the light of God, by holy circumspection and maturity. Banish all haste.

Yours affectionately,

R. p.

33. To Michele Parma at Asti

Monte Calvario, 3 August 1832

My dear Parma,

May the Lord bless your noble intentions, which I hope come from him. And this is what we must first and foremost find out. For, my dear Parma, anything that does not come from him is mere vanity. Even the love of people is vanity if it does not come from God — mean it is a fallacy. Now, how are we to make sure that the sentiments that fill our hearts are born of the eternal Truth? I know of only one way: we have to be in close relation with God, who is in fact the subsistent Truth. And the way in practice to establish this relationship is the humble and practical one of approaching him through prayer and the sacraments.

So I advise you and I encourage you to put all your trust in the grace of Jesus Christ: here is the one rock on which we can securely build. If you follow this course, then assuredly all will go well with you; you will receive the blessings which will crown with good success the beginnings which are inspired in you by God. The friendship I feel for you moves me the more to encourage you like this, since I know that you are of the same mind; and especially since you tell me that it seems to you that the Lord is calling you to enter his sanctuary. This is a weighty decision for you to take! And everything will depend on knowing clearly what is the will of God in your regard. The honour of the priesthood is one that no one can take on himself, as you well know: we have to be called by God, as Aaron was. The priesthood is a most wonderful thing to aspire to: most generous must be our resolution in approaching it — and at the same time most humble. It is never easy to enter into the secrets of our heart, and we must always have a certain distrust of ourselves. It is only when we look into ourselves with much recollection and prayer that God will make things clear to us. If we withdraw from external things and ask God to shed his light in the depths of our souls, then he will not let us be deceived or misled. And so it seems to me an excellent idea on your part, before reaching a decision to become a priest, to make a retreat lasting some days in a retired place away from things and people. There, under a spiritual director, you can commune with God himself over the matter; and through meditation and other practices of prayer seek for a clear knowledge of his will and for the strength (which he alone can give) to fulfil it.

The love I have for you makes me write to you like this; and the topic is so important that I do not want in this letter to speak of other matters — though there are many things that I should otherwise want to tell you about. But this is enough for now. So I embrace you heartily and sign myself —

Yours affectionately,

R.

34. To Don Giulio Padulli in Milan

Calvario, Feast of St Lawrence 1832

My dear friend,

[Rosmini begins by speaking of his friend's illness and of the remedies that are being applied. He has good hopes, he says, of their success; and he then goes on:]

I hope for your recovery through the goodness of God, who blesses the measures taken to restore us to health and gives them efficacy. But sometimes he wishes us to find in our suffering a greater good than that of health, for it can draw us closer to himself. It is an unfortunate fact that when we are well, our desires tend to stop short at natural goods. But when these are removed from us, when we no longer experience them and there is no other good within us but God himself, then our heart (which can do no other than love), no longer taken up with other things, casts itself interiorly and entirely on that good which formerly it neglected (since it was invisible), yet which is our highest and unique good. I have no doubt that the Lord will make you experience this in your heart more and more. And through your prayers you will receive from him the patience and gentleness which, left to ourselves, we are incapable of. Such virtues can only be learned in the school of grace, from him who said: *Discite a me; quia mitis sum et humilis corde* [Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart). I embrace you warmly and at the same time I will not fail to pray to the Lord for your dear Mariannina — do give her my cordial greetings. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

R.

35. To Mgr Carlo Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona

Monte Calvario, on the vigil of the feast of the Assumption 1832

... Your letter greatly consoled me by reason of the thought which our Blessed Lady inspired in you. What a beautiful thought that was! If you correspond to this invitation by carrying it out at once, you will certainly gain a new claim on the protection of our beloved Mother, from whom we can expect all light and comfort. Our Lady in her love will console your heart and give you the peace and tranquillity of soul which you so much need, and which I (unworthy as I am) pray each day that you may be given. Let us abandon ourselves to divine Providence and put our hopes in the goodness of Jesus Christ and the intercession of his holy Mother. We must not be anxious: we shall never have cause to repent of that trust and our abandonment. True, we are poor creatures and we have many defects — which of us has not? But the grace of Jesus Christ can purify us in a moment. And what better means have we of obtaining that grace which is the sole true good we are in need of than to carry out our work for God's glory — and only for his glory? We must put away every other thought: if our minds are intent simply on our heavenly Father, forgetting ourselves, then he will take care of us. He is the Master of all things, and in his hands is all that we have, all that we are — our health, our life, our death. He gives life, and takes it away. So let us repose all our hopes entirely in him. The thought that we are secure in his hands must give us peace and blessed contentment. If we have faith, it is impossible that we should ever be disturbed and anxious. Everything is subject to the wise counsels of Providence — even our faults. So we must be at peace; we must love this Providence more and more as the days pass. If we leave ourselves in God's hands, he will gently make plain to us the way of our eternal salvation and give us that peace which surpasses all understanding.

Here I have much to console me, for I find everything in excellent shape. May God be praised for it all. He alone knows everything. I will end by greeting you with great respect and asking your blessing. So I take my leave of you with gratitude and sincere affection.

A. R.

**36. To Don Giovanluca, Procurator General of the Passionists, at SS
John and Paul in Rome**

Domodossola, 17 August 1832

The kindness and charity which you showed me while I was in Rome moves me to have recourse to you over a rather unpleasant matter. Some while back I learnt that P. D., a Passionist priest, was going about spreading sinister rumours concerning both myself and the Institute of Charity. (You know well the Institute, since you examined its Constitutions at the direction of Cardinal Cappellari, as he was then). When I heard of this I bowed my head and made no issue of it, thinking that rumours of this heinous and outlandish kind could not harm me. But now I have received a letter from England telling me that P. D. has written even as far afield as that, voicing his suspicions, and confirming them (according to him) by citing the views of your Father General. I need not point out to you that to cast even a shadow of suspicion against a priest and a newly-founded religious institute can be a grave offence against charity, and must present an obstacle to many works undertaken for the glory of God — and we are here dealing with imputations of a most serious nature. I am willing to believe that P. D. may have been moved by motives of zeal in all that he has said and written; and if nothing more than my personal reputation were concerned, I would not have made any protest. But given that the suspicions voiced by P. D. must wound a body of priests who have no other aim in view than to work for the glory of God, I begin to doubt whether I can in conscience keep quiet any longer, especially when I recall how intent the holy founders have always been to preserve the good name of their Institutes. But before taking any step, I am commending the matter to your prudence, asking you to determine on what grounds the suspicions of P. D. are founded, and whether there is any truth in what he has written to England as regards your Father General's opinion. Because when I know on what foundations these things rest I shall be able easily enough to defend myself and refute whoever has circulated these suspicions, as is required by both charity and justice, as well as by concern for the service of God (which is gravely harmed by such suspicions). I shall be extremely obliged to you for anything that in your charity and religious zeal you can do in this matter (which must obviously be close to my heart); and at the same time you will add to my debt of gratitude to you. If I can serve you in any way you have only to ask

I remain with great respect etc.,

Yours,

A. R. p.

37. To Mr Ambrose Phillips in England

Domodossola, 17 August 1832

My dear friend in Jesus and Mary ...

Your letter of the 2nd, which I received yesterday, although it contained some rather unpleasant news, was more welcome than ever. I am greatly obliged to you both for your candour and for your loyalty. May the Lord bless you. Do not be surprised if I am not put out by the rumours which P. D. is putting about, horrible as they are, because I believe that he is acting like this out of zeal — but also out of ignorance both of me and of the Institute of Charity. I think that when he is better informed this Father will retract all that he has said and written. Moreover I cannot take these rumours seriously, because they are so strange and inconsistent: they surely cannot last. Yet it is true that the devil can sometimes, with God's permission, play fantastic and malevolent tricks — as we see he has done in the past by casting calumnies on men 'whose sandals I am unworthy to loose', such as St Ignatius and his companions. And this is because Satan wishes for nothing else than to obstruct works that make for the glory of God, works which he so hates; and this projected work in England must greatly rouse his anger.

All the same, the devil can only go as far as God permits, and no further. This is why I remain tranquil, since I know that I have not given the slightest occasion — and nor have our members — to these wretched rumours; and so I leave myself entirely in the hands of Providence.

In order to clear up the more easily this fog of rumours spread by the devil, it would be as well to know what is the basis on which P. D. has founded these fearful imputations; since if they have no real foundation they are not worth considering. But if he believes that he has any grounds, he must (out of conscience and the love of truth) say just what they are. And if I am informed of these I shall have no difficulty in showing their worthlessness — for only mistaken notions could have fuelled such totally false rumours. But let us wait and hear what response Cardinal Weld makes: he will surely have consulted reliable sources. If the need arises, I can send you some weighty refutations, backed by the authority of important people, which should be sufficient to dispel this cloud of suspicions which P. D. has voiced. But I think it would be a mistake to get drawn into making any such apologia, which would cause you and me to waste precious time. It might also arouse in me a certain *amour propre* if I were angered to the point of having to defend myself against such imputations (at once sinister and absurd, as well as gratuitous). So it would suffice me to know that you give no credit (because of your prudence and enlightenment from God) to empty and baseless allegations, words with no substance.

Here, meanwhile, as also in the diocese of Trent, through the divine mercy the Institute of Charity is happily making progress, and the demands on us are such that we cannot meet them all. And all this activity has the blessing of the Bishops concerned. If, as I hope, God has destined it, the English mission will come about. It is very close to my heart. For the present, let us thank God, who is preparing the means. If it is his pleasure he will remove all the difficulties that the enemy of good is busy causing us. I am eagerly awaiting the message you mention, from Lord and Lady Arundell. I know well how pious they are.

Our good Don Gentili is making excellent progress in virtue and spiritual perfection. He is not here at present, as he has had to go off to hear the confessions of some religious, but I expect him back soon and I will then pass on your news to him. He too will be amazed to hear of the strange allegations made against us. I am sure he will not be put off, but will rather smile, on hearing about them.

In the meanwhile, my dear friend, let us continue to pray: this is the way to know the will of God and to find the strength to carry it out. I put my trust in the prayers of so many good people who are interceding for us, and in particular for the English mission. Let us have specially in mind our dear Mother, Mary, who is the channel of all graces; through her intercession we can be sure of receiving the graces we ask for, since Jesus can deny his Mother nothing. I embrace you warmly in Jesus and Mary, and hope to hear from you soon. I was greatly consoled to hear that there is good hope that Lord Spencer will become a convert.

Yours,

A. R.

38. To His Eminence Cardinal Placido Zurla in Rome

Domodossola, 4 September 1832

Your Eminence,

Here I am again having recourse to that charity of yours of which I have had previous experience. The Bishop of Cremona asked me to write to you and send you the enclosed letter addressed to Cardinal Odescalchi, so that you could first read it yourself, and then (if it is in order) be good enough to forward it to the addressee, who may be willing to use his good offices with the Holy Father to obtain the desired outcome of the matter.

Some time ago the Bishop of Cremona confided in me his inclination to resign from his See, and asked my opinion about this. I was against the idea, and put before him many strong arguments to dissuade him; but I could see that he was much disheartened by this. It will suffice if I tell you that on the last occasion when I spoke with him in Cremona, putting forward many reasons why he should not give up his post, I found that he could still not accept my view. In fact he burst into a long and impassioned lament, saying that he would have said to a friend of his just what I had said to him [i.e. given the same advice]; but that he felt an insuperable repugnance at the idea of remaining in his post, an overwhelming need for peace and quiet in which he could attend to his own soul in what little time he believed he had still to live, and that these feelings made it impossible for him to act otherwise.

When I saw that he was so disturbed and desolated at finding me opposed to his view, I thought of suggesting to him that he should write a letter to the Holy Father, setting out frankly the situation and putting himself entirely in the Pope's hands, ready to follow whatever paternal advice the Vicar of Christ might give him, and regarding the Pope as expressing for him the will of God. I said further that he should try as far as possible to put himself in a state of indifference; if the Lord were truly calling him to the quiet of a religious congregation, the Pope would advise him to renounce the episcopate; but if this were not God's will, then he must bear the cross. The hope that this proposal offered him quickly restored his serenity and calmed him down. We agreed over what he should do, and I left for Calvario.

I see now from his letter that he had a better thought: instead of writing directly to the Pope, he would write to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars; and he hopes that I will convey the letter to Your Eminence, asking you to seek the Holy Father's sympathy for his case, and if possible grant the favour he so much desires. What can certainly be said is that Mgr Sardagna is very much cast down and preoccupied with the thought of resigning; it may even be that if all hope of this were taken away from him this could shorten his days. On the other hand he gives no outward

sign of his interior struggle, and carries out admirably all his duties as a bishop. At the same time this is a great burden to him, and he suffers interiorly a good deal. The chest trouble he had last autumn has considerably weakened him both physically and mentally. I wished you to know these things so that, if you think fit, you can inform the Holy Father of them.

Forgive me for giving you so much trouble. With all respect and my deep gratitude etc.,

ANTONIO ROSMINI-SERBATI p.

39. To Mgr Luschin, Bishop of Trent

Domodossola, 4 September 1832

My Lord,

Don Pietro Rigler, who called on me here but has now returned to Trent, gave me consoling news of you and of your excellent state of health. While he was here he showed me, with your permission, the letter you wrote to him just before he left Trent. I am grateful to you for the favour of letting me see this letter. At the same time I assure you that I entirely agree with Your Lordship's condemnation of the sort of zeal which is bitter, stormy and contentious. I regard any such spirit as most harmful to religion in general and to souls. I give you my word that I will use all possible vigilance to see that no such zeal ever 'gets a foothold in the Institute of Charity. Its spirit is essentially one of peace, love and tolerance; and if one of its members were to show that he was lacking in this spirit I would do everything in my power to correct him; and if after giving him a chance to amend, I despaired of being able to change his spirit, I promise you that I would dismiss him from the Institute. So if at any time you notice anything of this sort, I beg you to do me the kindness of letting me know about it. Please believe that I seek nothing but good; and you can do me no greater favour than to speak to me at all times with paternal freedom and candour. If there is one thing that would cause me distress it is this: to hear the voice of my Bishop only indirectly, or to have to ascertain his will only by conjecture. With this in mind, I must in conscience make it clear to you that there is no truth in what you have been led to believe — namely that in this house there are persons who are possessed of a bitter and disordered zeal, capable of stirring up in the people contention and even rebellion. Quite to the contrary: here there are souls full of peace and meekness, who foster union and charity. But if, as Your Lordship's words imply, any particular instance of a different way of acting has been mentioned to you, I am sure I shall be able to put your mind at rest, once you are good enough to let me know about it.

With great respect etc., and asking your pastoral blessing...

A. ROSMINI p.

40. To Don Giulio Padulli in Milan

Calvario, 23 September 1832

My dear Don Giulio,

Thanks be to God that (as our friend Mellerio informs me) you have begun to get out he tells me that you have not altogether lost your cough, so you are not completely restored to health; but he hopes (as I do) that it will soon disappear. Experiences like these [of sickness] are something that the Lord sends us so that we may come to realize our own nothingness. What good would it do us to have a merely theoretical grasp of this if we had never actually experienced it? Purely notional knowledge of such truths would be useless if we had no practical proof. Intellectual knowledge does not reach into our hearts and souls; and so we remain virtually incredulous — for these things are hard to believe if they are not lived in reality. On the other hand, if we are tried and even overwhelmed by evils, this brings our thoughts down from the clouds, and forces us willy-nilly to recognize what we really are, without illusions. So the sense of our own wretchedness is by grace made the means of leading us to God. For when we find nothing in ourselves but wretchedness, and nothing in the world outside us but tribulation, then our hearts — which cannot do without goodness and love — at last turn to God, out of a sort of happy necessity (which grace makes use of), and we abandon ourselves to him. We then come to acknowledge him as our only good, and feel profoundly the truth of those words of Christ. 'Come to me, all you who are weary and heavily burdened, and I will refresh you.' Then too we feel, as we never felt before, the goodness of God in our hearts... and with deep feelings of love we say: 'My God and my All!' It seems to us that we now find happiness in those very infirmities which are so against the grain of our nature, since through them we are deprived of the deceptive benefits of natural goods; and we can grasp the truth that God alone is enough and more than enough to satisfy our every desire. How precious is the simplicity of the love of God! How truly rich is that nudity of soul which — when we are freed from the trammels of earthly delights — turns us wholly to its Creator! There is such an inestimable value in this conversion of a desolate soul, stripped of earthly goods, to this highest and essential good, that God has made it the prime instance of his providential dealings with humanity; that he has given us infirmities and death to help us to seek him, and he makes this forgoing of earthly satisfactions the delight and the rich inheritance of those who are most dear to him; and finally he gave the fullness to his beloved Son alone, in the indescribable agonies which he endured in his life and in his death! How fortunate we shall be, my dear Giulio, if we live faithfully by his words: 'Whoever wishes to follow me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.' This is the great comfort and consolation which the Lord has attached to our ills, our sufferings. God says to all those who love him and meet with suffering 'I myself am with you in your tribulation, and I will deliver you from it

and glorify you.' He himself suffers with us; and if this were not enough to make all suffering sweet he promises to rescue us from it and raise us to glory. And how great that glory will be... 'The sufferings of this time are not worthy,' (says the apostle) 'to be compared with the future glory which will be seen in us.' For the present, then, let us live in this glory by faith; for the Christian should (as St Paul again says) live with his conversation in heaven. And if our spirit, our mind, our love, is in heaven, what will we care about this corruptible world when we are raised so high above it? We shall feel the grief which the apostle experienced at having to continue our pilgrimage here below, away from our Lord,; and there will be born in our hearts that longing (which is felt only by those to whom the Lord grants it) 'to be dissolved and to be with Christ.' And if we are to continue in this life, it will be tolerable only if we give ourselves to doing the will of that Lord for whom we sigh day and night during our exile here.

Yours, R.

41. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Locarno

Arona, 25 September 1832

My dear brother in Jesus Christ our only good,

Come as soon as you can. Embrace Molinari for me and put him in charge of the house in your absence, giving him precise instructions over the running of it. He is to continue to send me detailed news of everything. Tell him that I put my trust in him, and hope that he will act in the spirit of the Institute to which God has called him: a spirit of prudence and circumspection, of humility and simplicity, of truth, uprightness and charity.

Goodbye. I embrace you warmly in the Lord, and I look to him to bring about the amendment you promise. Without this, how can we expect God to bless us? How can we be justified in his eyes if we abandon obedience and straightforwardness, and instead follow the promptings of our own imagination and continue to act deviously towards our Superiors? *Cursed is the man who acts fraudulently in the things of God.* It is not enough that a work is of God: we have to carry it out without any deceit or insincerity. Think about this! And if you consider matters seriously in the light of eternity (and avoid looking for any glory in the eyes of the world), I am sure that from now on, by the mercy of God, you will be *an Israelite without guile*, as we all must be. This is what I hope for. God bless you — again I embrace you. In haste,

Yours very affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

42. To Don Pietro Rigler at Trent

Domodossola, Feast of St Francis of Assisi 1832

My dear brother and companion in the service of the Lord,

I should be very glad, if possible, to have the Blessed Sacrament reserved in the house — it is a great deprivation to be without it. Do all you can to arrange this.

I recommend you to study the Constitutions and to absorb their spirit. By so doing you will be confirmed ever more in the vocation you have received from God. We must not be afraid of the difficulties people may cause us; nor must we allow our work to come to harm through our own weakness or timidity. Our trust must be in God: he will overcome all opposition if he so please. I can well see that it would be a great advantage if we had the college, but we must be patient. If it is a good thing that we should have the house, suitably adapted, then God in his own good time will see that we have it.

I will send you as soon as I can a letter appointing Todeschi *as Assistant to the Superior*. I think this is a better title for him to have, rather than *Vice-superior*, so that his promotion over the others will be the less likely to cause any affront. In the meanwhile I entirely entrust to you the house and all those in it. I should like them to grasp well the spirit of the Institute, which consists in a complete consecration to the Lord of 'all that we are and all that we have'. We really have to want the whole of ourselves, our powers, our possessions, to be of God and for God; so that we spend ourselves and are consumed entirely for his glory and for the growth of his Kingdom — which is his Church. Oh, if only people could thoroughly understand these things! They would detach themselves from everything; they would see themselves as no longer having on earth any family, relations, friends, apart from their companions in the service of the Lord and the holy society which they form together.

Goodbye again. I embrace you warmly, together with dear Giulio, Boselli and all the others there. Greet for me those in the college. Pray for —

Yours,

ROSMINI p.

43. To the brethren of the Institute in the house at Trent

Monte Calvario, 8 October 1832

To my beloved brethren and companions in the service of the Lord... the grace of Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

I was hoping to be able to greet you personally in the Lord early next month, but some affairs already broached, which are to do with God's greater glory, and which require my presence (so that they can be speedily concluded, as is necessary), will not allow this, but will keep me here for a little while longer, in this beloved sanctuary which, besides being dedicated to the Passion of Christ, was the birthplace (as you know) of the little Institute in which God of his mercy has called us and joined us together. So if I cannot be physically present among you, I can at least be with you by means of this letter, and tell you all that is in my heart, and how sorry I am not to be with you there in body (though I am never far away from you in spirit) — solicitous as I am over your progress in your holy resolutions. Not that my being present among you can bring you any grace, or that I would be able by my words to help you or strengthen you against temptation and stimulate you to make progress in virtue, since I know rather that I am not capable of all those things; that I am powerless — and could even do you harm by the bad example I should give you in my weakness and wretchedness. But still, the love that I have for you in Jesus, the close bond which unites us — these are the reasons which make me want to have you, my dear companions in God's service, before my eyes all the time, if only this were possible. This is because one who loves is eager to know both the good and the bad sides of those he loves; he does not want to have to depend on what a third party may tell him, but to see for himself, with his own eyes, since he wants to rejoice over the good he sees in those he loves... and he wants also to know the bad sides, the faults. Besides, since I know your charity and humility, your dedication to the Lord, it does not surprise me that you want to draw profit for your souls from everything, even from my words; and are ready to take in good part and put to your spiritual gain whatever I may put before you of Christ's teaching, even though I am so unworthy a teacher. And it is because of the holy dispositions that I hope are in the souls of all of you that I want to tell you in this letter (as I would tell you in person if I could) the things that I believe most useful and necessary to perfect you in your holy vocation, which you have received through the singular goodness and love of Christ, and in which I trust you will persevere to all eternity.

(1) Each of you must give serious thought to being sincere with God — that is, you must want to carry out in practice what is laid down in the Rules of the Society you have entered. This is as much as to say that we, who have become members of the Institute, wish sincerely and entirely to consecrate to God alone ourselves *and all that we have in the world*; so that from now on we have

no other aim and disposition on earth but to promote the glory of Jesus Christ and of his Church in every way possible. We must be ready for anything; and especially we must be detached from the things of flesh and blood: for these are the most fatal influences for anyone who truly wants to give himself wholly to God in our Society. The words we must have before our eyes are those of Jesus Christ. 'Do not think that I have come on earth to bring peace: I have come not to bring peace but rather to bring the sword. For I have come to set the son against the father, the daughter against the mother, the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law; and a man's enemies are those of his own house. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it; and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.' (Mt 10).

(2) Each of you must love dearly his companions in Jesus Christ, without any exception; he must put up with their defects in all charity, condoning them for the love of Christ, and bearing with them willingly for his own mortification; not dwelling on them, and as far as possible not even noticing them; but instead being continually aware of his own defects, and regretting them also because of the annoyance and grief they give to others. Again, each of you must regard the welfare and good order of the house as his own, and do all he can to spread among the community, like a sweet scent, a spirit of deep charity and the closest possible union of hearts. Let everyone aim to unite brother with brother, and the brothers with the Fathers, (that is, the brethren with the Superiors); and try also to remove anything that could in the least diminish the union of hearts and souls that we possess in Christ, like the first believers. All who work for a perfect union of wills and hearts are truly in Christ; but those who do not guard against giving rise to bitterness and discord, or even mutual coldness, are not working for and in Christ, but rather making themselves agents of the one who is the enemy of Christ and of us all. We all form one body, and each of us is a member of that body; so each one must for his part study how to do everything possible in order to promote the perfect concord and health of the body and its members. In particular each of us must wish to see all his companions advance in solid virtues; and to this end be ready to help Superiors by revealing to them whatever may seem helpful for them to know, for the benefit of each individual member. This holy charity, and this care which each will take for the spiritual good and the good order of the whole house will show us to be true followers of our Master, who said: *'Men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another.'*

3. Finally, what I particularly want to impress on you is that you must study to become perfect in *obedience*. Oh, how great and how beautiful is this virtue! Let each of you try to be well-disposed towards your Superior; for anyone who has the right attitude will receive gratefully the care which the Superior takes over his well-being and his spiritual good. Corrections, penances, mortifications — these are truly great benefits; so we should have genuine regard in our

hearts for the one who gives them to us. In all things where there is no sin, the voice of the Superior is the voice of Jesus Christ. So let us carry out what is commanded us; let our desires coincide with those of the Superior: what he wills, we shall will. This is how we show our love of God, our mastery over self. My dear brethren, let us have no wishes of our own: our disposition should be such that what the Superior commands is what we desire; what he forbids holds no attraction for us. We have to overcome ourselves; we have to become victims together with Christ himself, and like Isaac we make our sacrifice through obedience. I make such great account of this virtue because it is the source of all the others, especially in our Society; and this is why I want you all in common to read and meditate on the wonderful letter of St Ignatius on obedience, so as to grasp the very heart of it. This letter is, I would say, meant expressly for us, for our Society. From it you will see that the great foundation of this virtue of obedience is the faith which sees in the Superior the actual person of Jesus Christ, and takes no account of the human side of the man. Given this foundation, you will always be obedient — and to each and every Superior, whoever he may be. And even if it should happen that a particular Superior were contemptible in himself, then in obeying him you would acquire all the greater merit, and would more surely be serving and obeying your divine Master.

I want to see you convinced of these maxims, especially when I have to appoint a new Superior among you — as is the case now. And because I believe that you are so convinced, I have every hope that you will accept what I have to tell you not only with entire submission but with love and true spiritual joy. Hence, taking into account the fact that our dear brother and Father, Don Rigler¹², your Superior there, is so busily occupied with his many holy duties that these take him away from you very often, so that you cannot have recourse to him in your needs, I have thought it necessary to give him an *Assistant* who can act in his stead, and can almost always be with you, so that you can take counsel of him and receive his guidance whenever the need arises. With this in mind I have prayed fervently to the Lord to enlighten me, and had prayers said, so that I may find an arrangement that best answers the circumstances; and in the end I decided to appoint as *Assistant to the Superior* at Trent your and my dear Don Giulio Todeschi, firmly believing that, just as he will faithfully interpret the Lord's will to you, so you will be humble and docile subjects who will gladly receive and energetically carry out that divine will as made known to you by him. There is no need for me to sound the praises of this beloved brother of ours, for you know him; and as for me, my appointing him to this office is sufficient proof of the esteem in which I hold him. So I charge you in the love of Christ to bear with his human defects (for what man is entirely free of defects?) and

¹² Don Pietro Rigler was also the Rector of the College of S. Vigilio, which he had founded, as well as the Spiritual Director and Professor of Moral Theology in the seminary of Trent. In addition to these duties he was very often occupied in hearing confessions and in giving retreats to the clergy of the diocese.

to remember what I said earlier — that the defects of a Superior make all the more praiseworthy and dear in God's sight the obedience of his subjects. But each of you who wants to be a truly obedient follower of Christ will (instead of looking at such defects as he may have) see and esteem the uncommon virtues with which your new Father is endowed; and with a love that will grow daily you will at the same time grow in reverence for him. To sum up then, I exhort you in all earnestness to give new proofs daily of your sincere humility and self-denial, and show that through your faith you look not to the man but to God himself.

I will add no more; and I know that even what I have said was not really necessary; but I wanted to say these things to help you and recall to your minds the great truths you already know (for they are the foundation of religious life) and so that you should know the solicitous love which I always have for you, even when I am at a distance. So, warmly embracing you all in Jesus Christ, our Head, our Master, our delight, our all, I commend myself to your prayers and I bless you. May the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit dwell in your hearts now and always. Amen.

Your Superior,

A. R.

44. To Don Pietro Rigler at Trent

Domodossola, 9 October 1832

My dear friend and brother,

Here is the letter announcing the appointment of Todeschi as your *Assistant*. Gather the brethren together, read it to them and comment on it: encourage them to receive the news in a good spirit. I should also like them to read the letter of St Ignatius on obedience. This could be the subject of the conference. Guide Todeschi with good advice, and particularly urge him to use *gentleness*. I am not writing to him myself now, but you can pass on to him the things I should like to say to him. I think that if he feels sleepy in the evenings he should go to his room — because it is not good that he should be seen dozing. Also he is to be even more kind and charitable towards all the brethren alike, showing them sincere esteem but speaking frankly to their hearts, prudently gaining their confidence, when it comes to amending their faults. This is the great work of Superiors: studying their subjects night and day, so as to get them to correct their defects and to urge them on in the pursuit of virtue. And if the Superior holds his tongue, this must not be out of negligence, or timidity, or feebleness, but through a deliberate decision that it is better for the individual or the group if he maintains a temporary reticence.

I commend you all to the love of Christ. Give me an account of how things are. My affectionate greetings to all of you there. And all my companions here send their best wishes too.

Yours,

ROSMINI p.

45. To Don Andrea Quinn in Rome

Domodossola, 9 October 1832

Dear Don Andrea,

I am sending you a booklet entitled *Regolamento dell'Istituto* [An account of the Institute], in which you will find a brief description of the Institute of Charity. Will you please make a fair copy of this and offer it humbly in my name to Cardinal Weld, who has expressed a wish to have a concise and accurate account of the Institute. The relation it has with the Bishops (which His Eminence is particularly interested in) is clearly set out in No. 15 of the description. It seems to me that the nature of the Institute is such that it can never come into conflict with the Bishops, because it never acts other than in accordance with the requests which it receives, above all from the Bishops; and it is subject to them in everything to do with priestly functions and the care of souls. As for its own Superiors: its members are subject to them as regards the interior government of the Institute, the keeping of the Rules, the distribution of personnel, and decisions concerning the taking on of works and the keeping or abandoning of those duties which it never seeks out but assumes solely according to the requests made by its neighbour.

I gather from his letter that the Cardinal also wants to know 'how Don Gentili and his companions would propose to regulate their activities in England'. The answer to that is that, should it please Providence to have Gentili go there with some of our brethren, they would act on the lines laid down in the account of the Institute which I enclose. From this it is clear that they would work quietly and peacefully, restricting themselves from the very beginning to carrying out strictly no more and no less than befits men who are Christians and priests, and that they would put themselves at the disposal of the Bishop and the requests of their neighbour. They would set themselves to carry out, readily and 'indifferently' [i.e. without any predilection of their own] any and every kind of good work that was within their powers. This is how Gentili and his companions would act — this is our way of acting. We do nothing by our own choice, apart from our strictly private duties; but we allow ourselves to be motivated by what is asked of us — chiefly by the prelates of the Church, taking on whatever works are first asked of us. Should [a bishop] wish Gentili and his companions to undertake the running of a parish, he would accept this, and would administer it according to Canon Law and the wishes of the Bishop, claiming no exemption or privilege whatever. So too if he were required to preach, or to work in schools, or in works of charity such as hostels for the poor and so on — all these duties he would take on most willingly. In short, then, our Institute wants its priests to have no preferences of their own, and to have no other aim but to adapt themselves to whatever mission they are given... since they know that they can serve God equally in all things whatsoever. Should Cardinal Weld want to know

anything else, he has only to ask, and I shall be pleased to give him any clarification he desires.

And now, my dear Quinn, let us turn to your situation. You have done well not to talk to others about the nature of the Society: please continue not to reveal this to anyone without express permission. I should very much like you to join us for a while in this holy solitude, where dear *Gentili* is making great progress in virtue. I do not mean that I want you here as one of our members — that could only be the work of God. It is therefore no business of mine, and all I want is whatever God may inspire you to do. But I am certain that the desire for perfection does come from God alone; so that although I am not for a moment urging you to join our Institute, I do urge you, as forcefully as I can, to undertake the evangelical counsels; and this is because the counsels given by Jesus are simply in themselves the best; and as St Thomas teaches, there is no need to hesitate over them. Any Christian who is drawn to follow them is under no obligation to ask advice of spiritual directors; all he has to do is to resolve to give himself entirely and generously to God. Those who understand the beauty of the counsels given to men by our divine Master are truly blessed: there is nothing more precious. So follow them courageously, in whatever religious institute God may move you to enter. In any case, it would give me great pleasure to see you, to embrace you in the Lord, and to have you here with me for a time.

Please translate the *Regolamento* into good English and send it to me.

A ROSMINI p.

PS Could you copy the marked section of this letter and let Cardinal Weld have it?

46. To Don Giambattista Boselli at Trent

Domodossola, 9 October 1832

My dear brother and companion in the Lord's service ...

Thank you for taking care of the Trent house; and I thank God who, in his mercy, has helped you to persevere in your vocation and given you the strength to work in his holy service.

I have come to see that it is very necessary to establish a Superior in the house at Trent who can act on behalf of Don Rigler — heavily occupied as he is. I have prayed to the Lord over this: I have considered all the circumstances, taking into account not only the person who should be appointed but also local conditions; and it seems to me that the will of God is that Todeschi should be the one to be given this post. So I beg you to set an example to all the others of the most perfect and humble obedience and submission towards him in everything. In this way you will be given the grace to advance in perfection yourself. I look to you to be the principal means of promoting that humility which I so much want to see in all the members of the Trent community. May God gently bring this about through his grace.

As for your own affairs: I think it best if you come to see me in Milan when I return (though I do not know just when this will be), and there we can sort out together whatever needs to be decided. In the meantime, God bless you; may you daily become more profoundly his, and so find great peace of soul. Give my greetings to all the others, my dear Boselli. Love me in the Lord as I love you in him

Yours,

ROSMINI p.

47. To Niccolò Tommaseo in Florence

Calvario, 17 October 1832

... As you rightly say, 'The Good News, after eighteen centuries, is still new to a world which has heard it but not taken it in.' *Tenebrae eam non comprehenderunt* [The darkness did not understand it]. It will always be so, except for the saints, who at all times have understood it. There have always been those who were children of God, and there always will be — *et fulgebunt quasi stellae in perpetuas aeternitates* [and they shall shine like stars for all eternity]. It is not within human power to increase or diminish their number even by one. God has counted them up, and no creature can alter that total. A man may be proud, but he cannot destroy the pride of others; only God can confound the pride of everyone. God reserves to himself everything that is to do with moral perfection; and those he makes use of as his ministers in the moral order, he has chosen from all eternity. *Ego elegi vos: non vos me elegistis* [I have chosen you: you have not chosen me]. So in the supernatural order, man on his own can do nothing to help himself: *servi inutiles sumus* [we are unprofitable servants] — and woe to anyone who pretends otherwise. So the whole duty of man is to carry out what morality requires of him, modelling himself on the one who said: 'Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.' So anyone who really lives by the gospel is faithful and generous in his humility and meekness; he is not afraid to proclaim the whole truth (in which he finds his own good) and to witness to Christ; and neither out of faintheartedness nor out of a presumptuous hope of producing some good which is not willed by God does he act according to human maxims or the destructive spirit of this world.

The gospel is sufficient in itself. God is everything, and the just man places all his hopes in the things of eternity, and this is the source of happiness even in this world, just as a river joins the sea. I do not say that this is the source of all the happiness that we in our greed imagine and wish for; but rather of that temperate happiness that God sees most in conformity with the merciful design he has in mind for those who are destined for eternal life. Sorrow and the cross will always be dear to those who are the disciples of Jesus Christ, and will never be absent from their lives. But at the same time their wonderful and universal charity will lead them to think only of ways in which they can lighten the weight of the cross that their brethren have to carry. It follows that religion has no need to justify itself in terms of human activity: properly understood, it is its own justification. This is seen in the way that faithful adherence to the law of the gospel produces the good effects that spontaneously issue from such fidelity, even in this world. 'It is a marvellous thing,' as was so well said by the man of law, 'that the Christian religion, which seems to be wholly taken up with the things of heaven, does in fact produce so much good on earth. Yes, truly, *pietas ad omnia utilis* [true piety brings benefits of all kinds]. But this refers to genuine piety, and not to any form of greediness. So charity must be the driving force: the love of God; the love of others for the sake of God; everything is possible for charity. But in this way human interests are not pursued directly. the Kingdom of God

alone is to be sought after. 'Seek first the Kingdom of God and (it follows), the rest will be added to you. And this is because the heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things.'

The Church shows forth in its saints a higher wisdom still: a wisdom that the world does not understand, and even takes to be foolishness. For it flees from worldly advantage; it lives a life of abstinence, of mortification, of voluntary poverty; and it takes as its secret motto *Beati pauperes* [Blessed are the poor]. These are the ones that Christ came to evangelize; the ones he, who had nowhere to lay his head, came to share his treasures with. How true it is that from the root of poverty springs a quite different fruit:- riches abound where poverty is shown. This is how the Church has been enriched; this is the one way in which the religion of the Crucified One came to rule over material interests. And how greatly the divine counsels surpass human 'wisdom'! Whenever the Church is loaded with the spoils of the Egyptians (along with so many other 'trophies'), whenever she seems to have become the arbiter of human fates, precisely then she is encumbered and powerless, as David was when he wore the armour of Saul. These are the times of her decadence. And the Almighty, who watches over her destiny, after humiliating her, after making her see that she is made up of men who are subject to temptation, after having made it clear to her by bitter experience that it is only in him that she can put her trust and be strong — then, moved by pity for her plight he allows the world's fury to fasten on the temporal goods of the Church and take them as spoils. And in this way he reduces her to that primitive simplicity which, more admirable than any womanly beauty, draws everything anew to herself, only to lay it anew before — not men — but the Spouse when he says 'Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, and come.'

Goodbye.

R.

PS All is well with the two houses, thank God. Their activity is entirely moral and religious in scope. They have no special aim, but simply that which is common to all men: to carry out their proper duties; to maintain the law of God... and so they could take as their motto: *in lege Domini voluntas eius* [Their will is dedicated to obeying the law of God]. Nothing could be simpler; and I believe nothing could be sweeter. So they are different from other Christians not by reason of their aim, but simply because they are people united in helping one another to achieve that aim. In the little book¹³ I had printed in Rome, with the title *Maxims of Christian Perfection*, all this is included, except obedience — since that work does not deal with religious life as such. Goodbye. Pray for me.

R.

¹³ The *Maxims of Christian Perfection*, which contain in brief the teaching of the gospel, had been published by Rosmini in 1830, and Tommaseo had greatly admired them. He had written to the author declaring his 'admiration for the rare beauty of that little book.' See the *Vita di Antonio Rosmini*, vol. 1, p-342.

48. To Don Pietro Rigler at Trent

Calvario, 12 December 1832

My dear brother and companion in the Lord's service ...

My heart was overjoyed to hear from dear Giulio that the altar was being put in; so perhaps by now we have present in the house our God, our Good? I await the happy news, for until the Blessed Sacrament is under our roof, it seems to me that we have done nothing of any account. We have always to bear in mind that our state of contemplation must never be a state of inertia. Rather, it is a state of preparation in which we build up our fervour, our generosity, and grow in grace so that we shall be ready for and zealous in the works to which the Lord may call us. We have to remain hidden, like lions in their den, while we give ourselves to contemplation in our houses: we must be like drawn bows, like a vessel of corked wine, a force contained until the moment when it can burst out with all the greater power. We all need to grasp well what is the nature of this state of ours. But since men are limited in their understanding, we have to tell our students one thing at a time; and the first thing is to get them to understand the inestimable worth of the hidden life devoted to prayer, contemplation and mortification. Then perhaps when the first occasion comes when the charity *quae urget nos* [which motivates us] calls us to the active life, that is the moment when we have to expound to them the other side of our teaching — particularly when, given our wretchedness — we are in danger of getting used to a life of indolence and love of ease, rather than holiness. So when you are explaining the rules to all and sundry, as occasion arises you can usefully touch on this point.

I cannot yet give you firm news of when I shall return: certainly I do not think it can be before March. But when I do come I hope to see great things, in the sense of seeing everyone abounding in spiritual illumination and an understanding of how great a treasure is poverty and every kind of suffering and persecution borne for the sake of Christ. It is for him alone that we have abandoned everything. Our brethren must be firmly persuaded that they have to renounce the things of flesh and blood so as to consecrate themselves entirely to God; and that whoever does this needs all the more to consecrate all that he has to the Lord.

Our dear brethren here, who form one heart and one soul with me, embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ. Goodbye.

Your unworthy servant in Jesus,

A. R.

49. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Trent

Domodossola, 20 December 1832

My dear companion in the service of the Lord, to whom be all honour and glory. May the gentleness and prudence of Jesus Christ fill our hearts and our minds. Amen.

I thank God for the various pieces of good news in your letter. How good God is in supporting our efforts! Here too things are steadily getting better. All the brethren give me edification; our Superiors are kindly disposed and show ever more charity. Don Giambattista [Loewenbruck] has accompanied our young men to the ordinations. Don Luigi [Gentili] will spend Lent at Domodossola this year, God willing. The rules of the house are gradually being put into practice, and after Christmas we shall make a greater effort to put everything in proper order. I am anxious that these rules should be introduced also at Trent and kept with great exactness; and I look to you, after the Superior, to be watchful over this.

But while you see to this, have always before your eyes the two words that I included in the greeting at the head of this letter: *prudence* and *gentleness*¹⁴. A Superior, my friend, has great need of both of these qualities: without them he will never gain the confidence of those in his charge, or be able to influence them. I recommend gentleness even more than prudence, because although each tends to produce the other, you cannot have prudence without gentleness. Gentleness is a most delicate virtue: it is easily hurt; a raising of the voice, a hasty gesture, a glance, a smile, a touch of irony, a tone of voice — any of these things can be enough to offend against gentleness. It is as delicate as self-love itself, and nothing is easier to hurt than that. Take the greatest care over this matter, I beg you. And as a sign of the great desire I have to see you excel in these two virtues, I want to give you a penance for all the times when you have offended against them in the past or may do so in the future. The penance is this: I want you to go to the Superior when he is alone and kiss his feet, asking his pardon for everything that your conscience reproaches you about in this matter, and begging him to have the charity to punish you formally every time you fail in gentleness towards anyone — or even towards no one in particular: because it is possible simply to be too curt and severe merely in the way you express yourself and even when no one in particular is the target of your severity. Moreover watch yourself during literary discussions and exchanges, so that you never show the slightest contempt towards any individual or nation. Be especially careful to show sincere respect for Germany and Germans — some of our brethren belong to that race. But we are not Germans or Italians or Frenchmen: we are Christians and brothers of charity, one in Jesus Christ.

¹⁴ The Italian word used is *dolcezza* (literally ‘sweetness’), and it implies the qualities that in English are called ‘gentleness’ and ‘courtesy’.

'There is no longer Jew or Greek; there is no longer slave or free; there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.' (Gal.3). So too, do not try to cut short discussion by curt answers; do not discriminate among people who hold different views: allow them to hold any view not condemned by the Church.

Let me know, the next time you write, how you have profited from this advice of mine — and do not fail to meditate seriously over it. Goodbye. I embrace Don Pietro [Rigler] and all the others. May the feast of Christmas bring us, as well as the love of Jesus, a love for his poverty, his mortification; and an emptying of ourselves. Let us keep the feast in a union of hearts. We here will have the Trent house in our prayers, and I am sure you will do as much for us. Again goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

A. R. p.

50. To Leonardo Rosmini in Milan

Domodossola, 23 December 1832

My dear cousin,

You ask my advice as to whether you should apply for the post of judge, and I give it without hesitation. Your conscientious doubts are unwarranted, believe me. You need only a little courage to dissipate these scruples: the post will be both advantageous to you and pleasurable. You are devoted to justice, and this is all God wants of you. A judge is not infallible; and even if at times he makes mistakes he can still be a man of complete integrity. God looks at what is in our hearts: it would be a great affront to him to suppose that he is so harsh that he punishes involuntary errors — it would be a great slight to accuse even a mortal man of behaving like that

All in all, then, have more faith in the goodness of God, my dear friend and cousin; then your heart will grow larger, and you will indeed run *in viam mandatorum* [in the way of the Lord's commandments]. So I would urge you to meditate on the immensity of God's goodness and his love for us; be full of confidence in him and on intimate terms with him. It pleases God when he sees that we show him a simple trust — so courage! If the post of judge appeals to you, take it without more ado, and God will bless you.

Yours,

ANTONIO p.

51. To Mr Ambrose Phillips at Garendon Park in England

Domodossola, Christmas Eve 1832

My dear Phillips,

I shall be glad to enrol among the Ascribed of our Institute Lord and Lady Arundell, whom I know by reputation, and whose piety I know through what I have been told by my two companions, Loewenbruck and Gentili... please give them my best wishes and ask them to remember me and my companions in their prayers. Although I have not had the pleasure of meeting Lord and Lady Arundell in person, still we are truly related in a spiritual sense in Jesus Christ, and this is of deeper significance than meeting face to face. I will send on the Rules of the Ascribed. You may already have told them something about Ascribed membership: it means an association of good people, a sharing in spiritual benefits for mutual help and progress in virtue, and (as occasion arises) helping our neighbour in his troubles. Kindly tell Lady Arundell that I will do as she asks — have prayers said especially for the conversion of her younger son, Lord Nugent. May God answer our prayers and our Lady be our advocate with him.

Of Cardinal Weld I know no more than that he asked me, through Mr Quinn, to clarify some points regarding the relations of the Institute with the Bishops, and I answered the request at once.

Now I come to the proposed Leicester mission. If it is the will of divine Providence that we should take this on, I have good hopes that all will go smoothly with this. But I can well see that a serious obstacle is the existing debt of £500 with which the mission is burdened. It would certainly be impossible for our men, on their arrival in England, to be faced with already existing debts. So first we must see if it is possible for the debt to be treated as something quite separate from the mission, and for the Bishop (or whoever is the creditor) to arrange for the debt to be dealt with so that it has nothing to do with us. The mission needs to begin from scratch, with a clean slate. Our administration would have to be quite free from any involvement with the debt, or else we could not take it on. If these difficulties can be overcome, and we receive the charge from the Holy Father, Gregory XVI, then I will gladly send Gentili with two other brethren to our beloved England, where there are so many holy and generous souls, and where you, my dear Phillips, are — you whom I love greatly in Jesus Christ.

As for what I can do in the way of supplying funds: I fear it will not be much, because I am (at present and for the next year or so) much weighed down by an extensive building programme which I have taken on in relation to the house and church in Trent and which is not yet finished. And so I am hoping that some charitable soul will cover the expenses of the journey and of the initial

establishing of the brethren as *poor men* (and no more is needed) in England. So let us pray fervently to the Lord in the meantime, asking him by his grace to arrange everything in a way that will make for his greater glory and enable us to give the greatest possible service to his divine majesty... this is all we wish for. All of us here pray daily for England. Gentili embraces you warmly. Be so kind as to give our sincere thanks to Mr Spencer for the interest he has taken in the Leicester mission. May Jesus always be in your heart and make you holy; and may our dear Mother, Mary, always make him favourable to us and lead us to the joyful vision of his face for ever. Goodbye.

A. R. p.

52. To Don Giuseppe Penz at Trent

Calvario, 27 December 1832

... Although you allude in your letter to your faults and your struggles, I can see that you none the less have an enduring desire and purpose of reaching spiritual perfection. And oh! how consoling it is, my dear friend, for us to know that the efforts which a man makes to arrive at perfection cannot fail to be crowned with success, provided that he perseveres. Yes, the victory is certain — we have the promise of Jesus Christ. The battle may be prolonged, but if we do not grow weary of fighting, we shall overcome all obstacles.

We must suppress as far as we possibly can all feelings of envy. This is a most vile passion, and we must abhor even the slightest trace of it. Do we not wish to see Christ glorified? Moses said that he wished all the people might prophesy. And should we not rejoice greatly when we see our Lord glorified and served by our brethren? If we ourselves are imperfect, and others surpass us in the love of God, let us humble ourselves and feel confusion; but our feelings of sorrow can only ever be over seeing ourselves less fervent than others, so little solicitous to do honour to Christ. And it should be a comfort and an encouragement for us to know that at least others are doing him honour. This is a thought that consoles me in the midst of my own wretchedness; and when I see the good deeds that others do, I can do no less than cry out from the bottom of my heart, *gratias tibi ago, Domine, propter magnam gloriam tuam!* [I thank thee, Lord, for thy great glory!].

We have to aim ever more earnestly at detaching ourselves from the things of this world, and at the destruction of our self-will, so that all that remains alive in us is the will of God as known through obedience. If when something is commanded us we feel an internal resentment, this is a sure sign that our self-will is still active. This human will is something we have to uproot entirely; and then whatever our Superiors decide for us will no longer upset us: rather it will be dear to us, because our will is conformed to it — so that it is precisely what we ourselves want to do. A soul that has this generosity gains enormous spiritual profit, being dead to self and always prompt to accept lovingly whatever the Superior decides, wanting nothing else.

I urge on you also true zeal for the holy Church and for the good of your neighbour. It is to the Church that we have dedicated ourselves — to her and to the salvation of our neighbour, according to the dictates of obedience; so we must employ all our gifts and all our energies in these precious labours when we are so commanded. Be determined to co-operate in the house, both by your example and by collaborating with your Superiors, so that there may be great charity and faithful observance. I hope that when I come I shall see great things there. In the meanwhile, let us pray. I embrace you warmly in the Lord. Convey my greetings to everyone there.

Your unworthy brother and Superior,

A. R.

53. To Niccolò Tommaseo in Florence

Domodossola, the Feast of the Epiphany 1833

My dear Tommaseo,

The indifference that St Ignatius speaks of is with regard to the *means*, not the *end*. We can and must always desire the end, and say with deepest feeling *adveniat regnum tuum* [thy kingdom come]; but we must remain indifferent over whatever means the divine goodness may wish to use to lead us to that end. The thing that deserves to be pondered on profoundly is this: we do not know what particular means will ensure that we attain our end. We are ignorant, and so we must have recourse to the God who sees us and our needs, and with perfect indifference receive from his hands whatever he disposes. So everything depends on discerning the *signs* of the divine will. Unless I see these, how do I know whether study (for instance) is the way that will lead me to salvation? How many have found it rather a path to damnation! Do I know whether preaching will help me to save my soul? How many have preached to others but been lost themselves! The whole of the Christian life and moral perfection depends on giving due weight to the meaning of the word *eternity*. But eternity is something yet to come; and this is precisely why people, held in the grip of the attractions of this present life, do not give due importance to this word *eternity*, and regard those who do so as foolish. The future life answers the demand: 'Give me a fulcrum...' 'It is the point outside the world on which religion places a lever which moves the world itself. One has either to abandon religion altogether or admit the truth of this. And if this is true, everything is a matter of indifference save God: save the word of God, the signs of the will of God, and those means that are known through the signs of the will of God. In short, God alone in all things! — *et exaltabitur Deus solus* [and God alone shall be exalted]. One day there will no longer be any virtue in loving eternal life, for it will be present to us. Virtue lies in loving it now, when it is distant. So men must not let this present time pass in vain — for it is the time of merit and of virtue! This is my conviction.

Goodbye. I wish you all happiness in the Lord. Pray for me.

A. R. p.

54. To Don Pietro Rigler at Trent

Domodossola, 19 January 1833

My dear friend and brother in Jesus Christ,

... Try to implant in everyone a heartfelt love for *truth* and for *all good*. If we have an overriding love for truth we shall seek it everywhere, and we shall consider ourselves happy in the possession of it. And if we meet with truth in the words of a friend or brother of ours we shall esteem it even more dearly, and feel indebted to him for having shown it to us. If we find that we have to give up an opinion of ours in order to embrace the truth, nothing could be more agreeable. We shall straight away say humbly. 'I was mistaken: now I know the truth. God be praised for it. I knew already that I was fallible and ignorant.' In fact we must be thoroughly convinced that we are utterly ignorant, ignorance personified. And is ignorance going to refuse to learn? Surely not. And in the pursuit of truth we must not shun *academic disputation*. Rather, I advise you to seek out such occasions, but always with good humour, cheerfulness, humility and charity. It is an activity in which you will find great opportunities to practise these virtues, to know yourself better, and to win a salutary victory over yourself! You are already familiar with what Scupoli taught. To make progress in virtue we have to do battle, and so put our virtues to the test, even putting ourselves at risk, though doing nothing contrary to uprightness. So this is my advice to you.

Much the same can be said of the love of *good*. If we have a genuine and deeply-ingrained love of good, we shall certainly love every good, wherever we find it — in every person, in all circumstances, in any shape or form. Our precious law is the law of love; and love neither hates nor envies anyone, and wants nothing else but good. This is the making of a magnanimous soul, one who 'runs in the way of the Lord's commandments'. And so that this happy state of affairs may be ours, we must implore God day and night, even with tears. Then our strivings will be crowned with success.

In the church here the jubilee is being kept. The preachers are Don Giacomo [Molinari] and Don Giovambattista [Loewenbruck]. Don Luigi [Gentili] will be giving the Lenten sermons. We have had requests for missions from three places. Last Sunday we received the abjuration of another Calvinist — the twentieth we have had the consolation of reconciling to the Catholic Church since we have been here. The Lord be praised for this. So altogether we have been kept very busy. 'Ask the Lord of the harvest...'

The Daughters of Providence¹⁵, through God's mercy, have made a good beginning, and their presence is asked for in many places. So far we have only answered a request from Turin, but soon we shall have to send them elsewhere. We must all pray with one accord to God about our many needs — for without his help, what can we do? I ask your prayers for one of my brethren whom you greatly love. [This was Bartolomeo Stofella]. All of us here embrace you in the Lord. Goodbye. My greetings to everyone.

A. R. p.

¹⁵ The *Vita di A. Rosmini* gives an account of the origin and spread of the Daughters of Providence (known as the Rosminian Sisters) — cf. vol. I, pp. 503ff.

55. To Don Paolo Orsi at Rovereto

Domodossola, 26 January 1833

My dear friend,

I have received your letter and that of Count Salvadori¹⁶, in which you both speak of the attempt which is being made to set up a home for the poor in my home district, and ask me if I am willing to bear some of the cost of this work. On this last point, I am not unwilling; and I will tell Salvadori to contribute as large a sum as I can manage.

But that said, my dear Don Paolo, allow me (in the way of friendship) to tell you candidly my feelings in the matter. I do not want to call into question the good will behind this idea; and I am sure that many of the people — yourself included — who promote this kind of work are moved by genuine zeal and charity. But as regards the work itself, and the actual principle involved in the provision of such homes, I have certain misgivings. At one time I would have warmly applauded these plans for public benefits; and perhaps I ought to blame myself for then having looked with some disdain on those who either opposed them or gave them a cold reception. But as we grow older we reflect more deeply; we take good note of what goes on, and we discern the reality of situations, no longer allowing ourselves to be deceived by appearances, promises, limitless hopes — the things that form the stuff of daily fantasies in a heart disposed to benevolence but as yet inexperienced. So to tell you the truth, I no longer have great regard for homes for the poor, after seeing so many of them, and reading what discerning people have written about them... and above all after giving considerable thought myself to the intrinsic nature of the whole matter. True, there are great differences between one home and another, as is inevitable, given the different ways in which they were founded, the differing ways in which they are run. And it is precisely the great difficulty of framing wise ways of running these institutions that constitutes one of the main obstacles that one meets with. Inconsiderate men take little note of these things.

Another fear I have is that these institutions, as they are commonly conceived nowadays, are mostly in the hands of Protestants, and are the result not so much of true charity as of the subtle egoism and sentimentality of our age — something that counterfeits charity itself and dresses up vices as virtues, turning everything (through hypocrisy and deceit) into self-interest. The fact is that neither Jesus Christ nor the apostles ever taught us that the sight of the poor is so unbearable that they must be banished from our sight; nor that it is intolerable that we should hear them ask for bread — often by their tears rather than in words. Does it not show great hardness of heart in us if we

¹⁶ Count Francesco Salvadon was the administrator of Rosmini's estate.

cannot bear to have compassion moved by actually seeing the wretchedness of our fellow men? Is such a feeling so depressing that we have to do everything possible to see that it is never aroused in us, and so must invent a system to ensure that the public never have cause to feel compassion? Shall we be happier when such compassion is never aroused in us? Will society then really be rendered better?

You may say that it is not for such reasons that homes for the poor are provided, but rather to better the evil lot of many, and banish the laziness which often underlies the profession of poverty. My dear Don Paolo, men's activities not seldom are a cover for secrets that they do not want to reveal to others; their hearts sometimes conceal these things even from themselves, if they do not make a strict self-examination. This is how it happens that often what people do has both a pretext and a hidden motive. The pretext is openly acknowledged: the real motive is concealed. If you think carefully about what I have said you will see that it is true. But do not reveal to a soul that I have said these things, since people never forgive anyone who uncovers their secrets. Goodbye.

A. R. p.

56. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan

Domodossola, 4 February 1833

I grieve to hear that Don Giovanni Padulli is still distressed over Matteo: the Lord means to perfect his soul. That is his way; when he wants to show great tokens of love to people, he sends them trials which forcibly detach them from the things that are most dear to them. You are well aware of this.

Alas, Bartolomeo Stofella is dead! A great soul and a great mind is lost to the world. But this too is in accord with God's way of disposing of events. I have a fear that in my early youth I greatly offended vis-à-vis this young disciple of mine — loving him too much and setting too high hopes in him for the benefit of the Church. I hoped then that he would become a man of apostolic spirit, a great writer, a Father of the Church. What great human presumption this was on my part! And how blameworthy it is to wish to anticipate the designs of God! Many are the times I have had to lament over this fault of my younger days, when I nourished hopes that were pious enough in their intention but, sad to say, mistaken in themselves.

Greet my friends for me. Goodbye.

Yours,

A. R. p.

57. To Don Teruggi Celestino, Director of the Seminary of Varallo

Domodossola, 5 February 1833

[This letter is included for its 'historical' interest.]

My dear fellow-priest in the Lord's service,

You wish me to suggest some books that may help you in the spiritual direction of young Church students. Here are some:

1. The 'Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius' with the Diertins, printed by Marietti in Turin, 1826. It is a work that calls for much study if one is to understand it well and draw profit from it. Bellecio, and the *Directorium exercitiorum* are two books that explain how to use St Ignatius' Exercises. Again, the 'Exercises' of Marchetti can usefully be drawn on as regards the ecclesiastical state. So too the *Selva* of St Alphonsus Liguori.

2. Add to these Da Ponte's 'Meditations', and Beuvelet again on the ecclesiastical state.

3. Rodriguez' 'Ascetical Letters' are excellent. And matters relevant to Church students can be found also in Riccardi (*Dello spirito e de' doveri degli ecclesiastici*); *Lectiones Cleri* printed in Vienna; *Memoriale vitae sacerdotalis* etc.

4. Apart from the above, the best ascetical writers are à Kempis, Scupoli, St Francis de Sales, the 'Meditations' of St Augustine, his 'Confessions' (used with prudence), Segneri, and Pinamonti — especially *Lo specchio che non inganne* — an excellent little book

5. Again for clerical students, the following books are first-rate: *Del sacerdozio* of St John Chrysostom, the *Uffizi* of St Ambrose; St Gregory the Great's *Pastorale*; St Bernard's *De consideratione*; Bona's *De sacrificio Missae*; the *Thesaurus sacerdotum et clericorum*, (of which I obtained a copy in Venice); the *Regulae cleri*; Tronson, especially his *Esami* etc.

6. Lives of the saints and of other Church persons; everything of Padre Bartoli; in general the lives of the Jesuit saints and of St Charles [Borromeo], St Francis de Sales, St Thomas (by Padre Touron), of the Dominicans; also everything of Padre Cesari; the Church histories of Farini and Orsi. Further: all the works of Carron, such as the *Vite dei Confessori della Fede* etc.

7. As for the education of young people, Gobinet is good, as also in general the books of the Jesuits.

Let me have some news of yourself, we love you as a dear brother, and hope for the support of your prayers — you will be remembered in ours. If you come to Calvario (as you were proposing to do last year), we can, God willing, talk further about the spiritual formation of clerics. How important is this task! It is essential to impress on them a proper appreciation of their state and to eradicate any remaining worldly frivolity — this is the point.

Love me in the Lord, as I love you. I write in haste.

Your affectionate brother and friend,

ROSMINI p.

58. To Don Giambattista Boselli at Trent

Domodossola, 19 February 1833

My dear brother...

Console yourself. The Lord knows very well our wretchedness and covers us with his mercy. *Si iniquitates observaveris Domine, Domine quis sustinebit?* [If thou shalt observe our iniquities Lord, Lord, who shall endure it?] As for the miseries of our neighbours, says one of the Fathers, he asks of us our care and our solicitude but not their cure. The merit you will earn through your efforts is the same even if you see no amendment in the souls you labour over. So what I recommend to you is *entire tranquillity of mind*. Oh, how important it is that we should keep our minds calm! When we are disturbed, that is when the devil casts his net to catch us. So in all circumstances we have to cultivate peace of mind and interior serenity. And to do this we need to avoid all haste, impatience and stormy passions. Patience will enable you to keep an inward calm.

I cannot yet tell you the time of my return. When I can decide this I will let you know. Meanwhile aim at perfect resignation; and remember in your prayers your wretched but affectionate brother and friend in Jesus Christ

ROSMINI p.

59. To Count Mellerio in Milan

Rovereto, 3 May 1833

... Here I am, back home, after stopping at Cremona and Verona on the way. In Verona I was greatly shocked and saddened to see my dear sister looking so haggard and weak. I can now only put my hopes for her survival in God, not in human means: in prayer, not in medicine. So I recommend her to your prayers too, my friend.

Oh how deep are the feelings of human nature, confronted with such a situation! But more than my natural sentiments of grief, I feel threatened especially by the likelihood of the abrupt cutting short of so many hopes and so much promise. How lofty are the judgements of God, how inscrutable his ways! Gioseffa Margherita rests joyfully in the hands of God, conscious of possessing him, and is drawn to wish for death rather than life; and this in itself adds to my anxiety: perhaps God will answer her prayers rather than ours? But the Lord may have reduced her to this state in order to bring about a miracle of mercy. So let us pray trustfully, with urgency, with importunity — ending our prayers always with the words 'Thy will be done', and 'Blessed be the name of the Lord: I do hope that your sister, together with Don Luigi and the Daughters of Charity there will second my efforts to storm heaven. You can imagine how upset my mother is. Enough for now. When we turn our gaze to God, all becomes well, and we almost feel ashamed of the feelings that afflict us.

A. R.

60. To the artist Giuseppe Craffonara at Riva

Trent, 12 May 1833

My dear Giuseppe,

My poor sister is at the point of death in Verona, and it will be a terrible blow for her mother to lose her. So I should like to make a present to my mother that may afford her some little comfort, by commissioning from you a small portrait of my sister (a portrait of the same size and shape as the one she has of me.) So I want you to execute this without delay. You will meet with two obstacles: the first is my sister's humble modesty; but you will be able to overcome that by appealing to her love for her mother, which will not allow her to deny her such a consolation. And you can invoke my sister's Superior, and the Bishop, if he is in Verona, so that she may be obliged under obedience to allow herself to be painted. This will overcome her reluctance.

The second obstacle will be the problem of obtaining access to the interior of the convent. But here it will be up to your eloquence to persuade the Superior to grant this by way of exception. With this aim in view I am enclosing a letter for the Bishop and another for the Superior of the convent¹⁷.

Once this is achieved, try also to obtain leave to make a portrait of the Marchesa di Canossa. It will be hard to persuade her to grant this; but to induce her to allow it, tell her that it is the mother of the dying Sister who is asking for the portrait; and that it would be very cruel of her to refuse such a plea.

I put myself in your hands over this, and I await some news from you.

Yours affectionately,

ANTONIO ROSMINI p.

¹⁷ Rosmini did not succeed in getting the portrait he wanted.

61. To the Marchesa di Canossa in Verona

Trent, 12 May 1833

My dear Marchesa,

I hope that you will do a favour for *Giuseppina's* mother by allowing her portrait to be painted while she still lives. But for this to be done it will be necessary for you to permit the artist to make a sketch of you also — something that will take only a quarter of an hour or so. To this end, there will come a painter, a certain Signor Craffonara, a good Catholic from Riva. Since you are so kind and good, I am sure you will not deny a mother who is about to lose her daughter such an innocent consolation, and that you will grant this double boon —i.e. also allow a small likeness to be made of the one who became *Giuseppina's* mother in the spiritual sense. Here we are praying for the poor invalid to Jesus crucified and to the Mother of Sorrows. Everything is possible with God, and so we have to pray to him with trust. I am writing in haste and have not time for more, except to recommend myself warmly to your prayers, not only for the affairs of this life but also for my eternal salvation. Believe me, I am your devoted servant.

A. R. p.

62. To Mgr Giuseppe Grasser, Bishop of Verona

Rovereto, 4 June 1833

Very Reverend Monsignor,

The German chaplaincy that you offer¹⁸ is perhaps a providential occasion to bring the Institute of Charity to Verona; and you are well aware of the principle by which I am guided — that is, 'neither to seek nor to refuse any occasion that Providence sends of serving the Lord: So the main condition on which it would be possible to accept the proposed chaplaincy is that the German chaplain may be accompanied by some other of our subjects, and so form the nucleus of a house. It would not otherwise be possible for the Institute to separate one of its members by sending him so far away before he had completed his noviciate¹⁹. As for the relationship of the chaplain to the parish priest, this would have to be settled entirely by yourself, since we conform ourselves wholly to whatever the Bishop in such cases judges to be most for the glory of God. So there would be no problem on our side. There is one difficulty perhaps as regards accommodation; but I feel sure that you will be able to solve this, and find a way of providing a lodging for the little community. Any small house, no matter how poor, would suffice, as long as there would not be others living in it. If the Oratorians have a wing of their house that they would let us have, such that the German chaplain was apart from them, and could prepare meals for himself and two or three companions of his, I would think it possible to take advantage of their hospitality. I have not said anything to Don Gasparo about lodgings, because I gathered that he had no room available. However if Your Lordship were to speak to him, he might possibly be able to make some suggestions over quarters for us. From what I have said you will realize that I see no difficulties apart from the matter of somewhere to live. So perhaps you will kindly think over all this and write to me with your views. Then the German chaplain will very soon be at your disposal. With my respectful greetings and asking your blessing.

Yours,

A. ROSMINI p.

¹⁸ Mgr Grasser had asked Rosmini to provide a German chaplain for the church of S. Pietro Incarnario in Verona, which was situated in a parish run by the Oratorian Fathers.

¹⁹ The Bishop agreed to the condition proposed by Rosmini who, a few months later, went to Verona with Don Antonio Oberrauch, the cleric Carlo Aliprandi and the layman, Giacomo Lukan, and there founded a small house of the Institute dependent on the one at Trent.

63. To Cristina Pilotti, Daughter of Charity, at Verona

Trent, 6 June 1833

... Since nothing is impossible for almighty God, and by the same token everything is possible for those who have faith, as the gospel tells us, and since faith is both dearer to God and more efficacious when it is shown in situations that seem most hopeless and lacking in human remedies (as was the case with Abraham), and it is all the more to God's honour and glory when he hears the prayers of his faithful, the more they implore his help, I decided that (for all these reasons) we must again arouse our faith and redouble our prayers to beg God in his mercy to restore the health of *Giuseppina*. So I was struck by the idea, proposed to me by various holy persons, of praying in common in the following way. Next Thursday at 7.30 a.m. we shall go to the altar of Our Lady of Sorrows (in the house of the Daughters of Charity here), and a priest will there celebrate Mass, and all the Daughters together with our laybrothers will receive Holy Communion at this Mass. The other priests will assist at it, and afterwards celebrate Mass individually for the same intention. So it would be necessary for all of you there to make your Communion and have a Mass said with the greatest possible faith in God.

I should like my sick sister also to receive Communion at the same time; and in order that she may be moved by the greater confidence in the divine mercy, her confessor must exhort her to hope and pray for her restoration of health, always on the condition that this would make for the greater glory of God. I am writing in the same vein to the Marchesa di Canossa and to my brethren at Calvario. Everything depends on faith; so let us make every effort to strengthen our faith, so that the Lord may be glorified even in this world.

So with great respect, and asking you to convey my greetings to the Reverend Mother Superior and to the good infirmarian, I sign myself

Your obedient servant,

A. R. p.

64. To his mother, Giovanna Rosmini Serbati at Rovereto

Trent, 7 June 1833

My beloved mother,

[In the first part of this letter Rosmini describes the arrangements he has made over prayers to be offered for his sick and apparently dying sister, *Giuseffa* ('*Giuseppina*') — the arrangements that were described in the previous letter (63). He then goes on:]

So what must you do, my dear mother, for such a daughter? Surely make every possible effort? Think of the omnipotence of God, and that, given a lively faith, the needed miracle can be granted. So you need to gather together all the family, the managers, the servants, everyone without exception, and encourage all of them to have faith, to purify their consciences through a good confession, with a promise to God to live a truly holy life henceforth, and to receive Holy Communion. The main idea, then, is that there should now be a spiritual renewal, so that God may listen to the prayers of those who have recourse to him with a pure conscience. So I advise you too to promise God that you will say your prayers to obtain graces, especially that of making a good general confession, and also of making a retreat under the guidance of a good spiritual director. And I would counsel my brother and all the members of the family to do the like. There can be no doubt that this is the way to cause God to relent, if he is angry with us, and to save the life of your daughter, already humanly beyond hope. Give serious thought to these things. It may be that God means to send *Giuseppina* back to us by a miracle, and moreover intends to use this situation to give us a greater grace still — I mean the salvation of our souls. Since you so love your daughter, carry out with courage and generosity the suggestions of —

Your loving son,

ANTONIO p.

65. To Mgr Carlo Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona

Trent, 10 June 1833

Very Reverend Monsignor,

Don Giulio [Todeschi] will be with you, as far as I can see, immediately after the feast of the Assumption — he wishes first to make a retreat, as our Rule requires.

You ask me if you may insist on renouncing your charge as Bishop (even though you have received from Vienna a message urging you to remain in your post), since you have a favourable reply from the Holy Father. But first of all, it seems to me that the Pope's reply was neither in favour of nor positively against the course you wish to take; he has not yet advised you one way or the other. Rather, he has expressed his regret over the idea of a renunciation. It is true, though, that he has promised not to oppose your request but to accept it. But it is one thing not to wish to force your hand so that you remain at your post unwillingly; and quite another thing actually to approve of your leaving your post or to advise you to do so.

I would think that it is not possible to infer from the Holy Father's reply anything more than that he leaves the matter to you, to your conscience and your good judgement. As for urging you one way or the other, my view is still unchanged, and is (as you know) that unless you feel an insuperable repugnance and lasting distress of mind, to the extent that you would be unable properly to carry out your duties, you would do more good both to yourself and to others by remaining at your post rather than relinquishing it. I am convinced that if you make the effort you will be able to find people to relieve you of many of your burdens and give you spiritual support. Also I believe that even while you occupy the episcopal chair you can still practise the virtues of a strict and exemplary religious; and even if that were not so, the virtue and perfection of the gospel consist in overcoming ourselves and mastering our feelings of repugnance, for *regnum coelorum vim patitur* [The kingdom of heaven is taken by force.] As a bishop you have the opportunity to profess the gospel before all the world, to preach it, and to suffer for the sake of justice... and what more do we wish for, if we love and seek for Jesus Christ? May I remind you of how St John in his old age could do no more than have himself carried into church and there repeat to his people the same words again and again — 'My children, love one another.' Yet it never entered his mind to abandon the episcopate. If you say, 'But I am not St John', this would seem like humility, but it could hide a secret snare.

I say all these things solely so that you may be given encouragement to remain at your post; and I say them in all sincerity and on account of the loyalty I profess from my heart towards you.

My sister is at the point of death, but God is all-powerful: on Thursday we want to ask him for the grace of her recovery, if that can make for his greater glory. So I beg you to pray yourself and get others to pray for this intention. Asking your paternal blessing, I am —

Yours,

A. R.

66. To Giovanna Rosmini Serbati at Rovereto

Trent, 18 June 1833

My beloved mother,

Since we must be entirely ready to receive with Christian resignation, and even with joy, the loss of our dearly-loved *Giuseppina*, I believe I must delay no longer in carrying out the commission she gave me when I saw her for the last time in Verona. She obliged me then to tell you, first and foremost, and then all the other members of the family, servants included, that before she left this world, 'she asks pardon for all the wrongs she may have done to you, for all the distress or displeasure she may have caused you; and that by forgetting all these things for the love of God, you will be ready to render good for evil, and commit her with fervent prayers into the hands of the Lord.'

Let us rejoice, dear mother, that since these were her dispositions, *Giuseppina*, who never did harm to anyone, cannot die, but can only go into eternal life. I shall go to find her there as soon as I can. Write to me, or get someone to do so. With filial affection I kiss your hand and remain —

Your loving son,

ANTONIO p.

67. To the Daughter of Charity, Cristina Pilotti, in Verona

Trent, 18 June 1833

... Thank you for all the kindnesses you showed *Giuseppina*, and for all your thoughtfulness towards my mother and myself. And please convey my thanks also to the good infirmarian and all your companions, who have done so much, and suffered so much for my sister. As for myself, whatever my human nature suffers, my inner will nonetheless prompts me to put off my mourning and dress as for a feast-day, to act as King David did when he heard of the death of his son. So great is my hope that *Giuseppina* is not dead but alive, and cannot die.

But you and all of us must still go on to pray for the soul of her who was yet a daughter of Adam, however great her goodness. I have not yet told the Daughters here what has happened, and I do not intend to do so until tomorrow: I know how great the blow will be to them, even though they have been trying for some time to prepare themselves to make the sacrifice. And my poor mother...! But the Lord gives us wounds to bring about our good, and then heals us for a greater good. Of your charity, pray for us, and get the Marchesa [*di Canossa*) to come to us.

With sincere respect,

A. R. p.

68. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Domodossola

Trent, 19 June 1833

May the Lord guide you in all your ways and all your thoughts, my dear brother. Amen.

When I think of the many and thorny tasks you have there, especially over the difficult matter of the Daughters of Providence (a matter which could cause us great harm if things go badly), I am full of fear, and from my heart I commend you to the Lord, so that he may help you and not let you take a false step. I also have a presentiment that some great temptation may come your way, and that it will take an iron resolution on your part if you are to set yourself firmly against it, hold on to the anchor of obedience, and not once more do something disastrous. So to forearm you against such a danger, I order you, before you go to Turin, to make a three-day retreat, asking Don Luigi [Gentili] to guide you in it, and submitting with great humility to his direction. During these days you must concentrate your attention on (1) humbling yourself in every way; (2) putting clearly before your eyes all the rules and directives you have so far received, so that you may be resolved to stick to them. Then let me know what dispositions you find in yourself, and what sort of state you find your imagination in. Meanwhile, the more I think about the matter of the Daughters of Providence, the more I realize that the utmost caution is needed. So I want to lay down these main maxims:

1. Do not make the Rules public: simply make a short summary of them and publish only that, making sure that in the summary nothing is said about the relation of the Daughters of Providence with the Institute of Charity. It should deal only with the ascetical section of the Rules.
2. No further novices are to be accepted, and no promises or hopes about future acceptances are to be held out.
3. None of the Daughters are to be sent out unless, first, they have completed a year of noviciate; and, secondly, they have been examined by someone appointed by me. The matter of the examination will be the suitability of the Sister for the post to which it is intended to appoint her.

Both you and *Gentili* are to write down these three points as *Maxims* in your little book; and I hold you responsible before God for carrying them out.

If there were any obligations incurred prior to this letter, write to me about them and I will look at the situation and decide accordingly.

My sister, I hope, has gone to her heavenly Bridegroom. But still, pray for her soul, since she was a daughter of Adam. Goodbye in haste.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

69. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan

Trent, 23 June 1833

My dear friend,

There is no need to add any comments to the enclosed obituary notices. You will gather from them my feelings of sorrow. Please send them on to these various families: Somaglia, Castelbarco, the two Padulli's, and Dugnagni; and commend to the Lord the soul of Giuseppina, even though to my way of thinking there is no doubt that she is already receiving her heavenly reward. She wore herself out completely through love, and before she died she said to me that, on examining her conscience, there was nothing that made her uneasy except that she would have wished to exercise even more charity than she had done. Now, anyone who dies full of such an ardent desire for the good of her neighbour can surely only inspire envy in us? She assured me that when she looked closely into her dispositions, she found that she was more inclined to wish for death rather than life. Another time she said to me: 'For a long time I have had a presentiment that I would soon die, because the Lord would not allow someone like myself, who managed things so badly, and was really good for nothing, to remain at the head of an institute so valuable and useful, occupying the post which should have been filled by a truly capable woman: And when I said that this was very far from the opinion of other people, she added: 'Oh, but other people do not know the truth, whereas the Lord and I, we know very well that it is as I have said. But may God be blessed, for through my death he will provide better for his work.'

There were other things that she said to me in the little time which I had with her; and they were all of a piece: they set the seal on what her life had been, and they showed what graces God gives at the moment of death to a soul who has been faithful to him all her life²⁰. Believe me to be ever,

Yours most affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

²⁰ Rosmini's sister, Suor Gioseffa Margherita, foundress and first Superior of the house of the Daughters of Charity (or Canossians) in Trent, had her life written in 1840 by Don Francesco Puecher of the Institute of Charity. It was published for the first time by a press in Milan in 1881.

70. To Don Giovanni Padulli in Milan

Rovereto, 14 July 1833

My dear friend,

I knew already what would be your feelings over the death of my sister, because I know your heart. The sorrow which I felt at her loss was the greatest I have ever experienced; but it still did not prevent me from saying the *Te Deum* as soon as I heard the news, calling my companions to recite it together with me. The sorrow I felt did not arise simply from natural motives: that seems to me to be the least element in it; but there were higher reasons for both my love and my sorrow. I hold that she is in heaven, with the conviction that one has of things that are certain. And so I rejoice for her and with her. It is only about myself that I grieve — myself in whom there is so much wanting. For the rest I abandon myself to God and in God. Nonetheless we must go on to pray for her, and I do this in the disposition in which St Augustine prayed for his mother: he had every hope of her salvation, but he still remembered how perfect and all-seeing are the judgements of God, and that when we creatures appear before him, however good and upright we may seem, there is always good reason to tremble.

The mention you make of dear Matteo shows me that the Lord means to visit you too with some tribulation in the midst of the blessings with which he has favoured your family. Greet them all individually from me. Goodbye. Pray for —

Your affectionate friend,

R.

71. To a person unnamed at Domodossola

Trent, 3 August 1833

My dear brother and son in Jesus Christ...

After reading your letter, this is what the Lord prompts me to say to you from my heart: be sure that whenever we are forbidden by Superiors to perform penances, and thereupon find ourselves greatly disturbed, cast down, depressed, this is a sign that there is a grave defect in us; that we harbour a dangerous attachment to the mortifications that we have been practising — whether they were great or small is not important. This is the truth of the matter, my dear brother, confirmed by all the saints. When we practise penances we must be ready at a mere sign from the Superior or confessor to drop them without hesitation or difficulty — rather with great joy in our hearts. This is because we should always find joy in being obedient, whatever is asked of us, with no second thoughts. But if obedience, instead of making us happy, saddens us, makes us rebel, sets our thoughts ranging about, inclines us to criticize the command inwardly — then it is clear that we are a long way from perfection, and that as regards the penances we were performing we were badly deceived in thinking that we were thereby making progress in virtue. Figuratively, the serpent was lurking beneath the sackcloth and ashes. So give thanks to God with all your heart that in his mercy he has made use of the voice of your Superior to draw you away from self-deception and get you to see the truth, through the test you have experienced and the proof that you ought to lay aside those penances. So rejoice over this, and at once set about overcoming this defect in yourself and becoming indifferent over practising penances or dropping them, so that you may be able to serve the Lord with great freedom of heart, trusting in his goodness, and not in penitential practices as such.

Any thoughts which occur to you contrary to this teaching, even though they may seem pious, are no more than sophisms, suggested to you by the subtlety of the devil in order to mislead you. God wants you to trust in him alone, and he will not abandon you if you aim not at penances but at obedience. And through obedience you will receive grace in abundance. So now that we have discovered the enemy you are sure of victory. I look forward to hearing from you that you are going to shake off these temptations and, leaving aside your own judgement, intend to run joyfully in the true path which the Lord in his mercy is showing you. I embrace you warmly. Greet for me all our brethren — I owe letters to many of them, especially dear Don Giacomo [Molinari], and I want to write to them. Goodbye.

Your affectionate brother and father in Jesus Christ,

. R.

72. To Giuseppe Flecchia

Trent, 1 September 1833

My dear Giuseppe,

Since God has called you through obedience to your Superiors to teach (for a trial period only) in the elementary school in Calice²¹, you are thereby given an important and agreeable mission. You will have to render an account of this not only to your Superiors, but more importantly before the judgement-seat of God, from whom comes this call to exercise such a ministry of charity. So the love I have for you compels me to furnish you with this short instruction. If you regulate your conduct by it, then (as I hope) the duty laid on you will become a path leading you directly to heaven.

First of all, I urge you to see that your new occupation does not in the least diminish your religious recollection, your exactness in keeping the Rules, or your total dependence on and submissiveness towards your Superiors. Rather, these virtues should grow in you, making you, for the love of Christ, ever more like the children whom you will now have under your care, and in whose hearts you are to cultivate the virtues proper to childhood, such as simplicity, purity, meekness and docility.

In order to know how much you must love the children in Jesus Christ, meditate frequently on how dear they are to the heart of our divine Redeemer, and on his own words: 'Suffer the little children to come to me' and 'If anyone scandalizes one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the depths of the sea.'

Make it your intention to treat the children as reasonable beings and Christians, using the two means of *reason* and *faith*. There are no better ways open to us than these two. So you will want to enrich the souls of the youngsters with motives for acting which are always pure and noble — since these alone are consonant at once with reason and the gospel. Any intentions that are ignoble and wrong, which may inadvertently be implanted in children of tender age, intentions that go against their true nature, cause hidden harm to them, and I would almost say a moral consumption, even in their earliest years; and this is the secret origin of the open vices which infect those of mature age and are destructive of society. But at the same time you must realize that young people are only purified and made good by the internal working of God, who helps them to keep his laws, according to the psalm: 'How can young people keep their way pure? By guarding it according to your word.' [Ps 118 (119), v.9 RSV]. And so you need to pray earnestly that Jesus, who is the sole Teacher of

²¹ Calice, a village near Monte Calvario, later became part of the Commune of Domodossola.

mankind, may be with you and lend power to your careful tending of the children, safeguarding and fostering the grace of baptism in them.

If you are to ground the youngsters in habits of acting according to reason and the divine light, you will have to ensure that you yourself always show them the example by your demeanour and behaviour. This means that everything they see in you, as well as your treatment of them, must be peaceable and enlightened. Then the clarity and calmness which they see in you will make them love you — something that would not result from mere motiveless caresses. So what I am recommending is not a studied attempt to gain their affection, but the spontaneous attractiveness that results when all that you do flows from the inner tranquillity and light which inspire your actions, with no trace of passion or anger. Scripture always shows calmness and patience as the companions of wisdom; whereas foolishness is characterized by anger. Thus in Job we read: 'Anger is the death of the fool', and in Proverbs we find: 'A rod of pride is in the mouth of the fool'; and again: 'Whoever is slow to anger shows great understanding, but one who has a hasty temper exalts folly.' Sentences like these from scripture will offer you much food for meditation.

Keep religiously and punctually to the horary times, and to the rules laid down for the elementary schools by the authorities of Calice. Get hold of two copies of each of these and give one to whoever is the Superior at Calvario so that they can be put in the archives.

Be zealous to see that the children entrusted to you learn thoroughly the three R's and all the other material required by the school. So you will have to see to it that you gain the necessary knowledge yourself, as well as a grasp of the principles of pedagogy and the practical skills which you will need to make you a good teacher, making use of books that can help you in all this.

Finally, take account of this: God willing, you will probably become the first elementary master approved by the Institute of Charity; and so it is up to you to become a model to be imitated by those whom God may send after you. Before you begin your duties, make a fortnight's retreat so as to ask for the graces that you will need and to prepare yourself for the clerical state, to which you will be admitted when you receive the tonsure. Later, when with God's help you have given proof of your fidelity and expertise in this way of serving the Lord (that is, as a teacher appointed for a trial period by the Calice authorities), you will in due course, if the Lord so pleases, also be ordained as a Lector of the Church, and declared to be a teacher approved by the Institute of Charity²².

. R

²² The Constitutions of the Institute of Charity laid it down that elementary masters were to be chosen from among the lay coadjutors who, if they were old enough, might be ordained as Lectors and Acolytes, in order to receive the graces needed to teach religion to the young.

73. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Cremona

Trent, 3 September 1833 [2 September in E.C.]

My dear brother in Jesus Christ,

Your letter almost made me laugh — not that I am without sympathy over your faults, but because of the contradiction which you fall into without noticing it. You accuse yourself of having shown anger against Gioia, but you do so while at the same time getting very angry with yourself! And the best part of the joke is that you want me to be angry with you! So for your first lapse you are to say a *Miserere*; and for the second one you are to recite the *Miserere* seven times over. This is the penance you ask me to give you. And this is because, as St Francis de Sales so well says, the Lord does not want us to be angry, even with ourselves. For it may be that this is a greater fault than being angry with other people, since we must begin by being charitable towards ourselves — and so put ourselves in a disposition to be charitable towards others. For this reason I want you to know that I have not the slightest inclination to be angry with you — rather, I love you more than ever.

But enough of this. Tomorrow I shall probably be in Rovereto, and that is where you will find me: send your letters to me there. Write to Mellerio as you purpose. Continue to send me news of how things are with you there. Give my respects to the Monsignor.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

74. To Don Paolo Orsi at Rovereto

Trent, 4 October 1833

My dear friend and brother,

During the recent retreat I did nothing but put obstacles to the grace of God through my many faults — and yet you thank me? I am so ashamed that I bow my head. But for the rest, my heart rejoices when I see that the Lord himself has granted you so much of his light, so that you feel moved to love him ever more deeply and want to be wholly his. Oh yes, may we be his, entirely his, keeping nothing back. God has given us all that we possess, and do we want to give him only a part of ourselves? My dear friend, because of the love I have for you, and because of your great kindness which leads you to draw profit even from the words of one so unworthy as myself, I say again to you: 'Be generous with the Lord; do not be afraid of giving him too much; make it your wish to give him every day more — and do so.' Consider always what you have that may give him pleasure, and sacrifice it to him. 'Happy is the man who knows how to give to God whatever he holds most dear.' He himself will enlighten you day by day over what you must do for him. It is by prayer that we can obtain this light; and whoever prays thus and does not want to be tight-fisted towards God makes daily progress in the ways of the spirit. Goodbye. I embrace you from my heart, and I thank you for all that you have done for me, for the great charity with which you treat me and for your concern for everything to do with me.

. R.

75. To Don Clemente Alvazzi at Domodossola

Trent, 8 October 1833

My dear brother in the Lord,

I thank God from my heart that you realize that the temptations of which you speak in your letter of 21 August *are* temptations, that you know them as such. For this is a means of overcoming them; when we know that thoughts and suggestions come solely from the devil, that enemy who hates us and whose only aim is to harm and ruin us, it is perhaps no bad thing to mock him, leave him to do his own thing, without in the least heeding him. Instead we can give him a good smack in the face by adopting the sorts of acts of mortification which directly oppose what this sly deceiver tries to suggest to us. So this is my first answer to your request for remedies against temptation: be sure in your own mind that these are temptations — that is, tricks to catch us and ruin us; and then treat them with the contempt that they deserve.

The other remedy I suggest is to overcome any repugnance you may feel, and then promptly tell your Superior about your temptations in detail. Be resolute; put up with your feelings of shame, and even if he treats the matter lightly, say to yourself: 'All right: I quite deserve to be laughed at, since I am a foolish and wretched fellow.' And then, by keeping calm and cheerful, you will have overcome the temptation. At the same time resolve to correct such of the defects you mention as depend on your own will — for instance, speaking out of turn or little to the point, and so on. And as for the faults that partly come of your physical state — such as sleepiness, or finding your mind a blank during meditation — put up with these as afflictions, without letting yourself be at all disturbed by them, much less being angry about them. Still, you must be careful not to encourage these defects, and instead try to master those which come of your nature itself. And, as I said, even if you do not altogether succeed, resign yourself, humble yourself, and try to make up to God for the faults by doing more perfectly those things that are within your power.

That is enough, my dear friend. Greet Don Cesare and all the others for me. Here we enjoy many great blessings from the divine goodness. .. Pray, as I am sure you do, for your affectionate brother

ROSMINI p.

76. To an unnamed priest at Domodossola

Rovereto, 18 November 1833

My dear brother and companion in the Lord's service...

As regards the state of your soul, which you carefully inform me about, I put my trust in the mercy of God. I can see that the Lord is allowing the devil, our enemy, to cause you a grave and painful struggle; but do not fear: if you put all your trust in the cross of Christ you will obtain the victory. But what I consider the main thing you need to direct your efforts to is attaining the *meekness* of Jesus Christ. 'Learn from me because I am meek and humble of heart.' These beautiful words sum up the character of Christ and of the Christian. So take this as an infallible guiding principle, my friend: all anger, all wrathful feelings, malevolence and acrimony proceed from the devil. If you make this your touchstone you will be able to discern the various spirits that you detect in yourself. Is it a spirit of gentleness, of peace, of docility, of love? If so you can say at once: This is the spirit of God, and I must go along with it.' But if it is a spirit of confrontation, of harshness, of sadness, of blame, of hate? You will know immediately that this is the spirit of the devil, who is trying to seduce you, who rages against you; and you will say: 'I will not consent to it; I will take it only as an affliction, and I will not follow it. I will ignore what it is inciting me to do.'

You will be a happy man if you become really meek; if you master within yourself any inclination to anger — even if it masquerades as a sort of zeal, but a bitter zeal, which does not accord with your state. And if you aim to acquire this precious virtue of meekness, you will at the same time acquire all the other virtues: obedience, humility, resignation to God's will and patience. What St Philip [Neri] referred to as the *mortification of the reason* is contained in meekness. It is of more value than any bodily mortification or external penance. These count for nothing if they are not in accordance with obedience and the advice (even if it differs) that you receive from this or that Superior, according to whoever may be in charge of the house. So be ruled in this way. To be ready to be guided by a variety of directors, my dear brother, is a sign of real virtue and a way of discovering whether we are genuinely mortified interiorly. Any man who is not willing and able to change readily his way of acting when he comes under different superiors is not really mortified; and whatever he does, even if it involves great austerities, is no proof of true mortification — which must always have as its basis docility and flexibility of will: in a word, self-denial. Notice how Jesus Christ, when he told us to carry our cross, said first: 'Whoever wishes to follow me must deny himself.' And this is because there is no true carrying of the cross without denial of self. Not every cross is that of Christ: that cross is not something we impose upon ourselves, but that which is given to us through obedience, accompanied by denial of both our own will and our own mind. So external penances which

resemble the cross are good — that is, if we take them on after denying ourselves. Otherwise, to wish for them is a delusion of the devil. So act always according to these principles, the infallible principles of Christ. A single act of renouncing your own judgement, your own will, counts for more than all the austerities you could imagine. So learn to become indifferent over these things: remain tranquil in mind whether austerities are forbidden you or commanded you, or merely allowed. It should be all the same to you. Have no wish except to cultivate gentleness, peace of mind, obedience and denial of yourself. It is more important to keep your heart in the peace of love than that you should convert the whole world. Aim then always to imitate our beloved Lord, and so become lovable and peaceable as he is. And pray always for your affectionate father and brother in Christ —

R.

77. To Don Antonio Rey²³ at Domodossola

Rovereto, 19 November 1833

My dear fellow-priest and companion in the service of the Lord,

Forgive my delay in replying: I have been very busy, and my affairs (as you see) have taken me away from the Trent house. But here I am with you. I was very pleased to get your letter and the frank report you give me of yourself. The distaste and tedium you tell me that you experience is simply an effect, my dear friend, that is commonly found by those who give themselves over to a retired life in religion: it is one of the greatest trials the Lord sends, and also one of the greatest opportunities of conquering ourselves and acquiring solid merit before God. The struggle to gain the victory over the tedium that can ensue from the restrictions of such a life and the limits it imposes on our freedom, gives no fuel to our self-love, and is not even apparent to people generally — so much the more is it esteemed by God! I hope that you will, by the grace of God, be able to triumph over it completely, and afterwards begin to find greater sweetness in what hitherto seemed intolerable.

If, seeing and admiring the humility of your companions when they so frequently ask penance publicly for their faults, you do not as yet find it in your heart to imitate them, do not let this upset you at all; for in time you will be able to overcome the repugnance you feel at the idea of so doing. Be tolerant towards yourself, and do not exact more than you are able to manage. Grace and virtue come by degrees: what we cannot yet rise to, we can compensate for by humility, and by recognizing frankly that others are in some respects better and humbler than ourselves. For the rest, without becoming upset, let us be determined to overcome any sort of repugnance, meanwhile waiting for the time when the Lord will give us the strength for this — and asking for this strength with fervent prayer. In this way we can go ahead without any anxiety. As for this matter of asking pardon: it need not be for a moral fault: we have to humble ourselves also over the limitations of our nature, or our lack of foresight and vigilance. But the matter over which we ask forgiveness must be some kind of *imperfection*. Because otherwise, if we were not convinced that the matter over which we were publicly accusing ourselves really was an imperfection, our act of self-accusation would not be sincere. And we should never do anything that is insincere and less than candid, anything that does not come from internal conviction. *Omne quod non est ex fide, peccatum est.* [Whatever does not proceed from faith is sinful.]

²³ Don Antonio Rey, who was at the time a lecturer in theology in the seminary of San Sulpizio, was one of the three men chosen by Rosmini to go on the English mission, as will be seen subsequently.

I am very anxious to see you and have a long talk with you, my dear brother. But it looks as though the Lord does not mean to allow me this consolation yet. Still, I hope to be at Calvario by the spring at latest. Write to me from time to time, and be sure that in me you have a friend.

I should like you to translate into good French for me the booklet of the *Maxims of Perfection*, which I want to publish²⁴. Let us put all our trust in prayer and the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Greet for me all your companions, and get them to pray for your very unworthy but most affectionate

—

R. p.

²⁴ The booklet of the *Maxims of Christian Perfection* was first published in Rome in 1830. There were ultimately thirteen editions in Italian, the last being that of the publishing house Cogliati of Milan. The first French edition was published at Annecy in 1836, and a second in Paris in 1882. The *Maxims* were also translated into English and German.

78. To Don Luigi Gentili at Domodossola

Trent, 23 November 1833

My dear companion in the service of the Lord,

How I am misunderstood, my friend, over the instructions I give!

It seems to me that this comes of negligence in reading my letters. For the rest, I am very distressed to see our brother *in inviam et non in viam*²⁵ [Going astray rather than on the right path.] But do not weary him with too many reasonings, too much advice. Simply pray for him. And implore him with tears in your eyes when you have an opportunity, as I have done myself in my letters to him (and what of the letter which I addressed to him at Monte Calvario — has this arrived?), begging him not to abandon his vocation, *et non excidat de loco suo* [let him not be lost from his place].

Anticipating that he will be away from Calvario, I give you faculties as Vice-superior. But I beseech you in the Lord to use all gentleness and discretion with everyone, so that they may see how sweet is the Lord's yoke *et quod praecepta eius gravia non sunt* [and that his commandments are not heavy]. I urge you to keep devotions short, especially those that are public, and to be always humble and gracious in manner. Support people of differing temperaments, guiding each one according to his own character and his greater or lesser weakness. In short show the tenderness, or perhaps better the indulgence, of a mother when it comes to spiritual matters (where there is no sin). I hope that God in his mercy will help you. I know very well that my own defects are a hindrance; but our prayers in common and your faith will win the victory. Goodbye. I embrace you warmly in the Lord — and you must embrace the others on my behalf.

Your affectionate servant in Christ and your brother,

ROSMINI p.

²⁵ The reference is to Loewenbruck, whose impetuous zeal Rosmini had tried in vain to restrain. To this end he had imposed on him a number of rules that he was supposed to observe over the direction of the Sisters. (cf. Letter No.68 above.)

79. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Domodossola

Trent, 26 November 1833

My dear brother in Christ,

I have just received your letter of 21 November, and it leaves me not knowing whether to hope or to fear. Please God he has enlightened you so that you can discern the dreadful deceit the devil has practised on you! I am sure I am right in saying that the link between the Institute of Providence and the Institute of Charity is simply provisionally proposed. You must realize, too, that the Constitutions written at Calvario were of this nature — provisional, and not at all definitively settled. This they cannot be until they are first tested out in practice and then confirmed by the Holy See. So the Rules can be changed from day to day, provided that experience and good sense call for this. Besides, my friend, you confuse two different questions. It is one thing to ask whether the link between the two Institutes is a good idea or not; but it is quite another to ask whether — given that the director of the Institute of Providence is a member of the Institute of Charity — he can act of his own accord, rather than in conformity with the degree of authority that he has been given by the Superior of the Institute of Charity, to whom he is subject. The first of these questions is open to discussion, and I have not reached any definite conclusions about it. But about the second there can be no argument: the perfect obedience that the Institute of Charity calls for certainly does not allow any of its subjects to act independently in any way or in any affair. Such conduct would, be monstrous: it would introduce all sorts of divisions, and the Institute would become a sort of hydra with a hundred heads — it could no longer exist. I am not saying that the Institute of Providence must always have as its director a member of the Institute of Charity; what I am saying is that if and when the Institute of Charity does allow one of its members to direct (or even found) another institute, this in no way exempts that member from any aspect of his obedience: all that he does must be done in virtue of obedience, and with the authority which is not his own but has been received by him. This is the true nature of obedience in every religious institute. So that anyone who wishes to release himself from the safe way of the virtue of obedience puts himself in danger of losing his vocation, and if he is deceived by the devil, he may well in addition lose his eternal salvation (something that at best is uncertain), since he rejects the sure means offered him by God of attaining salvation — through the direction of his Superiors. It is of greater value, my friend, to obey than to convert the whole world. St Francis Xavier was ready to abandon the millions of souls he was converting by his preaching simply at a sign from his Superior! He did not let his imagination deceive him or persuade him to say: 'My Superior is mistaken', or 'He does not know what he is doing; he does not see the good that is being done, or the way to bring about more good.' Nor did he say: 'I am called by God to preach the gospel to these people: so I will abandon my Superior and

religious life so as to be more free to do great good.' And what a poor soul he would have been had he argued like this. Any religious may be tempted to reason on these lines, withdraw his obedience on the pretext of being more free to do good, and leave his institute. What a terrible self-deception! 'Be faithful to your vocation,' says St Paul, 'and do not change it' on the excuse that you can do more good. I can see what fearful consequences would follow if you were to defect from the Institute of Charity on such a pretext. The least of these would be that the world itself would be scandalized and would abandon you; so that in the end you would find yourself deceived into losing the very support which at present you vainly look for. I am morally certain of all this, and I have the proof to hand. But this, as I said, would be the least of the evil consequences. The greatest, for me, would be to see you drawn into an abyss of troubles, and in trying to put one thing right, committing a hundred other mistakes. So you could end up — after making such a promising beginning — clutching your head in your hands, having caused all sorts of evils in the world through wanting to do too much good, *but in a way not according to God*, not following the safe way taken by the saints.

For all these reasons you can imagine what reply I must make to your letter of the 21st: I can in no way allow you, even temporarily, the independence of action you ask for, since this would be destructive of the Institute of Charity, and because I should be responsible for all the ill-considered steps you might take through your over-heated imagination.

At the end of your letter you offer me an alternative: *either* to remove you from membership of the Institute of Charity or to take on myself the direction of the Institute of Providence and to relieve you of this responsibility, at the same time assigning you to whatever minor post I see fit to give you at Calvario. I accept this second course, and I shall see how sincere you are in your declaration. You will in no way cut a poor figure in the eyes of either the Ticinese or the Sardinian government if you say that your Superior has himself taken on the direction of the Institute of Providence, and wishes to employ you in another capacity, and that therefore they can deal with me. God will help me, I trust, nor shall I fail to appreciate your counsel or the work you will do for me in future without any danger either to your own soul or to the Institute. This is the only course open to me. My heart would never suffer you to leave the Institute; yet I should certainly sin against charity if I were to co-operate in a work which is clearly that of the devil. So I await a further letter from you, one that will truly bring me consolation if you show that you were really speaking sincerely, and if you do not make further difficulties over your promise — on which so much depends, both for your own soul and for the two Institutes. Write to me soon, and follow up your consoling letter by setting off for Rovereto, where you must stay in my house, and we shall soon be together. Then you can tell me all about your obligations, and we can work out ways of meeting these, and make plans about everything. I am confident that, once this is done, you will henceforth begin to be a true Superior of the Institute of

Charity, and enter a new and fruitful phase of your life. Meanwhile I greet you most warmly, and patiently await the time when you will take away this stone which weighs on my heart.

Your affectionate brother,

ROSMINI p.

80. To Don Luigi Gentili at Domodossola

Rovereto, 9 December 1833

My dear brother in the Lord,

On Saturday your Vice-superior arrived, and I soon came to confer with him. *Benedictus Deus Israel, quia visitavit et fecit redemptionem plebis suae!* [Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: he has visited his people and redeemed them!]. As soon as he saw me he fell on his knees; and I found him altogether himself again. As I told you in my letter, I had good hopes that the Lord would not abandon this zealous servant of his. So say a Te Deum, and keep up your prayers so that everything may work out to the glory of God and lead to a good, stable outcome... I have received your letter of 30 November: I should have found it more to my liking if you had not made excuses for yourself. When our Lady saw that St Joseph might well have had doubts about her marital fidelity, she said nothing, and left it to God to remove any doubts (supposing that he had any) from her husband. And surely the Mother of God should be our model? Have we not chosen her to be our exemplar in the Society? So what justification is there for being so deficient in our imitation of her resignation and abandonment to the will of God?

So if at any future time you want to excuse yourself (something which is not according to perfection anyway), do not again seek to protect yourself by using such expressions as: 'I must disillusion you over an error in which *I know* that you have fallen... both you and Don Giovanni [Loewenbruck] *have believed* that I etc.' Say instead: 'Perhaps you have believed... I am afraid you may have come to think that I etc.' This is the attitude required by both modesty and prudence, as well as by respect for your Superiors.

Furthermore, when you have to meet charges of any kind, it is not fitting to try to excuse yourself with the sort of certainty you show: and this is because when we are accused of anything, this tends to make us act blindly. We should have doubts about ourselves rather than be convinced of our innocence. Even if you felt completely clear in conscience, you should never say so, but rely on others to vindicate you, and remain humble inwardly and outwardly. Nor should you believe that when you feel repugnance over something, this is a sure sign that you are not attached to that thing. Because here we are dealing mainly with spiritual attachments, which consist in a persuasion that we are doing well over some matter, and this persuasion is accompanied by some stubbornness in our self-judgement. Such attachments are not inconsistent with a natural repugnance. In fact that repugnance can delude us and be precisely the material of our obstinacy of judgement and our attachment. We can only be sure that we are free of these attachments if we have so much liberty of spirit that merely knowing the wish of our Superior is enough to enable us to conform ourselves to his will, without any reasonings about the matter, without any

doubts, without trying to make a rejoinder, without delay in our response, but rather at once and happily allowing ourselves to go along with his wishes.

I am writing these things to you, my dear brother, because I am sure that you are trying to the best of your ability to correspond faithfully with your holy vocation, and to make yourself a true member of the Institute of Charity as the Rules describe it. We must have courage and trust in the Lord, who is always with those who put their hopes in him. He will certainly come to our help. One of my great hopes is that in all of us there may be a sincere desire for — and love of — corrections. This is indeed a sure way of making spiritual progress. *Argue sapientem et diliget te; doce iustum et festinabit accipere.* (Proverbs ch.9) [Give instruction to a wise man and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man and he will increase in learning.] [Note: Rosmini's Latin does not represent the accepted text of Proverbs 9, 9.]

I sympathize with you from my heart over what you say about your many occupations, which rob you of time to yourself and the opportunity to study. But, my dear friend, be patient and offer up your cross to the Lord. In the meantime I will try to think of ways of helping you; and at the latest I hope to do so when I come to Calvario at the beginning of spring. Meanwhile arm yourself with fortitude. Try to be both gentle and kindly.

Tell me if you have amended the defect I noticed in you — of being too lengthy in your devotions. Love me in the Lord, in whom I embrace you.

Yours,

ROSMINI p.

81. To Don Luigi Gentili at Domodossola

Trent, 1833 (undated: E.C. 7891 appendix.)

My dear brother and companion in the Lord's service,

Your letter of the 11th (which has only just arrived) has greatly consoled me, because I see that you recognize your fault; and this leads me to trust that you are disposed to give a blind obedience — without which we shall never be dead to ourselves. And if we are not dead to ourselves we cannot be alive in Christ. St Francis Xavier gave a wonderful example of obedience when he left his work of converting many thousands of people at a sign from his Superior. There is no more wretched deceit of the devil than a false zeal which persuades us to obey less promptly on the pretext of bringing about some spiritual good by which we believe we are benefiting our neighbour — as if we men were necessary, or could plumb the depths of the abyss of divine Providence, which knows how to draw good from evil or from the omission of some good. I believe that had you obeyed without delay, Don Giambattista [Loewenbruck] would have found himself forced to remain at Calvario, and what actually happened could have been avoided. In any case, the ill effects of disobedience are infinite, not to be understood by presumptuous men, but only by God, who has attached every good to the virtue, of obedience. We need to reason less and obey more! How beautiful is the simplicity of virtue!

Embrace warmly everyone in the house for me. Grow in love and every other virtue, and may God bless you all. Goodbye to you in Christ, my dear brother.

Yours,

R. p.

82. To Don Clemente Alvazzi at Domodossola

Trent, 1833 (undated)

May the Lord bless all your labours. Amen.

On thinking about what would be good for your soul, three things occur to me that I wish to lay down for you to observe. The first is that you should say *Matins* before *Mass*, and take part dutifully in all the community exercises — the conferences, the explanation of the Rules, the saying of the rosary and so on.

The second thing is that you should not get involved in the affairs of your family, apart from grave necessity — and then only after first speaking to your Rector. Also be on your guard against inordinate affection for your relations

Thirdly, do not spend time at Domodossola talking needlessly to people: rather observe silence and deep recollection. And on feast days devote the time to serving the Lord in the church. Do not hear confessions during the week, so as to leave all your time available for your duties as Master; but on feast days hear confessions not at Domo but in the church at Calvario.

If you are faithful to these rules and the others I have given you, I am sure that the Lord will abundantly bless you and all your activities.

R. p.

83. To the deacon G. B. Giuliani at Verona

Rovereto, 19 December 1833

My dear Giuliani,

[Rosmini senses from Giuliani's letter that in spite of the joy that the diaconate should bring, his friend finds himself subject to certain doubts and some sadness. He goes on to say.]

... base yourself on what is solid and rock-like: seek all your good in God and in his holy service, and after that have no fears. You tell me about your great desire to see Rome again; but what could you do there? Aim at some ecclesiastical preferment? I would not advise it. It would not make you the least bit holier. So the only advice my sincere friendship for you suggests I should give you (in answer to your welcome letter) is this: do not be too anxious about anything except trying hard to become holy; this is the way to find peace and every other good thing. And you see, if you hold firm to this principle you will be able to find tranquillity, contentment and spiritual well-being in Verona or anywhere else. May the Lord grant you the light to see the value of a life recollected in him, consecrated to him! It is only through this light that we can wean ourselves from the love of human things, and become indifferent to this or that place or station in life, knowing that in any event we can find what we are in search of — our God. So this is my advice: occupy yourself fully in the duties of that state within the Church to which divine Providence has already called you; aim first at acquiring an ever-greater purity of conscience; and then give no thought or consideration to whether you serve God in this place or that. This is important, because I think that to change place simply of our own accord and without moral necessity is spiritually somewhat dangerous.

Let me have news of yourself, my dear Giuliani, and pray for me to the Lord, asking him to-establish me as a faithful servant of his.

Yours affectionately,

A. R.

84. To Don Luigi Gentili at Domodossola

Trent, 23 December 1833

My dear brother and companion in the Lord's service,

Your last two letters brought me great joy: thank you for them. If you follow the way you trace out in them, your soul will obtain the fruit of the prayer made for us by Christ to his Father: 'Keep them from evil.' Ah, my dear friend, how admirable is the work of purifying our souls! Here, down below, we have always to struggle: for the rest, God has taken us into his care.

At the moment I am unable to send you a laybrother. You will have to make out as best you can. The Lord has blessed us, too, with many illnesses; one of our young men may soon go to a better place in heaven; and although I hope that he will go there quickly, I must still recommend him to the prayers of his brethren. His name is Felice Moschini. *quo mundus non erat dignus* [of whom the world was unworthy]. His condition grew worse after our good Vice-superior (whom you have just embraced in the Lord) left there, and who, with his humble and altogether religious presence consoled me and took away all anguish from my heart. I hope to restore him to Calvario even more worthy than he was when I received him; and I urge you to show him even greater respect and obedience than before — such as you would show to the Lord. I cannot find words to praise sufficiently the mercy of God, both in general and over this particular matter: for me he has changed a grave worry into an equally great joy.

Mgr Scavini, in writing to me, has brought up an important matter. He says: 'There was a certain amount of discontent among the priests who went to Calvario for their retreat over the fact that for two days they were left without any spiritual help or advice; whereas in the previous year each retreatant was visited twice a day by the Director, who was able to support and guide them.' The good Bishop here touches on something noteworthy! For goodness' sake, such a thing must never happen again. (The Monsignor says it occurred because the Director was in church hearing the confession of some simple woman.) This is quite contrary to the spirit of our Institute, which takes the giving of retreats as one of its best-loved exercises of charity, and which it must cultivate (I might almost say) in preference to any other. So from now on let there be the greatest diligence and exactness in being at the service of retreatants at times most convenient for them, even if for the sake of this, some other less necessary work has to be shelved. I urge this as strongly as I can.

Embrace all the brethren for me. May the Lord shed the joy and the grace of his birthday on you all. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

R. p.

85. To Mr Ambrose Phillips at Garendon Park, England

Trent, 24 December 1833

My dear friend...

[Rosmini first sends Christmas greetings to Phillips and his wife and then goes on:]

Your letter of 1 October, with its happy news, has given me much joy in our Lord, whom I do not fail to ask for further blessings on you. My dear friend, you have much to be grateful to him for he sets you to work, sending you many gifts, so that you may serve him ever more and become even more zealous for the spreading of his Kingdom on earth — that is, his Church. May you and your children earn fame in the annals of the Catholic Church and above all in the glory of heaven! I will certainly pray that God will endow you with such children, the blessings of a Christian marriage. And what a great blessing it would be if God had chosen you and your descendants as instruments in the conversion of England! But it is for us to see what the will of God is, and to try to carry it out as his faithful servants, whatever it may be.

As to our mission to England: I see that you are au courant with what has happened over Sir Henry Trelawney; but I am not sure if you are aware that Mgr Baines has received a Rescript from Rome in which the Holy Father gives his approval of the affair. The Pope has also sent me a letter of encouragement. For my part, wishing to act with prudence and without precipitate haste, so that the English mission (if it is God's will that it should take place) may be the more firmly established, I have written to Mgr Baines, sending him the Constitutions of the Institute so that he may examine them and give his approval in writing, as other of the bishops have done. In this way the bishop of the diocese, or of the District, will have a better insight into the Society of Charity, and things will go ahead in all harmony, which is what I wish. Meanwhile, continue to pray that the mission may succeed in the way that is most pleasing to God.

I have been for some months now in the city [Trent] where the great Council took place, and I shall not see dear Gentili again until the spring. In the meantime the Lord has seen fit to extend our Society further, to Verona²⁶. I tell you this so that, since you are a dear brother of ours, you may rejoice in the Lord over this development and pray for the new foundation.

May the infant Jesus and Mary his Mother be with you and your good lady now and always.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

²⁶ See notes to Letter No. 62.

86. To the Countess Giovanna Rosmini at Rovereto

Trent, 29 December 1833

My dearest mother,

I wish and pray that you may, receive every gift and blessing from *God* in the New Year. May the Lord keep you in health and prosperity — that is my desire for you. And above all, may he fill you with his light, which shines within the soul, making it clear that we must give little heed to the things of this passing world, but set all our desires on the things of heaven, which will never pass away. This is my greatest desire both for you and for myself. Without this enlightenment we shall never put our delight in the will of *God*, who is ever infinitely lovable; nor shall we truly know what that will is. This is the only good we have in this world: to know and do *God's* holy will, and to strive never to offend him in any way. Do please help me with your prayers, so that I may attain the fullness of this, my sole desire, and give your blessing to —

Your most affectionate

ANTONIO p.

87. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Domodossola

Trent, feast of San Silvestro 1833

My dear brother and friend in the child Jesus ...

Set your heart on entering thoroughly into the spirit of our Rules and observing them. And see that all the work you do in the house with that aim is animated by an unequalled love towards each one of your companions; make it your aim to eradicate completely from your heart and from the hearts of the others everything that might lessen charity; and act always with that delicate prudence and gentleness which only Charity itself knows. Let us particularly wage war against self-love, and replace it with humiliation and mortification; we must pit ourselves against any trace of envy, and against any wish to appear to be persons of distinction in the eyes of the outside world. Rather let our aim be to love to be obscure, to have a low opinion of ourselves, and to be devoted to truth. Blessed is the man who perseveres! This blessing I constantly ask of the Lord.

I wish every holy blessing on yourself and the others in the New Year. My thanks to Don Cesare [Flecchia] for the letter he wrote on his own behalf and that of his brethren — in which his good heart made him say too much. I return his sincere good wishes and thanks, Embrace for me Don Luigi I Gentili] (I shall be writing to him soon) and all in the house, as well as Bianchi. Greet the archpriest, Chiossi and any others you feel should be included. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in the Lord,

ROSMINI p.

88. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Cremona

Trent, 16 January 1834

My dear brother in the Lord,

You may let Don Brignoli have the *Liber Memorialis* and the *Regulae communes*, as well as the *Maxims* (which he should be told to study). Through these three texts he should be able to clarify his mind about his vocation. Take care also over the other two priests, co-operating with divine grace with suitable prudence, especially as regards the younger one — although at 63 years old it is normal to find that not only the skin has hardened, but the mind also. Still there are no limits to what God can do. You should not conceal anything, but with older men it is necessary to proceed with greater caution, requiring more tests, especially of obedience and flexibility of judgement.

It seems to me that the parable of the Ten Virgins can be applied also to those who do not know themselves, and believe that they are in a fit state to receive the Spouse but are not so. They are deceived over the outward virtue which they have (symbolized by virginity), and their outward practice of devotions (signified by their lamps). But they do not have the oil of true justice. At the first temptation or trial (which here is the approach of the Spouse) they realize, when their weakness is tested, that their virtue is inadequate. This is signified by their lamps failing. They try to light them again, but cannot do so because they do not have the oil of justice. They throw themselves on the merits of the others, on their tolerance; but this is not enough. When they come to see this, they do not have time to get rid of their old prejudices and wrong habits (which they have concealed or tried to excuse), and they are overtaken by death — that is, the arrival of the Spouse. But it certainly seems to me that the parable also contains higher mysteries regarding the coming of the Son of God at the end of the world. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

89. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Cremona

Trent, 21 January 1834

My dear Giulio,

I have sent your letter to the Bishop, and now we must wait to see what result divine Providence will draw from this matter²⁷. Meanwhile we have to see the hand of God in these events; and when they humiliate us we must co-operate with the divine action by becoming more humble than ever. The same lesson is to be drawn from the life of the holy King David, when Shimei cursed him and threw stones at him. David would not allow the man to be harmed, but said: *The Lord said to him, 'Curse David'*. There is a great lesson for us in this event and these words! So remain at peace, as befits someone whom the Lord has humbled.

I embrace you in haste: pay my respects to Monsignor. I had intended to write to him; but now what has happened makes me delay doing so. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

²⁷ Mgr Luschin, the Bishop of Trent had asked Don Giulio Todeschi to give up the chair of Dogmatic Theology in the seminary and had offered him the parish of S. Maria in Rovereto, left vacant by the death of Don Oliari.

90. To Mgr Carlo Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona

Rovereto, 2 February 1834r

Very Reverend Monsignor,

With regard to what you said in your letter of 1 January, I had intended to tell you that I look on the question of your renouncing your See as a quite separate matter from your vocation to the Institute of Charity. As I have said more than once before, I should have no difficulty at all in accepting you into the Society, provided that you yourself, after looking into its nature, found that it would fit in with the spirit that moves you to seek perfection. So over this second point there is nothing more to be said. Nor does it impinge in any way on your decision over the first question.

So over the matter of your renouncing your position, I would ask you to weigh this well: whatever you do for the benefit of your neighbour is also a benefit for your own soul. Jesus Christ has expressly said that he will regard any good that we do to our neighbour as done to himself. So please tell me frankly and calmly whether, if you retired from the episcopate, you would be able to do as much for your neighbour as you now have the means and opportunity to do as Bishop. Consider then whether it is advisable, as regards the spiritual activity in which we must all engage, for you to throw away or bury the gifts which God has put into your hands; tell me whether, if you retired to the cloister, you could achieve anything like the great and lasting benefit to souls that the institution alone of the Daughters of Charity in your diocese can bring about. Again, could the merit you gain by the distribution of the wealth now at your disposal (and the consequent spiritual and practical benefits reaped by your neighbour) be equalled by the merit you would gain in retirement? It was Jesus Christ who endowed you with the means you now possess; and it is certain that one day he will ask you to give an account of how you have used them, saying: 'I gave you five talents...'. Can you safely reply: 'Lord, it is true that you put into my hands all these means of doing good, but I have renounced them; so ask my successor about them'?

You may say to me: 'But the preoccupations of my state do not allow me to attend in tranquillity to the needs of my own soul.' To that I would reply with St Gregory: 'Do what you can: Jesus Christ is good, and he will supply with the merits of his blood for anything lacking in his servant who sacrifices himself for love.' Combine contemplation with action. If you cannot take St Charles [Borromeo] for your model, take St Francis de Sales. Read his life, and imitate him as closely as you can — his gentleness, not only towards others but to himself too. We must act like this. We must not demand too much of our feebleness, Monsignor! We have to combine charity with humility; be persuaded of our limitations, our nothingness, and remain always tranquil, not even allowing ourselves to be upset over our powerlessness. Let us throw ourselves into the arms of Jesus Christ, who will bear the burden of all our miseries and imperfections!

Yours,

R.

91. To Don Luigi Gentili at Domodossola

Trent, 9 February 1834

My dear Don Luigi,

I thank God for all the enlightenment he has given you during your retreat. The way of perfection, my dear friend, is summed up in few words: 'the desire to be mortified, especially as regards our reason', as St Philip [Neri] said. Now recollect yourself in the Lord and tell me at once: are you disposed, with God's help, to take upon your shoulders the English mission, and put up with all the difficulties and opposition that you will encounter, for the love of God and of obedience, even unto death? I await your answer to this question once you have prayed about it.

The most perfect charity reigns in this house: it is the Kingdom of God. 'God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God.' The Spirit of Jesus Christ is love; and he dwells in the souls of all our brethren here at Monte Calvario, as he dwelt in our dear Mother, Mary, who placed us there and gave birth to us in Christ.

Yours affectionately,

R.

92. To the Sister of Providence Eusebia Alvazzi at Locarno²⁸

Trent, 23 February 1834

May the love of Jesus Christ be always in your heart.

Put all your trust in God, and he will certainly help you in the important post of Superior which has been laid upon your shoulders. The Lord will never abandon you, since this responsibility comes from God and from your Superiors, and was not at all of your own seeking. Doubtless you will meet with troubles and difficulties, but a lively faith and abandonment to that divine Providence to which you are consecrated will overcome all these things. I am amazed when I think of the truly wonderful way in which your Institute has been established!²⁹ It is growing stronger in all the virtues that are dear to God, such as mortification, patience in difficulties, poverty, obedience and love of one's neighbour. To this list can be added *the love of study* for the greater good of the children that it is your vocation to teach. I shall be grateful to you if you will tell me about your activities through the good Don Carlo Rusca, who looks after you with true paternal care³⁰. I ask you also, of your charity, to remember me in your prayers — you and your devoted community — for I am in great need of spiritual help, given the many burdens which press upon me. But thanks be to God for everything, and may he bless abundantly you and your companions. Believe me, I am always ready to serve you devotedly.

Yours,

A. ROSMINI p.

²⁸ Suor Eusebia Alvazzi was one of the four sturdy and generous souls who, through many hardships and dangers, took themselves to Portieux and the house of the Sisters of Providence founded by the abbé Moye in order to learn the Rules and be formed in religious life. (cf. Letter No.9 of this volume, note 1).

²⁹ cf. Vita di A Rosmini, vol. I, pp.506 et seq.

³⁰ When Rosmini removed the Sisters from Loewenbruck's direction he entrusted them to Don Carlo Rusca, who was on the spot, and whose prudence and discretion he knew. Some years later Don Rusca entered the Institute of Charity. He died a holy death at Stresa in 1851. (cf. *La Vita di Suor M. Giovanna Antonietti e le Suore della Provvidenza dette Maestre Rosminiane* by Don Francesco Paoli, p.111)

93. To Mgr Luschin, Bishop of Trent

Rovereto, 22 March 1834

[In this long letter Rosmini begins by explaining that the Bishop's desire to appoint him as Archpriest of Rovereto — in accordance with the unanimous wish of the parishioners — causes him an acute problem of conscience. He is extremely grateful for this mark of esteem, but he feels that to accept the appointment would involve a failure to meet the moral obligations by which he was already bound. Given this apparent conflict of duties, he is grateful that the Bishop in his letter recognizes that Rosmini may not feel free in conscience to assume the position of Archpriest; and he goes on to expound the main difficulties that he faces, much as he would wish to conform himself to the Bishop's wishes. He then proceeds to describe these difficulties, under five heads:]

1. The first and greatest problem is my own incapacity. I am amazed at the high regard in which the public seems to hold me; but Your Lordship must believe that I know that in fact I have many defects, and I lack the gifts required in a parish priest. The high opinion of me can only come of the fact that my fellow-citizens do not know me sufficiently well.
2. Next there is my physical weakness. There is no need for me to go into details of my ailments: I can only say that the burdens I have to cope with at present are beyond my strength. All the same, I would sacrifice myself willingly if I could hope that my lack of strength would not make me fall short of the duties that would fall to me as parish priest.
3. The third difficulty is my involvement with the Institute of Charity. This is not an arbitrary affair: I am not free to withdraw from it. I have contracted duties towards those who are in my hands. I did not take on this situation for my own pleasure: rather, I did so because I was convinced that not to do so would be to oppose divine Providence. There have been other times when I felt obliged not to take on obligations which would have stood in the way of a more extensive good; and I acted in this way after mature thought and with the approval of Superiors... and I would dare to say, after I had ascertained the will of God. I could never renounce the obligations that fall to me in my position of Director (however unworthy) of the Institute of Charity. Now these obligations are many; and the main ones that seem irreconcilable with the post of parish priest seem to be the following:
 - (a) The house at Domodossola requires my absence from this diocese [Trent] for at least two or three months in the year. And it is worth considering (as regards travelling) that should divine Providence within a year or two cause the Institute to spread further afield, I should have yet greater need to absent myself.
 - (b) I could not live apart from my brethren: those who assume parochial duties must live in community, as prescribed by our Rules. This Your Lordship knows.
 - (c) The direction of the Institute calls for much and frequent correspondence, since it is in its early days and the members need detailed and minute guidance. The

burden of this correspondence contributes greatly to wearying me, and it makes demands on the time and energy that I should need to devote to my flock if I were parish priest.

4. The fourth difficulty is that just as the responsibilities that go with the direction of the Institute would detract from the carrying out of parish duties, so too the duties of being in charge of a parish would detract from the proper government of the Institute.

5. Lastly, a fifth difficulty arises from my commitment to studies which, if I rely on the judgement of persons of authority, I must believe to be of greater general benefit for religion and more for the glory of God than the limited work of a parish priest. It is clear that parochial duties in Rovereto would absorb all my time — so that I should have no opportunity at all to make progress in the work (literary in appearance perhaps, but in reality religious) to which I have devoted the greater part of my life.

It is true that the clergy and others who have approached me in this matter have promised to ask Your Lordship that I should be given four members of the Institute as companions; and they also say that it is enough for them if I take on the post for just two years — something that you yourself mention in your letter; and you kindly add that you would be willing to concede to me whatever facilities would be consistent with my duties. All this, I must admit, goes some way to diminish the force of some of the difficulties I instanced above; but it is still clear that the harm which the Institute of Charity would suffer could only be compensated for if an obvious spiritual gain could be hoped for in the whole population. But I could do little or nothing to bring this about within the space of two years. For as Your Lordship knows, it is not possible to set to work immediately to improve matters, even in the most necessary ways; because it is essential to allow time and await the opportune moment to introduce changes. So after the efforts I have made to find a way of replying that would be acceptable to Your Lordship and to the local people, I can find no other solution in this situation except to abandon myself into your hands and conform myself to whatever conclusion you reach³¹.

[The letter finished with Rosmini's declaration that he simply wishes to do the will of God, and that he wholly submits to the Bishop's verdict on hearing of the circumstances described above.]

With respectful greetings and asking your blessing,

ROSMINI p.

³¹ In the event Rosmini was prevailed upon to become the Archpriest of Rovereto. He accomplished a great deal, at heavy cost to himself (in every way, including financially), but he resigned after only one year. A very interesting account of this period is given by Fr C. R. Leatham in his *Rosmini, Priest Philosopher and Patriot*. cf. pp.170-75.

94. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Cremona

Rovereto, 26 March 1834

My dear Giulio,

I do not by any means approve of your withdrawing from any of the works *the Bishop proposes for you*. Never say 'no' (unless your lack of physical strength forces this on you). Instead, receive in all simplicity whatever comes to you and work at it for the glory of God. Exercise charity toward the prisoners too: this is a work of mercy that is very dear to Jesus Christ. So too show yourself willing and happy to give retreats; and if you share this work with another priest, do not be too hidebound over the method, but fit in flexibly with his ways. God has many ways of giving grace.

I beg you, too, not to dismay those who have not the necessary strength by asking too great perfection of them. Jesus Christ led his disciples towards perfection one step at a time, and told them: 'I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them all now.' You have to allow for human weakness. It is well to ask a man for just what is absolutely necessary and within his power to give. This wise gentleness is one of the most important principles which should guide one who is in charge of souls. How are we to know whether what we propose to someone is in fact beyond his strength? By watching to see whether it produces in him agitation and discouragement. If what we suggest is within the power of the person we are directing it will result in an attitude of calm hope, and an increased zeal for good. This is a great guideline in the pastoral ministry. Think about it. Consider carefully the effect of your words, so that if you find that you have gone too far in what you ask, or the way in which you ask it, or its opportuneness, you can modify it. Always be cheerful, and preserve a holy joviality; take care never to be in a bad humour. Remember the honey of St Francis de Sales, a drop of which catches more flies than a whole jar of vinegar! I am writing in haste, with my mind too much taken up with what will ensue over this blessed parish in Rovereto! But enough for now. Pray for me. I have not time to tell you all the news. Remember to love —

Your affectionate friend and servant in Christ,

A. R.

95. To Don Brignoli at Soresina

Rovereto, 26 March 1834

Dear Reverend Sir,

I understand from your letter that the Lord has inspired you with a desire to seek perfection, and that to respond to this you wish me to accept you into the Institute of Charity. I have delayed replying so as to reflect carefully and pray over the matter. As a result I have come to the conclusion that, given the good you are doing there, Mgr Sardagna would not for the present wish you to abandon your post. And since I should like everything to proceed smoothly, I think it best if in the circumstances you were to try to serve God as perfectly as you can in your present post for the time being. The purity of your intentions, the wish to belong wholly to God, and the good works you are engaged in — all these things will in the meantime cause you to grow in grace; and this in turn will strengthen your vocation itself; You must believe that as far as I am concerned I would willingly receive you right away; but if I suggest this deferment, I do so only in the persuasion that when it is the will of God that you should give effect to your plan to join us, he will at the same time move the Bishop to comply with your desire. In the meanwhile, let us be united by a close bond of love and holy friendship; and if you so wish I will enrol you as one of our Ascribed Members — those who share in the spiritual favours granted to our Institute by the Holy Father, Gregory XVI, as well as in the merits of all the good works done by it. I shall always be happy to hear from you how things are going with your vocation; and if you persevere in it, you will in course of time be able to put it before the Bishop's judgement in all humility and hear what he thinks about it and what he wants you to do.

Remember me in your prayers, and be sure of my regard for you and — I will add now — my feelings of fraternal union.

Yours devotedly,

ROSMINI p.

96. To the cleric Carlo Narchialli³² at Fobello

Rovereto, 28 April 1834

... I gather from your letter (and earlier from Monsignor the Vicar) that the Lord has inspired in you a wish to join us in order to serve him in love. I was very pleased to hear this, because I have no doubt that your intentions are sincere and that you are bent only on consecrating yourself to the love and service of God. And indeed our little Institute of its nature has no other aim than to please the divine majesty as far as is humanly possible, and to show in some way our gratitude for the infinite blessings God has bestowed on us by bringing us to give ourselves back to him who created us. You will be able to learn more about the spirit of the Institute at Calvario, where you may go when you wish. There you will find in the Superior, Don Loewenbruck, a true father; and you will come to appreciate the great blessing of holy obedience. You may entrust yourself to him with all confidence, and be sure that the Lord will bless you. Meanwhile I embrace you in Christ, and hope soon (if God so wills) to be able to greet you in person,

Yours sincerely,

ROSMINI p.

³² The cleric Carlo Narchialli, from Fobella in Valsesia, was ordained priest three years after his entry into the Institute, and made Spiritual Director of the college in Domodossola. Here he died in the flower of his youth on 25 March 1839, on the same day when the other Fathers and Brothers were making their religious profession at Calvario. He had made his own first profession a month earlier from his sick bed. An account of his life and merits was deservedly published.

97. To the deacon G. B. Carlo Giuliani at Verona

Trent, 16 May 1834

My dear Giuliani,

Your letters are always very welcome, and especially the last one, in which you tell me the great news of your approaching ordination. Let us send up humble prayers to the Lord, asking him that to this immense dignity may be joined a true priestly spirit, together with detachment from the things of this world, generosity in suffering, and great zeal in working for the salvation of our neighbour and the increase of the Church. For if all Christians are called to holiness, certainly priests ought to give an outstanding example. Indeed they can do no less if they want to correspond to the greatness of their vocation and be assured of their salvation. I wish all these blessings for you, my dear Giuliani, and I will offer my poor prayers for this intention, and get others to pray for you, as you ask. And in return I ask you to remember me in your first fervour and ask that the priestly spirit may be revived and renewed in me: this I want above all; this I value above every other treasure. But, wretched me, how poor I am!

No more for now: I must leave you to your holy preparations. It seems to me that you are greatly blessed in these days. Continue to love me, and believe that I am from my heart —

Your affectionate friend,

A. R.

98. To Lady Mary Arundell in Rome

Trent, 7 June 1834

My Lady,

It is only through kindness that you and Lord Arundell take pleasure in the acquaintance of someone as little deserving as I. But perhaps this is largely due to the goodness of my excellent friend Phillips, who has obtained for me the benefit of being able to treat personally with such distinguished persons as yourselves. Doubtless what he said to you about me was more indicative of his greatness of heart, his friendship and his religious charity than in accord with the plain truth! So it is I who must thank you (as I cordially do) for having got in touch with me as you were passing through Trent, and in this way granting me a favour I have long desired.

[In the following paragraph Rosmini gives an account of a young woman named Maria Moerl, who was apparently favoured with mystical experiences. He has heard from a Veronese priest who had visited the woman and been impressed by her.]

My companions are already praying daily for you and your husband and brother, and to these prayers I never fail to add my own — poor as they are, the Lord still hears the pleadings even of the unworthy. I can assure you that when I think of the goodness of God, all my sadness disappears — for that goodness is infinite. All that the Lord asks of us is that we should be good and that we humble ourselves: these are both acts of justice. How could he ask for less? At the same time he has promised to help us so that we may become truly good, and to reward our humility by exalting us. Thoughts like these must surely give us courage. For how could the God of all goodness abandon us when we value virtue more than anything else, and make it our one desire to succeed in pleasing him? It is wonderful to think that a finite creature can yet be pleasing in the eyes of an infinite Being! But this is really his doing: his infinite power brings it about. So let us await him in confidence: he came into the world for this very purpose, and he died to achieve it. So you must banish from your heart all the anxieties you tell me about, for a daughter of God has so many reasons for happiness that sadness is out of place.

I must add an appeal for a favour, of your kindness. On the 20th of this month it will be the anniversary of my sister's death. I commend her to your prayers, and I am taking the liberty of sending you a little picture card which the Bishop of Cremona had printed, out of the friendship he had for her. It will be distributed on the anniversary³³.

³³ The card referred to had this inscription:

I would ask you to give my respectful greetings to your good husband; and be assured of my deep esteem.

A. ROSMINI p.

GIOSEFFA MARGHERITA ROSMINI-SERBATI WAS BORN AT ROVERETO ON 11 SEPTEMBER 1794. SHE ENTERED THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY IN VERONA IN 1824, FOUNDED A HOUSE OF HER CONGREGATION AT TRENTO IN 1828, AND WAS SUPERIOR THERE UP TO 20 JUNE 1833, WHEN THE LORD CALLED HER TO HIMSELF.

The faith of Jesus Christ, which she studied and meditated upon constantly, enabled her to overcome all the prejudices, vanity and malice of this world and established her in God. To those who knew her she was, all through her life, a mirror of the most humble and hard-working charity which finally claimed her as a victim. Rather than grieving at her passing, people blessed her and looked upon her with holy envy.

According to this inscription and the text of the above letter to Lady Mary Arundell, Gioseffa Margherita died on 20 June. But according to the letters of her brother to his mother, to Cristina Pilotti and to Loewenbruck, her death took place on 15 June, as also was reported in Puecher's *Vita di Suor Gioseffa Margherita Rosmini*, p. 156.

99. To Don Giulio Todeschi in Cremona

Trent, 4 June 1834

My dear companion in the divine service,

I very much liked the *Manual for kindergarten schools*, and I should like you to make a close friend of this Signor Aporti and learn from him about his method³⁴ of helping young children... I gather from the book that he has not heard of the schools for poor children set up in Turin by the Marchese di Barolo and the Contessa Masino, which have a similar purpose to that of his own schools. (In his Preface he mentions only the schools in Pisa.)

As for the manuscript on charity³⁵, dedicate it to whomever you like.

Unfortunately I was not able to avoid taking on the burden of the parish [Rovereto]. On Thursday I have to do the examination for it, and after that His Excellency sees fit to appoint me as parish priest. I shall have to shoulder this responsibility, but only with the promise that it will not be for long — only as long as I myself see fit to retain the post. Dear God! — this is the hardest moment of my whole life! Pray earnestly for your poor friend.

As for yourself, remain calm for the present. I hope to pass through Cremona towards the end of this month. Please tell the Monsignor this and give him my respectful greetings. Humble yourself before God and rejoice! May Jesus and Mary bless you.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

PS Rigler is recovering fast, thank God.

³⁴ The priest, Ferrante Aporti, the founder of the kindergarten, had opened his first establishment in Cremona in 1827

³⁵ He is referring her to the *Storia dell'Amore dalle Scritture*, which Rosmini had begun in about 1820, and which Todeschi, with the author's consent, had published in 1834 in Cremona, dedicating it to Mgr Sardagna, the Bishop of that city.

100. To Ambrose Phillips in England

Domodossola, 15 July 1834

... Alas, my dear Phillips, that good man [Lord Arundell], to whom you were kind enough to introduce me on the occasion of his passing through Trent, is no more. Lady Mary Arundell wrote me a long letter in which she describes the details of his death in Rome³⁶. She moved me to tears — though at the same time my faith gave me the consolation that his soul is surely in heaven. I could never have thought that the first time I met Lord Arundell in person was also going to be my last encounter with him: he seemed so healthy and robust. It all shows how fallacious human reasonings are, how short-sighted is our vision. Here we have a salutary lesson that we must all be ready to hear the call of the Lord.

At the same time your Bishop, Mgr Baines, wrote to us of the Christian fortitude with which Lady Arundell supported her great loss. The good Lord comes to our help at the very time when his hand falls heavy upon us. We only have to have faith in his goodness.

I greet you warmly in Jesus and Mary.

Always yours,

R.

³⁶ On the day before his letter to Phillips, Rosmini wrote a long letter of consolation to Lady Mary Arundell.

101. To Suor Eusebia Alvazzi, Superior-General of the Sisters of Providence in Locarno

Domodossola, 17 July 1834

Dear Reverend Mother,

You must bear calmly and with resignation the burden of being Superior. God has laid this on your shoulders for such time as it may please his divine majesty. So humble yourself profoundly and unceasingly over such faults as you are aware of in yourself, as well as those you do not know about; ask always for light from heaven so that you may carry out the important ministry which has fallen to your lot, for the salvation of your own soul and for that of those precious souls whom Jesus Christ has put into your hands. Do not fail to give correction when it is necessary, but do so with great love, humility, prudence and holy authority. Imagine how Jesus Christ would speak, and take him for your model. When it pleases God he will send us a teacher with experience in women's skills. I will do all I can to find one. In the meantime, you must do what you can, in tranquil resignation, urging on your Daughters to apply themselves with great love and diligence to learning those skills. When you give a conference it is well to be very prudent so as not to hurt the weaker ones by disclosing or hinting at their defects. Still it can be useful if you mention some fault that they have committed, provided that you do so carefully and with great charity. But you must speak in a way that is full of love and humility; for someone who humbles herself and shows love can say things that could not be said otherwise. You must try to put this advice into practice, and then act as you think best in the Lord. I commend myself to the prayers of all our Daughters in the Lord, and I ask him to bless them. No more for now, as I am writing in haste.

Yours. devotedly in Christ,

ROSMINI p.

102. To Cardinal Giuseppe Morozzo in Turin

Rovereto, 11 September 1834

Your Eminence,

I am hoping that in your holy zeal you will come to the help of these poor Sisters of Providence. The fact that the Marchese di Barolo has founded a new religious institute in Turin is no business of mine: he must do as he thinks fit. But when he wants to open there a noviciate of the Daughters of Providence, taking subjects from their house in Locarno, modifying their Rule at his pleasure — this is an absurdity that amazes me. I will never consent to it but will oppose with all the strength I have the transfer of our Locarno Sisters from their centre so that the Marchese may (as he proposes) make use of them to create a new foundation³⁷. He is mistaken when he maintains that the Daughters of Providence were founded in France for the education of children of both sexes. Both in France and in Italy they were established only to educate girls. Proof of this fact is to be seen in what happened when the French Superior³⁸ came to establish the Daughters in Locarno: when she heard that the Marchese was mixing boys with girls she was altogether dismayed; and she begged me earnestly to dissuade the Marchese from this course, or to prevent the Daughters of Providence from teaching in those schools. She admitted to me that in one or two schools in France boys were admitted; but she added that this was a deplorable abuse. I would agree with the Marchese that in individual cases there could be no danger for a Sister; but Your Eminence, as pastor of souls, will readily appreciate that for some Sisters such a situation could be an occasion of sin; and given that we have to make every effort to obviate a single sin, we cannot allow a religious institute through its Rules to open the way to a possibly sinful situation.

I am sure that Your Eminence will do everything possible to support such a holy initiative, which aims to remove the sort of offence to God which leads to the ruin of religious orders. And now, to unravel this knot, I think it is necessary to speak out, and also to inform the Minister³⁹ clearly about the truth of the matter, as opposed to the untrue reports of the Marchese di Barolo. Is it really possible that this gentleman wants to use force to produce a split in the Institute of Providence by taking from it some of the Sisters against the will of their Superior and founding a new noviciate on his own initiative, keeping the same habit and name — a noviciate which could never be recognized by the Locarno house as belonging to the same family? I am sure that Your Eminence, in your capacity as guardian of religious institutes in Piedmont, will allow no such

³⁷ With regard to the serious troubles caused to the Sisters of Providence by the Marchese di Barolo, cf. the Vita di A Rosmini, vol. I, pp.514 et seq.

³⁸ This was Suor Teodora Collin.

³⁹ The King's Minister was Count de Lescarène.

thing, but will defend the genuine Institute against the counterfeit version which threatens it. With a view to bringing a speedy end to this persecution which the devil is waging against the good Daughters of Providence, I beg you as earnestly as I can to be so good as to speak to the Marchese. I am taking the liberty of enclosing a letter⁴⁰ to him, informing him that in the future our Sisters may no longer be employed in his schools for poor children; and that only those already assigned to that work may continue there⁴¹. I put my trust in the zeal for the glory of God that animates Your Eminence, as also in your prudence.

I also commend to you the noviciate in Domodossola⁴²: if the government will help us to establish it, I hope it will do much good.

Asking your blessing, with great respect...

Your humble servant,

ROSMINI

⁴⁰ This letter is No.2334 in E.C.

⁴¹ In June 1832 Loewenbruck had clothed as nuns three young women of the Ossola, and without more ado had sent them to Turin to teach in the Marchese di Barolo's school for poor children.

⁴² He is referring to another noviciate for the Sisters apart from that of Locarno.

103. To Don Carlo Felice Rusca at Locarno

Rovereto, 27 September 1834

My dear friend,

Now that I have finished the retreat I had to give to the Trent clergy I can find an opportunity to write to you.

As for the affair involving the Marchese di Barolo, I have no doubts: God will certainly come to our help. But we must not be faint-hearted, my friend, or give way out of weakness. This is a matter of the things of God. If we allow lay people to claim to be able to direct our affairs or to change the Rules of the Institute, they will lead us here today and there tomorrow, and we shall finish up in real trouble. I am not in the least afraid of people with power or money, or people who make threats against us; for I put all my hopes not in men but in God alone. *Nothing is to be changed from what was laid down.* I regret that you let yourself be drawn into so much discussion with the Marchese over all this. The prudent thing would have been to stand firm and make no response other than: 'You must write to the Superior: whatever he does will be right.' That would have been enough. I beg you to stick to this rule: talking can only do harm. I have already written to those concerned and also to the Marchese, saying: *I will not release a single Sister to found a noviciate in Turin.* I have a good mind to withdraw all the Sisters who are with the Marchese, and to pay him all that he unjustly claims. For the Institute of Providence does not rely on money but on God. You are to do nothing; and if he writes to you, send the letter on to me, and just tell him politely that you have done so and that I will deal with the matter. *Add too that you ask him not to communicate with you again over such affairs, which are none of your business but which concern only the Superior.* At the same time be sure to write always in courteous terms, paying him the respect which is due to him. What he says about speaking to the King and so on is mere idle chatter. The fact is that I shall be perfectly well able to inform His Majesty about the whole affair, according to the plain truth. To sum up, then: have no fear and do nothing. I give you and the Superior together the faculty of sending away (prudently and in an edifying manner) anyone who shows that she has no vocation. It is well to be easy over letting people go rather than over receiving them. As for those who are dismissed: let them have everything they brought with them, keeping back only the cost of their upkeep during the time they were in the house.

By now you will have received my letter of the 15th. Goodbye. May God bless you and grant you an enlightened mind, peace, discernment and gentle charity.

Yours affectionately and humbly in Christ,

R. Archpriest

104. To Cardinal Giuseppe Morozzo in Turin

Rovereto, 8 October 1834

Your Eminence,

I hope that the matter of the Sisters of Providence will have a satisfactory outcome as the result of Your Eminence's support. I am sure that you will come to my help in an unfortunate situation which was none of my making, and from which (for the sake of God's glory) I do not feel I can extricate myself at the cost of abandoning so many excellent young women who want to devote themselves to God's service. My conscience will not allow me to withdraw from a difficulty simply to avoid trouble to myself. That, it seems to me, would be to betray the trust that our Sisters have placed in those they regard as their Superiors.

On the other hand the work itself is going well and is giving glory to God. So the devil, in order to put obstacles in its way, makes use of the zeal of a wealthy man who does not understand the nature of religious institutes and is bent on governing them as he pleases. There is no reason why the Marchese di Barolo should not found any institution he likes; but is he free to coerce our Sisters who are living in his house? What I propose, then, is *that the Sisters who have been assigned to him be given complete freedom either to belong to the institute of Providence or to be released from it, and if they so wish, to join any institute that the Marchese may found -whatever it may be and whatever it may be called.* (None of them have as yet taken vows.) The fact is that the Sisters have written begging that they may not be abandoned, and saying that they wish to remain under the authority of their first Superiors, and have no wish to part company with their original Institute. Charity demands that they should receive a reply to this appeal, and that they should not be betrayed out of human respect. For my part, whatever may come about, I could never in conscience permit the Marchese to retain our Sisters when he wants to separate them from the Institute and mix them with other Sisters who are not recognized by the Institute and who are not dependent on it, but who are accepted by him and trained on lines of his own. So too I could not on any account send him any other Sisters. I would allow only those already assigned to remain with him, as long as no changes are introduced.

Your Eminence, with your zeal and prudence, will know well how to defend these views of mine in the capital city. Certainly I would wish to be on good terms with the Marchese; but in this matter I believe I must in conscience act in the way I have described. This is my one principle.

I am grateful to you for what you have done for the Domodossola noviciate, and I hope that this work too will have a happy outcome. You must not believe that I am losing sight of the Institute of Charity: to me this is vastly more

important than that of the Sisters, and I have for it the greatest possible solicitude. Thank God there is excellent news from Calvario, where charity reigns; and so I hope that God's blessing rests upon it, despite my unworthiness, my nothingness. I hope too that by the time I return there the work on the chapel will be completed.

I once again commend most earnestly to Your Eminence the matter of those poor Sisters, who are suffering one of the storms that commonly afflict religious institutes in their early days. With sentiments of deepest respect I ask your blessing.

ROSMINI Archpriest

105. To Don Giovambattista Boselli at Trent

Rovereto, 11 October 1834

I was very glad to read the few words you added to our Father Vicar's letter. My dear friend, never fear that I forget you: I often have you in mind, and you are always in my heart. I very much hope that the Lord is purifying your soul — it is his way to do this through temptations and troubles. Put all your trust in him, and none in yourself. When you feel in bad humour — and this is certainly the work of the devil — raise yourself above it, and your thoughts to God, so that you can look down on your enemy and despise him. Virtue is made perfect through patience, and the fruit of this is peace. Pray for me, as I do for you. Oh, how many cares weigh on my mind! It is these which hinder me from writing to you as often as I would wish. Pity me! Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI Archpriest

106. To Don Francesco Puecher⁴³ at Trent

Rovereto, 14 October 1834

I hope that you received from the Lord abundant grace and consolation during your retreat, so that you will be able to perform satisfactorily the duties which will fall to you in the new position to which divine Providence is calling you. I want you to act as my secretary, and come here to me in Rovereto as soon as your Superior will release you. The post is one calling for entire self-abnegation, since according to the spirit of the Institute the secretary is someone who, instead of living his own life, devotes himself to the person he helps. You will not be able to pursue your own studies except in so far as your duties leave you free and your Superiors permit. In other words they become of secondary importance. One of the main obstacles that the devil may put in the way of your doing your job in a holy and virtuous fashion is that of vanity, especially here in this town. So be on your guard against this; be careful not to wish to cut too much of a figure in people's eyes, showing off the gifts you have received from the Lord. Use these when you are told to do so and as the post requires — not to gain some scrap of human admiration but because it is God's command, and in this instance he wants men to see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. Do not take on any commitment with regard to our Academy without my permission. Make sure that you do not make sententious statements, especially when speaking with priests. Rather, see to it that your words and demeanour are marked by modesty, prudence and simplicity. Have close to your heart the interests of the Institute which it is your chief duty to serve. I am not here talking about the utmost secrecy which you must preserve over all the matters in which I shall employ you, for I have no doubts about you in this respect — since you can easily see for yourself how necessary this is.

Pray fervently to the Lord for perfect humility; and may our Lady be your gentle teacher. Goodbye.

A. R.

⁴³ Don Francesco Puecher was born at Pergine (Trento) in 1809. He entered the Institute in 1831, joining the house at Trent. He was a skilled writer and speaker, and he held with great credit various important posts in the Institute notably that of Master of Novices and Provincial Superior.

107. To the cleric Emilio Belisy at Domodossola

Rovereto. 22 October 1834

My dear friend in the Lord,

I have carefully considered before *God* what you say in your letter and asked him to enlighten me over what advice I should give you, for your own greater perfection and his greater glory. And this is my conclusion: your father has sent me a letter saying that he gives his consent to your joining us, recognizing that this is your vocation. All he asks is that he will not be required to spend much on your maintenance. I have assured him that there will be no need to contribute anything to your upkeep, and that at most he might give something towards your clothing, if he so wishes. But if you think this might be burdensome to him, write to him in my name and tell him that he will not be called upon to give anything. For the rest, I think it is best for you to stay where you are and follow whatever path Providence may lead you by. I judge that nothing but the gravest matter can deflect you from the religious calling that you have undertaken to follow. It may be that *God* wants you to gain many brothers by losing one; and that if you were to refuse this profit you might fail to win your brother and even be lost yourself. Neither *St Ignatius* nor others who were called to the religious state abandoned the spiritual family *Christ* gave them for the sake of the family that nature gave them. So that my counsel would be that you remain firm in your vocation, making yourself ready for whatever *God* may ask of you; that you console your parents by means of letters, and guide your brother also by letters — making these as long and frequent as (and only as) your vocation allows.

I must finish, and so I embrace you, referring you for further instructions to my dear brother, *Don Giovanni Loewenbruck*. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI Archpriest

108. To His Holiness Pope Gregory XVIRovereto, 10⁴⁴ November 1834

... It is now almost three years since I ventured to address a letter to Your Holiness, informing you, as was my duty, of the situation and progress of this little Institute on which you have always looked kindly and which took the title of Charity. And although my respect for you has prevented me from bothering you with further letters, this has now to give way to the obligation I have of keeping you informed about the Institute which, full of deference as it is for the Apostolic See, cannot feel assured that it is making progress along the right lines unless it can hope to be well regarded and blessed by that same Holy See.

So I begin by expressing my lively appreciation and gratitude for your gift, the Brief, full of apostolic kindness and charity, with which you were good enough to reply to my letter, as well as for the wealth of holy indulgences with which you enriched the Institute.

Next I ask Your Holiness to bless the small beginning of the new foundation which in the meantime has been established in Verona, thanks to Mgr Grasser, the Bishop of that place. Because he wanted me to entrust to a member of the Institute the pastoral care of the large German-speaking population there, and I, to comply with his wishes, sent a German priest with an Italian companion or two, this was how it came about that as it pleased God's Providence the Institute made a beginning in that city.

As for the other two houses, that of Monte Calvario, Domodossola, and that of Holy Cross in Trent, they have been protected by God's mercy, and the various works of charity undertaken by them have grown and spread. In particular, they saw an increase in the number of Protestants (mostly Swiss) who returned to the Catholic faith and abjured their errors in the Ossola and neighbouring parts of Switzerland. A much greater number could have been received had we possessed better means to make the Catholic faith known, especially by distributing suitable literature in the Protestant villages. To the house at Trent there was added a college for young boys something that was badly needed there.

When the parish of San Marco in Rovereto fell vacant through the death of the Archpriest, it somehow occurred to the Bench and the Bishop that I should take charge of that pastoral office; and all that I could do to persuade them of the unfittingness (not to say the impossibility) of such an idea was of no avail. So, given the difficult stand taken by the people, together with other pressing

⁴⁴ There is some uncertainty about the exact date of this letter — cf. the footnote on p.35 of the *Epistolario Ascetico*, vol. II.

circumstances, I became convinced that it was indeed the will of God that, for a time at least, I should take on my shoulders this post, and that in this way the Institute should begin to take on the care of parishes — something to which, as Your Holiness knows, it is by its nature destined to do. It was in this way, too, that it began in Rovereto, and I ask your blessing on this new foundation also.

Lastly, Mgr Baines, the Bishop of Siga and the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District in England, has for a long time wanted to have some of our men with him, mainly with a view to using them to teach languages and science in the college which he has founded. Up to now I have hesitated over this, considering how fully occupied are the subjects we have, and how difficult and distant such a mission would be. In the meantime I have asked Mgr Baines to examine our Constitutions and tell me his opinion of them. But because of the advice Your Holiness gave me in your Brief, which states that the Institute should extend itself only with the consent of the diocesan bishops, as a precautionary measure I want them to approve of the Institute not only in words but (after thorough examination of the Constitutions) to give their approval in writing and, if they think fit, by means of an express and formal decree. So far the other bishops have been good enough to do this; and now Mgr Baines too has sent me a decree of approval. So it is now up to me to send him the subjects he asks for. But before doing so, the nature of, the project requires that I humbly present myself to Your Holiness (which is the purpose of this letter) and ask for your advice and guidance. If I receive your support and am encouraged by your counsel I shall have no hesitation in sending to England the three priests asked for — and I would equally willingly send them to any other part of the world. But should Your Holiness be opposed to the plan, then I will certainly not part with them. In short, I shall be entirely guided by you in the whole matter.

Lastly, I humbly ask you to be good enough to accept a copy of a little work of mine, recently published, and written against the impiety of our times⁴⁵. Humbly prostrate at your feet, I remain —

Your most humble, grateful and obedient son,

A. ROSMINI Archpriest

⁴⁵ The booklet is entitled *Frammenti di una storia dell'impietà*. ['Fragments of a History of Impiety']

109. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Trent

Rovereto, 28 November 1834

My dear brother in the Lord,

In your letter, my dear Giulio, you mention (as faults of yours) actions which are not really faults at all. This is a most dangerous deception of the devil, who tries to confuse us by raising in us a fear of a non-existent evil, a fear disguised as humility. So you must banish these scruples and every sort of melancholy, and feel a holy joy in the Lord. *Viam mandatorum tuorum cucurri, cum dilatasti cor meum* [I ran in the way of thy commandments when thou didst enlarge my understanding]. ENLARGE your heart and trust in God's mercy; rejoice with simplicity at the thought of the divine goodness. Have done once for all with discouragement and sadness; and to overcome the devil, do as I order you: (1) for a week omit your daily examination of conscience; (2) make a visit to Rovereto as soon as you can do so without interfering too much with your commitments, simply so as to raise your spirits in the Lord; (3) as a penance for your past failings in this respect, say thirty times: 'I will have no scruples of melancholy in my house'⁴⁶. I embrace you warmly. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

R. Archpriest

⁴⁶ The penance Rosmini gave Don Todeschi was a favourite saying of St Philip Neri.

110. To Mgr Giacomo Freinadimetz, Vicar Capitular of Trent

Parish House of San Marco, Rovereto, 15 December 1834

Very Reverend Monsignor,

I the undersigned, realizing more and more the great need there is to provide for the good of the flock entrusted to me, believe that an excellent way of bringing this about would be the institution in this parish of an Oratory of St Philip [Neri]. And to produce the greatest good I believe it would be best to have two sections — one to undertake the care of the older workers, and the other to look after the young people (these being the two classes of people who stand in greatest need.)

The Oratory for the first group would be held daily and follow this programme: it would begin in the evening and last about an hour; first a spiritual book (such as the life of a saint) would be read; then the rosary would be recited; and finally there would be half an hour of meditation or instruction, finishing with a litany or other prayer.

The Oratory for the young people would be held only on Sundays and holy days, outside the hours of the parish ceremonies, both morning and afternoon. The morning session would last about an hour and comprise a short spiritual reading or a hymn, after which Mass would be said; and to finish, a short talk would be given, adapted to the needs of the young people, followed by a litany or something of the sort. In the afternoon, following on the public talk on Christian doctrine which all would have to attend, the young people would gather in a suitable place, where they would remain until evening. There would be an instruction, sacred stories and singing; and finally some sort of innocent entertainment.

There is no need to remind you of the very great benefits which result from these institutions of St Philip. They have been adopted with general approval in nearly all the major cities with a happy outcome; and they have been seen to result in a wonderful improvement in the morals of the young, and to help the Christian education of the people in general. Some trials have been made of this institution, and they lead us to hope that by the grace of God much fruit will be produced by it. So I ask your canonical approval for it to be established in this parish... I feel all the more confident that this permission will be granted, since the Oratory has already been approved in Trent by a decree of the diocesan authority

A. ROSMINI Archpriest

111. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Trent

Rovereto, 23 December 1834

I shall be coming to Trent for a day when the Christmas festivities are over, and I pray that the Lord will fill your heart with, joy during them. The devil would like to persuade you that you are inordinately proud, so as to disturb and upset you by putting this thought into your mind. But do not be disturbed, and do not even think of yourself as proud. Rather, see yourself as an ignorant man who is in no position to decide whether he is good or bad. Go on following the programme I gave you. If the advice you are given by others in the house causes you any worrying doubts, I will reassure you when I come for a while. Let our Lady be your delight. Do not even read the scriptures, since the devil will do as he did with Jesus Christ — deceive you with texts, or try to do so. Turn to Mary and say to her again and again: 'My Mother, chase away my melancholy.'

In the heart of Jesus I am —

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI Archpriest

112. To Mgr Baines⁴⁷, Bishop of Siga and Vicar Apostolic of the

Western District of England

Rovereto, 12 January 1835

Very Reverend Monsignor,

Forgive me if I have not so far replied to the letter you were kind enough to write to me from Domodossola last September⁴⁸. The reason for my delay is that I was anxious to submit the matter of our mission to Prior Park to the judgement of His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI. In the event, by a kindly Brief of 17 December, he has left the whole matter to me. So after recommending the whole thing to the Lord, I have come to the conclusion that it will be possible to undertake the desired experiment.

I was very pleased to receive the declarations you gave me in your letter. So I have three subjects ready to place themselves at your disposal and to leave for England — namely, Luigi Gentili, Antonio Rey and Emilio Belisy. I commit them to your fatherly charity. I am fully persuaded that you will act as their father, that you will be ready to forgive their defects and be their support and guide while they are in a far-off land unknown to them. So too I am sure that they will never fail to be affectionate and respectful sons to you, and will sincerely use all their efforts in your service and that of your District, to the glory of God.

I should like to be in a position to spare you the expense of their journey, but the Institute could not at the moment afford it, and the entire financial burden will have to be borne by you. They will leave Italy as soon as they receive your orders together with the means with which to set out on their journey.

Please be good enough to impart your episcopal blessing on our little Institute of Charity, on the three members of it who will soon become your sons, and on the one who with deep respect signs himself —

Your most humble and devoted servant,

A. ROSMINI Archpriest

⁴⁷ Anyone who wishes to know more about Bishop Baines and his rather strange character may refer to *La Vita di Luigi Gentili scritta da G. B. Pagani*, pp.178-82.

⁴⁸ Mgr Baines on his way back from Rome, where he had gone in connection with the affairs of his District went by way of Calvario in the hope of finding Rosmini there. Instead he found Gentili, and arranged everything with him. Then he wrote from Domodossola to Rosmini summing up the conditions for the missions to Prior Park as planned.

113. To Don Giuseppe Penz at Trent

Rovereto, 12 January 1835

My dear friend in Jesus Christ,

My hearty thanks for your offerings towards providing the College with another servant, as well as for the frank account of things which you give in your letter. It is essential that our good lay personnel should not be too greatly burdened, and the College is quite capable of supporting another servant. Our beloved Father Vicar [Don Todeschi] is at present too heavily burdened, and has not the necessary peace of mind to give thought to all the many things that arise. So I will come myself to Trent as soon as possible and make all the necessary arrangements. In the meanwhile, have patience and keep up your courage by having recourse to the solid virtues of mortification and humility. Reassure the lay people too, and tell them in my name that they need have no fear: provision will be made for everything and their number increased. I will send on their letter to the Father Superior at Cremona [Don Rigler]. It is to be hoped that he will return in the spring to take up again the direction of that house which the Lord has subjected to great trials!⁴⁹ My dear friend, we have to suffer for the love of God and patiently bear all adverse circumstances. Try by your own prudence and charity to be helpful to the brethren, and see to the well-being of the house. I hope to bring another servant with me when I come. Meanwhile I embrace you warmly. I hope to be with you tomorrow or the next day. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI Archpriest

⁴⁹ Several of the community, the Superior included, had been ill — some with chest trouble, others with a fever or worse.

114. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Trent

Rovereto, 19 January 1835

... Your letter is full of self-accusations. You know already that I will not accept them — indeed you should not send me any more. If you want to speak to me about such things you ought to refer to them as silly illusions. You **MUST** believe your Superiors: they know you better than you know yourself. What you experience is a DECEIT of the devil, who wants to strike fear into you by making you believe that you are wicked, while all the time, without your realizing it, you have God within you. He is hidden there, and he can see the hard trials you are enduring; and when these are over he will show himself to be a bringer of greater joy than ever. OBEDIENCE and JOYFULNESS — any thought contrary to these does not come from God; it can only be a malign suggestion from the evil one. So put up with your suffering but remain at peace; and in this way oppose the enemy, while you wait to see the countenance of God hidden within you shine on you anew with his dazzling light. *Expecta Dominum, viriliter age; confortetur cor tuum, et sustine Dominum* [Wait for the Lord; act manfully, let your heart take courage].

Your humble servant in Christ,

R.

115. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan

Rovereto, 19 January 1835

My dear friend,

Thank you very much for the books you sent me, and for all the other favours you do me. When I take advantage of you like this I do it on the principle that I thereby make you gain merit before God — since I know that you do everything for his sake in a spirit of charity, as befits a good Ascribed Member of ours!

I am in the midst of many pastoral cares, and I wonder at the fact that I am not exhausted, either in body or in mind; and I put this down to something like a miracle of God's goodness. And again I see it as a special mercy of God that although I have had to reprimand many people, because of the grave disorders I see, nobody has so far taken it amiss or failed to promise me to amend.

This really is a remarkable thing, considering that I have felt in duty bound to reprove those responsible for all sorts of irregularities, both public and private. I do not know how long it will last, this meekness and docility on the part of the flock entrusted to me; but I am ready to accept God's will as long as he will help me.

A rather ambiguous reply has been received from Vienna to the plea made by the representatives of the Commune to have a house of the Institute here [in Rovereto]. It stated: 'This request cannot be granted until the ecclesiastical authorities have given definitive approval to the Institute in Trent.' The new Bishop writes encouraging me to use influence in Vienna so as to win greater favour. But I have no one to turn to there.

Elsewhere, by contrast, the Institute is spreading. What great need we have to pray and to be grateful to the Lord! I feel more embarrassed as the days go by. However, here too I have a number of good people who are praying.

Greet for me Count Castelbarco — I will write to him soon. Also greet our dear friends Padulli and Somaglia, as well as Don Luigi. In haste I embrace you in the Lord with much affection.

ROSMINI Archpriest

116. To Vincenzo Bianchi, a lawyer in Domodossola

Rovereto, 20 January 1835

My good friend,

In the matter of Trontano I can only see the hand of that divine Providence which manifests itself in everything. It has made use of you in this also, imbuing you with the zeal which led you to write to Mgr Scavini that eloquent letter of which you sent me a copy. Don Loewenbruck, the Superior at Domodossola, tells me that he is in favour of accepting that parish; and considering how near it is to Calvario, it seems to me too that it is advisable to make an initial experiment with the introduction of the Institute into parishes. So I am writing to Loewenbruck signifying my assent to the proposal. I am encouraged not a little over this important decision by seeing in my own parish the signs of God's mercy. He greatly increases my strength to meet the demands that occur. I could not have believed it possible that I should be able to carry such a burden; yet in confidence I can say to you as my friend that after three months' trial I find myself vastly encouraged rather than dismayed. How great is God's goodness! When I took on this task I felt sure that I should be overcome by it; I began on it like a victim prepared to be sacrificed; yet my bodily powers no less than those of my mind have rather grown than diminished. My dear Bianchi, pray for me: I have to render an account of great graces received — and so little corresponded with!

May St Philomena, whose cult you have so piously promoted, bless you. I am happy that at Calvario they are beginning to spread devotion to her by distributing holy pictures; and I thank you for everything, and for the picture in particular.

I have read the article in the 'Memories of Modena', and I find that the writer, or whoever prompted him, has said too much about us. I have no desire to make the Institute known through the press, and indeed would very much prefer to keep it hidden. Believe me, my dear Bianchi; what I want is that this little Congregation should do whatever it can, but keep altogether quiet about itself. For my part I would not permit any attempt to spread its name; nor would I allow any of my brethren to do so.

I must finish, though reluctantly. I embrace you warmly in the love of Jesus Christ, my dear friend and brother, while I wish to remain always —

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI Archpriest

117. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Trent

Rovereto, 13 February 1835

My dear Don Giulio,

I am sorry to see that you are in the same sad state. You ask me if there is any remedy. But I reply that there are in you none of the moral evils which you fear. So why torment yourself? Why keep on repeating to me the same accusations against yourself that we agreed you had to bury in oblivion, unless you yourself want to help the enemy who deceives you with them? You really ought to believe me. If I, looking at the matter objectively, from outside, take this view, why do you go on judging differently, when you are in no position to make a true judgement on yourself? Why do you continue to speak to me about defects which you have told me about so many times, as if I had not heard it all before? My dear man, I have to deal with many other letters apart from yours. It is right that you should let me know about any physical problems you have; but about everything else you are in the dark; and for this reason you ought to live by faith and to trust in the judgement of your Superiors: they have no wish to deceive you. So get rid of these introspective thoughts; do not say that you are wicked, or that you lack sincerity, or whatever. Do not even entertain such thoughts. Think only about being happy in God, and open your heart to him, to the One who loves you and allows you now to suffer only because he loves you. So no more letters like that last one; no more news of your melancholy thoughts. Follow the method I gave you, especially my advice about going out. Goodbye. I will reply to the rest of your letter when I have a chance.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI Archpriest

118. To His Eminence Cardinal Castracane⁵⁰ in Rome

Rovereto, 28 March 1835

Your Eminence,

I am deeply grateful for your much-appreciated letter. I had the honour of making your acquaintance in Rome, in the College of Propaganda, and I have a vivid memory of your kindness. It was the then Cardinal Cappellari, the Prefect of Propaganda, now His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI, who obtained this favour for me, at the time when you were the Secretary of that Congregation. This reason alone ought to have made me particularly happy to receive a letter from Your Eminence. But I had an additional reason to rejoice when I read in your letter of the desire expressed by the Holy Father. I regard this as a singular favour on his part, and so I would ask you to be so kind as to express to him my deepest gratitude. Our little Institute is especially and entirely dedicated to obedience to the Holy Father.

I will let nothing stand in the way of carrying out the wish of the Archbishop of Chambéry. Cardinal Morozzo some time ago told me about this desire of the Archbishop, but I had received no direct request from him, because a letter of his went astray. But as soon as I received a duplicate of that letter (revealing his wish) I replied that once the Easter celebrations were over I hoped to be able to speak to him in person; and, God willing, to make arrangements for the new foundation; also that in the meantime I had given orders for a copy of the Constitutions to be sent to him from Domodossola, so that he might be pleased to read them and examine their contents., and should he find them acceptable I asked him to be kind enough to issue a formal decree of approval, as the other bishops had done — it being my custom to ask the approval of the diocesan Ordinary before the Institute makes a foundation in a new diocese⁵¹.

I had written this much before I received your valued letter, so you can imagine that if I already was anxious to follow the leadings of Providence in this matter, now that I know these more clearly from the wish of His Holiness I have become all the more so. It is true, though, that it will not be possible for me to begin the foundation next May, as the Archbishop earnestly desires. But he will, I am sure, recognize that, anxious as I am to serve him without delay, the nature of the case (rather than any lack of zeal on my part) means that various preparations will have to be made. But I will make every effort to correspond with what now becomes for me a sacred duty, since it is something desired by our beloved Holy Father.

⁵⁰ Cardinal Castracane became and remained a close friend of Rosmini all his life. He was the postulator of the cause for the approbation of the Ins~, which remembers him with gratitude as its benefactor.

⁵¹ See E.P., letter No2449 to Mgr Antonio Martinet, Archbishop of Chambéry.

Taking courage from your kindness and zeal for the glory of God, I now dare to ask you to take this opportunity of making known to His Holiness that now and in the future my own commitment and that of the Institute is dedicated to the service of the Apostolic See, according to the needs of the time. I have received requests from eight or more bishops who wish to have the services of the Institute; but for reasons of prudence I cannot accede to all of these; nor (for the same reasons) can I accept a large number of subjects. Again it is not lawful for me to establish the noviciates as they ought to be. The precautions that I have to take, and the obstacles that stand in my way, would no longer exist were the Institute to receive definitive approval from the Holy See. And from the moment when divine Providence saw fit to raise to the government of the universal Church that eminent person whom I have always regarded as the one destined by God to establish the Institute of Charity in the Church, I had purposed to betake myself to the feet of the Holy Father — not only to offer him my congratulations on his elevation, and profess my devoted obedience, — but also to ask for the, approval of the Constitutions of the Institute. But since I foresaw the problems which stood in the way of my making the journey I proposed, I took it to be the will of God that I should wait a while. A year or so later it seemed to me that the time had come to carry out my plan; but since I wanted to act in conformity with the wishes of the authorities here, I asked the Emperor Francis (whom sadly we have since lost) if His Majesty had any objection to my approaching the Holy See to seek approval of the Institute, and requested his permission to do so. But now more than two years have elapsed, and I have so far received no reply. So it is precisely this delay in receiving a royal rescript that has both hindered me from asking for the Apostolic approval and also greatly harmed the progress of the Institute. These are the things that I beg you of your kindness to bring to the notice of the Holy Father.

With expressions of my deep esteem and reverence for Your Eminence, I remain —

A. ROSMINI Archpriest

119. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Domodossola

Rovereto, 13 April 1835

My dear Father in Jesus Christ,

Nothing is closer to my heart than the wish to form you so that you think according to the spirit of the Institute, which is one of truth and perfect uprightness. And so, as you know, I have never spared you, but have spoken with the love that a Superior must have. And this is how I mean to act now in reply to your letter of 4 April. I want you to meditate in God's presence on the following points; if you humble yourself before him you will always be greatly enlightened.

(1) In your letter you say that the Cardinal is *absolutely set on* having the mission to Savoy. My friend, this is an exaggeration. He is not 'absolutely set on it', nor could he be. At the most he would be pleased to have it and if he *mentions* this in his letter, it is mostly to show how much he cares for our Institute, and to lead us to serve him better. But if I found that I could not accept a foundation in Savoy, I should have no difficulty in excusing myself to the Cardinal without in the least displeasing him.

(2) Even supposing that it were true that the Cardinal is most eager to have a foundation in Savoy, this would not necessarily dispose the Superior of the Institute to agree to it, and in your letter you give *too much weight* to this idea. It would be quite unfitting for a Superior to let himself be moved in such a grave matter by a desire to please anyone at all. Nor should he let himself be pressured into moving faster than would be indicated by weighty considerations relating to the internal affairs of the Institute and the prescriptions of the Constitutions. So when in your letter you put to me as a reason for the foundation the fact that the Cardinal wishes it, this shows that you do not understand the prudence with which the Institute should be governed. This is something that you need to think calmly about and learn.

(3) You show great keenness over this foundation in Savoy: examine yourself to see whether in this enthusiasm of yours there is a fondness for a place where your native tongue is spoken, and where you have been shown deference, and so for these reasons you feel a certain human desire to move there.

If you will calmly think about these three points before God, it will greatly help you. In the meantime be at peace about the whole matter until I get there, and take no further thought about it, regarding it as something which does not concern you. Because this disposition of mind — to leave to Superiors to do as they think best over things which are no part of your duties — is a valuable help to religious *obedience*, to proper *order*, and to *peace of mind*. When I come you will hear about my plan and you will, I hope, be satisfied.

As for the English mission, take care to prepare the two men who are to accompany Don Luigi [Gentili]. And among other things, it will help if you see that they read carefully the *Constitutions*, so that they may gain a thorough knowledge of the Institute. Get Gilardi⁵², as well as Molinari and Alvazzi to do the same — Don Alessio⁵³ too, if you think it advisable. This Institute of ours is still not sufficiently understood and known by our men. It needs to be more seriously studied.

May the blessing of heaven come down on you all, my dear friend — this is my hope. I embrace you in spirit in Jesus Christ.

Yours affectionately,

R. Archpriest

⁵² Don Carlo Gilardi was from Locarno, and had entered the Institute six months earlier.

⁵³ Don Alessio Martin was from Savoy, and he too had joined the Institute a few months previously.

120. To Sister Cristina Pilotti, a Daughter of Charity, in Verona

Rovereto, 18 April 1835

Dear Sister Cristina,

We have all suffered a great loss with the death of our holy and venerated Marchesa di Canossa, whom I have always revered as a mother. But I know that this event must be a specially grave blow to your heart — to you who were her close and constant companion, so greatly loved by her. But we must adore the designs of Providence, which are so much above our understanding! Who would have doubted that one so worthy and deeply respected must live a long life for the benefit of the Institute she had founded for the good of the Church? But it was not to be: she was to die comparatively young. And in God's eyes this was for the best. For we know by the light of faith that had this not been so, the Marchesa would not have left us so soon; God would not have allowed it. This reflection alone goes some way to dry our tears, and perhaps even change them into tears of joy. For who can doubt that this holy soul is now in a better world? For myself, I have not been able to offer suffrages for her soul without at the same time commending myself urgently to her prayers, for I was confident that she is already close to God. Nor will she from above have forgotten her Daughters of Charity and all those in need — of whom I count myself one.

I am sorry to hear that your own health has suffered: may God give you strength. And you have a further reason to put aside your grief. This would do harm to your delicate health, which now will be so much needed. Please convey my sympathy to all your companions, and tell them that my feeling is one of great sorrow, but mixed with a certain joy at the happy translation of their Mother. Should it please God to glorify her by any new sign of favour, please let me know of this at once. Meanwhile I remain with great respect and affection

—

A. R.

121. To Giacomo Molinari in Verona

Rovereto, 20 April 1835

My dear Sir,

I should like to recommend to your kindness Signor N. N., who is currently occupied in that business of yours. He stands in need of your charity and indulgence. My dear Sir, I know that he has been at fault in a delicate matter, and has been so more than once. So I fully recognize that you have good reasons to dismiss him from the affair. But I see also what an admirable act of generosity it would be if in your charity you were to consider giving him another chance to prove himself. I will make no more pleas on his behalf if he fails this time. But I have good reason to believe that he is now altogether a changed man. It is true that one can never be certain about people; but we can — and indeed we must — hope for the best in the case of Signor N. N. What would become of him, and of his poor family, if you, Signor Giacomo, were to be unrelenting? I know that your own brothers share my good hope that this man has changed. If he were to be abandoned in his disgrace, who knows what he might be driven to do?

I will say no more: your own humane feelings will lead you to further reflections — over which, to keep this letter short, I will not go into details

I have the honour to remain —

Your devoted servant,

ROSMINI Archpriest

122. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Trent

Rovereto, 20 April 1835

... Take heart, my dear Don Giulio, in your affliction. Trust yourself to the guidance of your Superior, in whose words you must hear the voice of God. In that way you will be sure of not going astray. Be convinced that whatever thoughts insinuate themselves into your mind that are contrary to the views of your wise and holy director are false and illusory. Recognize who is your enemy and ignore him, while you hold fast to obedience. Be courageous, then, and happy! God allows you to struggle for a while so as to set you free in the end.

Regard yourself as incapable of judging for yourself, and think only of resting in God through your Superiors; relax, and preserve a holy cheerfulness. Say often: 'Lord, in thee I have put my trust; may I never be confounded.' Our Blessed Lady must be the one to make you free. Say some special devotion in her honour, and I will join you if you tell me what you have chosen.

I have no time to write more now. Fondest regards in the Lord.

A. R.

123. To Mgr Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona

Rovereto, 22 April 1835

Very Reverend Monsignor,

We have welcomed back Rigler and found him in good health. He quite rightly is unendingly grateful to you for the more than fatherly kindness and consideration you have shown him; and knowing how great is your esteem for Rigler, I am not at all surprised that you feel the loss of his companionship. He on his part was very happy in Cremona. But the situation in our poor house at Trent really did call for his presence for the time being. Indeed he was content enough to go there, since he realized the need.

Do not imagine, my Lord, that your hopes have 'gone up in smoke'⁵⁴. But God alone knows the times and the moments; and sometimes it is his good pleasure to show us, by deferring his gifts, that even our good and holy desires must be subordinated and conformed to his adorable will. Sometimes too he sheds an unexpected light in the midst of gloom. Take the case of the venerable Marchesa di Canossa! According to human reasoning, who would not have wished to see her granted a longer lease of life? Yet what we wanted was not really for the best And God in his wise Providence disposed otherwise. I have no doubt that despite her most sad loss, God will bless the Daughters of Charity, as well as the holy plans you have in mind.

Here in my own parish I recently saw an instance of God's designs: everything seemed to be going swimmingly, and the local people were changing for the better, thanks mainly to the Oratory for adults. This Oratory delighted everyone; nothing in the least untoward occurred. But what do you think happened then? A decree from the supreme government authority brought about its suppression. *Fiat voluntas tua*⁵⁵ [Thy will be done]. To me it is all the same; and I expect to meet with other setbacks within the two years that I have promised to stay here. Let us live in faith, then, and joyfully do whatever is in our power, making progress with constancy in the course of our spiritual warfare.

I must end now, because I have to set out on a visit to our schools in this countryside. With great respect, and asking your blessing —

ROSMINI Archpriest

PS In my haste I forgot to thank you most sincerely for the approval you were good enough to give to our Constitutions.

⁵⁴ Mgr Sardagna had repeatedly shown his wish to have a foundation of the Institute of Charity in Cremona. (cf. EC., letters 2230 and 2478). So when he saw Rigler leave he thought that all his hopes were at an end.

⁵⁵ The amount of good that the district derived from the Oratory was incalculable, and it would be difficult to convey how deep and acute was the sorrow felt by Rosmini when he saw it suppressed. But cf. E.C. vol. IV, p.321 and the Vita di A. Rosmini pp. 475, 487.

124. To His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI

Rovereto, 24 April 1835

... Considering all the circumstances, I felt confident that I was acting in a way conformable with divine Providence when I agreed to the request of the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District of England, the Bishop of Siga, to send him three members of the Institute of Charity so that they might minister there. (I wrote previously to Your Holiness about this.) I believed that I had three men suitable to supply this need in the two priests, Luigi Gentili (a Roman whom you know) and the Frenchman Antonio Rey, a lecturer in theology, together with the cleric Emilio Belisy, who comes of a noble family in Carpentras. But since the Institute of Charity is specially dedicated to the service of the Holy See, and would fail in its purpose if it did not profess the utmost submission to and dependence on that See, from which alone it can derive its spirit and guidance, I consider it opportune and fitting that before the three subjects intended for the mission leave for England they should go to Rome and humbly present themselves before Your Holiness as a sign of their obedient service and with the aim of asking your blessing, from which they above all look to receive courage and strength in their distant mission. So it is my humble purpose in this letter to ask of your kindness and good will that you will receive these devoted sons of yours with the fatherly charity which you extend to the whole Catholic world, and that you will inform them of your wishes, and also let them have the documents you consider fitting for their situation. Lastly, please be so good as to accept their devoted homage, together with that of myself and the whole Institute. With this I humbly ask your apostolic blessing.

Your devoted servant and son,

ANTONIO ROSMINI Archpriest

125. To Don Luigi Gentili

Rovereto, 25 April 1835

My dear brother,

The signs seem to indicate, as far as one can interpret them, that it is the will of God that some of the members of our little Institute are to go to England and exercise Christian charity in that country. As far as the external signs go, there was the request made by the Bishop of Siga, the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, and also the Brief of the Holy Father (dated 17 December 1834) in which he left it to the discretion of the Superior General of the Institute of Charity to decide whether to accede to the Bishop's appeal. And as for the internal signs, there was the belief of Superiors that the Institute had men available who could put themselves at the disposal of the Bishop in works of charity.

Now, to obey the divine voice it was decided to send you, my dear brother, on this mission, giving you as your companions our French brethren Antonio Rey and Emilio Belisy. So you must pluck up your courage and pray to the Holy Spirit for the prudence you especially need so that the three of you may be able to carry out faithfully the will of your heavenly Father in that distant and difficult mission.

In the first place you must understand and be deeply persuaded in your heart the Institute does not aim to become great or famous: it has no desire to cut a figure in people's eyes, but rather for its own part wishes to remain as unknown as possible, and even to cease to exist altogether if that should be the will of God and make for his glory. So you will be careful not even to name the Institute without need; and you must try also to impress on your companions this spirit of humility which the Institute itself and each of its members must preserve.

You must take care to render yourself perfect in your obedience, maintaining the strictest dependence on your Superiors who (once you have left to take up your mission) will in fact be the Superior General and any others he may appoint over you in the future. You are particularly required not to make any decision beyond the scope of the faculties you have received.

In addition to aiming at perfect obedience, you must set about destroying in yourself every trace of worldly self-love. For every member of the Institute, relying on God's mercy, aims to exercise charity towards his neighbour to the fullest possible extent in so far as he knows the will of God. And this can only be done by someone who has for the love of God overcome in himself all worldly self-love, so that he wants God alone to be the witness of whatever he does. To this end make sure that you speak with modesty and self-restraint, with no

affectation; and that nothing you say tends to exalt yourself or belittle others. In short, carefully hide your own merits from others; and do this out of a constant conviction of your own nothingness.

You are appointed Superior over your companions; but they must also be your advisers, especially in regard to the relations of the Institute with people outside it. In your dealings with these, you must give no place to either hopes or fears that are figments of your imagination. Rather, you must be guided by uprightness, truthfulness, straightforwardness and rational foresight. So your duties towards your companions come down to these two: to lead them to holiness; and to guide their charity according to the spirit of the Institute. And both of these aims can best be achieved along the lines I have enjoined on you: helping them to overcome self-love, so that they not only submit themselves to the decisions of Superiors (which would be no great thing), but that they are fully content to do so, preserving always equanimity and a cheerful spirit, together with a readiness to sacrifice themselves unconditionally for love of their neighbour, according to the will of God as it is made known to them. But take careful note: you will not lead them to victory over self-love if you provoke it, but only if you treat them with great consideration and kindness. There are several ways in which you can help them to overcome their self-love: first, by the example you give them of a sincere spirit of humility and self-sacrifice, as evidenced in all that you do or say; then by the general and particular instructions you will give them over the self-sacrifice which is necessary in the exercise of unlimited charity — and these instructions must not smack of anything harsh or arbitrary, but show a reasonable and sympathetic spirit; and finally, when they have to undertake even humiliating tasks contrary to their self-esteem that you enjoin on them when Providence gives occasion, they should see that God himself makes it necessary for their Superior to impose these difficult tasks, provided always that you judge that they are not beyond the spiritual capacities of your companions — and it is a gift of God to be able to make such a judgement, a gift that Superiors need to ask for with many prayers and tears. You must always show your love and respect for each of them, and deal with them *cum magna reverentia* [with great reverence]. Never laugh in a way that shows the slightest scorn or derision; instead, a loving smile should reveal your interior happiness, backed by the serious and peaceful thoughts that should always fill the mind of a Christian, a member of the Institute, and all its Superiors.

Put everything in train to satisfy to the full the Bishop's wishes, always giving precedence to these rather than to any requests for charitable works that may come from others. Indeed you must never undertake anything that could detract from the perfect carrying out of the works His Lordship has given you to do, or could cause him any displeasure. At the same time, should the case arise, you must not, even to please him, act in a way contrary to the spirit and essential Rules of the Institute, but retain the freedom and independence that

are necessary if the Institute is to continue to exist and do the good that it proposes for itself.

In dealing with other priests, make sure that there is never any sign of dissension or divisiveness between you and them; rather, treat them with considerateness, courtesy and a sincere readiness to do them every kind of charitable service. Above all, never show lack of esteem for them, or criticize their behaviour, particularly as regards their innocent recreations. And so as not to put up any kind of barrier between us and them, I should like you to ask the Bishop to allow you to be actually in the college with the other masters, keeping the lodging you were given as a place of retreat for yourselves and others. And within the college, be careful never to put on any airs of being reformers or teachers, but rather behave humbly and be tolerant over any customs you do not approve of. Aim only at winning favour with all, by your modesty and prudence; and wait for the hour of the Lord.

Yours

R.

126. To Mgr Baines, Bishop of Siga, Vicar Apostolic of the Western District of England

Rovereto, 26 April 1835

My Lord,

Allow me with this letter to present to you three members of the Institute of Charity — Don Luigi Gentili (who will be their Superior), the priest Antonio Rey, and the cleric Emilio Belisy.

Your Lordship's pastoral zeal, favoured by Providence in a particular way, brought about this mission and will, I am sure, see to the continuance of the work now begun, taking care of it and fostering these small shoots of the Institute of Charity which are now transplanted to the soil of England. I renew my plea that you will be good enough to act as a father to these dear companions of mine who are now far away from me. Kindly make allowances for them. If they are imbued with the spirit of their Institute, they will spend all their strength in good works, and humble charity will direct them. They seek a reward not on earth but in heaven. If you will be good enough to give me frequent accounts of how they get on I will take this as a certain sign of your kindness; and on my part I will take every possible step to ensure that my companions, according to their vocation, serve you with the zeal and diligence which your care for them deserves. Finally I beg your pastoral blessing on the Institute and on —

Your devoted servant,

A. ROSMINI Archpriest

127. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Trent

Rovereto, 29 April 1835

My dear Giulio,

I gather from your letter that your trouble persists, or rather that after a temporary relief it has returned. Have no doubts that our Lady will banish it entirely from you. Your present state, my dear Giulio, is quite involuntary: it is simply an affliction which you suffer; and if you bear it with resignation it will earn you merit with God. You yourself, in the intervals when you could see clearly, knew that what oppressed you was an illusion of the devil, not a reality; and even if you had not realized this for yourself, the voice of your Superiors, the voice of obedience, forces you to believe this, and uncovers the real enemy. So — courage! You must turn your thoughts away from what troubles you and fix them on our Lady, the brightest of all stars; you must be guided by the words of your holy and enlightened director, Don Pietro Rigler, the guide of your soul, and as such given to you by God. He will be the heavenly messenger who will direct your steps safely in the midst of the darkness. Fill your mind with joyful thoughts; let the infinite mercy of God be your daily food, and let Mary be the one to nourish you with her most sweet milk. I await the consolation of a further letter from you which will be all obedience, all lightness of heart. *Qui sperabunt in te, Maria, non confundentur* [Those who trust in you, Mary, will never be confounded]. I embrace you lovingly and am ever —

Yours,

A. R. Archpriest

128. To Don Agostino dalla Piazza at Vallarsa

Rovereto, 29 April 1835

My dear Don Agostino,

Yesterday I heard the confession of the unfortunate Robol, and promised to console his afflicted family. I ask you, Don Agostino, to take to your heart this work of charity, and to ask the parish priest (please give him my respects) in my name to interest himself in it. I enclose with this a letter to the family. Will you be so kind as to read it to those poor people and explain it? I trust in your charity. In haste I remain —

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI Archpriest

129. To the father and mother and all the Robol family

Rovereto, 29 April 1835

... Yesterday I went to the prison to see your Felice, who wanted to make his confession to me. While I was with him he asked me to try to offer you all some consolation and to bring you to accept with holy resignation whatever may be the outcome for him. For my part, I must tell you that I was greatly consoled and edified by his attitude, which made it clear that he has been especially enlightened by God to recognize and detest the gravity of his crime. He awaits the punishment with a truly Christian fortitude, and is ready to pay the price that human justice demands, if only, as he hopes, his repentance and the disgrace resulting from his misdeed can win him grace and forgiveness from the justice of God. And for your consolation, let me say that I look upon your Felice as a kind of martyr to justice and repentance, and consider that if he dies in such a frame of mind he will swiftly go to heaven⁵⁶. But despite his heroic resignation, there is one thing alone that afflicts and worries him and that is the thought and the sight of how much you suffer on his account. So there is no better way in which you can comfort him than by showing that you are resigned to the will of God, and are ready to offer up to the Lord your affliction and the anguish you are enduring so as to merit for Felice entire forgiveness before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. So when you come to visit him, do not give in to tears and excessive sorrow, but rather move him to accept his fate with Christian sentiments, showing yourselves to be resigned and even content over his resolution to accept his punishment. Believe also that such resignation on your part will greatly comfort him and make him feel far less the weight of his sentence

ROSMINI Archpriest of San Marco

⁵⁶ See the Vita di A Rosmini, vol.1, pp.490 et seq.

130. To Do Antonio Oberrauch in Verona

Rovereto, 3 May 1835

My dear brother in Jesus Christ,

You perhaps thought I had forgotten about you when you received no letters from me. But no, I always have you in my heart: I see you always in the love of Christ. But up to now my wish to write to you at length has been thwarted, simply because I could never find the necessary time to do so. But now I am with you, and with your brethren, dear Aliprandi and Pietro.

First of all, how are things with your vocation? Is God giving you the holy resolution and determination to persevere in obedience and the labours of our Institute? Do you study its Rules and try to understand in depth the spirit of justice and charity which animates it? These are the main things that I am concerned to learn from you — you who are far from the discipline and helps that are available in a regular house. You have need of a special grace from God to make you firm in the holy decision you have taken; you need also to show a particularly generous co-operation with that grace.

Furthermore I should especially like you to give me an account of the instruction you were given when you were provisionally assigned to Verona. Do you read it with respectful attention, meditate upon it, and model your behaviour on it? What things do you think need putting right in that Verona house? What defects do you see in your companions? What are the ways in which the community could grow in fervour, holiness and good order? I shall expect from you a faithful account of all these things.

I take it that you write every fortnight to your immediate Superior, Don Rigler, telling him what is happening and whatever else he would wish to know; and that you receive from him suitable guidance?

May God bless you abundantly. Give my fond greetings to dear Aliprandi and Pietro. I will write also to Aliprandi at the first opportunity. As you can imagine, I am snowed under with all that has to be done. I am alone in an extensive parish, and the parochial duties are already too much for me. So far God in his overflowing mercy has given me his help. But I have special need of prayers for various matters which weigh upon my heart; so please pray yourself and get others to pray for me. Goodbye, my dear brother. All good wishes to Don Gasparo and the Oratorians.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

ROSMINI Archpriest

131. To Giacomo Nodari in Rovereto

Rovereto. 5 May 1835

I have read and carefully thought about your letter: do not imagine that I fail to recognize the seriousness of the wrongs committed by N. N. and the entire reasonableness of your dismissing him from your service and taking him to law. This would accord with the ordinary rules of prudence. Indeed N. N. himself fully understands your reasons for so acting, and accepts them. But kindly let me add further to what I wrote to you before; and regard what I say as a sign of the esteem I have for you, for your goodness of heart, and once again, your generosity.

I get the impression that you believe that N. N., during the years that he was in your employ, may have stolen from you a considerable sum through a series of breaches of trust which he kept concealed. Signor Giacomo, I do not deny that you have grounds for fearing this; since a man who has been found unfaithful once can certainly have been so many times. All the same, allow me to tell you what I believe in my heart. I am fully convinced that he has not stolen from you (through various small thefts) more than fifty or so forms in all, over the six years (I think it was) that he was in your service. He has given me leave to make use of what he confided in me during his confession, and you may be certain that this is how matters stand. He recognizes how great is the wrong he did you, and — as far as one man can judge another — I believe that he is sincerely repentant.

Finally, it is right that we should trust to certain signs, unless we despair of the mere possibility that a man who has fallen from grace could ever return to acting uprightly. I can vouch for the fact that the life N. N. is now leading is quite different from what it was before. Would it be right, my dear Signor Giacomo, to abandon a family which, without his support, may be driven to desperate measures, especially when there is promise of better things, and a generous act of charity might mean the difference between life and death? No, Signor Giacomo, do not resolve to take such a regrettable step, but out of pure charity pardon him once again, and do not condemn his and his poor children to wretchedness. If you continue to employ him, you can if you wish attach to this favour (which I shall consider as done to myself) all the restrictions that prudence suggests. Accept him back with reservations: let his employment be only conditional; but do not send him away. If you act like this you will gain no small merit with God, who himself judges us wretched men, and sometimes needs to have patience with us over many, many years, and put up with our repeated falls time and again. But he has promised that he will do so, provided that we act likewise with our fellow-men. I await in hope, then, for a full pardon, while I remain, with genuine esteem and sincere respect,

Your humble servant,
ROSMINI Archpriest

132. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Trent

Rovereto, 23 May 1835

My dear friend and brother in Jesus Christ, Saviour of the world. May Mary our Mother console you.

You are not your own judge. If you hold firmly to this maxim, that will be enough to bring you peace of mind, and to make you realize that the thoughts which distress you are directly opposed both to this maxim and to the judgement of your Superiors. So I order you once again never willingly to think about the state of your soul, but (whatever that state may be) to go about your ordinary occupations, and to say to God (simply pronouncing the words will be enough, so that even in this prayer no scruples may arise), *I love you, I wish to love you, make me love you.* If you simply say these words out of obedience this will greatly console you. Then turn to our Lady and say to her often: 'O blessed Virgin, my dear Mother, drive the enemy away from my soul.' And another principle that should keep up your spirits is this: *The devil can do us no harm beyond what God permits him to do.* Take courage, then, and carry on! *Fugite, partes adversae, vicit Leo de tribu Iuda, radix David* [See the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered]. (Rev. 5:5).

I await consoling news from you. May God bless you through his Son Jesus, and lift from you, if it his will, the heavy cross you are having to bear, or at least give you strength and courage to bear it.

Your wretched brother,

A. R.

133. To Cardinal Placido Tadini, Archbishop of Genoa, in Rome

Rovereto, 26 May 1835

Your Eminence,

Let me first offer you my hearty congratulations on your promotion to the cardinalate, by which our Holy Father, Pope Gregory XVI, has conspicuously rewarded your great and enduring merits. (I would have conveyed my congratulations sooner, but I feared to inconvenience you by a complimentary letter.) But now I have to send you my sincere thanks for your much-appreciated letter of 21 May — a letter full of kindness and courtesy. It reveals particularly your great zeal for the glory of God, from which derived your proposal that our little Institute of Charity could suitably be established in the ancient abbey of La Chiusa⁵⁷. My frank opinion is that it would not be contrary to the nature of the Institute to run a home for secular people who wish to reject worldly notions and earthly vanities and seek peace in a cloistered life. Indeed this would be a fine work of spiritual charity towards such people — one entirely in accordance with the spirit of an Institute which was conceived with a certain breadth of outlook, so that it would not be hindered from applying itself to any work of Christian charity. In such a house it would be easy enough to assign quarters quite separate from those of the religious; and the relations between the two could be governed by suitable rules. So I see no difficulty here.

However I do see a problem if it is proposed to start this work immediately. I would think it necessary to allow time to form suitable subjects for the work Your Eminence knows better than I how much is involved in the training of true religious; and although the men I have are all, thank God, fervent and marked by great purity of conscience, yet they are either young in years or relatively new to religious life; and such men as could begin this work are at present so busily occupied that I could not take them away from their posts. So if it is agreeable to you that the initiation of the plan could be delayed for a time, and then proceed gradually (since it would be impossible to bring together a large enough community all at once), I feel confident that the Institute of Charity could lend itself to such a holy and pleasing project. In the meantime I will await any further news and views that Your Eminence may be kind enough to send me over this matter. I sign myself with deepest respect —

A. ROSMINI Archpriest

⁵⁷ King Charles Albert had revealed to Mgr Tadini his plan to entrust the ancient abbey of San Michele della Chiusa to a religious congregation so that a home for the sort of people described in the foregoing letter could be established, and Tadini had suggested the Institute of Charity to the King as suitable for carrying out his project (See *La Vita di A. Rosmini*, vol. II, p.607.)

134. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Trent

Rovereto, 21 June 1835

My dear friend and brother, may the Paraclete dwell in your soul!

Today, on the feast of St Aloysius, that most lovable of saints, I want to write to my Giulio to remind him to be cheerful in the Lord. How are we to maintain this cheerfulness? We have to give little thought to ourselves, and never pass judgement on our own state. Instead we must go on our way with simplicity. Since we have a secure anchor, are we then to have doubts? Can we entertain sadness in ourselves? And what is this anchor? It is Christian hope, which 'is never confounded'. And this hope belongs not only to the saints but to us sinners too. We must all have hope, and then we can never perish. We know that God's goodness is infinite: he has created us; his generosity is boundless; and so pleasing to him is our confidence in him that it moves him to save us, to make us holy, to bless us in every way. So what I recommend to you is simplicity of life — and not too much introspection, which only confuses you. Keep yourself busy with things that are neutral; avoid even study, as far as you can. And if even so you feel depression, do not be afraid; this is involuntary and does you no harm. It merely calls for an attitude of resignation, as with all our other misfortunes. But on no account must you say (or think) that this is of your own doing. This would be to slip back into your old mistake of trying to judge yourself — something you neither can nor should do. So accept even this sadness with simplicity and cheerfulness, and say to the Lord: 'I am made ready by scourging'. When all is said and done, leave everything to our Lady, St Philip [Neri] and St Aloysius. Keep in their company; and avail yourself of the harmless pastimes that lighten life for us, as St Philip did. Try to find relief in small things that can amuse you because their very insignificance can both cheer you up and allow you to practise humility at the same time. On top of all this: perfect obedience towards the one whom God has given you as a father for so many years, and in whose voice you must recognize that of God himself. Continue to love me, and believe that I am —

Yours affectionately,

R.

135. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Trent

Rovereto, 28 June 1835

My dear Giulio,

In your letter you do not keep to our agreement. From beginning to end it is nothing but a series of self-accusations. Yet we agreed that you would not judge or condemn yourself. It is this certain rule alone that can give you peace of mind if you can only stick to it. You must take care not to get caught up in a vicious circle: saying to yourself, 'I am to blame, because I am not obeying by refraining from judging myself.' But can you not see that this is itself a judgement you are passing on yourself, a self-condemnation? I do not want you to say that you are to blame, even when you disobey me. You must never say that you are guilty, because you are not qualified to judge, especially in your own case. Remember that the greatest and finest act of humility is never to pass judgement on yourself, but rather to renounce your own opinion. This really is humility — rather than the way you behave: calling yourself culpable, hardened in wickedness, the slave of passion and so forth, as you do — or better, as the evil one does, by his suggestions, which deceive you with a false appearance of humility. So I must again forbid you ever to condemn yourself, to pronounce or write judgements about yourself such as are to be found in your last letter. You must not even think along such lines, as far as you can help it. I forbid you to judge yourself to be guilty even if you fail to observe this command of mine, which I give you in God's name. This is a fine thing: you presume to know your inner soul and to be able to assess the exact degree of *knowledge* and *malice* you have or have had! These are matters which are beyond your power, my dear Giulio, and something you would never attempt if you were in your right mind. What you are suffering from, my dear fellow, is a sort of illness; and you must put up with it until it passes, bearing it on the two shoulders of RESIGNATION and OBEDIENCE. If you fail in either of these, you must still not judge yourself or condemn yourself as guilty. Instead you must put the whole matter into the loving hands of God your Father, and the Blessed Virgin your Mother, commending yourself also to St Philip, St Aloysius and St Philomena as your advocates. As regards St Philomena, make a novena to her on the lines which Rigler, your sure guide, will show you: ask her (if it is God's will) for the grace of serenity of mind and trust in your Superiors, so that you may be convinced once for all that it is you who are mistaken in your judgement, and not they. And I counsel you again to give up meditation and examination of conscience, and to do as little study as possible. Instead, busy yourself with trifling things, things of no importance. These will be more pleasing in God's eyes than activities that may seem to be more valuable. I embrace you lovingly in the Lord.

Yours, ROSMINI Archpriest

136. To Don Luigi Gentili at Prior Park in England

Rovereto, 9 July 1835

My dear brother and son in Jesus Christ,

May our Lord Jesus Christ and his Mother Mary be heartily thanked for your safe arrival in the place preordained for your sanctification and that of your companions, united with you as one heart and one soul, bound together by the unutterable love of our Lord Jesus Christ. You can imagine with what eagerness I have read and re-read your letter.

It would be useful for your salvation if from time to time you were to kneel before your companions and put them under obedience to tell you what defects they had noticed in you, especially as regards dealing with your neighbour, and you on your part ought to thank them for their charity, without trying to vindicate yourself. After that you should ponder over the faults that were revealed in this way; and as far as you find the accusations true you ought to try hard to correct those faults. This exercise will not only be a good way for you to overcome your self-love but also for you to discover in what ways you had offended your companions, so as to make yourself more acceptable to them by avoiding whatever they had reason to find displeasing in your behaviour.

You must not be too sure about yourself, or be too convinced that you show prudence in your dealings with others. And even when things seem satisfactory and people are pleasant to you, do not be too confident that you have done well. Prudence comes with the years; and someone who is still young does not realize how subtle and deep a virtue prudence is, and too readily believes that he possesses it. An older person can always see further than youth can: you should therefore respect age. Take it as a sure fact that prudence consists more often in refraining than in doing: we are seldom sorry for what we have not said or done; but much more often for our actions and words. We must therefore watch our step — never putting a foot down, so to speak, without first testing the ground. Circumstances have to be carefully considered, as well as the likely consequences of what we do and say.

I greet you lovingly and bless you, together with my two dear sons and brothers who are with you in the service of the Lord. Be very discreet and good-humoured in your dealings with them.

A. R.

137. To Mgr Pietro Ostini⁵⁸, Papal Nuncio in Vienna

Rovereto, 14 July 1835

Your Excellency,

If I were not intimately persuaded that it was *God* alone who initiated the Institute of Charity, I might well have doubts about its success.

But given this persuasion, it would seem a lack of faith on my part if I were to allow myself to be discouraged at the first obstacle that appears, and were to take my hand off the plough. Your Excellency knows well that all similar works of the Lord have had to face many difficulties and much opposition. On the other hand I know all too well that it is my sins that cause the obstacles we face; and that it would be as well if I were to disassociate myself from the Institute. I have thought of this more than once, but have never found a way to do so. So I can only conclude that *God*, in order to show forth his mercy more abundantly, wishes to pursue his purpose despite the impediment that I represent, and so I remain tranquil and adore his designs. And it seems to me that (again with *God's* help) my peace of mind would not be at all lessened even if I saw the Institute altogether destroyed, since my task is not to succeed but to serve *God* and conform myself to Providence as it manifests itself through events. It is this frame of mind, this entire indifference in face of the divine will (which I try to maintain in myself and which must constitute the characteristic of the Institute) that has persuaded me never to wish to see it grow or spread, any more than I wished to found it in the first place. You may already be aware that the beginning of the Institute did not come from me but from that holy woman, my friend and mother (whom I have now lost), the Marchesa di Canossa, the Foundress of the Daughters of Charity in Italy. I would never have done anything in Trent had I not been invited there by the Bishop, Mgr Luschin. I have depended on him in everything; I was assured by him that he would support me with the King and the government; and I explained my difficulties to him before I came — the main one being that as this was an Institute with a wide scope, and was extending outside the confines of the monarchy, I did not know if I could enter Austria. Before buying the present house in Trent I asked him not only to let me have his advice but also to give me an express declaration that he would effectively support me with the government. He more than once gave me such a declaration. I sought his approval beforehand of the plans of the buildings I proposed to put up. In short, then, my conscience does not reproach me with failing to observe the rules of prudence in the whole matter, or with going against the normal ways in which the will of *God* is made known. But I noticed that as soon as Mgr Luschin

⁵⁸ Rosmini had known Pietro Ostini in Rome (back in 1823) as Professor of ecclesiastical history at the Gregorian University. Ostini was later promoted to the post of Papal Nuncio in Vienna.

found the attitude of the government at all cold or obstructive, he seemed to be a changed man. Not that he spoke openly with me about any of this; rather he pretended to be the same person as before. I detected in him a certain dislike of the Jesuits, and saw that he was displeased by certain similarities which he seemed to see between the institute of Charity and the Society of Jesus. But he said nothing to me about this.

To sum up: Mgr Luschin, after having put me in an embarrassing position, abandoned me, and issued that famous report of 23 July 1834 in which he depicted the Institute of Charity as having a tendency, like that of the Jesuits, to insert itself everywhere in the Church. It was then that he laid down the four conditions, the text of which you have obtained for me⁵⁹. It would not be fitting for me to comment further to you about these conditions; but I think it advisable to ask you to notice just one of them: the notable contradiction between the actions of Mgr Luschin and the condition he imposes — viz., that our priests may not take on the pastoral care of souls.

I myself was obliged to take on precisely such a post because of his repeated invitations, and for fear of offending him. Moreover he wrote to another member of the Institute (Baron Todeschi), offering him the parish of Santa Maria del Carmine in this town. And on top of that he appointed yet another of our priests as a chaplain in the German part of the Tyrol. I simply cannot understand these contradictions — unless they mean that Mgr Luschin found it of practical use in his diocese to do what in theory he regarded as harmful. But no more of this. The Institute makes no claim to engage in the care of souls: it merely makes itself available. It is then up to individual bishops whether they make use of its members in this way or not.

It is a firm principle of the Institute never to ask for anything, whether parish responsibilities or anything else. Rather, it holds itself free to decline invitations when its situation does not allow it to accept them. But I have said enough. In the midst of these various complications I simply rejoice in divine Providence and praise God from my heart, looking to see these matters resolved in whatever way Providence may choose to act. But I do not think I should be justified in abandoning my position before the due time. So too to transfer to another religious institute would require a special vocation. And even if I thought God wanted me to do so (which is not the case), I could never decide for my companions as regards their vocation — for this can only come from God⁶⁰. So I ask you most earnestly to pray at the foot of the crucifix so

⁵⁹ The conditions suggested by the Bishop to the government for the approval of the institute (conditions which that government accepted) were such as to subject the Institute to the power of both the Bishop himself and the government See *La Vita di A. Rosmini*, vol.I, p.424 and p.436.

⁶⁰ Mgr Luschin was succeeded by Mgr Tschiderer who, when he went (in June 1835) to Vienna to pay his respects to the new emperor, Ferdinand, told Mgr Ostini that he wished to have in his diocese only one religious Order, and Ostini proposed the

as to obtain for me the light that I myself continually ask for — even though my own unworthiness puts obstacles in the way of this enlightenment of which I have such need.

I will end by adding only that after seeing the conditions laid down by Mgr Luschin, and considering the whole thing before God, I decided to resign from this care of souls; and I merely await an opportune moment to take this step with all possible prudence.

With deepest respect and gratitude I ask your blessing and your protection. I remain your humble servant and friend —

ROSMINI Archpriest

Jesuits to him, and said that he would write to Rosmini telling him and his companions to enter the Society of Jesus. See *La Vita di A. Rosmini*, voll, p.443.

138. To Don Lodovico Besi, missionary in Macao

Brescia, 18 July 1835

Reverend and dear Father,

... With what eagerness and delight one reads about the labours, the consolations, the struggles and the victories, the persecutions and the progress of the Church of Jesus Christ as it spreads to new countries! I am extremely grateful to you for the news you give me of yourself and of the Church... As for us, who live in lands which have been Catholic for centuries, we still have to fight against the ever-vigilant and untiring enemy of all good, even though the persecutions we experience are so different from what you endure there.

As for the little Institute of Charity, with the Lord's help it continues to thrive, even though the devil fights against it. A small group of its members, headed by Don Gentili (whom you know) has gone to Bath in England, at the repeated and urgent prompting of the Vicar Apostolic there, Mgr Baines. What it may please God to make of this sowing of the seed of the gospel is hidden in the designs of his lofty Providence. The Institute has also begun to undertake the care of souls, and it was God's will that I myself should be the first to take this burden on my shoulders. Circumstances put great pressure on me, obliging me last year to become the Archpriest of Rovereto — though only for a limited time. I am hoping that our Lady of the Rosary, my beloved Mother, will relieve me of the task which — on her feast, and relying on her patronage — I took upon me.

For the rest, the Institute (as you know) lives ever in tranquillity, resting in Providence. It has no ambitions, seeks nothing, and refuses nothing that is offered to it. My dear Besi, although we are so far apart in body, do always remain united with me in spirit; obtain the divine mercy for me with those apostolic prayers of yours which extend to the whole Church. Look on me as wanting to be a brother of yours in spirit amidst your arduous exertions there. Be ready to make any demands on me (even though I can do so little), as your servant as well as your brother.

I will say nothing about *Giuliani* (who is in Rome) or about the others you know, since you have more news about them than I myself. You will have heard also about the death of the Emperor, Francis, and the accession of his son, Ferdinand. He shows great promise as far as the cause of religion is concerned. So I will say no more about these things, but embrace you warmly in Jesus Christ, the salvation and comfort of our souls, our strength in times of difficulty and temptation. To him alone be glory for ever. Amen.

Ever your friend and servant in Christ,

ROSMINI Archpriest

139. To Emilio Belisy at Prior Park in England

Rovereto, 4 August 1835

My dear Emilio, beloved companion in the service of Jesus Christ, to whom be all honour and the total sacrifice of ourselves. Amen.

As I reply to your letter of 18 July, I must ask you that whenever you or your companions receive a letter from me you will acknowledge receipt of it for my peace of mind. You and Rey are always free to write directly to me, and your Superior does not read such letters. However, as a sign of reverence and of full and habitual submission to your immediate Superior (and perfection consists in these things), you are to hand these letters to him unsealed. He will send them to me without reading them. In this way truth will be respected, and you will enable me to guide all the better this distant part of our little Institute, and you will not lack the advice from me which you wish to have over everything. So too it will be possible to maintain full confidence between yourself and your Superior, whom you must love in Jesus Christ, renouncing self and conforming your will and mind to his. Oh, how admirable is this perfect agreement between religious and their Superiors! Through it a man dies to himself for love of Christ; and in virtue of this love he makes himself a fool — that is, he wholly renounces his own judgement. You especially, and Rey too, must study this lofty virtue since, being always in contact with the same person, you are bound to meet with more temptations than someone who lives in a house where there are subordinate Superiors. So the virtue that God looks to see in you is the perfect renunciation of your own judgement and complete denial of your own will, in order to follow in practice the judgement and will of the Superior given to you by God, wherever there is no sin. So you ought to meditate on chapter VII of our Common Rules, weighing each word, and then, with the help of God, put it all into practice with great simplicity. It will help you, too, if you read very carefully the fine letter of St Ignatius on obedience, asking the Holy Spirit to enable you to understand its deep supernatural truth. Because without supernatural enlightenment it is not possible to feel and understand the great value of obedience. Rather, if anyone relies simply on natural reason, its sophistries will oppose obedience and eventually destroy it. But God infused into all the saints the light that made them see that utter perfection lies not in reasoning but in abandoning reason (as if they had no mind of their own) whenever obedience has enjoined anything, whether by the Superior's word of mouth or by his known will.

I believe that the outcome of your mission in England will depend in great part on whether you know how to make yourself submissive to your Superior, so as to form one heart and soul with him — in other words, whether you are able to overcome every contrary feeling for the love of God, and rise above even any defects which may show in the one who, although he is the representative of

God for you, at the same time is not exempt from human weakness and fallibility. Truly, I believe that by virtue of your obedience God will grant the graces which he wishes to bestow on many souls in that country, and that the happy outcome of the work of the Institute there will again be linked to your perfect obedience. You are indeed called to exercise such perfect obedience; and you will have to give an account of your obedience to the eternal Judge. Should you be lacking in it, you will have to answer for all the good that has been hindered in this way, and for how the glory of God has been lessened. But on the contrary, by overcoming yourself and through complete obedience you will make yourself a perfect instrument in the hands of God; and he will give you the merit of all the great things which he is pleased to do through those who are meek, humble and obedient. He will reward you in heaven.

So since I take obedience to be the hinge on which the whole religious life turns, producing both the spiritual good of the members of the Institute and the fruit resulting from their labours, you will readily see how it grieves me when I hear of anything which goes against obedience and union with your Superior. You would do well, then, to write to me over any defects over this point, and continue to do so every two months, in accordance with my letter of 14 May.

So that you may be helped to maintain a perfect harmony — and also help your companion to do this, follow these rules:

1. Never show publicly, or in the presence of your companion, any opposition to the view of your Superior;
2. Do not attach any great importance to any opinion which is not contrary to faith. Rather, you must regard practising virtue as the one thing of importance, Our Institute is only concerned with this, and knowledge as such counts for little with us. Our spirit agrees with St Paul's saying: 'Knowledge puffs up.' And he adds: 'but love builds up.' What does it matter, then, if you know more than someone else but are without humility? If you set store by your own knowledge and your own opinion, you have not yet learnt what it is to be wise or how opinions should be held.
3. You need to guard against any sort of ill-humour, bitterness or melancholy — as also against any aggressive feelings — for this would be contrary to the spirit of gentleness and peace, which is always ready to give way to others in everything, and does so cheerfully. In other words, we are talking about practising humility; for the meek man never argues, He will take part in scholarly discussions; for these, if they are well conducted, do not harm but rather increase charity — given that their whole aim is to arrive at the truth.
4. Certain questions and arguments need to be avoided entirely, since they serve no purpose — and this is the nature of the matters you mention in your

letter. Leave them to be settled by those who are 'masters in Israel'; and those who are such deal with these questions only when they are forced to do so. So make it a rule never to enter into such questions in front of other people. You must be aware that every member of the Institute must adhere strictly to the encyclicals of Gregory XVI, and I am sure you will do this.

I shall be writing to Don Antonio [Rey] when I have an opportunity, since I need to answer his letter. Meanwhile I affectionately embrace you. I know that you have begun your retreat — commend to God your unworthy brother and loving father —

A. ROSMINI Archpriest

140. To Mgr Giovanni Nepomuceno de Tschiderer, Bishop of Trent

Rovereto, 4 August 1835

Most Reverend Monsignor,

As the undersigned greatly wishes to lay down the heavy burden of this parish of San Marco in Rovereto, he hereby offers Your Excellency his formal resignation. Since the year during which he has looked after this parish does not end until 5 October next, he would wish to remain in office until that date. However he asks the favour of being told who is the priest to whom he can hand over the administration of the parish on that day.

While he feels the need to take this step, since it seems to be in conformity with the will of God, at the same time, because of his affection for all these people, who have never caused him any displeasure but rather given him many proofs of their docility and filial co-operation, so that he feels greatly grieved at parting from them, he begs (as the people of the parish surely will do in due course) that you will, in your wisdom and by dint of that divine enlightenment which God gives to the principal pastors of Holy Church, choose a wise and holy priest to have care of this large population and lead them to eternal salvation.

I remain yours, with deepest respect,

A. ROSMINI, Archpriest

141. To Mgr Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona

Marco, near Rovereto, 10 August 1835

Most Reverend Monsignor,

... My resignation from my position as Archpriest has been given and accepted, to take effect on 5 October next.

The affairs of the Institute in Austria offer me no comfort or assurance up to now, though things are very different in Piedmont. There the King himself has asked me for a new foundation (I tell you this in confidence). As for Mgr Tschiderer, he does not seem to be sympathetic to the spirit of the Institute, and so far has not offered it protection. But I am perfectly content, wishing only that God's will may be done. Even should the Institute have to leave Trent, I would bless the Lord all the same. I assure you that in spite of all, I feel great confidence in my heart that the Institute is of God, and that he wants it to exist. So, given this persuasion of mine, you will not be surprised to learn that I am quite ready to face difficulties and obstacles, because there is not a single Congregation in the Church which in its beginnings has not faced similar and great problems. If I am obliged to go to Vienna (and I shall not do so without clear necessity), I will await whatever help the Monsignor can give me. Even apart from the Institute, there are other reasons that would have led me to leave the parish, though not so soon. Indeed it grieves me to have to take this step so soon, for it means I must leave unfinished many things that have been begun. Besides, it is only natural that a certain attachment to the people there has grown in me. They have shown me many signs of affection and of being anxious to learn. There are also many souls that I had begun to direct in the spiritual life, finding them responsive; and now I shall have to abandon them. May God send to this home parish of mine a pastor after his own heart — someone equal to the demands that will be made on him.

Our dear Don Giulio [Todeschi] is now back here, but there is no improvement in him; his condition causes me grave worry⁶¹. I am writing to you from a house in the countryside, where I went for a few days with the idea of making a retreat, as well as taking the local waters.

May I add to my own greetings those of dear Don Paoli⁶²; and for my own part I send you my usual message of great affection and gratitude. Asking your blessing —

⁶¹ Concerning the extreme desolation of spirit which Don Giulio Todeschi suffered, see the Life of him written by Don Puecher (pp.1 50-187) and EC. letters 2428, 2447, 2466 and elsewhere.

⁶² Don Francesco Puecher, at that time still secretary to Mgr Sardagna, entered the Institute of Charity in 1839. In it he gave valuable service, both through his work as

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Professor of Pedagogy and Methodology and as secretary to Rosmini. He also collected his writings and various memorials of his life. He wrote about Rosmini's teachings and popularized them, and himself suffered persecutions on that account in the final years of his life.

142. To Don Antonio Rey at Prior Park in England

Marco, near Rovereto, 21 August 1835

My dear companion in God's service,

I owe you a reply to your letter of 4 June, written before you left Monte Calvario. But if I have not written before, please in your charity forgive me — I rely on that charity now, and will do so in any future cases of delay. So do not take my silence as a sign of lack of affection or respect for you on my part. Rather, it results from my situation and from the liberty I take with my good friends and brethren.

I see from your letter that God has given you the light to discern clearly your faults, and so has set you on the road to correcting them. This will be a further grace on top of the first one — getting to know them. For everything comes from God; and we have to pray hard that he will indeed give us everything. In our weakness, we can draw great comfort from this truth. For if victory over our spiritual enemies could come only from ourselves then, knowing how feeble we are, how powerless, how prone to evil, and knowing too how violent and persistent are the assaults which our enemies mount against us, we should find ourselves utterly disheartened and without hope. But since we look to the all-powerful God for everything, we shall humble ourselves before him quite without any pretensions, and pray to him humbly and full of confidence.

God is calling you to perfect humility. So you must abase yourself and yield to others in every way, making no account of yourself, your ideas, your learning, your words. Present yourself to Jesus Christ like a dead body; do not attach importance to your life on earth, where our stay is so brief. Arouse your compunction and repent of your faults; consider the least and most ignorant of your brethren as superior to yourself, and let your actual Superior be to you as one acting for God on this earth... Suppress in yourself, at whatever cost, any spirit of criticism; let there be no trace of contradiction in your heart or in your words — much less any complaint or spirit of conflict, any trace of quarrelsomeness, of sourness, of ill-humour. Your charity must always be tender and a help to your humility. 'Charity is patient, is kind; it is not envious or boastful, arrogant or rude ; it does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.'

We must continue to fight, to repent whenever we fall, and to renew our good resolutions. We must never cease to pour out our prayers to God, begging for the grace of amendment. Only in this way will you be faithful to your vocation. Our Institute calls on us to profess humility, charity, obedience, self-denial and willingness to suffer. This is the whole truth about it.

You have received as a special grace from God the mission to England. That mission will be blessed, provided that each of you three does his duty. May the heavenly Builder have no cause to reject any of these first stones! Help your companions in their weakness by your own virtue, and they will do the same for you. By dying to yourself in this way and giving yourself entirely to Christ, you will be able to say when the day of your death comes (and it could be near!), 'I have finished the course.'

I await your letters, telling me about yourself, your companions and your mission there. Goodbye. May our Lord Jesus Christ amply bless you all. Pray for your affectionate brother in Christ —

A. R. Archpriest

PS I do not know whether any of you have written to Calvario. If not, I want all three of you to do so. It is your duty towards that house, which was your Mother, and towards its Superior, who was your loving father in the Lord. Greet warmly for me your Superior, Don Luigi [Gentili] and Emilio [Belisy].

143. To Don Pietro Rigler at Trent

Marco, near Rovereto, 25 August 1835

My dear Father and brother in Jesus Christ,

Yes, I have known for some time how disturbed in spirit you were, and I was waiting for you to tell me about it before referring to it. I know the cause of your trouble, too: it is my own sins — these and nothing else are (I know all too well) at the root of all the evils the Institute suffers. The trouble does not lie (as you think) in its teaching, or in its domineering spirit, or in its Constitutions.

1. As regards what the Institute teaches: is it possible for a moment that you can attribute to me the view that the renewal of souls can come from mere cold ideas or particular notions, rather than from the grace of Jesus Christ? The very idea horrifies me. In how many places in my works have I said that all the knowledge in the world avails nothing for eternal salvation, and that this can only come from the power and grace of Jesus Christ crucified? How often have I stated that simplicity of heart and even a certain innocent ignorance is more blessed than human wisdom, since those who are simple and ignorant sometimes have a firmer faith, and since the grace of God is communicated more readily to those who are humble? How many times have you heard me repeat that it is the one who preaches in humble words Jesus Christ crucified who produces most fruit? My dear friend, I do not know how you can believe that I set too much store by knowledge, when I have never done other than inculcate piety — the piety which is all that I myself desire for its own sake, and which I regard as my sole good. God knows that if at times I have asked him for knowledge, I have every day prayed to him for the conversion of my heart and the amending of my defects, as well as to be ignored and despised by men. It would be blasphemy and a sacrilege against my Redeemer Jesus Christ if I were to make men's salvation depend on anything other than him — directly on him through his Holy Spirit. I do not believe I have ever given the least occasion to cause anyone to suspect so ill of me. But I take even this misunderstanding to be a just punishment for my sins, and I humble myself before the hand of God, which is growing heavier.

In the second place, you accuse me of being excessively attached to certain of my own ideas. God knows how often I have examined myself over this point. But (so far as the Lord has given me light to see) I can say sincerely that I have so little attachment to my own views just because they are mine that I not only have no difficulty in abandoning them, but I feel great pleasure in adopting the ideas of others, leaving my own aside, when I am contradicted. But as I say this I realize that I am speaking foolishly. Let me say instead that where my views have not been the subject of decisions by the Church I have never put them forward as anything but fallible human reasoning; and I have never wanted anyone (whether in the Institute or outside it) to adopt them. Moreover I have

always declared myself ready to withdraw any opinion that the Church found displeasing. For I am a devoted son of the Church, and I wish to live and die as a docile child of this loving mother. If then anyone finds an opinion of mine unacceptable, let him reject it, condemn it and refute it. In *dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas* (Freedom in matters doubtful; charity in everything].

Finally you contend that certain of my teachings are contrary to the authority of the most reliable authors, to the views held in common by the faithful, dangerous and evidently false. But please be sure that if I knew that my views were opposed to those of the most reliable authors I would reject them on those grounds alone — even more so if they merited the rest of your description. So I fear that you have misunderstood me. If you know of any opinion I have expressed in any of my published writings which deserves the sort of accusation you level at me, let me see it, and I will at once withdraw it. If on the other hand you are referring to things I have said, I can only think that you have misinterpreted me. I beseech you to understand me in all charity. If you do so, all the differences between us will vanish; for in my opinion they come from the evil spirit who delights in sowing discord among us. Finally, it is unjust of you to pass judgement on me on the basis of what you hear from Don Giulio.

2. As for your second point, where you speak of 'my domineering spirit', I make a distinction between my views and my personal way of behaving. As far as this is concerned, I submit myself entirely and sincerely to your judgement. I can only say again that my sins and shortcomings are the sole cause of all that the Institute suffers in the diocese of Trent. I therefore put forward no excuse on this score, but rather, sincerely condemn myself. I implore God in his mercy to have pity on me. But when it comes to the rest of the story and various internal matters concerning the Institute, it seems to me, my dear fellow, that if you consider the circumstances in which we have been placed, you will see that it would have been very difficult to act differently.

As for my hasty reception of new candidates, and the difficulty of dismissing any of them, let me tell you the plain truth: so great was the esteem and confidence I had in you that I attached far more weight to your judgement than to my own. This is why, I believe, I have not accepted a single subject at Trent on my own initiative (barring the very first). All the others I took in deference to your own opinion (which sometimes did not agree with my own). I rejoiced in the Lord whenever you told me of a new arrival; but for myself, God be thanked, I have never sought out anyone, never asked God in my prayers for any new subjects, and have not grieved when none came. If you could see into my heart, you would know that this is true. As for dismissing men, that too I left entirely to you, because of the great esteem I have always had for you, so that I even took your voice as the voice of God.

When it comes to public positions, tell me please if you think I have ever sought or wanted anything of the kind. To be fair to me you must admit that you have many a time heard me express a sincere desire to see their number lessened. When you entered the Institute, you relinquished at my request the position of Rector of the seminary, and I have always wished you to be free of any other post so as to look after the house. I can assure you that, had circumstances allowed it, my one wish would have been, as you say, to imitate Mary, to stay at home and establish a sound noviciate, free from all external commitments. But was this possible? How often did I ask you for your opinion about this? How could I have acted other than I did without offending the Bishop, the town, everybody? I do not see now, I never could see, any other solution. If you had spoken to me about the matter I would have taken your opinion rather than my own — God knows how willingly. Given the noviciate, it would have been possible to train subjects in the things of the spirit; and after testing the candidates, to be courageous in dismissing them if they fell short of what was required. The lack of such resources — or rather the impossibility of establishing them — is the cause of our troubles. You will reply that I should have given my attention to the spiritual formation of our members; and for my part I say again that I acknowledge myself guilty of all evil and deserving of every punishment.

You say that obligations were taken on without the means of meeting them, and orders were given without taking into account their suitability. I ask you in all charity to tell me what you are referring to; and I further beg you to do me the great favour of bringing it to my attention should such a situation arise in future. I trust in God that I will never fail in docility and obedience to you.

3. Lastly, with regard to the Constitutions: far from being reluctant to submit to the judgement of the Holy See, I am awaiting impatiently the right moment for them to be examined, corrected or modified according to the wishes of those in authority. There is no single article that I would insist on. It is entirely for God to show his will in the matter: he will make the truth clear. It seems to me that, acting on this principle, everything can be accomplished, where there is no evident sin, with holy tranquillity, sincere humility and a spirit of peace.

My dear Father and brother — I say this with all respect -be on your guard against the deceits of the enemy! It seems to me that he is insidiously attacking your vocation by painting things in false colours and getting you to make judgements that are perhaps rash. If things had turned out differently, then it may be that you would not have had these thoughts; but the situation has cast a gloom over you. I do not want you to suffer harm yourself or perhaps even cause harm to others. If the enemy turns you against the Institute to which God originally called you so that you might help in its foundation, a single word of yours is capable of causing great damage. For myself, I am resigned to everything that may happen. It is just that I counsel you not to be moved by the disastrous external events; and I must warn you that you will not be

justified before God if you take scandal from the internal condition of the Institute — since you were meant to prevent such harm. You will not even be justified in letting yourself be scandalized by me, if I gave you bad example where it was my duty to give you good example. Forgive me, rather, and pray that I may amend my ways. I bow down before Jesus Christ and with tears beg him to give you light and to dispel the dark clouds with which the enemy tries to envelop you.

May Jesus be praised and blessed for ever.

Your most affectionate and unworthy son,

ROSMINI Archpriest

144. To Don Clemente Alvazzi at Domodossola

Marco, near Rovereto, 3 September 1835

My dear son in Christ,

The will of *God* made known through your Superiors seems to have destined you to be a teacher in the Mellerio school when the new scholastic year opens. My advice, if you are appointed to this post, is that you should take it as coming from the hands of *God* and make every effort to carry out your work well. You know what our Rules have to say in the chapter headed: 'The spirit of understanding', which urges us to carry out as perfectly as possible any task we are given. But no man can do this unless he prepares himself beforehand, ensuring that he makes himself thoroughly familiar with the subject and well-informed about it. So during this vacation you must take in hand two things: you should, first, study grammar and the best way to teach it; and, secondly, give thought to the best way to ensure that your pupils find your teaching pleasing — but also religious and such as to afford them genuine edification. You will succeed in this by means of your gentle modesty and grave demeanour, and also by introducing a moral and spiritual element briefly and appositely.

God bless you! I look forward to hearing news of how you have carried out my advice; and I want you also to pray more than ever for your father in Christ —

ROSMINI Archpriest

145. To Don Pietro Rigler at Trent

Rovereto, 7 September 1835

My dear Father,

When in my last letter I mentioned my suspicion that circumstances had made a bad impression on you and were largely responsible for the disturbance of mind that afflicts you, I did not have in mind the fact that the government is little disposed to look on us with favour. I know well that you would not be afraid of this, or even of open persecution, if this should come about. I meant instead to refer, principally at least, to the Bishop's opposition and the fact that we have never been able to establish ourselves with religious observance. As for the attraction you feel towards the Redemptorists, this does not surprise me — though it seems to me that for this attraction to be tested and well-founded you ought to know them more thoroughly. What I am afraid of (and I fear greatly for you) is that if you do not recover from your present unsettled state, for which the enemy is responsible, you will lose your vocation and leave the Institute, without ever making up your mind to enter another religious congregation, even though you may spend the rest of your life making enquiries and forming tentative half-resolutions to do so. This is what I am so afraid of; and this, if I may speak frankly, is the great danger which (it seems to me) threatens you. Do not imagine, my dear friend, that I am writing to you to try to hold you within the Institute. When I say (as I have said before) that the door is always open, these were not empty words: they were said from the heart. When a member of the Institute has left, this has never caused me displeasure — only perhaps a certain fear for his future. Nor must you think that I am writing to you to vindicate myself. Rather, I tell you again, if God does not help me, not only do I fall into error with my thinking: I also err with my will; so that the whole cause of the ills of the Institute lies in my sins. All the same, I think I have to write to you; I have even to try to justify myself over one or two points, and speak like a fool [cf. 2 Cor:1 1,21.] Because if I did not, I would fear that I had failed you by not providing you with sufficient arguments to support you against the temptations of the enemy. You can easily appreciate that not all that you have thought comes from the Holy Spirit; for he is the source of truth, of charity, of obedience, and of humility; and you recognize yourself that at least some part of what you said is untrue; that there was some exaggeration and that the picture you painted was excessively black. You seem too to be aware that you accused me unjustly of holding millennialist opinions. But you do find my teaching dangerous, or rather quite false, on two points: on the gravity of material sins, and on political authority. To reach this judgement you would need to know my true views on these matters. So I would ask you to expound clearly just what you think my opinions are on them. If I find that they are truly mine I will admit it frankly. If I find that they are not, I will make any necessary corrections. In this way any doubts

you have will be removed, please God, since I will not begrudge writing even more dissertations on these subjects in order to put your mind at rest. But let it suffice for now if I say that on the points in question I believe that I share the ideas of the most reliable authors in the Catholic Church, from whom I always seek enlightenment. I will also profit from your advice and take care to explain myself ever more clearly, and to omit nothing that could avert the danger of being misunderstood. Allow me, though, to add one remark — one with the same aim as that of the whole of this letter. You keep on saying that you do not understand my ideas; but all the same you suspect that my writings have grave errors concealed within them: that, as you put it in your first letter, 'there are things contrary to the authority of the most reliable authors, to the common belief of the faithful, and clearly false'. My dear fellow, would it not be more charitable to give me the benefit of the doubt and interpret my ideas in a favourable sense, given that you do not fully understand them? Charity thinks no ill. And is not the general rule: Do not pass judgements? See what humility advises: a humble man would believe that he had misunderstood something if he thought he detected errors. He would have thought that these apparent errors came of his failing to grasp the true meaning of what he had read, and he would have asked for a clarification. Or suppose we consult what prudence would have to say: it would have counselled listening to the views of the most learned men in the Church.

Since I am speaking like a fool, let me point out some things that I would do better to keep quiet about — but will say all the same in the hope that they will help you. Does Rome feel any fears over my doctrines? Two Popes have told me that it is the will of God that I should work at my desk; the present Pope has had the same message conveyed to me several times. If we turn to religious Orders, and first the Jesuits: the General of the Society not only approves of my philosophical approach (as I could prove to you from his letters, where he expressly praises it as most sound and valuable to the cause of religion) but also consults me in cases of doubt. Fr Perrone, the Professor of Dogmatic Theology in the Roman College, who has published his lectures, quotes my philosophy and uses it for the advantage of religion. Fr Suryn, Professor of Philosophy, commends it to his students as the only philosophy that is conformable to the Catholic religion. Fr Pinciani, Professor of Physics in the Roman College, who has published an important work on physics, when he comes to deal with the definition of bodies, cites no other book than my *Nuovo Saggio*, and regards my philosophy as the soundest of all. If we turn to the Franciscans: the Illyrian Father, a Roman Penitentiary, recently published a work on religion in which his remarks on myself and my philosophy make me blush. But he speaks in this way because he considers my philosophy the best suited to religion. Fr Turco, a Consultor of the Roman Office, expressed a judgement on my philosophy that cannot be surpassed. I could show you letters from Benedictine professors which deserve to be buried because they contain too many complimentary remarks on my philosophy. I could assemble here a long list of

opinions expressed by cardinals, among them Cardinal Nembrini, Bishop of Ancona, who goes beyond all limits in his praise. I could tell you of the principal universities, of the most reliable journals, of the scholars of other nations, and show you that these learned people did not misunderstand my teaching but considered it to be deeply religious and capable of overcoming the various errors of modern times. This is the only reason why I wrote it, and it seems to me that I had help from God himself.

But you should tear up all this, and believe that I have not written in this manner to glorify myself (for there is no true glory in this world; nor could a sinner like myself glory), but simply to get you to see that there may be some rashness in your judgement.

As for your second point: I will not speak of the matter of the Sisters of Providence — something in which you also suspect me of behaving badly. I believe that I have more than enough evidence to vindicate myself over this.

Your third point stems from your fear that in Piedmont I did not attach enough importance to the noviciate, or take it to my heart. Yet I believe that this is quite contrary to the truth. I am sure that both I myself and the Superior there have had the noviciate very much at heart, and that up to now we have applied the section of the Rule which is concerned with novices as far as this has proved possible. It is untrue to say that at Calvario there is no definite Superior, for one has been established there for quite some time. Also we have been studying for quite a while how to free the Master of Novices from outside commitments.

If you try to make judgements from a distance and without accurate information, you certainly will not be able to ascertain the true situation. Instead, you will always be influenced by imagination (fed by the enemy), and you will think you discover something to criticize, cause for distrust and blame, reasons for accusing those who have the responsibility for directing affairs

All right: so I am an unworthy and fallible man. Does this mean that I ought not to be Superior? I acknowledge this; I own up to it. And if I had not been afraid of disobeying God I would never have accepted this burden, or continued to carry it up to now. It is one that I hope, through God's mercy, to be able to relinquish in due time. But it is simply not possible, believe me, for any Superior to rule over subjects who are imbued with a spirit of criticism. They will not only see all his faults, but they will also require him to give them an account of all that he says, of every one of his slightest actions. And then what becomes of obedience? Where is the spirit of mortification, of self-denial?

No, my dear friend: do not let yourself be carried away like this. Choose one course or the other: either to behave magnanimously as a subject, a good subject; or to remain no longer in this Institute, especially given that it is new

and one in which obedience must be even more perfect because fully voluntary. Any attempt at compromise, at finding a middle way, would (it seems to me) be a danger to your soul. The sad truth is that self-love and a thousand other secret passions are at work within us to deceive us, and these might lead you to feel justified in acting in a way quite unsuited to a submissive religious. Yet any member of the Institute of Charity must have the resolve to be and to act like a religious. When he comes to the Institute he makes this promise; unless he does so he cannot enter it or remain in it. You, after all, are my Admonitor⁶³: why do you not admonish me in this case (though always with the prudence that is called for by the Rules of the Admonitor) Do I not receive admonitions with gratitude? God knows how great a benefit I think they are. But with regard to events which occurred long ago, and of which you have little knowledge, to set yourself up as judge, and with such confidence in yourself, over matters which are both complex and uncertain — no, my dear Father, this is not in my view a way of acting prompted by the Holy Spirit, but rather the result of the devil's subtle deception, aimed at harming both the Institute and your own soul.

I must finish — as I never would if I tried to deal accurately with everything... So I finish by warning you that your own peace of mind and your spiritual profit depend on not letting yourself be deceived by subtle reasonings, but rather making a practice of asking yourself: 'What is most in conformity with charity? with humility? with obedience, mortification, self-denial?'- and saying to yourself: 'I want to act in a way that conforms with all these virtues, with no empty reasonings.' This is the spirit of the gospel: this is what our Institute is all about. Anyone who is not intent on these things wants no part of the Institute of Charity, which has no other aim than that we should perfect ourselves in virtue. Keep within your limitations, and you will find peace and quiet of mind. Try always to carry out your duties as well as you possibly can. This is your place. Examine yourself often to see if you have acted like this; and if you find you have fallen short, humble yourself, and do not look for others to blame. You are Superior of the Trent house, and it is in this capacity that your brethren know and revere you. It is for you to govern that house according to God's Spirit. Give your whole mind and soul to this. Do I place any obstacle in your way? Shall I not rather rejoice over the good you do?

So do not occupy your mind any more with the affairs of the Institute in general unless you are consulted about these. You have more than enough to do in the house. By so acting you will cut the ground from under the enemy. So

⁶³ Such was the high regard that Rosmini had for Rigler that he had chosen him as his Admonitor and confessor, and he venerated him as a father. Yet it was through Rigler that he had many things to suffer; and in the end Rigler left the Institute. They remained friends however -even when Rigler joined the Knights of the Imperial Teutonic Order (a course which, as Rosmini mildly remarked, seemed a little odd, in that it meant giving his obedience to a layman in an order of chivalry whose ideals seemed very different from his previous aims.) [With acknowledgements to Fr C. R. Leatham's Rosmini.]

courage, my dear Father! Let us fight together against the spiritual enemies. The one safe way is that of the gospel. I hope that by God's mercy all the dark clouds will be lifted from your soul, and that the Holy Spirit will fill you with light. Praise be to Jesus crucified! Praise to our Lady of Sorrows.

Pray for your unworthy servant and son,

ROSMINI Archpriest

146. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Tamié⁶⁴

Rovereto, 10 September 1835

My beloved Father in Jesus Christ: may the Holy Spirit dwell in you and guide you.

You have left, and I hardly know what to say to you, given the haste with which you did so and the urgency of the circumstances you tell me about. All the same, I urge you in Christ to see that no haste attends the foundation at Tamié. Put this down in your notebook: The wish of some important person such as the Archbishop, or the fear of displeasing him, or the fear of losing some favourable opportunity, may occasion the danger of acting hastily, without prudence and circumspection. So it is necessary to obviate this danger by refusing to be moved by vain hopes or fears, but rather resolving not to take any step unless we are sure of it and have consulted our Superior (when it goes beyond our own faculties.) If however it is within the powers we have received it still has to be considered as to any possible future effects it may have, (and we need to consult one of our more prudent companions, without influencing him one way or another) and above all reflected on before God with much prayer; and if we have any doubts whether the matter is entirely wise, we must not act.'

My dear Loewenbruck, I trust you: God and his Holy Spirit will give you the humility, as he has in the past, to profit by my counsels, which are so necessary if we are truly to proceed according to God's will and not deceive ourselves. It is all the more necessary for you to act with gravity and wisdom, because I do not know when I shall be able to visit those parts, much as I wish to do so. It is true that I shall soon be released from parish duties; but there are still a number of obstacles I have to overcome before I can get a passport; and there are various steps I must take before I even ask for this.

Write to me in detail about every aspect of this foundation, but especially the bad ones, since I am not so much interested in the good ones. Be entirely frank, and God will reward you.

I urge you to be scrupulous in giving instructions to our brethren, and in exercising them (especially through your example) in the virtues of humility, contempt of self, indifference to everything, perfect obedience and mutual love. I will then send you particulars of the order and the rules to be observed in that foundation.

I embrace you and your dear companions. They are to write to me and tell me about their feelings and dispositions concerning their religious vocation to our

⁶⁴ Over the foundation of the house at Tamié, see the later letter no. 152.

Institute, and about working in that mission, under obedience, for the glory of God and for the good of souls.

Should there be any outbreak of cholera, I hope that by God's mercy none of you will be found wanting. May Jesus and Mary always be with you.

Yours very affectionately,

ROSMINI Archpriest

147. To Don Giacomo Molinari at Domodossola

Rovereto, 10 September 1835

My dear brother in Jesus Christ: may his Spirit always be our guide.

Before I make it a matter of obedience for you to offer spiritual and bodily help to the victims of cholera (should the disease reach your area), I want to know what are the frank dispositions of each of you. So let each one who is willing to give this service (freely, not under pressure) write briefly to me about how he is disposed, and ask me for a command to do this work.

I will then reply and lay down the rules that are to be followed.

My warmest greetings in the Lord to all the brethren. Get them to pray for me so that, God willing, I may see you face to face. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

ROSMINI Archpriest

148. To Don Antonio Rey at Prior Park in England

Rovereto, 13 September 1835

My dear brother and companion in *God's service*,

Your letter of 1 September gives me great hope. God is giving you the light to know yourself; it remains for you to fight, and never grow weary or become discouraged, despite the wounds you will receive at times. You must firmly believe that God in his goodness, when he sent you to England, meant to place you in a school of practical virtue. It is one in which you will never find yourself abandoned; and it may provide you with the only means to come to know and to root out your faults. Make determined efforts, then, and in time and with perseverance you will succeed in putting off the old man and attaining the childlike disposition which is so desirable.

As far as I can see, your heart is not as ill-disposed as you make out in your letters. It just seems to me that you need to make it more full of love. Try to soften your heart and grow more loving. You must truly have a great love for God and for men. How greatly love smooths the way for everything! Through it, all bitterness and harshness is removed from us; and instead, gentleness and sweetness are infused into us! Love is humble, and those who have it are made meek and humble. 'Charity bears all things, hopes all things, thinks no evil.' And when through love we hope for all things from God, that great anxiety which sometimes disguises itself as zeal for holy things is taken away from us. When we are doing all that our state requires of us, then we should remain tranquil, and we need not be disturbed even by the imprudences of Superiors, should they occur. This is because they involve no fault of ours; and it is only over the things for which we are to blame that we need to grieve. For the rest, we leave the outcome to God.

For your comfort, though, I want you to know that if, through human weakness you cannot entirely win the battle, I will recall you; but I very much hope in the Lord that this will not be necessary. You will find peace if you confine yourself to your own occupations and the duties that fall to your personal lot. Take no notice of what others do, since these things do not concern you. In this way you will more readily move God to help you, since he is pleased with those who are intent on serving him and have no other care. There is just one thing that you must not fail to do: that is, to write to me simply for the glory of God, so that even at this distance I can know all about your situation, and so be better able to help you. So you must count this commission of mine as one of your duties. Do not forget to pray for me and for all these companions of ours. I send fondest regards to you and your brethren in the love of Jesus Christ, and I wish you heavenly gifts.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

R.

149. To Don Luigi Gentili⁶⁵

Rovereto, 14 September 1835

... Since I am afraid that you have not read carefully enough and meditated on what I said in the letter of mission that I wrote to you on 25 April last⁶⁶, I must urge you to do so and to treat with great respect all the things I laid down, so as to enter into the spirit of them, and obey them with great exactness. It is only through such punctiliousness — and not through trusting in yourself — that you will have God's blessing.

I think it well to add these points for you:

(1) You must be sparing in giving commands and directives. This is rarely necessary, since for the most part you can make use of a request, a word of advice, a suggestion. For instance, the prayers you have ordered to be said before and after classes may be unsuitable, or at least too lengthy. In small matters such as these I advise you to go cautiously; for a small thing which is not customary where you are may easily have bad results, and cause people to be ill-disposed towards you all from the outset. Little customs are the more likely to cause difficulties; and this is why in the letter of mission I counselled you not to introduce innovations, but to fit in with any usages that were not in any way sinful. So too in that letter I told you that your companions ought to be your advisers. So consult them before you make any such arrangements, and if you find that they do not agree with what you propose, then **REFRAIN FROM** acting. As I have told you before, the best sort of prudence often consists in **NOT** acting. Moreover, in the spirit of the rules I laid down, you ought often to consult me over arrangements. So far you have not sent me a single proposal or told me anything about your plans and ways of acting over there. So the prayers I referred to should be **SHORTENED**; and if your companions do not approve of them, omit them altogether. They are good in themselves, yes; but it may be better not to use them if they arouse an unfavourable reaction. It is an old fault of yours to prescribe **LONG** exercises of devotion. So I must impress on you anew the advisability of **BREVITY** in such matters. Do not let yourself be deluded *sub specie boni* [under the appearance of good], but obey, obey.

(2) Do not treat pious practices in too absolute a way as necessary. Our Lady herself will be better pleased if you do not go to extremes, but rather gradually and as occasion offers sow the good seed. Do not act without consideration, or with the sort of zeal which can be seen by the less fervent as fanaticism. You need to act with great love towards those who are weak, and to do everything gently.

⁶⁵ This letter was not printed in E.C. but in the *Avvisi Spirituali* di Antonio Rosmini (Turin 1890). The original is in the Rosminian Archives at Stresa.

⁶⁶ See letter No. 125 above.

(3) Be humble with regard to the Institute, and if you need to venture an opinion, then (first) make sure that your mind is clear about it, and that it is sound; and (second) never attribute it to me I forbid you ever to quote me; you may well misunderstand me anyway; (third) put your view forward with all moderation and prudence, never condemning the views of others (unless they are condemned by the Church), but respecting them all.

(4) Never contrast English usages with those of Rome or Italy. To do so would contravene Common Rule No.26.

(5) It is not our church, so do not in any way interfere with the ceremonies. At the most, you could gently make suggestions if you are asked, but in an impersonal way, leaving the outcome to be what it may. And if you do have to propose anything, do not rely on your memory, but be guided by Cardinal Morozzo's Book of Ceremonies, if you have it there. This would be a sound authority to depend on.

BE EXACT IN OBEDIENCE

Your father in Christ,

A. R.

150. To Don Cesare Flecchia at Domodossola

Rovereto, 18 September 1835

My dear companion in *God's service*,

I cannot write at any length (as I should like to), and so you must be content with these few lines. I cannot consent to your making a pilgrimage on foot in Savoy: you must make the journey in comfort.

I am very pleased that you have begun to enjoy Scupoli — that is the book for you. He will teach you first and foremost never to hold an opinion of your own that conflicts with that of a Superior, and seldom with that of one of your brethren. What great gain it is not to hold fixed views, but rather to distrust one's own judgement, and have no difficulty in renouncing one's own opinion — not simply out of a spirit of obedience, but much more in a spirit of charity!

There is no good to be got from having set, inflexible views. It is better to put up with some slight distress of mind rather than fail in the smallest way over charity and obedience. Anyone who is not a Superior is lacking in faith in *God* if he plays the censor in the house.

Lastly, I hope you abide by this maxim: Never try to impose a rule on a brother of yours unless it forms part of the Ten Commandments or the commandments of the Church.' Let there be nothing arbitrary, nothing harsh, in your behaviour: only advice, only love.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

A. ROSMINI Archpriest

151. To Mgr Giovanni Nepomuceno de Tschiderer, Bishop-Prince of Trent

Rovereto, 29 September 1835

My Lord, I owe you many thanks for your esteemed letter of 26 September, written with the clarity that is my sole desire; and although your letter seems to imply that the Institute of Charity may not be established in Trent, I trust that in your kindness you will allow me to set down some reflections and clarifications that seem to me to be necessary in order to make everything plain. Since I want nothing apart from the will of God, I am equally content whether the Institute continues or ceases to exist in Trent. And since it cannot be the will of God that it should continue there unless it has the full consent of the Bishop who in that diocese is the representative of Jesus Christ, should that Bishop not approve of it and not wish to have it, then neither do I wish for its continuance.

But if I were to fail to put before the Bishop certain relevant clarifications before removing the Institute from Trent, I consider that I should be acting imprudently, and so in a way displeasing to God.

Starting from the four needs of the diocese that you clearly enumerate in your letter — needs which you would wish to have met by some religious institution — I should like to say the Institute of Charity could, by its very nature, be very suitable to be employed in meeting those needs even exclusively, though not fully. When I say exclusively I mean that the Institute could supply those needs if in fact it did nothing else, but dedicated itself entirely to the needs you mention. The reason for this derives from the character of the Institute, which from its beginning was dedicated to no specific work, precisely so that the Bishops could, according to the particular needs of their dioceses, set limits to and determine its activities, fixing the bounds within which it would have to confine itself.

At the same time I say that it could not apply itself fully to those needs — for the following reasons. The idea behind the Institute of Charity is simply that it is a body of men available to give help to the diocesan clergy and to the other religious bodies. But there must be limits to what it can be called upon to do: otherwise it would certainly not live up to what was expected of it. It must instead be content that the Church should receive from it some help, some gain, even if that had to be less than some would wish. The reason why the Institute does not promise more, but is content to take the lowest place in the Church, and merely to help out wherever there is a shortage of priests, is this: The religious spirit could not long be preserved and survive within it, and the Institute itself could not last or remain useful if it should have to devote itself without any limits to external works.' For this reason it is a fundamental

principle of the Institute that whenever one of its members has to engage in some external work of charity, this must come about by agreement between the Bishop and the Superior of the Institute.

In this way it seemed to me that the Institute could never cause any harm to a diocese, since it has no authority or liberty to become involved in the slightest degree in any matter without the general or particular consent of the Bishop. On the other hand, external works will not be able to harm its spirit or religious virtues, or lessen its internal harmony, because it may not take on such works without the full consent of the Superior General, who is responsible for watching over and preserving both the internal spirit and the Institute itself.

I have noticed that all the main institutes that are most useful to the Church are entirely immune from episcopal authority, and this immunity has the Church's approval. Nor have I failed to see that ill-disposed people have interpreted in a sinister sense such independence in religious institutes. But men of sound sense and of a truly Catholic spirit have not only rebutted this irreverent and calumnious interpretation, but have found, in the history of ecclesiastical discipline, just reasons for this immunity: they have realized that the Bishops themselves have encouraged it and asked it of the Sovereign Pontiff — because on the one hand they wanted to have religious houses in their dioceses, and on the other, experience has shown that without such immunity religious bodies were unable to survive. These truths are recorded in Tommasini's *Ecclesiastical Discipline*, and in many other sound authors.

However it appeared to me to be very desirable that in the circumstances of our day some religious body which aimed at universal good should depend on the Bishops as much as possible. With this idea as background, I conceived of the institute as in a negative sense entirely dependent on the Bishops — that is, so that it could do nothing without their call and their consent — and in a positive sense (that is, when it came to taking on external works), it would depend at one and the same time on the Bishops and on its own Superiors. I envisaged such an arrangement, as I said earlier, because as far as I could see, without such circumspection the Institute could not for long preserve its original spirit, and would in a short time have degenerated and perhaps, God forbid, have done more harm than good to the Church.

I would ask you to consider this whole matter with all its implications: how difficult it is to preserve intact and for long the religious spirit of an institute; how great is the human weakness that besets even ecclesiastics, even religious; and how easily the latter can lose sight of and be deprived of their holy vocation. I agree that if there were to be a Bishop who knew in depth the religious life; who was full of the spirit of God, who had the time and the patience to inform himself about the state of every religious house and every individual religious... to consider the internal state of the houses; and in a word were to act as a true Superior within every house of the Institute — then, I

fully agree, there could be nothing better than to leave to such a Bishop the entire disposition of the Institute and its members. But if a Bishop was so taken up with so many other cares within his diocese - matters often very different from religious life — that he lacked the time, the energy, and perhaps the inclination to busy himself with such minute particulars (on which yet depend the well-being of a religious institute), then would it not be better for it to be one of the religious themselves who had to decide before God whether, if he employed this member or that on one work or another, whether any discord in the house would result, whether or not the Institute itself would suffer? Should he not consider that pupils who ought to be educated by the best of teachers would be only imperfectly educated if these were withdrawn? Should he not reflect whether or not external occupations might pose a threat to the spiritual life of those engaged in such works? A Bishop does not live in the house along with the religious, and has not got them under his eye at every moment: he deals with them on the basis of general information obtained through others; and inevitably is confined to hearing what people of differing attitudes say — people who sometimes take the part of this or that insubordinate religious, and who are not especially favourable towards the Institute or always very discerning in separating truth from error. On the other hand, the prelate of the diocese is rightly concerned for its good, and although its true good would be served by maintaining in all its vigour the religious institute, it could easily happen (and I say this with no lack of reverence) that through the Bishop's zeal to provide for the urgent needs of his diocese, the Institute could to a great extent be sacrificed.

Let us suppose, though, that these reflections of mine are ill-founded, and that the Bishop in question not only has a profound knowledge of religious life but understands well the inner nature of the Institute of Charity and wants to keep it intact, and hence employs its subjects in work with just as much circumspection as a Superior of the Institute would use. The rule of this Bishop will not last for ever; and experience shows that different Bishops, though they may all be holy men, have different outlooks. Hence, with every change of Bishop, the Institute would also feel a change in his spirit, and could never preserve its own spirit, its original spirit. I have known Bishops who were totally antagonistic to all religious institutes. Under such a Bishop the life of the Institute of Charity would at best be precarious; and so much the better if such Bishops were to destroy it — for it is not at all necessary for it to exist. The worst thing that could happen would be that it should be deflected from its course, changed in its nature, with discord and alienation among its members: and this could make it very harmful to the Church, rather than useful.

I have known other Bishops who were not opposed to religious institutes in general, but who were the enemies of certain Orders, such as the Jesuits. Now if the Institute of Charity had similarities with some of the institutes which

were ill-regarded, it is easy to see in what a bad way the Institute of Charity would find itself under them.

Finally, certain Bishops, although loving and respecting all the religious institutes approved by the Church, sometimes ask of them what they are unable to give — things that would be contrary to the end for which they were founded. Thus in a certain Italian city a very pious and zealous Bishop required the Oratorians to devote themselves to preaching; but because this work was contrary to the nature of St Philip Neri's Congregation, that house is no longer truly Oratorian, though it preserves St Philip's name — much to the distaste of those who constitute the community. This sort of thing could very soon happen to the Institute of Charity if it met with a Bishop who had his own special outlook (which might be holy enough in itself).

All these drawbacks, which would be inevitable if the Bishop had absolute control over the religious of the Institute, would be avoided if it were arranged that in such matters the decision depended also on the Institute's own Superiors. These men share the same religious training; since their youth they have absorbed the same religious spirit — the spirit which is handed down like an inheritance in religious families; they have made their own the customs of the Institute and have made a deep study of its nature; they are single-mindedly dedicated to directing it — a work which absorbs a man completely.

Allow me, My Lord, à propos of the question of preserving the religious spirit, to explain that paragraph in the Constitutions that you quote in your letter: *Coadiutoriae vel nullo pacto vel quam rarissime a nostris internis assumendae erunt* §608 — Curacies are not to be accepted on any account by our internal religious unless the parish priest himself belongs to our Society. Note: the present text of the Constitutions is slightly different from that quoted in the letter.] The burden of this paragraph is simply and solely the preservation of the religious spirit of the Institute. When anyone wants to found a religious institute, the preservation of its spirit in the future is of paramount importance; and to this end, in my view, even good things have to be sacrificed. Now, all religious institutes have seen these two things as both suitable and necessary for the preserving of the religious spirit:

1. That all the religious should live together in the same house. This was regarded as so important a matter that the Church itself thought it right to sanction it by Canon Law, and suppressed those houses which did not contain a reasonable number of religious;
2. That the religious should live together as far as possible under the eye of their immediate Superiors. It is clear from this that the members of a genuinely religious institute could only with difficulty preserve the spirit of their institute if they had to be scattered through a diocese as chaplains,

without being able to live in a house together with other religious, but had to live among secular priests with a different spirit, men sometimes prejudiced against regulars (an attitude which could only breed discord), not under the eye of their own Superior, but rather under the authority of parish priests, not all of whom had the same outlook, so that there were great variations among them as regards their ways of thinking and acting. This is the reason why, to the best of my knowledge, there is no instance (and there never has been an instance) where a religious institute in virtue of its Constitutions has sent out its members as assistants subject to parish priests belonging to the secular clergy.

This precaution, which I incorporated in the Constitutions of the Institute of Charity with the aim of preserving its religious spirit, is so far from being unnecessary that I fear to some it may appear insufficient. There may be those who criticize the permission given to some members of the Institute of Charity to take on the pastoral care of souls, although in these cases there is a twofold precaution: for they do not go alone, but are accompanied by at least two other religious priests, and then only in cases approved by their Superior. Even this practice is somewhat more liberal than what has so far been the custom (as far as I am aware) among other religious institutes. I know that the Benedictines, the Oratorians, the Cistercians and other Orders take on parishes; but in the first place they live together; and they do not normally admit any secular priest into their houses; and in the second, they are not willing simply to send one or two of their men to a parish, but want their Congregation to be officially in charge of that parish, and want it to be permanently and immutably entrusted into their hands. As far as I know, this is the arrangement as regards the parishes run by the Oratorians in Verona and Vicenza, and that of St Bernard's in Rome, which is run by the Benedictines. By contrast, the Institute of Charity does not insist on all these precautions and the conditions thought to be necessary by the existing religious Orders; and this is because its aim is to make it easier for Bishops who want to make use of its members in the care of souls.

But over and above all this, for my part I see it as absolutely indispensable for the preservation of religious discipline and of the Institute as a body, that no member of ours should be left on his own, but should live with at least two of his brethren.

So, My Lord, you have good reason to regard it as a good and useful thing for there to be a religious institute whose members, without losing their religious spirit, could at the entire disposal of the Bishop be sent as assistants to any part of the diocese according to need. But in my humble opinion such an institute could not exist. All I would see as possible is that an institute might be put in charge of parishes in such a way that the parish priest himself and his assistants would be members of the same institute; and even this only when, presuming always a call from the Bishop, the Superior of the institute also judged that this could be done without harm to the spirit of the institute

itself. If this situation arose, there would be a small group of religious in the house of the parish priest who, being himself a religious, could be the immediate Superior of the religious who were his assistants. And for this it would be necessary for the Superior of the institute to consider well whether the priest thus destined to be in charge of the parish possessed the qualities necessary to act as Superior.

My Lord, if you will reflect before God on these considerations which I humbly submit to you, you will understand why it is that I deem it essential to the Institute of Charity that its Superiors should give their consent before any of its subjects are employed in external works of charity. If then you are willing to agree to grant the Institute this degree of liberty so that it may be useful (as I believe it can), it will be possible for it to exist in the diocese. If the case is otherwise, then I shall recognize that it is not God's will that it should so exist, and I shall be equally content to close the Trent house, without regretting what I have hitherto done, since I acted sincerely and in good faith for the glory of God.

A further essential point strikes me towards the end of your letter: the universality of the Institute. It seems to me that the opposition to this idea may come from the State rather than from your wishes. But if it is you who insist on this point — i.e. you wish to have an institute with particular rather than general aims — then I would ask you to let me know this, because this fact alone would render it necessary for the Institute of Charity to cease to work in Trent. My reflections on the history of the various religious institutes which have flourished at different times in the Church have convinced me that only those with universal aims have lasted and been of great benefit to the Church. Whereas on the contrary those with particular aims: (1) have lasted for only a short time; (2) have been of little help; (3) have very easily lost their primitive spirit.

If this problem stemming from the universal nature of the Institute of Charity arose purely from political laws, from which only the Emperor can dispense, then I would certainly wish to use all suitable means to petition for this exemption, and would be prepared to present myself before the throne, provided that I could count on your firm support.

If this happens, and I am able to obtain from the Emperor the wished-for favour, I shall see this as the will of God. I believe that if it is in accordance with the divine will that the Institute should be established in Trent, the heart of the sovereign will be moved to consent to this, since the heart of the King is in God's hands. Equally I shall recognize God's will if he refuses, and in all peace of mind obey, and close the Trent house. So My Lord, over this matter too, I need to know clearly what is your will — that is, what the Holy Spirit suggests to you.

Your letter touches on various other points; but I think it is needless to speak of these, since the two essential matters are those concerning the granting of suitable authority to the Superior, and the universal nature of the Institute. Should you, My Lord, not agree over these things, then there is no point in going into other matters. On the other hand, should you be in agreement over them, then it will be very easy to come to an arrangement over the others.

Humbly asking your blessing,

ROSMINI Archpriest

152. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Tamié in Savoy

Rovereto, 29 September 1835

The grace and love of Jesus Christ be with you,

1. Several signs have appeared which indicate that it seems to be God's will that some members of our humble Institute should go to the ancient abbey of Tamié in Savoy, mainly to give a mission in that countryside and give retreats to both the people and the clergy, according to the will of the Bishop of the diocese.

These signs were, as far as externals go, the repeated and urgent requests of the Archbishop of Chambéry, asking that a house of our Institute should be established for the giving of missions and retreats, and offering the abbey of Tamié as a place for the foundation. These requests were first made known to me by a letter of Cardinal Morozzo on behalf of the Archbishop, and then by one from the Archbishop himself. When however the Institute deferred taking on this task, the Archbishop then approached Pope Gregory XVI, who got Cardinal Castracane to write to me on 19 March, saying that 'it would be a most acceptable thing in Rome were you to find it possible to do as the good Archbishop requested.' Thus, as regards external signs, nothing was lacking as an indication of the will of God (once the internal signs were favourable). As regards internal circumstances, there were many reasons that would have made it preferable to postpone such a foundation until things had matured further. At the same time, other considerations went a long way to persuade me that it would be better to go ahead without further delay. Also the Lord had sent to the Institute several French priests who seemed suitable to become the first stones of the first foundation in a French-speaking region. Moreover, going along with your advice, and having asked for light from God, in the persuasion that I am obeying the voice of the Lord, I have decided to send you, my dear brother, to Tamié as my agent in establishing this house. You are to have with you the following brethren: the priests Cesare Flecchia, Alessio Martin and Giacomo Julien, as well as the two laybrothers Giuseppe Maria Ferrari and Giovanni De-Capitani.

So you must pray earnestly to the Holy Spirit, and carry out this work with the circumspection and spiritual prudence that are essential in order to fulfil faithfully the will of the eternal Father; and let us not mar through any fault of ours what we do for God's glory.

2. First, you must understand and be fully persuaded that the Institute has no wish to enlarge itself; nor does it seek to be known — rather, for its own part it wants to remain as little known as possible, and even cease to exist if this is God's will and would make for his glory. So you must guard against even naming it without necessity or reasonable cause. You must also ensure that the

companions you will take to Tamié realize that this spirit of humility must mark both the Institute as a whole and each of its members.

3. As for the character of the house at Tamié, this will be determined in due course. For the present the one in charge of it will simply have the title of Superior.

4. Since it cannot at once be decided which of the three priests is to be the Superior of the house, for the present you will act in this capacity for as long as you remain there. But when you have to be away to look after things at Calvario, Don Cesare Flecchia will be in your place — but on these conditions: (1) Don Cesare will regard his two fellow-priests as his counsellors, and will act always in agreement with them. He will take no step which could in the least arouse their opposition; and if he thinks that he is thus prevented from doing what he ought to do, he must write at once to you; and you will tell him and his companions to act in the way you judge best before God. If he faithfully and obediently observes this instruction (which I shall impose on him as a matter of obedience) he will preserve the peace which is Christ's gift and the source of all good; and he will govern gently, to the gain of his own soul and those of others. ; (2) You must compose some rules for the personal guidance of Don Cesare, with a view to obviating any small problems during your absence. Send me a copy of these rules as soon as possible. Admonish your companions that they must be willing to give Don Cesare perfect obedience, submission and respect while you are away, as is the duty of true religious in relation to their Superior.

5. I grant you faculties, while you are at Tamié, to receive there any applicants who ask to be received for a first trial — though if they are clerics they must have the permission of the Archbishop for this. But you must be careful not to invite anyone, directly or indirectly, to join the Institute, even if you are speaking only jokingly. You are to let me know promptly if you do receive anyone, informing me of all the circumstances that may be of interest to me and which are mentioned in the list of information for members of the Institute which you have already sent me with regard to the Calvario community. But do not transfer anyone who has made the first trial at Tamié to the noviciate at Monte Calvario unless you have specific permission from me. While you are away from the house, though, no one is to be received there into the first probation.

6. You will arrange the horary and other matters according to the circumstance on the spot and send me a copy of your decisions.

7. Let Don Cesare have the following items, of which a record is to be kept in the archives at Tamié⁶⁷. It is your responsibility to put these into practice in the new foundation little by little, as far as circumstances allow...

⁶⁷ There followed a list of 21 regulations which had up to then been promulgated in the Institute.

8. I put you under obedience to tell me about any small problems, conflicts or clashes that you meet with in carrying out your commission, especially if they are due to any imprudence of yours, such as ill-considered words, unwise or ambiguous promises, or by raising the hopes of others. I repeat that I do not want any hopes to be raised in the minds of people by your words as to the good that the Institute may accomplish. If people are to cherish hopes, I want them to do so of their own accord when they see what we have done. Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. So we must mortify our tongues: if we do not sin with our tongues we shall become perfect men.

9. We must think about composing some rules for conducting missions, so I ask you to put down in writing any thoughts that come to you over this matter. In general I advise you to use great moderation over external practices. It is true that these make a big impression on people in some places; but we must never take our eyes off our sole perfect exemplar — Jesus Christ. He is the missionary we must imitate; and he never made use of spectacular or sensational devices, as have some missionaries in modern times. His preaching was simple, serious, and full of wisdom and holiness. Meditate well, my dear fellow, on this advice, and I am sure that the Spirit of Jesus Christ will make you see the truth of it and its importance.

A. R. Archpriest. Provost General

153. To Don Giacomo Julien at Tamié

Rovereto, 25 October 1835

My dear brother and fellow-priest,

Allow me to send you a few lines. Without knowing you personally, I love you. Even though your Superior has said nothing to me about it, I know that you are having temptations over your vocation. My dear brother, can it be that these result from faint-heartedness? Are you perhaps depressed by the dismal and solitary place in which you find yourself? Can it really be for such reasons that you have a mind to turn back on the road of perfect service of God that you have begun to travel? Is it possible that for such earthly reasons you could give up the immense grace which God in his infinite mercy has given you — the call to a religious institute? Does our good God deserve so little return? Are we going to refuse to carry for love of him a cross so light, when he has carried such a heavy one for us? Oh, the hardness of our hearts! My dear brother, are you not afraid that God may deny you his gifts if you are going to be so niggardly with your sacrifices? What are you going to give to God if you will not give him the choicest victims — that is, the mortifications that cost you most dear? Are you going to save up for him the fruits of Cain? This would be a sorry state of affairs. You could not find enough tears to deplore your misfortune.

All in all, my good friend, I counsel you not to come to such a conclusion out of merely human and earthly motives. Faced with a matter so grave, on which your eternal salvation may depend, look at things in the light of eternity, not in the false light of your passions. Do now what you would wish to have done when you are on your deathbed: remember that, since you have been sent by Superiors to take part in an enterprise that may bear great fruit for the glory of God, such as a new foundation, if you, through faint-heartedness, were to desert the ranks of the Lord like an unfaithful soldier, you would certainly be held responsible before God for your bad example and for all the good results that you, through your desertion, would have impeded. May the Holy Spirit enlighten you: listen to no other voice. I bless you and wish you every good from God, the eternal Truth; and I hope that, stimulated by this new advice of mine, which the Lord gives you through your unworthy Superior, you will think seriously about the possibility that you may take a false step through lack of courage and of trust in God.

Yours affectionately,

A. R.

154. To Don Luigi Gentili at Prior Park in England

Rovereto, 8 November 1835

My dear brother and companion in the Lord's service,

Be consoled, my dear fellow, always and in everything — even about the advice I give you, which truly has no other aim than what you yourself desire: your spiritual profit. I was deeply appreciative of your letter of 26 October, especially the part in which you opened up your conscience. Still, I think you would have done the more meritorious and perfect thing had you offered those lengthy excuses only to God, and kept quiet to me about them — all the more so since you recognize your own defects in that self-examination, and there was no need for all the excuses.

You talk as though you knew for certain that Don Antonio had written much more to me than he actually did, or as if he wrote accusing you, when in fact he showed sincere charity. So it is not a valid excuse that you put forward when you say that you had not written to me before about the state of things so as not to cause me displeasure, or because you wanted to show consideration for your companions. As to this last point: when you tell me candidly about their faults, using no exaggeration, you are not accusing them before a secular court, but simply helping them in a charitable fashion through me, because you give me the insights I need in order to guide them. I think I have told you before that when you write to me you must not consider whether you are pleasing or displeasing me. All you have to ask yourself is whether there is a need to write; and particularly concern yourself with being obedient. You know very well that I want to be told about everything according to the pure and simple truth. But I mainly want to hear about things that are amiss, rather than the good things; because I have to try to find remedies for what is wrong, not for what is right. Hence I need to know about: (1) your own personal defects and those of your companions; (2) your relations with them, and whether any clashes or lessening of charity occurs; (3) any clashes, or cooling off in charity with people round you. If you faithfully tell me about these things you will act with simple obedience and you will be blessed. So you must put away any motive or pretext that might dissuade you from doing this, regarding it as a temptation.

I recommend all three of you to make yourselves little by little as English as possible in anything which is not sinful, since in this way you will be acting like St Paul: I have made myself all things to all men. Wherever no sin is involved there is no good reason to oppose what you find: each nation has its own customs, which are good in its own eyes. So you ought to see through English eyes, and in your charity approve of what you see. It is a great defect in servants of God, whose true homeland is in heaven, if they are too attached to Italian, or Roman, or French customs. Try to learn gentleness and the magnanimity that goes with gentleness. Ask God in prayer to give you great

patience; and if you see in your companions any weaknesses, do not let that disturb you or give rise to bitter feelings within you. If you wait patiently, God will console you by bringing about their amendment little by little in due course. The more thoroughly you earn their love, the sooner and more easily that amendment will take place spontaneously. Nor must you ever be depressed by the thought of your own defects, but instead have all the greater renewed trust in God. Everything will turn out well if you are gentle and humble, and if you do not go in for innovations without consulting me beforehand. Do not try to do too much.

I have considered before God the rectorship that the Bishop is offering you; but I cannot approve of your accepting this within the first year of your stay in England. This I regard as a time of trial; and after it, we shall see whether the Bishop is of the same mind about putting you at the head of his seminary. If the post is still unfilled, we shall see whether or not you are to accept it. But as for the first year, absolutely not. And be careful not to hold out any hopes for the future to the Bishop. Simply tell him that for the present I do not give you permission to accept the post, because you are too young and too new to the situation.

My fondest greetings to all three of my brethren in England: I hope that they will always be of one heart and one soul — tell the others this.

I have not yet been able to leave here, and I have no hopes of being able to do so until the spring. Pray for —

Yours affectionately,

A. R. p.

155. To His Eminence Cardinal Placido Tadini, Archbishop of Genoa

Rovereto, 14 November 1835

Your Eminence,

I am replying at once to your esteemed letter which I received yesterday. I am anxious to co-operate cordially and fully with the holy and generous plan of His Majesty the King of Sardinia, and trusting myself only to the help of God and his Providence, I wish the proposal a successful outcome. You ask me when I could send subjects to the new foundation, and what conditions I would wish to be met before beginning the work. In order to obey your request I have set down in the enclosed memorandum⁶⁸ the thoughts that have occurred to me

⁶⁸ The enclosed memorandum was as follows:

1. The project conceived in the noble and most pious mind of the King of Sardinia — to open a religious refuge for persons who have had their fill of worldly honours and who now wish only for religious peace and a holy solitude in which to enjoy it (and are unable or do not wish to take religious vows), is certainly a new and noble one, and the Institute of Charity considers itself highly honoured that the royal favour has singled it out to execute this generous and holy plan. And since the institute has no other end than the glory of God and love of neighbour, practised according to the will of divine Providence, it regards the proposed work as intrinsically in keeping with its aims. This, in addition to the fact that the Institute has been chosen before other quite flourishing institutes, shows that the invitation represents the will of God. At the same time though, in order that the Institute may be able to conduct this pious work and carry it out the more faithfully according to the mind of the royal author of the plan, it is hoped that His Majesty will be so good as to have drawn up a more detailed version of the project he has in mind.

2. As for the financial maintenance of the Institute, His Majesty will kindly, as suggested, assign the abbey of La Chiusa and its revenues to the Institute, which will then maintain a number of religious in proportion to those revenues. 3. As regards the building, it needs to be in two parts, separate but communicating with one another. One of these will be assigned to housing the religious and the other to providing accommodation for the persons who wish to remain in temporary or permanent retirement there, without taking religious vows. The former part can be quite poor, since it is devoted to housing poor religious. The second needs to be arranged so as to provide the comforts suitable for the distinguished persons who may wish to live there. It must have its own oratory, refectory, library and private garden etc.; but it is to be hoped that over the arranging of this building His Majesty will give the necessary instructions to one of his own architects, so that everything may be carried out according to his mind.

4. In order to allow time for these arrangements to be made, and especially for the training of suitable religious, the Institute asks that it may be given about two years, hoping firmly in divine Providence that it may be able to send the requisite subjects to live in the new establishment by the spring of 1838.

about the matter. These I submit to your great prudence and wisdom. Since I greatly wish that this enterprise (which seems to me both great and admirable) may be carried out to the religious satisfaction of His Majesty, I think it will be better to prepare carefully the material as well as the formal participation of the Institute. And as regards the latter, I consider that the Institute should ask to be allowed to have a period in which to train suitable subjects; and for this I think the minimum time needed would be two years. In the meanwhile, the building itself, if it already exists, could be put in order, and the formal plan for the work completed.

With sentiments of profound gratitude, respect and devotion, I ask your blessing.

A ROSMINI p.

5. Finally, it is the custom of the Institute of Charity not to enter a diocese for the first time without first having the Bishop of that diocese examine and approve its Constitutions and give his consent in a decree. So the Bishop of Susa, in whose diocese the Institute would find itself, will have to be asked to be kind enough to grant his approval.

156. To an anonymous correspondent at Domodossola

Rovereto, 1 December 1883

My dear G.,

It was only yesterday that I received our letter which, I see from the postmark, was posted on 25 October from Angera [Lombardy], and I am replying at once.

I am not sure whether in your letter you are asking my advice or telling me about a decision you have already taken. In the former case, I would say that one's passions are not overcome in a moment; and that there is no need to be discouraged even if one yields to the attacks of our spiritual enemies. I would say to you that the defects you tell me about are not such as to dismay me, as long as you put all your trust in the grace of Jesus Christ, who alone is able to eradicate our vices and give us the opposite virtues. And finally I would say that the step of leaving the place where you find yourself deserves to be thought about carefully and with a cool head, while your soul is free from perturbation. For we are dealing with a very important decision, and one of which you could afterwards repent. To this I would add that unless you find the prospect insupportable, I would rather you waited until next spring, when I hope to be at Calvario myself. In the meantime, try to do the best you can, without showing any dislike for your brethren or giving them bad example. Then, when we are together in the spring, we can consider the matter seriously before God, and consider too what decision is to be made, and how to carry it out with all possible prudence. This is my view of the matter, if you want to know it.

But if your letter is only meant to tell me about a resolution you have already taken, one over which you are not asking counsel, I can only ask the Lord to give you every blessing. You are perfectly free: no one can ever remain with me except of his own free will. As for the things you brought to the house, remember that you were exempted from paying for your keep (as everyone is expected to do), and that the work you did was done in the service of the Lord. So it does not seem to me to be in conformity with the love of God that you should have regrets about the little you have been able to do or give in the service of your Creator. However, I will tell your Superior to let you have what remains of your property. As for what you tell me has been spoilt or destroyed, if you will send me an accurate account I will let you have my decision. I cannot deny, though, that if the step you are taking originated from any discouragement you feel because your passions seem too strong, this would cause me great grief, because of the love I have for you. No faithful follower of Jesus Christ should ever suffer discouragement or distress, but should rather hope even till death in the grace of our Lord. He will be able to make you feel the sweetness of humility and the unspeakable peace it brings with it. Goodbye.

Your affectionate servant in Jesus Christ,

ROSMINI p.

157. To Don Antonio Rey at Prior Park in England

Rovereto, 1 December 1835

My dear companion,

Thank you for your letter of 17 November. In it you accuse yourself of many defects; but I do not believe you. My dear brother, we have to distinguish between the temptations that afflict us and our consent to them. I can well believe that the evil spirit harasses you with temptations to ill-will, self-love and anger; and I know that the enemy makes your Superior the main subject of these suggestions of his — because if he could get you to give your full consent to them, he would have scored a great victory. The same would be true if through tormenting you and tiring you out, he could make you yield to discouragement, so that you laid down your arms. But it is my hope that most of the time it is merely a question of your being tempted, and nothing further; and this I conclude from the great distress which you experience, and the fact that you accuse yourself as though you had consented. I trust too that you will not be discouraged, because I fully believe that Jesus Christ will help you and will free you from all your enemies, provided that you persevere in the struggle and keep praying. And so that the evil spirit may not overcome you, or get you to consent, or discourage you, I suggest (in addition to the ordinary means) the following:

(1) Do not expect too much from yourself, or expect to mend matters in a moment, or be upset if you do not immediately mend your ways;

(2) In your dealings be as pleasant and cheerful as possible; for anyone who can preserve a holy cheerfulness in himself is less prone to temptations to ill-will and to inclinations to anger. To this end, set yourself to imitate the lovable St Francis de Sales;

(3) Resolve to be kind and charitable towards everyone; for if you accustom your heart to feelings of universal charity and the gentleness that goes with it, you will practise charity especially towards your Superior, and be tolerant of any ignorance or defects he may have. For which of us is not ignorant? Or do we fancy ourselves to be wise? Let us never do so, but rather repeat always in our hearts what Solomon said: Surely I am too stupid to be human: I do not have human understanding. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the holy ones. (Proverbs 30: 2,3). How can a wretched man, however much he knows, think highly of himself? This reflection alone is enough to banish from us any temptation to be envious or to look down on those who know less than ourselves.

I thank God that he has made you realize through experience how sympathetic we ought to be towards others, and that we must not expect from them more than their weakness makes possible. This is a most valuable truth. But you admit

that it is only now that *God* has revealed this to you, and that for a long time previously you acted towards others without appreciating the force of this truth. So learn from this to make allowances for others, even for those who have not arrived at the knowledge which you yourself have so recently acquired. And now that you see why fraternal love is so highly recommended in the New Testament, teach by your example, and extend your love to your two companions, so that this fraternal charity, welling up plentifully in your own heart, may fill theirs also. This is a short cut to holiness. It is my belief that our Institute has no more important precept than that of the fraternal charity from which it takes its name. Everything will depend on this love, so I recommend it particularly to you, my dear brother.

I will not fail to point out to your Superior his defects; and you must make them known to me quite frankly, but in a spirit of great charity.

Love your few pupils in *Jesus Christ*. Give my warm greetings to your two companions. May the Holy Spirit fill you all with himself, with love, gentleness and perfect union. What I want is charity, not learning. I have a great dread of learning, but an immense love for charity. Oh, may knowledge never be a cause of division among us; may charity build us up and make us one in *Jesus Christ* our Lord to him be all honour and glory for ever!

I want you all to teach a gentle morality, and not one that would frighten people, as would the two proposals you mention in your letter if they were taken tout court. But I hope that the one who expressed them does not mean them in a rigorous sense. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in *Jesus Christ*,

R.

158. To Don Carlo Aliprandi at Verona

Rovereto, 9 December 1835

My dear brother in our Lord Jesus Christ,

You must not let what you tell me about your feelings of spiritual coldness frighten you. The whole Christian life is an alternation of consolation and aridity. Consolation is not a sign that we are making progress; and aridity does not mean that we are going backwards. My dear brother, we have to live by faith: The just man lives by faith. Faith must help you not to be presumptuous during consolation, and not to lose heart in aridity. Jesus Christ is ever the same, yesterday, today, and for ever. Faith and grace live within us, often without our realizing it; and we must not confuse them with the feeling of faith and grace. Nor must we think that our spiritual state changes all at once without a grave reason. We have to content ourselves with having an upright will, or at least wanting to have this, for the rest trusting mainly in our loving Father and our good Mother, Mary.

It is most important, then, that by prayer and every kind of good work we offer violence to the Lord during the storm that is raging round our Institute. So we have to pray that he may direct our steps in everything — all of us united in his name — so that we may conduct ourselves as holy men, and that he may send labourers into his harvest'. In making this prayer we do not try to discern the divine dispositions regarding the Church, for we do not know these. Nor do we know into what parts of the world God may be pleased to see the Institute flourish. The Lord's is the earth and the fullness thereof. Again we do not know whether God has perhaps decreed that for a time the Institute must suspend its work in Trent, while elsewhere it is to grow. Perhaps it is God's purpose in this way to test its members, and to separate the resolute from those who vacillate. This seems highly likely to me, since I see that in Trent the Institute receives no support from the Bishop — who instead wants to subject it to conditions that would make its survival impossible. And when I see that the obstacle arises from the very quarter where we could least have expected it, I am led to believe that we must see in this a sign of a decree from above, since up to now the Bishop is set on altering the Constitutions of the Institute in essentials. I am telling you this so that you may know all about the state of things and inform Don Antonio. So pray, both of you, and get others to pray, and in this way obtain for me the light I need to see what final and definitive answer I should give the Bishop. This I shall do next January. So you and those with you must remain firm in your vocation, and so merit the grace to fulfil it perfectly. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in the Lord,

ROSMINI p.

159. To the priests and laybrothers of the Institute of Charity in the house of Jesus crucified at Trent

Rovereto, 16 December 1835

The fortitude and patience of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and glory for ever.

Our dear brothers, Don Francesco Puecher and Don Giulio Todeschi will tell you why I have had to close down the Institute in that house of Jesus crucified. My dear brethren, I can well understand how grieved your hearts must be at hearing this news. But if you will consider how inescapable were the motives which induced me to take this step, you will adore in this event the inscrutable designs of ever-loving divine Providence, and you will understand more fully through experience the spirit of our holy Rules, which direct us to allow ourselves to be governed by our good God in whatever way he pleases, with entire indifference, content to accept whatever occurs, even when events seem to be unfavourable to us.

What I find most painful to have to tell you is that, since we have no other house within the Austrian Empire, I have to set you free from every bond and obligation contracted with the Institute. But God, whom it is your constant wish to serve, will protect you; and perhaps at some future time he will gather you anew in his name, provided that you are faithful to your vocation and deserve to be confirmed and strengthened more and more by his holy grace. Perhaps this is a trial he wants to make of you so as to reward you in the end. He may intend through this incident to separate those who were not worthy, or he may wish each of you to become more worthy by showing steadfastness.

In the meanwhile I thank you for the faithful obedience that you have all given me, and the inexpressible charity you have shown in putting up with my shortcomings. I also ask pardon for the bad example I have given you, and for my mistakes — perhaps it was because of these things that God has laid his hand heavily on us. But your charity is so great that it leads me to put my hopes in your unceasing prayers for me: I beg you to obtain through them forgiveness and conversion for me, so that I may fully appease the Lord — in whom, with great affection, I embrace and bless you all.

Your servant in Christ,

A. ROSMINI

**160. To the priests Don A. Oberrauch and Don C. Aliprandi in
Verona**

Rovereto, 22 December 1835

My dear companions in the service of God,

I very much want you to protect yourselves sufficiently against the cold, and especially Don Carlo. He is to be obedient over this, as in everything else, towards Don Antonio, his Superior; and so too Don Antonio must obey Don Carlo in this matter. You must show mutual charity. I give you permission to have a stove built; and if your funds do not run to this, write to me and I will gladly meet the cost. So I await an answer from you, my dear brothers, over this matter. And to you, Don Carlo, I say that if you were not to obey me, out of an excessive love of suffering, and were then to fall ill, you would be unhappy over your failure to obey. Finally, remember that obedience counts for more than suffering itself: It is obedience I want, not sacrifice. So give heed to this warning.

Soon perhaps you will have a companion or two to join you. Meanwhile, pray to the Lord. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

ROSMINI p.

161. To Don Andrea Giacomuzzi at Trent

Rovereto, 23 December 1835

My dear brother in the Lord,

Your letter greatly consoled me, because of the generous and resolute sentiments expressed in it. If God did not allow the Institute of Charity to find a home in Trent, you must attribute this to my own unworthiness and to nothing else. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised! And I must praise his mercy too for the peace and true happiness I experience over the way things have turned out. I can say to you in all sincerity that I am not only tranquil in mind but also very happy. Join with me in thanking God for this; and I see that it is the same Father who makes me joyful now who also endows you with constancy in your resolutions. You have good reason to say that your hope is greater now than before.

I must end now, as various affairs are pressing on me: but I shall never cease to love you in the Lord, and I am sure that you will pray for me with even greater fervour. With affectionate greetings I remain

Yours,

ROSMINI p.

162. To Don Clemente Alvazzi at Domodossola

Rovereto, 3 January 1836

My dear brother and companion in the blessed service of Jesus,

You are very zealous for good, and for this I thank God from my heart. But there are times when you are almost entirely lacking in prudence. And how is this virtue to be acquired? First of all through obedience; then through reflection; and lastly, as you grow older. You have not yet lived long enough to gain much experience; you have not yet reflected much on the consequences of your actions, because no great conflicts have arisen to provoke such reflection. So what remains for you is to be very faithful to dependence on obedience — that virtue which is admirable in itself and very much a part of your vocation.

I give you permission to make the inscription to your worthy father. I shall see it when I am with you. But I absolutely forbid you to accept any presents from the students. You must inform the Superior and Vice-superior of this decision, so that it may be recorded in the rules of the house. Take care, all of you, of the health of your Vice-superior.

Do not suppose that you will be able to remedy all the irregularities in the school in a moment. For the present confine yourself to giving your lessons well and to treating the youngsters in the school with gentleness, dignity, prudence and clarity of mind. Do not worry: your own defects need not make you fearful. Those of which you accuse yourself are not serious, thank God, and they cause me no anxiety. So be good to yourself too; and you will be good if you remember that those who are weak need to be treated with a gentle hand. If then you regard yourself as one of the weak, you will be gentle to yourself too. Should you treat yourself too severely, this would suggest that you think yourself strong; and this presumption would be a graver defect than any of those of which you accuse yourself to me. So take courage! Believe that the Lord will amend you. Aim at frankness, obedience, a tranquil and gentle spirit. I embrace you warmly, and I ask you to convey my fondest regards to all our dear brothers in that house.

Yours in Christ,

ROSMINI p.

163. To an anonymous correspondent at Domodossola

Rovereto, 3 January 1836

My dear Giuseppe,

Thank you for your letter of 5 December. You must never exaggerate things, even when it is a matter in which you blame yourself. It seems to me that the struggle you have undergone came of the mistake of expecting too much of yourself. If you can persuade yourself that you are truly weak, you will not upset yourself too much, and you will not lose heart at the sight of your defects. The Lord will give you the grace to mend your ways little by little. But one thing I do beg of you, my dear brother: never underestimate the importance of obedience. If you should fall into some fault against obedience, which would not be too surprising, oh do not allow the devil to lure you into having less regard for this virtue, or let your companions hear you speak disparagingly of the esteem, respect and obedience due to Superiors. If you did this, then a small fault in you would lead to a grave one; and I assure you that if you did not amend yourself over this, I should feel in conscience obliged to send you away. Your other faults do not worry me: I trust in God.

So rest quite easy in mind, and do not allow your imagination to distort things or paint them in exaggerated colours.

Pray for me, as I will pray and get others to pray for you. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,

ROSMINI p.

164. To Don Luigi Gentili at Prior Park in England

Rovereto, 3 January 1836

My dear brother and friend in Jesus Christ, in whom we hope to be united for all eternity,

I see how upset you are because one of your companions has spoken candidly to me, as was his duty. The way you express yourself shows the resentment you feel, and suggests that you think you have been accused to me. My dear Luigi, there is no question here of any accusation. There can be no accusations among us. Let me say that you have brought this word into religion from the world. Give it back to the world from which you have taken it. I must warn you to see in what has happened a case of a self-love which is anything but mortified. Yes, I accuse this enemy to you, so that you may fight against him with all your might. We are brothers, and you must never think that you see in me anything like an earthly court of law. Rather, you must want everything about yourself to be clear to me, and wish your companions to write to me with all freedom. Both humility and truth must make you deeply persuaded that it is much easier for others to know our defects than for us to do so. When you are convinced of this, and when you want me to know about your faults for your own good, then you will be glad to accuse yourself of your defects, but you will be even better pleased if others do this for you. An accusation that you make against yourself is less of a humiliation than one made by others; the former can be a sign of pride; whereas if we can be pleased to have others tell us and our Superiors about our faults — this is genuine and sincere humility. Bear it well in mind that the whole foundation of our Institute depends on destroying the evil of self-love.

If you look into the intimate nature of humility, you will see that it would be more in conformity with this virtue not to excuse yourself, even if the defects revealed to the Superior were in fact untrue. Our duty is simply to reply to him when he asks questions, without multiplying words, but clearly, sincerely, calmly and with a pure intention. God himself will defend us if we are innocent, and we must abandon ourselves to him.

Lastly, let me warn you of another deceit caused by self-love. This cunning enemy at times puts on the appearance of humility: he makes our defects seem worse than they are, and even when we accuse ourselves to Superiors, he suggests that we should exaggerate them. Examine yourself over this point too. Your defects should not cause you to fear: put your trust entirely in God, and with his help you will overcome them. Do not expect too much of yourself, and when you accuse yourself, do so in all simplicity. If I were to confront the part of your letter in which you excuse yourself with the part in which you accuse yourself, there would be a strange contradiction. According to the first part, you have no defects; whereas from the second part it would appear that you

have many and great faults. We must not be ruled by our imaginations, but by calm reason; and our thoughts and words should always be marked by gentle, peaceful charity.

I must again advise you, when you are giving instructions, not to come out with over-severe statements which would not stand up to examination or testing by a wise and discreet moral judgement. And take care especially 'not to make a precept out of what is only a counsel, and not to make a mortal sin out of a venial one.'

As a penance for your failings, you are to read with a completely tranquil mind the various personal warnings I have given you from time to time, and of which you keep a record in your notebook.

I bless you all in the most sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary: in them I want you to be completely one. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God in him. Amen. Amen.

Yours with all my heart,

ROSMINI p.

165. To the Marchese Luigi di Canossa at Verona

Rovereto, 13 January 1836

My dear Marchese,

Thank you very much for your kind letter. I do not deserve your thanks; and as for your good wishes, I return them in double measure. I am especially grateful for the religious interest you take in our humble Institute of Charity. Its beginning in fact came from your own family — that is, from that holy woman, the Marchesa Maddalena. And I trust that she, who is now near the throne of almighty God, will be its advocate with him. Her holy zeal was most ingenious in finding ever new ways of giving glory to God, and it embraced the whole world. She burned with a desire to sanctify souls, and she often said to me that every country was the same to her, and that she was willing to go to the ends of the earth in order to do good. Because of the esteem in which she knew I held her, you may be sure, my dear Marchese, that I would not hesitate for a moment to do what you mention in your letter, if it were possible and willed by God. Verona, such a holy city, and the home of the Marchesa Maddalena, would deserve preference over any other place, when it came to founding a religious house, if one had to and were able to choose. But you will understand that there are many difficulties over this; and the Institute of Charity, by its nature and its customary way of acting, follows rather than anticipates the gentle Providence of God. So I would beg you to pray, my dear Marchese, for me and for this much-tried Institute — which, I say again, can be said to belong to your own family.

Please give my humble respects to your father, and believe me to be always —

Your devoted and affectionate servant,

ROSMINI p.

166. To Don Giambattista Boselli⁶⁹

Rovereto, 22 January 1836

Because of the love I owe you, my dear brother, I should like to send you some advice to accompany you to your new post — advice which may help you to reach the spiritual perfection which, I am sure, is the one object of all your desires.

1. First, then, although the house in Verona cannot properly be called a religious house, it is my wish that you live there as far as possible as if it were, and according to the Rules of our Institute.
2. Resolve to continue with your studies in the spirit of your holy vocation: a spirit of humility, of charity and of indifference over everything, and to be diligent in reading the Rules and making your meditation and examination of conscience.
3. I have no doubt, my dear brother, that you will sincerely respect and love the Superior of the house, Don Antonio [Oberrauch], who some years ago was called to Verona by the Bishop, and who carries out the duties of chaplain to the German-speaking people. It is to his labours that we owe the house and much of the income that supports that little community of ours. Since he knows better than anyone else, through his years of experience, the local needs, the customs and the social relations there, he will be able to give you the necessary insights into carrying out works of charity, and also the way of life, interior and exterior.
4. It is through your humble submission, spontaneous and full of love, that there will be wonderfully shown among you that golden mutual charity that ought to make us one heart and one soul. Hence the peace of the Holy Spirit will spread through the house and diffuse outside it the sweet odour of disciples of Jesus Christ.
5. You will be eager to help Don Antonio in caring for the boys who live there, in maintaining order and good conduct within the house, and in hearing confessions and visiting the sick, or in any other task he may entrust to you,
6. You will put your trust in the Bishop, and as soon as you arrive, ask Don Antonio to take you to him so that you may receive his blessing and show him your dimissorial letter and credentials.
7. I hope that you will then keep me closely informed about everything, sending me also any reflections that God may suggest to you for the improvement of our little hostel in Verona.

A. ROSMINI p.

⁶⁹ In E.C. this letter is given the date 1835 (cf. vol. XIII, No. 7988). But it was in fact written in 1836, as is clear from the letter of Rosmini to Mgr Grassler on 23 January 1836 (E.C. vol. V, p560), and from Boselli's personal notes (preserved in the Rosminian archives), according to which he left the Trent house (which had already been closed) and went to that in Verona on 26 January 1836.

167. To Don Clemente Alvazzi at Domodossola

Rovereto, 30 January 1836

My dear Alvazzi,

Do not worry too much about the school. It is not good to expect too much or to want to do things in too great a hurry. You are young and full of zeal. Now God has given you work in the school so that you may gain some experience and exercise the beautiful virtue of PATIENCE. So do not complain too much. Rather I advise you against going from one to another with your laments, seeking counsel first from this person, then from that. Such a way of acting shows neither maturity nor prudence. Do what you can, without appearing singular in any way, and wait. In time God will bless your efforts and reward your patience, perseverance and moderation.

As for punishments, never use the cane: you can punish the boys by making them kneel, and by using other punishments that are not forbidden by the rules, and are used by the other teachers. Try also to learn from them in everything that is good — you who are the youngest of all. But a demeanour that is dignified, well-ordered and friendly will help you greatly. If the children do not make much progress, even though you have done your best, you must not be upset. Just persevere in doing your duty, and that is enough.

From now on you must stop indulging in useless complaints and in too much talk about the school, outside the house as well as in. I pray that God may bless you abundantly.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

ROSMINI p.

168. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan

Rovereto, 5 February 1836

My dear friend,

At your request Don Luigi [Gentili] told me that Giacomino Somaglia was ill, and by the same post Count Cesare Castelbarco informed me of his death. I can well imagine how greatly you are grieved by this quite unexpected blow, and it is the thought of your sorrow that most afflicts me. On the other hand, when I reflect on the Christian fortitude which you have already shown in so many misfortunes, and on the infinite goodness of God, who customarily proportions the weight of afflictions to the strength of the one on whom he imposes them, and who also by his grace increases that strength in proportion to the need, I am to some extent consoled by these thoughts; and they make me fully confident that you will bear this misfortune in the order of nature with your usual indefatigable resignation, which will both lessen the bitterness of the blow and earn you merit and reward. So I am sure that you will see in what has happened a sign of the divine goodness, which gives you an opportunity to show God your love, as you conform yourself with all your heart to his adorable will. Certainly there is nothing more lovable than the will of God — or rather nothing else is worthy of love, so that our only good is to be able to know it and fulfil it.

But when this divine will demands of us a sacrifice so hard on nature, then it seems to me something immeasurably delightful and dear, bringing the fullness of joy to the faithful soul who has given his heart to Jesus Christ and his love to the sacred wounds. To love the will of God in agreeable matters is so little a sign of love that it may be questioned if it is love at all; but to love it in adversity is love as pure as refined gold — love which satisfies the soul that suffers lovingly.

Oh, my dear Mellerio, you do not need consolation from me you who have so often told me how our holy religion changes even the most unwelcome events into joys. But still I do not think you will find unacceptable in these circumstances whatever may remind you how precious to the Christian is his cross. Certainly I am glad to recall these truths myself, and especially to do so with a friend such as you, who shares my sentiments completely. The hand of God, when it touches you, touches me too. This hand of God, who is all-powerful and all-wise, created the heavens, and wants to form us too for heavenly love; and the discipline of suffering, through which it trains us, is no less to be admired than the creation of the universe, though for the most part it is hidden, and seems to destroy rather than build. In reality it destroys what is visible so as to create within us what is invisible; it takes out of our hearts the things of earth, so as to give us something eternal and infinite, immeasurably more valuable than anything earthly.

I can imagine the desolation felt by your sister and by all the Somaglia family. But this too will afford you an opportunity of doing good, by communicating to them your own fortitude.

The moment I heard the sad news, I commended the soul of the departed one to God, and got my brethren to pray for him too.

I embrace you fondly and hope to see you before long. May our crucified Lord shed in your heart a drop of his precious blood: there is no more salutary balm.

Totally yours,

R.

169. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan

Rovereto. 14 February 1836

My dear friend,

Although I hope to embrace you soon, since I intend to leave here on the 22nd and be in Milan within the week, I am still sending you another letter. I was in doubt whether in your sorrow you would still feel more deeply than ever the sweetness of the grace of God. The world is corrupt, and perhaps it would have been difficult for the young man who has been taken from us to have made his way in it without coming to harm. God foresaw this and snatched him away lest evil should change him. Whatever the eternal love of God does, it does with merciful intent. We have to be strong in the hope that it was out of his mercy that God took this young man to himself; and believe firmly that he meant to show mercy to us also, by speaking to us of the great truths through events, which are the language of God.

Please let the Somaglia family know how deeply I sympathize with them in their loss, and tell them that I remember in my prayers those to whom I am bound by strong ties of gratitude and friendship. Let us try always more and more to act as St Paul would have us do, keeping ourselves far from that sadness felt by pagans who are without hope, and let us give ourselves entirely to God. Goodbye.

Yours with all my heart,

R.

170. To Don Simone Zeni at Lavis⁷⁰

Rovereto, 15 February 1836

My dear Don Simone,

I thank you warmly for your welcome letter. It was full of the sentiments that cannot fail to win for you heavenly blessings. In the closing of the Institute's house in Trent we have to adore the exalted ways of divine Providence, and remain constant in our first intention of serving God with all our heart. Although we are separated as far as external links go, we are still bound to one another by the ineffable bond of the love of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have to remember the many difficulties that were met with by those who were called by God in the early days of religious Orders: remember St Ignatius, St Alphonsus Liguori and all the other holy founders without exception. In the meanwhile, be diligent in sanctifying yourself in the position in which God has placed you. Gain souls for the Lord; make this your aim in all you do. When you least expect it, God will make you feel all the delight of serving him. Write to me from time to time; you will always find me at your service, and be sure that you have in me an unfailing friend. Above all, pray for me in my weakness and sinfulness: pray for one who will always have you in his heart, wherever you may go.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

R.

⁷⁰ When the Trent house was closed, Don Simone Zeni was sent by the Bishop to Lavis as chaplain.

171. To Don Antonio Rey in England

Rovereto, 19 February 1836

My dear brother,

I am glad that you are increasingly enjoying the peace of the Lord. As I have written to you before, you must guard against being too hard on yourself, expecting too much of yourself. We are weak men and we have to bear with ourselves and not be discouraged. No matter how many defects you seem to discover in yourself, you cannot deny that you also want to overcome them and perfect yourself. Well, this desire will be crowned with success. God listens to us: he gives ear to our holy desires, and especially to the wishes we express in prayer. As the psalmist says, You have given him his heart's desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips.

So you must not force yourself over things which make you feel an insuperable repugnance (a repugnance which moreover is imaginary — a deception of the devil), and which are not of obligation. You will profit by making acts of profound humility, together with great trust in God, so that the GOODNESS OF GOD will always be foremost in your mind — that goodness which he mainly shows by guiding us to eternal salvation, and giving us the material and spiritual means to achieve it.

I think too that it will greatly help you if you put a brake (as far as you can) on your imagination. To this end you would do well to replace mental prayer by much vocal prayer — but over this you will be guided by your Superior. Love GOD and CHRIST in your companions; try to be filled with love, sympathy and compassion, and desire holiness for yourself and them, so that all three of you may be CHILDREN OF PEACE. Love, calmness, peace — these form the way which will lead you to a gentle humility and perfect obedience. Pray for —

Your brother in Christ,

R.

172. To Don Luigi Gentili at Prior Park in England

Rovereto, 19 February 1836

My dear brother in Jesus Christ, to whom be honour and everlasting glory.
Amen.

I thank God from my heart for the brotherly harmony that the Holy Spirit increasingly spreads among you; and this harmony will be greatly helped if 'each of you is content to concentrate on carrying out his own duties without giving thought to the affairs of the Church as a whole.' Let us perfect ourselves in our holy vocation, and in all simplicity rest in God. One thing I would strongly advise you is this: 'not to take a jaundiced view of anything at all that happens over there.' I say this because I can see that the devil might get a grip on you in this connection and deceive you into a false kind of zeal. Instead, you must try to keep a cool head — though not a cold heart. I know what I am talking about here, and if you heed my words they will stand you in good stead. Remember that it is not enough to receive humbly the advice of Superiors: what matters is that you should thoroughly assimilate such guidance until you savour its hidden worth.

I embrace in the Lord dear Rey and Belisy, and I ask God to bless you all in the abundance of his love. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

173. To Mgr C. E. Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona

Milan, 9 March 1836

Very Reverend Monsignor,

All things considered, I do not think the time has come to go ahead with the plan you have in mind: for the present it would be better for you to wait patiently. *I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined his ear to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog.* The virtue that God wants us to practise in our times is LONGANIMITY: the virtue that scripture recommends so strongly, constantly telling us in one way and another: Wait for the Lord be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord.

So let us praise God, and pray, and get others to pray, in complete tranquillity of mind.

Here I am busy with my studies, and I am waiting for my permit, which never arrives. This long-drawn-out waiting is trying to our nature; but at the same time it is a salutary exercise for the spirit, as I said. And so, by the grace of God, I remain always content.

Please give my warm regards to dear Don Paoli and to the others I know there. With deepest respect and devotion, I beg your blessing.

ROSMINI p.

174. To Don Giacomo Molinari at Domodossola

Milan, 17 March 1836

... I should like Gilardi to be dispensed from the Omegna mission. You will find the most prudent and considerate way of relieving him of this burden. I urge him then to use all diligence to see that the retreat he is going to give at Gozzano bears fruit; and this will happen if the retreat-giver is filled with the Holy Spirit, the spirit of the priesthood.

As for the young man from Miggiadone who hopes to enter the house, I want to give you this rule: when it comes to laics, only the minimum number should be accepted — that is, only as many as are indispensable for the practical running of the house; and these few should be chosen most carefully from among those who possess the greater spirit of God, sound health, and ability. So think carefully about all the implications of this rule, and then submit your thoughts about it to Don Giambattista [Loewenbruck], so that he may reach a decision about who is to be received.

As for what his parents pay during his first probation and noviciate, they are simply to meet the cost of his keep (in advance, in six-monthly instalments) — enough to cover his upkeep, drawing up a contract like the one used by the Sisters of Providence when they receive a boarder. There will be no obligation to keep him on, but merely to give him a religious education in the house. This contract must always be in writing from now on (and dear Bianchi will know how to draw up a form of words — which you must send on to me) so that no complaints may arise in future if a young man is sent away. Put this directive into the list of rules.

I send warmest greetings to all my dear brethren who at Calvario pray at the foot of the cross for me, their servant in exile.

ROSMINI p.

175. To Don Francesco Puecher at Verona

Milan, 18 March 1836

My dear brother and companion in the Lord's service,

I felt keenly your absence and the lack of your help; and so your letter was especially welcome. Ask God that we may be together again, if it so pleases him; and I believe it will please him if we pray for this.

In the meanwhile you do well, now that you have the time, to make a retreat. During it, make every effort to unite yourself to God and to sacrifice yourself totally to him, keeping nothing back. Make a special sacrifice of self-love, and ask him that you may be dead to all the things of this world. Pray for me too: I hope to make my retreat soon after Easter. My great desire is to be converted once and for all to the Lord, and to cease to be as ungrateful as I am now.

Thank you for the news you give me of our brethren there. Try to help them by setting an example of great humility and gentleness, and by showing religious sentiments not so much by words used in the tone of a preacher as by the fervent and simple outpouring of your heart. Prudence and discretion will greatly avail you; so ask the Holy Spirit for these gifts.

If you are not able to give conferences or other religious exercises in the house, try at least for your part to supply for these by making your words pious and edifying.

I embrace Don Antonio in the Lord, and urge him to make himself holy and to pray that we may all do the like. All our good, and the whole aim of our Institute consists in this.

I am most anxious to see you. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

R.

176. To Don Giulio Todeschi at Cremona

Milan, 19 March 1836

My dear Giulio,

I was delighted to get your letter. Preserve the peace which God is giving you; and it will greatly help you to do this if you cultivate both MODERATION and HUMILITY. If you use restraint, you will not be led into the sort of excess that could deceive you under the appearance of good. I rejoice over your fervour: it is a gift of God; but you need to use foresight and caution in following its promptings. Still, I do not disapprove of the monthly vigil you want to make, provided you do not make a rigid rule about this but use it with liberty of spirit and with the guidance of your confessor. So too moderation and discretion towards others will lead you to 'decide always in their favour, where there is no evident sin'. It will also stop you from imposing on them any heavier burdens than those that are clearly laid down in God's law.

See that your conversation is always open and cordial, full of kindness, pleasant, considerate and innocently cheerful: nothing harsh, severe, insincere or sad. Bear in mind what is in Rules 5, 6, 7, 13 and 14. In short give an example of pleasing and holy speech. Do not immerse yourself too much in your studies, but alternate application to them with activity. Devote as much care as possible to preparing the Lenten sermons.

Here I am held captive: pray to God that I may be freed⁷¹. I am working all the time at the *Anthropology*⁷². It is only now that the work against Mamiani⁷³ can begin to be printed.

I embrace our dear Paoli, whose holy friendship you will enjoy. My deepest respects to our beloved Bishop. Give my greetings to all my acquaintances. Goodbye. May almighty God bless you, and may Mary his dear Mother do so too.

Yours most affectionately,

R. p.

⁷¹ He alludes to the passport which he needed in order to go back to his brethren in Piedmont after he had given up the post of parish priest of San Marco in Rovereto, and the unfortunate closure of the Trent house.

⁷² Rosmini wrote two works with this title: *Anthropology in the Service of Moral Science*, which he published in 1838; and *Supernatural Anthropology*, which he finished writing in April, 1836, but which was published only posthumously, in 1884

⁷³ The title of this work is *The Renewal of Philosophy in Italy*, proposed by Count Terenzio Mamiani and examined by A. Rosmini-Serbati.

177. To Don Luigi Gentili at Prior Park in England

Milan, 2 April 1836

My dear brother in Jesus Christ, to whom be eternal glory and love,

It will help greatly if you meditate on the advice I have given you, so as to draw profit from it by humility, rather than speak on your own behalf, trying to justify yourself in face of the defects imputed to you. Forgive me if I make so much of humility — the virtue in which I should like to see you perfect yourself. The same goes for restraint in speech, which is a good outward sign of humility itself, and which makes a man truly wise. If we can become really humble, we shall be genuine members of our Institute of Charity.

For the rest, bear the burdens of your brethren, and bring them forth anew in Jesus Christ, to use St Paul's expression. This can be done through immense love. As for Belisy, if it quite impossible for him to have his family inheritance, I will make it up to him from some property of mine. Meanwhile, I should like him to prepare himself with both holiness and learning. It is essential for him to take a regular course of dogmatic theology: write and tell me if this can be arranged — but note well, it must be a regular course.

As for your own inheritance, you were at fault, my dear Luigi, in not writing to me as soon as you heard from Rome about it. You should have informed me without delay. You share the common human fault — a disposition to try to keep things hidden and act secretively in various small ways; and I feel I must point out this to you because I long so much to see you become perfect, with the help of God's grace and mercy. So as your penance for the faults of this kind that you have committed, I want you to read with a cool head nos. 24 and 25 of the Memorial of the First Probation.

I have thought about your proposal that your estate should be classified now under the title of poverty (and you ought not to have spoken to the Holy Father about this of your own accord) or under a missionary title, and I cannot approve of this. So write again to find out positive information about this family property that you say you have in Rome, since it would be best to make use of it if possible.

As for bringing your brothers to England, I can neither approve of this nor permit it. If one of them has a vocation as a religious let him go to Domodossola, where he will be welcomed. We have to give up our family in this world so that we can all serve God and be wholly his, free from all worldly cares.

I am not happy that you have to be sent for to go to your lectures. It seems to me it would be much better if you were in your place most punctually, and

waited there patiently for your pupils. This would set them an example of perfect diligence.

My dear Luigi, arm yourself with fortitude and become a great man in the Lord, so that you can say, I have run my course. God has given you a great vocation so that, stripped of self, you may become like Christ, who was offered up because he willed it.

Pray for your wretched servant and friend,

ROSMINI p.

178. To Don Cesare Flecchia at Tamié

Milan, 14 April 1836

Dear Cesare, whom I love in the Lord, to whom be all love and honour. Amen.

Thank you for your letter of 15 March. I thank God for it too, because it shows me how much he is helping you. I know he will do so more and more. Have no doubts, my dear Cesare: our good God overcomes all our wretchedness, and is victorious in all who hope in him. So — courage!

Set yourself to serve, with love and also with holy discretion, that new house in which God has placed you; try to help in everything which your Superior approves of and which agrees with the rules. Since you have been given the task of teaching in the school, see that you prepare your lessons well, since for us sound teaching is of the greatest importance. I should like all our men, if possible, to have a deep knowledge of theology — dogmatic as well as moral: the two are closely linked, and one illustrates the other.

God willing, I hope to be at Calvario before the end of May. I have not yet been able to obtain a passport, and that is what holds me here. I must again urge you not to write such a microscopic hand: write with large clear letters. I must finish, but I send you my warmest regards, and pray that God will bless that house for his glory. I embrace all the dear brethren there. Goodbye.

Yours in Christ.

ROSMINI p.

179. To Don Giovanni Padulli

Milan, 25 April 1836

My dear Don Giovanni,

When you are in Rome and present yourself to the Holy Father, please have me in mind. Give him my humble greetings, and ask for the favour of his apostolic blessing. Should he ask you about the Institute of Charity's affairs, say to him:

1. That the Lord is blessing the Institute in Piedmont, where it finds much favour, and that it is doing well in Savoy; that the King of Sardinia has asked me to open a new house, offering me the abbey of San Michele della Chiusa (formerly in the possession of Cardinal Gerdil), and that I hope in course of time to meet the pious request of His Majesty; that in England, too, things are going well, except that I am asked for more subjects, though at present I have none at my disposal for that purpose.

2. That for the present I have closed down the Institute in Austria, for two reasons: first, that the government was fettering it in a way that prevented it from attaining its purpose, and demanded that the Institute in Austria should be separated from the Institute elsewhere; and, second, because the Bishop wanted to make use of individual members as chaplains in various parts of his diocese, thus preventing them from following the religious life according to their state.

3. That I am most anxious that, should it be pleasing to God, the Institute may be formally approved by the Holy See for the universal Church; and to this end I recommend it most earnestly to His Holiness, in whom I placed all my confidence before, by the will of divine Providence, he was raised to the See of Peter.

4. That I desire greatly to go to Rome, because I realize that it is essential that the Institute should have a house there. Indeed it seems to me that it cannot truly be said to be founded until it is firmly established in Rome. The reason for this is that, since it is intended to be dedicated to the special service of the Holy See, there is a manifest need for its centre to be immediately under the control of the Pope, and in close communication with him so as to receive his orders.

(No signature)

180. To Giuseppe de'Rosmini Serbati at Rovereto

Milan, 26 April 1836

My dear brother,

I gather from your welcome letter of 11 April that you still find yourself beset by doubts and hesitations. You must take courage, my dear Giuseppe, and realize that the timidity you feel stems from a disturbed nervous system, and that matters will improve if you manage to overcome your fondness for solitude, and associate with other people, not allowing yourself to be dismayed either by your own defects or by those of others. You need to be firmly resolved over this, and to prefer the company of persons who are at once cheerful and good. Then you must try as much as you can to adopt the same cheerfulness. I say that you must seek out good people, since you are not looking for a worldly sort of affability, but rather a holy happiness, something innocent and simple.

You need to remember that because of your nervous affliction any undue dwelling on the same thing, especially if it is something of small importance, is very harmful. What you need is to divert your thoughts, and to do whatever you wish to do at once, without all those doubts. Hence you must never dwell on bitter feelings but send them packing; make every effort to acquire the beautiful virtues of agreement with the wishes of others, of kindness, friendship and Christian charity. In all this you will be greatly helped if you do not set too much store by earthly things, but rest all your love in God, content with whatever pleases him, even the mortifications which come our way, which he sends us for the good of our souls.

Kiss the hand of our dear mother for me. Pray for me and send me frequent news.

Your most affectionate brother,

ANTHONY

181. To Don Paolo Orsi at Rovereto

Rho, 6 May 1836

My dear friend,

Anyone who teaches young people must be firmly persuaded that to induce them to be good, and to have a useful and effective influence on their souls, there is only one simple means: and that is the truth in the fullest sense of the word. I mean truth both in its natural and imperfect form, and truth in its supernatural and perfect form. This latter is the grace of Christ, which works secretly in them, and from which alone can come the salvation, the interior virtue and the happiness of man.

It follows that the teacher must not trust over-much to external and (so to speak) mechanical means, which can at best have two good effects: first, they can remove the occasions of wrong-doing; and second, they can dispose the soul indirectly to good. But these means do not produce good itself; they can only constitute a certain preparation to receive the good which consists in truth and grace.

Now the type of education that trusts entirely to the material means I spoke of, thereby neglecting the immediate and formal means, produces unwittingly two grave disorders in the minds of the young.

In that it restricts itself to means that are preventative and prohibitive — in a word, negative methods — it produces an apparent and artificial goodness: something that might be called 'schoolboy virtue'; and this disappears soon after the youth is no longer enclosed within the school walls, surrounded by the sheltered atmosphere which, without being able to make him good, offered him no opportunity for wrongdoing outside.

In so far as this sort of education uses means that are positive, yes, but that merely induce a disposition towards good, certain ill effects follow. The means used include such things as the gentleness of the teachers, affection, efforts to make good actions materially rewarding, encouragement to excel, and so on. But since they go no further than this they give rise in the pupil to a mistaken outlook and intention. Yet the intention can be compared to the eye of the soul, and by this the whole body should be enlightened, as our divine Master said. That intention is misguided, because it does not produce in the depths of the young person's soul a genuine love of virtue for its own sake, for the sake of its ineffable beauty and its intrinsic rightness. Instead it only leads to human affection towards his teachers, a love of being praised and rewarded and of being treated with affection. Other effects are a certain vanity and self-esteem, ambition, the desire to outdo his peers; and these dispositions teach

him to envy rather than love — whereas it is in love that true virtue consists, and so it is to love that we should try to lead the young.

It is not that all these means (which used on their own can be harmful, but used in conjunction with better means prepare the way towards making the boy good) are not to be employed; rather, they are to be seen as important, like the hedge which keeps the field from being harmed by the cattle. The trouble comes only if they are believed to be all that education calls for, the main element in it; or if it is thought that education has even begun when these means alone are used. (A field well protected by hedges but without seed in it produces only weeds.) No: the truth is that they are not capable of making a start, or of sowing the first seed of education. So, I repeat, they can be no more than mere preludes to the great task of rendering the boy good.

There is only one way in which this task can be begun, continued and completed; and that is by (1) bringing the boy to know in his soul the saving truth, strengthened by grace; (2) getting him to contemplate the beauty of this truth which he knows; (3) enabling him to be enamoured of the beauty of the truth which he contemplates; and (4) leading him to act in conformity with the beauty of the truth which he has come to love.

For all this to come about, only one thing is needed: the boy must have clearly before his intellect a vision of the moral truth in question; the all-powerful light of this truth comes only from divine grace. And for the moral truth to be put before the eyes of his intellect, it must be explained to him simply and coherently, with no affectation or artifice.

Our Lord as God is the Truth itself; and as man he is the great and sole Teacher — and therefore the model of all teachers. So let us look closely at him: our way of teaching must have in it nothing affected, nothing over-refined or artificial; rather, we must give an exposition that is clear, brief, profound, serious, and expressed in familiar images and symbols, such as are necessary when dealing with those who are not yet mature.

I said that moral truth has to be explained coherently. This is because there must be consistency between what is said and what is done. The boy must be able to see the truth in the words of his teacher, but also in his face and in his life. So too there must be consistency both in what the teacher says at various times and between his teaching and that of others. Hence different things must not be taught at different times of the day; nor must everyday circumstances give rise to maxims that contradict what was said in school. And what is taught in school must all be true, with no exaggeration, no pretence, no admixture of the prejudices which unfortunately we breathe in with the air. All in all, then, consistency of truth means that it has to be pure truth, stripped of all human deceit, whether in sacred or profane matters. Dear Don Paolo, it is not as easy as some believe to avoid telling lies!

And now to come nearer to what you ask me about: 'how can we make the virtue of the boy in school something that will last?' Reflect well that truth has an eternal beauty, such that it never grows less, never satiates or wearies those who look on it. Rather, the more it is contemplated, the stronger grows the desire for it. Because those who have once tasted the indescribable and stimulating beauty of moral truth can only with difficulty abandon it. So the education of those who show themselves to be virtuous even away from school is something that carries an assurance: it means that they were genuinely virtuous during their time at school.

It is not within human power to bestow on moral truth the infinite light which divinizes the souls that receive it within, so that they are made superior to all the attractions and dangers of the world: we must be convinced that only divine grace is able to do this. And that grace is the working of subsistent truth which through Christ shines out in us. But still God our Master has given us the infallible means of obtaining grace. We must then see to it that the boys use worthily the sacraments of Christ — and you understand what I mean by worthily. These sacraments set a seal on and make effective our human words, so that they, if they are inspired by the Holy Spirit who is within us, are (I would almost say) a sacrament and can give grace.

I have already said that the chief danger of some of the methods used is that they distort the intention of the boys, and that it is only by means of a right intention that formal virtue is practised. To finish, let me add here the norms which are followed by the brethren of the Institute of Charity who are engaged in the education of young people, with a view to maintaining in them a right intention. Here is the advice I have given them:

Rivalry and competition should not be used to move young people to virtue. On the other hand they need not be suppressed when they arise spontaneously, provided they do not degenerate into envy or animosity.

There are both primary and secondary motives to be used to spur the boys on.

The secondary ones are not to be used alone, but rather to add force to the primary ones.

The primary ones are:

1. The beauty of virtue;
2. God deserves to be obeyed, and Christ to be imitated.

The secondary ones are:

1. The prompting of natural goodness, which invites us to virtues such as compassion, the love of our fellow-men etc.;

2. The profit to be gained from the practice of virtue: for instance, moderation helps preserve our bodily health; industriousness yields financial reward; knowledge earns us the esteem of others etc. (These two motives must be subordinated to the principal one — the beauty of virtue.)

3. The reward or punishment which awaits us in the next life;

4. The example of our Lady and the saints, and of virtuous persons in general, especially our own relatives, those in the same age-group, in the same environment, or connected in some other way.

These last two motives must be subordinated to the principal one: God's claim on us to be obeyed and loved; Christ's claim to be imitated.

You see how simple these rules are; they contain only what is known by everyone. But to tell the truth, it seems to me that just because they are so well-known and in no way singular, people give very little thought to them. I consider that if those who teach the young would think deeply about these simple truths, and if each teacher would make up his mind to apply them faithfully and make them his unfailing practice, a new type of youth would be seen in the world. The essence of goodness and virtue, I never tire of saying, lies in purity of intention: virtue by its very nature is lasting, and true virtue does not disappear when schooling is over. It is only mere outward virtue, the appearance of virtue, that does so.

In my view there is one writer who, in his wise simplicity, answers your question (How can young people be taught so that they continue to be good even when they have left school?) — and that is the author of the 'Imitation of Christ' who, when he enquires what constancy of virtue depends on, finds the answer in purity of intention. I refer you to chapter 33 of volume III, where we find: *The simpler the eye of the intention is, the more steadily will you make your way through the storms of life.* A truly golden sentence: it says it all.

Write to me and send me news of yourself and of our friends.

Yours,

ROSMINI p.

182. To Don Giuseppe Roberto Seth⁷⁴ at Trent

Rho, 7 May 1836

My dear brother and friend in Jesus Christ,

Perhaps you think I have forgotten about you, since you have had no reply to your two letters! But you must not think anything of the sort: far from forgetting you, I remember you before the tabernacle and at the foot of the cross. If I have not replied before, it was so as to give thought to my answer — or rather to ask God for light about what to say. And even now I cannot answer you fully. All the same, I assure you that your feelings, as you express them in your second letter, will produce great fruit in due season, if you keep them alive with the water of divine grace.

The Holy Spirit consoles those who wait for the Lord, with the words: 'All things have their due time and season.' And what was first said by the Holy Spirit was repeated by Christ himself in those words which he addressed to his apostles when he ascended to heaven: 'It is not for you to know the times or periods which the Father has set by his own authority.' So let us await with courage the time and the moment of the Lord. This sacrifice, by which we calmly attend to the wonderful dispositions of his Providence, is of great value in God's eyes: it is a preparation for the joyful hour which often chimes out unexpectedly. When it pleases God, the Spirit of Jesus Christ will bind us closely together by bonds of delightful friendship and brotherly love — and what sword will then be able to separate our hearts? Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship or distress... ?' Oh, may our good God grant us this love, with which we want to overcome our enemies by loving them!

I shall soon see dear Puecher again — the Bishop has assigned him to me as my secretary; and after his two months of absence I shall be very pleased to have him back again.

Write to me, and love me in the Lord. May Jesus and Mary bless you.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

⁷⁴ Don Giuseppe Roberto Seth had entered the Institute in his native Trent in 1834. When the house was closed he remained in the college, faithful to his vocation, but with a great desire to go to Monte Calvario. In fact he left for Calvario in 1837, and two months later went to Rome, to support the application for apostolic approval of the Institute.

183. To Don Stanislao Mayer at Panz

Rho, 7 May 1836

My dear friend in Christ,

I have received your letter of 7 March, which reached me in Milan. Thank you for it — it was very pleasing to me both for the good news which you give me of yourself and of the place that divine goodness has assigned to you so that you can sanctify yourself and work for the sanctification of others; and also particularly because I see that the Lord has given you great constancy in your holy resolution. I always greatly revere that saying of scripture: 'It is good to wait in silence for the salvation of God.' It is a valuable thought for our time, and I suggest you meditate on it for your own consolation.

I shall be going to Piedmont next week, and I hope that I shall hear from you there from time to time. I have great faith that in God's mercy we shall see one another again in due course, and that we shall find that our friendship has by no means been diminished through absence. We embraced when we parted, and we shall do so when we meet again; for God unites friends even when they are far apart.

It seems to me a gift from God that you have there as your companion our dear Don Martino⁷⁵ Give him from me what the Christians of old called *osculum sanctum* — a holy kiss. Pray for me, you my friends, for I am a wretched sinner and have great need of the charitable prayers of good people.

The place from which I am writing is a retreat house run by the Oblates of St Charles, and I have come here to make the Spiritual Exercises. I find these priests very edifying, and I am happy to be with them.

Write to me: be constant in your vocation, and this will ensure that you reach the degree of holiness that will come of your service of the Lord. Goodbye. I take leave of you in Jesus.

I remain all yours,

R.

⁷⁵ When the Trent house was closed, Don Martino Tappeiner and Don Stanislao Mayer, who were in the community, remained united with the Institute in affection and desire. Don Mayer had been one of Rosmini's co-workers when he was in charge of the parish of San Marco in Rovereto.

184. To Don Antonio Rey at Prior Park in England

Rho, 8 May 1836

My dear Don Antonio,

Your welcome letter of 5 April makes it clear to me that the devil continues to wage war against you and puts every possible obstacle in the way of your smooth progress towards perfection, and of the holy sacrifice which you have made of yourself to the Lord. But his efforts will be all in vain, my friend: have no fear of him; remember that you are fighting under the invincible standard of our glorious Captain, Jesus Christ, and our great Leader, the Blessed Virgin Mary. You need only perseverance, constant acts of humility, prayer and sighs from the depths of your soul. Provided that you persevere, the time will come when all that now seems to you hard, bitter, and even incomprehensible, will certainly become your greatest delight; and you will see that in these very things was hidden the salvation of your soul. Yes, my dear friend, the means for our purification are at times to be found in what seems strange and irrational; and these means belong to an order of intelligence infinitely superior to ours and wholly divine. If you ponder before God the things your Superior arranges, they will appear all the more delightful, all the more acceptable, the more unreasonable they seem to you in themselves. Have no doubts: do not fear: nothing is lost; all the seeming contradictions and sacrifices are in fact to be treasured.

I urge you not to be too hard on yourself, but to humble yourself at all times with all gentleness. Be convinced of your own nothingness, and it will no longer surprise you if you feel the force of your passions.

Greet Belisy warmly for me, as also your dear Superior. Thank you for the news you send me, and continue to keep me informed, solely for the glory of God and the greater profit of our souls. Give the enclosed to dear Don Gentili. Within a few days I shall be back at Calvario. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately in Jesus,

R.

185. To Don Luigi Gentili at Prior Park in England

Rho, 8 May 1836

From this quiet spot where I have come to make a retreat I am snatching a moment to reply to your welcome letter of 24 April, which on the first page gives me a glimpse of the delightful place to which God has destined you. Oh, may it be for us, my dear companions, not an earthly paradise but the way, ever strewn with crosses, which leads to heaven.

You ask me whether you are to write to me about what the Lord does through you. My answer is 'yes' — but think carefully about what you write, so as to avoid any exaggeration, any trace of vanity. It is well to say less rather than more; and to use words and expressions that are sincerely modest and humble. Tell me not only the good news but also the bad, and more particularly the bad, since it is useful to me to know what problems you meet with, so that I can look for remedies to suggest to you; whereas the things that are flourishing, although they give me a certain pleasure, are not what in the end I am looking for. Above all, I urge you not to let the devil lead you to hide anything from me, or to act secretly, or to do anything by yourself for fear that, if you told me about it, I would stop you from acting. This would be a grave deception, my dear brother, so keep alert. Finally, the most beautiful letters which recount humbly the good which the Lord is pleased to work through us are those of St Francis Xavier, that great servant of God. They breathe forth such virtue and sincere humility!

I have a great fear of the spirit of vanity, and also that of bitterness. Both are extremely bad, and they often go together. Make every effort to overcome them. Jesus Christ had no other aim but to do the will of his Father; and he is an ocean of sweetness. Do pray to him, asking him to give you too his own inexpressible gentleness. Learn from him, for he is meek and humble of heart. Keep a watch over all that you say: let all your words be ever sweet and gentle. Never give voice to any blame towards your companions: rather aim to praise them. Speak to them with the gentleness that St Bernard always showed to his brothers. Look for good in them, show you have a high opinion of them; encourage them; inspire in them great hopes of progress in virtue — hopes founded entirely in God, in the infinite power of his grace. The man who is supported and encouraged by his Superior makes much progress. It is a great mistake to think that you can inspire humility by putting others down, by undervaluing them. No, instead it is rather by praising them in the Lord that you will get them to make progress; and if you have to humble them, it must be done sincerely, with deeds rather than by actual words, and **QUITE WITHOUT ANY AFFECTATION**. To sum up: read peacefully and lovingly chapter 3 of Book II of Thomas-à-Kempis, the Imitation of Christ. Let this be your penance. Goodbye.

Yours,

R.

186. To Don Luigi Gentili at Prior Park in England

Turin, 24 June 1836

The cross and the consolation of Jesus Christ to my dear brother Luigi Gentili. Amen.

I thank God who, it seems, is blessing your labours. Be faithful to the humble spirit of our Institute and to obedience; and then the fruit of your work will be enduring, and you will earn a great reward from God, who is your all. The outcome will surpass the beginning. It is this final outcome that we must always have in view, without ever allowing ourselves to be deceived by good beginnings

I have come here as a result of the offer which the King has made: he wishes to give us the abbey of San Michele della Chiusa, and it seems that he wants us to put into effect a great and noble plan. I shall be going there one of these days with some of the persons appointed by the King. In the meantime we must pray. As soon as I can I shall betake myself to Tamié in Savoy, where our brethren are..

What great reason we have to humble ourselves and pray! Even the little seed of philosophy sown here promises a plentiful harvest. The university here has adopted the entire system, and as a result all the Provinces are doing the like. In this connection it seems that a very important project is developing; but I do not want to tell you more about it as yet, since the matter is so far only a future possibility⁷⁶ But I wanted to touch on the state of our affairs simply to get you to pray, and have prayers said, for me, wretched as I am, like a ship that is leaking at all points. Heavens! How I am beset by fears!

There is another important matter to tell you about, for your consolation, and perhaps it is the most important of all. Within a few days a noviciate will be opened at Stresa, where I have bought a small but isolated and delightful property. This is the nursery and what may be called the wealth of our little Institute; and here are being prepared workers for you too, my dear companion, whom I embrace from my heart, and from whom I grieve to be separated by such a distance. Take courage in the Lord, and bear patiently the burden imposed upon you. But we are preparing labourers who will afford you some relief, at the time appointed by the mercy of God. Moreover I have in mind to pay you a visit, either in person or through others; so it will be less than a year, I trust, before you will see the face of one of your brethren.

I am most anxious to hear from you and to receive detailed news of your situation, your progress in philosophy, the missions, retreats — and above all of your companions. Greet them most warmly from me in the name of Jesus Christ.

⁷⁶ See the Vita di A. Rosmini, vol.1, pp.5T1, 578

I am expecting the quarterly report required by No. 11 of your letter of mission, and I should like you to devote a paragraph to each of the sixteen heads mentioned in the letter. You should meditate before God on every part of the letter, to see that you have followed its prescriptions and make sure you have not left anything out.

Jesus Christ himself, whom you serve with perfect obedience and self-denial, will bless you, and with you your two dear companions, who form the main object of your love. Goodbye.

Yours in Jesus,

ROSMINI p.

187. To Pietro Rosmini⁷⁷, lawyer, at Rovereto

Turin, 13 July 1836

My dear Pierino,

I cannot describe what kindness I have found here; and yet it seems ages since I entered my delightful solitude. I made a pilgrimage to the ancient abbey of San Michele, perched on a hilltop in the Susa valley. The old buildings are very solid, and it must have cost a fortune to haul up there the great blocks of stone, well-cut and variously shaped, which make up what remains of the oldest part of the building.

The tradition is that this marvellous piece of Moorish architecture came of the penance done by Count Hugo (known as The Threadbare) who, after he had committed a good many misdeeds, repented and asked the Pope to absolve him. It was then that the Pope gave him a choice of penances: either to be exiled from his country for seven years, or to build a monastery at his own expense. This rich gentleman of Alvernia chose the second alternative, and had built on the peak of Mount Pirchiriano in the Susa valley the abbey of San Michele which afterwards became so famous⁷⁸. And so narrow is the pinnacle of this mountain that it was only with much difficulty that this great edifice was built there, and it was constructed in such a way that it embodied within itself the rocky peaks which in places penetrate right through to the third storey.

The church itself is situated at the third level of the monastery, where the rocks finish; and to reach the entrance you have to go up a covered stairway. This is both magnificent and tremendously solid: it is perhaps the finest remaining part of the ancient building.

Here, it is said, night and day three hundred monks alternated in singing the praises of God. The abbey was immensely powerful, with jurisdiction over a vast area containing hundreds of parishes; and it was subject only directly to the Holy See.

Now today the pious King Carlo Alberto wants to have the remains of his ancestors translated here, and he wishes to restore the building so that it may serve as a retirement home for some of those who have grown disillusioned with the things of this world and wish to spend their remaining days in a religious retirement.

To tell the truth, the ascent up here is rocky and hard, even for mules (though I think the generosity of the King will remedy this difficulty); but when one

⁷⁷ Pietro Rosmini was Leonardo's brother (see letter 23 in vol.1 of the English version of the Ascetical Letters), and both were friendly with Antonio from infancy.

⁷⁸ See Vita di A. Rosmini vol.1, pp.558,559,560.)

actually arrives, two magnificent vistas present themselves: in one direction one can see Turin and the Superga, with the whole valley; in the other, the area through which the Susa flows, dotted with small towns — though not the city of Susa, which is hidden behind a mountain.

So it is up there that a group of our brethren from Monte Calvario will be sent to look after the place and care for those who want to find there a religious solitude to afford tranquillity to their hearts. This will be next spring, I think, though the King would like it to be sooner. So please pray that everything may work out for the greater glory of God and our sanctification.

I shall, it seems, be able finally to leave here on Monday, 18 July. When I find myself in big cities I feel like Truffaldino, who was smothered under forty or fifty garments. I am swamped by thousands of useless and irritating usages⁷⁹..

Give my warm regards to my friends — first of all your own family, and then mine if you see them, to the Orsi family and those who ask after me. Keep me in your dear friendship, and believe that I am, from my heart —

Your

ROSMINI p.

⁷⁹ He is referring to the various ceremonial courtesies shown him by the people of Turin. (See Vita di A. Rosmini, vol., pp. 577-78).

188. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan

Tamié, 24 July 1836

My dear friend,

Tomorrow I shall celebrate, in this deep solitude, the feast of St James. As you can imagine, I shall have you in mind and speak of you to God, though not in a formal manner, since one does not speak formally to God. I will say no more about your feast-day, except that I hope you will do for me what I am doing for you.

For the rest, this vast monastery, almost the only building in this valley, so high up and secluded, these relics of ancient piety, these reminders of the gentle abbey of Clairvaux, lift up one's soul to God in a wonderful way. This religious house was founded by Peter II, who was later the Bishop of Tarantasia, and earlier had been the first Abbot of Tamié. It seems to me that at times I see the shades of many abbots and monks wandering about this holy place where their remains are buried. All this makes me envy that life — more heavenly than earthly — led far from the world by the sons of St Bernard, those daring souls who distanced themselves from the society of men in order to find in deserted valleys the company of the angels.

I cannot delay any longer with you to pour out the feelings which fill my heart. Goodbye.

Entirely yours in the Lord,

R.

189. To Don Giulio Todeschi⁸⁰ in Rome

Stresa, 2 August 1836

I bless God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has granted you the grace to arrive safely in the See of Peter, and who gives you joy and serenity of spirit. Thank you for all the news you give me, all of it dear to me, since it concerns many worthy and beloved people, and contains matter for comfort.

Cultivate the relationships and friendships you have formed, in accordance with the spirit of the Institute and its aims. I have no hopes of going to Rome this year myself: I have too much to do in connection with the new house which the King of Sardinia still wants to see opened by October. I hope that on Thursday our little noviciate will be moved to Stresa. Do pray to the Holy Spirit; for this will be a very special day for the Institute⁸¹.

I am very pleased to hear that you are working on the Lenten sermons... and what of the little dialogues⁸²? I urge you to work on these too. As for the sermons: remember simplicity of style, and adapting them to the people. It seemed to me that these two qualities were missing from, or at least were not prominent in, the first sermon you gave in the refectory; but we did not have time to discuss this.

As for the Holy Father, keep to the directives you were given: wait on Providence, in this as in everything else.

Your letters are a great consolation to me: write to me often, even if I do not reply at once because I am so busy; and the more detailed the news you give me, the better I shall be pleased. If at any time you have the opportunity of an audience with the Pope, open your heart to him in all simplicity, and tell him that your desire (and my advice) is to establish yourself in Rome, and that you beg him to be so good as to ask leave for this from the Austrian government,

⁸⁰ Todeschi, now free from the deep melancholy which scruples had caused in him, when the Trent house was closed, after a short stay in Cremona with his cousin, Mgr Sardagna, had gone to Calvario on 20 April 1836, and on 15 June left there for Rome. He had been sent there both because he found the climate helpful to his frail health, and so that he might quietly detach himself from the diocese of Trent and advance the cause of the approval of the Institute. will be a very special day for the Institute'.

⁸¹ The noviciate of the Institute of Charity was transferred early in August 1836 from Calvario to Stresa, where it remained for three months. From Stresa it went to San Michele, and in November 1838 back to Calvario for a brief spell that is, until a larger place could be prepared for it at Stresa, where it was to remain.

⁸² The work referred to was the *Dialoghi filosofico-morali* written by Todeschi mainly for the use of young students. It was a valuable work — one to which the author never managed to put the finishing touches. It was published after his death.

because you fear to meet with obstacles if you make this request yourself. If the Holy Father should ask you why you have this desire, tell him that I wish it for the good of the Institute.

All here send you their affectionate greetings and good wishes. I bless you from the bottom of my heart.

Yours most affectionately in Christ,

ROSMINI p.

190. To Don Giuseppe Roberto Seth at Trent

Domodossola, 7 August 1836

My dear friend,

I bless God for your prompt offer to help those suffering from cholera. Don Giovanni⁸³ in Verona has done the same; and all of us here will do likewise, with God's help, should the plague come this way.

I also grant you the faculty you ask for (and which I have already given to Don Giovanni) — that should the heavenly Spouse knock at the door, you may make the three vows of the Institute before your death (as our good Felice⁸⁴ did, the first fruits among our members, I trust). For the rest, let us always wait on the Lord. Hold yourself ready, not only to leave this life, but also to leave for Calvario — the notice will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. This is what I hope: I should so like to have you near me! Pray that it may be soon. Perhaps God wishes us to pray much for this, and will then grant the favour suddenly.

I hoped that people would soon forget us in Trent, but you tell me that there is a good deal of widespread indignation against everyone. And why? What are they saying? What reasons or pretexts are being offered? Tell me all about it and enlighten me. Goodbye. May the Blessed Virgin guide you on the path to salvation and perfection: may she guide you to Jesus. Again goodbye. Give my best regards to Rigler.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

R. p.

⁸³ He is referring to Don Giovanni Boselli who, after the closure of the Trent house, went to Verona

⁸⁴ Felice Moschini, the brother of Maurizio, asked to be admitted to the Institute of Charity, and was accepted into the Trent house, where he died in 1834. The esteem in which Rosmini held him can be seen from the circular letter he sent to the Rectors on 28 December 1838 in order to announce the approval of the Institute.

191. To Don Antonio Rey at Prior Park in England

Domodossola, 7 August 1836

My dear companion in God's service,

Your welcome letter of 18 June made me consider seriously what can be the cause of the anxieties you suffer and the persistency with which they recur. I should so like to find some remedy for them, so that you may enjoy peace of mind and sanctify yourself in the vocation which you have accepted. So take careful heed and see whether the advice I am going to give you comes from God, as I firmly believe it does.

The reasons for your troubles are: (1) you have not yet fully grasped that outside yourself there is for you neither good nor evil, but all your true good lies in your own sanctification; (2) you have not yet fully grasped that external things (whether good or bad) which do not depend on your own will can be and indeed are, in the hands of divine Providence, so many means of increasing your holiness.

I realize that what upsets you is the way in which your Superior acts, and that you see many imperfections in his behaviour. Now suppose all these faults that you see really are such: did you perhaps commit them? No. Then they do no harm to your soul. When you carry out your duties within your own sphere of action, your soul is holy: you are safe. What more do you want? Why trouble yourself over faults that you do not commit? Why lose your peace of mind and put yourself in danger (because of the irritation you feel) of being less humble, less mortified, less docile, less obedient? By the way you act you get upset over something that is not an evil for you; and through upsetting yourself in this way you do something that really is an evil for you, because it does harm to your soul.

You may say that in the meantime things are going badly, and that this harms others and the Institute itself. But this is not sound reasoning: it shows a certain zeal, but a zeal which does not come of a right principle. I ask you: are you to blame for harm that comes of how others behave? Certainly not, for it is not you who produce it. So if you are not to blame, why be upset? Why afflict yourself? Instead, adore in all tranquillity divine Providence, which permits the evil, and pray to God that he will give light to the one who has need of this. And if you also want to repair the damage done by these evils, I will tell you what the remedy is. Try to grow in charity, humility, mortification and self-denial. In this way you will gain greatly, and the Institute will attain its end as far as you are concerned. Engrave clearly in your mind the sole aim of the Institute: the salvation and perfection of the souls of its members. If then, instead of concerning yourself with others, you look only to yourself, and use all your powers and devote all your thoughts to self-abasement and submission to all,

then by your submission and obedience you sanctify and perfect your own soul, and you will have helped the Institute to attain its end. Leave the rest to God.

Just suppose that your Superior acted in everything in the way that seemed best to you; and that you never had to deny your own will, never had any occasion to bear contradiction, and so remained a slave to your passions. How would this help you? What would be the good if all England were saved and you were lost? What would be the gain if everything in the house went exactly to your liking — and you were not to God's liking? So let your Superior do what he thinks best let him act according to his own lights, his own spirit; and do not expect him to be led by yours. Even when you think it would be more prudent to take the opposite course to the one he chooses, humble yourself, abase yourself. Say to yourself: 'It is not for me to decide over this matter; God moves him to act as he does, and God knows why.' You must just do your duty and think no further. So many worries exercise your mind but only one thing is necessary. Humble yourself, and you will find peace. It is your place to practise virtue, not to censure the defects of others. Tell yourself: What God wants of me is the salvation and perfection of my soul: this is my great vocation.' Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things. By saying to yourself such words as these, you will get used to restraining your imagination, and you will become perfectly recollected. You must learn to distinguish between what your duty calls for and what is no business of yours. If you were the Superior, you would follow God's inspiration in directing others. But since you are a subject, your own holiness and salvation consists in submitting your thoughts and your will. This is your great and only good! So take courage, my dear brother: believe what I am telling you. What you are experiencing consists merely in *temptations*, and you have no need to fear, you will easily overcome them yes, easily, if you do not become disheartened. But you will not be without the cross. *In this sign + you will conquer.* May Jesus bless you.

Yours

R.

192. To Giuseppe Rosmini Serbati at Rovereto

From the little house above Stresa, 15 August 1836

My dear Giuseppe,

Just a few lines to thank you for your letter and news. I see that you have not yet received my letter

Here, no one is ill [through cholera]; it was introduced at Galliate, a town in this diocese, by some smugglers, and up to last Wednesday there had been nine cases, four of whom died.

We are praying that by God's mercy we may be spared from it. The best thing is to make a good confession, be detached from the things of this world, and live calmly, abandoning oneself into God's hands, while at the same time using all the precautions that human prudence suggest. God is our Master, the best of all masters. We must love him with all our hearts.

Pray for me: write anything you wish to me, and give me news of the epidemic to ease my mind. Greetings to my relatives and friends. I embrace you in the Lord.

Your affectionate brother,

ANTONIO

193. To Don Luigi Gentili at Prior Park in England Stresa,

Feast of the Assumption 1836

My dear Don Luigi,

As regards the rules you want for the seminary⁸⁵, I find it almost impossible to draw some up without knowing the conditions on the spot. So I shall limit myself to saying that there can be three divisions: (1) rules concerning piety; (2) rules about study; (3) rules of discipline. Also there need to be rules for those who govern, as distinct from rules for the governed. The people in authority could be: (1) a Rector in overall charge; (2) a Minister to help the Rector in running the discipline; (3) a Spiritual Director; (4) a Prefect of Studies. The latter three must be like obedient instruments in the hands of the Rector. In addition to these, there will be teachers, who will be answerable directly to the Prefect of Studies, but ultimately to the Rector, in whom all authority must be vested, and who must act as the link between the staff of the seminary and the Bishop. The aim of the rules must be to make everything subserve piety- but, note well, not practices of piety. These, in relation to piety itself, are merely means (and so must be used with discretion). What matters is really solid piety — that is, the love and service of God, holiness. This is not a matter simply of saying 'Lord, Lord', but of doing the will of the Father. So everything else must be subordinated to this end: practices, discipline and studies.

In the second place, see to it that the motivating ideas put before the young men are pure, and that no one is urged on by a spirit of emulation. It would be a great mistake to encourage this: and although it is made use of by teachers in certain religious institutes (which I have not the heart to name, out of the love and respect I have for them), it shows a deplorable blindness. On this subject I shall send you, God willing, a letter I have had printed.

But as regard studies, I should like to say much more than that letter contains. Look into and study carefully my *Essay on the Unity of Education*, and also my book entitled *Christian Education*. Again, you can glean some good ideas from (1) the *Ratio Studiorum* of the Jesuits, recently printed in Rome (though perhaps this does not meet the needs of our times); (2) *De ratione docendi et discendi* of P. Iuvencio; (3) you could also have a look at the rules of other English boarding schools, taking from these what is good and leaving aside the rest. Finally I advise you to prepare just a provisional plan and send me a copy of it. It will save time if I make notes on a plan drawn up on the spot. But notice that it should be broadly based; and that I consider it indispensable to have a Rector and three subordinates. For things to go well, several people are needed. I have said nothing about room prefects, since you already know about them.

⁸⁵ Mgr Baines had asked Gentili to prepare a set of rules for his seminary.

Now as to Don Antonio. You must not think that he lacks intelligence: this he certainly has: but he is suffering temptations. His self-love plays on his imagination — and vice-versa. And then when you consider his age, you have the whole explanation. So you must use exceptional charity towards him, pay him every attention, and omit nothing that could win him over. You need always to keep before him the sole and simple aim of the Institute: if he keeps his mind fixed on this he will have no more disquiet, because he will no longer be tempted to be upset by things that he considers done amiss or not going well. Belisy could help him, using great humility and discretion; but it is important that he retains Don Antonio's confidence.

Here we have now separated the noviciate from the Calvario community, and with God's help we are putting everything into good order. Pray assiduously for these tender young plants, that God may give the increase. If I had time I would tell you many things for your consolation, but I cannot now write at greater length.

Mgr Baines tells me that he wishes to give you some authority in his new seminary. On the one hand I have fears that you may attach too much importance to minor matters, or abolish, or show disapproval of English customs, or through excessive zeal commit some such imprudence; on the other hand, trusting in God, I am writing to the Bishop giving my permission for you to accept the post. But for the love of God, go easy and keep a cool head. Do not let yourself get excited even out of zeal, or from your love of certain practices. May the Holy Spirit fill you with himself. Goodbye.

ROSMINI p.

194. To Don Cesare Flecchia at Tamié

Stresa, Nativity of our Lady 1836

My dear brother in our Lord...

I was very pleased to get your letter. I will reply first to the matters which concern you personally, and then to the others.

(1) As regards the instructions about what you are to do next winter, I leave the matter to the Rector; (2) the aim of our vocation is to acquire virtue, not to work miracles; (3) I urge you not to take with an ill grace any order that you may be given, but to be always calmly ready for anything, so that nothing can catch you unprepared. Why do you show displeasure, if not because you were not expecting the order you were given? So be ready for it, whatever it may be, and you will always remain cheerful. But this holy indifference and readiness for anything does not mean that you may not -cheerfully and respectfully — tell the Rector of your thoughts, for the common good. Indeed this is part of the duties that go with your post [as Minister and Vicar]. And after that it must be all the same to you whether you do one thing or another, as long as you are perfectly obedient, this is what you must have at heart (4) no solemnity may as yet accompany the taking of vows: the celebration is between us and the Lord. Nor can I permit you to make any vows other than of entry into the Society, and that of obedience. This is the permission given to the others. When you have taken your vows, make a record of the date, the year and so on in your little book containing the rules *ad personam* [for you personally], and then inform me of the fact Goodbye. May Jesus and Mary bless you all. Keep up your prayers always for me and for yourself.

R. p.

195. To His Excellency, President Antonio Mazzetti⁸⁶ in Milan

Stresa, 17 September 1836

Your Excellency,

Your friendly letters were welcome, and especially the first, since it contained towards the end a sign of true friendship. Generally I take very little notice of praise, because I know it is not always sincere. But when it comes to the advice, admonitions and even reproofs of friends, there is no deception here: these carry the seal of sincerity they are gifts from the heart! On the other hand, I esteem so highly Your Excellency's uprightness and sound judgement that I take your words as coming from an oracle; and because this is so, I wish they had been even more clear, for fear that I may have misunderstood them. But if I do understand you rightly, then I would ask you to consider that there is an all-good Providence, and that I make every effort to follow its indications. So too, reflect on St Paul's words, 'we are fools for Christ's sake', with their profound meaning. You are a deeply religious man, and you know well that for a Christian, success in this present life is not everything.

On the other hand I cannot complain: God, among his other gifts, has given me a tranquil spirit; so it does not trouble me that there are some who dislike me, or misrepresent me. I shall always be happy provided I am conscious that I have not done anyone harm; and I shall be even happier if I can think that I have done some good to others. I know that neither in Trent nor at Rovereto is there anyone who can say with truth that I have acted amiss towards him. That is my consolation. Perhaps I do too much. Leaving aside studies, where it may well be that, at least when I was young, I overdid things; when it comes to actual work, which you mention, do you know my motto? It is never to undertake anything of my own accord, or to refuse to do a good work out of weakness or faint-heartedness.' That is everything. It is no part of my character to be enterprising, and I am aware that I am not that kind of man. But to refuse to do a good work when others ask it of me would seem to me to go against divine Providence and a wrong done to God, should I turn my back on him when he offers me an occasion of serving him. It is a matter of conscience with me. I see very well — too well — that even with these precautions, with all prudent circumspection, one still meets with obstacles and conflicts when one wants to do good. But what of it? It would be a poor sort of world if no one was willing to make a sacrifice! I am thoroughly convinced that in this present time more than in any other, men of sacrifice are needed. And yet perhaps there is now a great dearth of men of this sort. I should be very happy if a sacrifice of mine were of some worth before God! I know who I am talking to; and yet that does not stop me from opening my mind frankly to him. At all events, I intend to draw profit from your words by redoubling my efforts never to overdo things in any way.

Yours,

R.

⁸⁶ Antonio Mazzetti, from Anaunia in Trent, was President of the Civil Court of Justice in Milan.

196. To Mgr C. E. Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona

Stresa, 24 September 1836

Most Reverend Monsignor,

I have never before been so reluctant to write to you as I am now. We have to arm ourselves with a total resignation to what God wills: this is always to be adored and loved in all circumstances, propitious or otherwise. I received two letters from Rome, dated the 5th and 10th of this month, which informed me that dear Don Giulio Todeschi had taken to his bed with a fever — due, it was feared, to a nervous disorder. And yesterday another letter came, telling that that at 5.30 in the evening of the 15th he died peacefully in the Lord, leaving everyone round him edified by his fervent and devout sentiments. You can imagine how great a grief this was for me, humanly speaking. And I can equally imagine the sorrow you will feel in view of the love you bore your most worthy cousin. As soon as I learn more details about the circumstances of his death I will make it my duty to pass them on to you. In the meantime I beg you to pray for the soul of our dear friend, and get others to do likewise.

Your humble, grateful and devoted servant,

ROSMINI p.

197. To Baron Niccolò Todeschi in Rovereto

Stresa, 5 October 1836

My dear Baron,

The depth of my own grief at the loss of dear Don Giulio argues how great must be the sorrow which you and your family are feeling. When I first received the news of his sudden and utterly unexpected death I could hardly believe my eyes as I read the letter which conveyed it. And it fell to me to be the bearer of so bitter an event to the Baroness his mother, to you and to all his family. I tried to do this through the mediation of Don Paolo Orsi, so that hearing the news by word of mouth might to some extent soften the terrible blow.

Don Giulio was as dear to me as the closest blood-relation, like a brother. I owed him so much, and he showed me so much kindness, affection and sympathy. But in the end it was God's will; and this thought must console us over everything that has happened. Your brother was a saint, and I feel certain that he is already enjoying the vision of God, and that there he is praying, for me and for his family — and praying too that we may live a good life and die a happy death, as he did. But all the same I have said Mass and had Masses said for our dear friend. Our suffrages for his soul must be no less because of the high opinion we had of him and our hopes that he has already reached glory⁸⁷. Be so good as to convey my sentiments to your good parents, and assure them of my deepest condolences.

With sincere esteem and friendship, I remain,

ROSMINI p.

⁸⁷ The high opinion Rosmini had of the virtue and holiness of Giulio Todeschi can be seen, too, from the circular letter of 28 December 1838 which he wrote to the Rectors of the various houses to let them know the joyful news of the approval of the Institute by the Holy See. (cf. the previous note on Felice Moschini, after letter 190.)

198. To His Excellency Antonio Mazzetti, President of the Civil Courts in Milan

Stresa, 8 October 1836

Your Excellency,

Thank you for what you say about the new Society, the Institute of Charity. I see from your letter that there are two objections to the Institute — viz. that it is 'too ambitious, and contains, in a concealed fashion, some undesirable elements.' As regards the charge of secrecy, I assure you that there is nothing hidden, and that it is quite contrary to my nature to work surreptitiously. Everything about the Institute was openly stated and submitted to His Lordship the Bishop. The idea that there is anything concealed is a figment of someone's imagination, and supposes things that are in fact untrue.

As for its being 'too ambitious and assertive', I am entirely convinced that what distinguishes the Institute of Charity among the various religious Orders is precisely its moderation — moderation in its principles, moderation in its ways of acting, moderation in carrying out the ministries that are entrusted to it. I would almost venture to say that this Institute was purposely established to display moderation. So you see, Your Excellency, if I am wrong in that belief, I need to be shown just how, and in what connection, the Institute of Charity goes too far; and it is precisely this that so far no one has told me. The Institute of Charity has no other scope than study and the private exercise of virtue that is called for from every Christian, every priest; but at the same time it never refuses to devote itself to works of charity when it is asked to give its services, and not otherwise. I do not know what greater principle of moderation could possibly be asked for: I repeat that no other religious Order puts before itself a moderation like this.

You mention the Bishop, now Archbishop, Luschin⁸⁸. I have a serious accusation to make against Mgr Luschin — one that I would respectfully put forward in his presence. It is this: he was not frank with me. These are the undeniable facts: (1) he invited me to establish the Institute of Charity in Trent, when I had no thoughts about doing any such thing; (2) I submitted all the Rules of the Institute to his judgement, and he approved all of them, not only verbally but also in his letters which I still have. These Rules were also examined and approved in a formal decree by seven bishops, among whom were the Patriarch of Venice, the Bishop of Verona, Mgr Grasser, and Mgr Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona; (3) he offered me his own seminary so that the Institute could make a beginning there; (4) when in order not to inconvenience him over the seminary

⁸⁸ Mgr Luschin had been transferred from the episcopal See of Trent to the Metropolitan See of Leopoli

I proposed to buy a house in Trent, he approved of my plan; (5) before I bought the Provost's house, I called on Mgr Luschin and asked him expressly if he would give me his support with the government, if he was entirely happy about the Institute, if he had nothing to object about it or its Rules etc. He promised solemnly to support me, said that all was going well, that I should go ahead with the purchase of the house, and so on; (6) not content with this, I went to see him again before I bought the house, visited him again after I had done so and before beginning work on the building, asking him to be frank with me, and saying that I wanted to act according to his wishes in everything etc. He had no comments to make, he approved of everything, he promised everything. So I went ahead with the purchase, relying on his sacred word; (7) when it came to sending the Constitutions to Vienna, I sent with them a letter to him saying that I did not wish them to be sent to Vienna unless everything in them agreed with his own ideas. I asked him to inform me if he had any objection, in which case I would have tried to make any changes he wanted. He made no objection at all, and he never once mentioned anything that he was opposed to! Am I not, then, justified in accusing Mgr Luschin? The fact remains that when he first received a letter from the Governor, he lost heart and began to be afraid that he would clash with the government if he gave too much support to the Institute! Mgr Luschin does not know that I saw his original reports, and all the relevant documents. (These came to me from Vienna itself, where they were not approved, as I was told.) If he knew these facts, he would understand still better my quarrel with him over his lack of sincerity. But at the end of it all, I have learnt something: I understand men better⁸⁹.

I have no reason to repent over what I have done, because I acted straightforwardly; and if cowardly and unworthy men were able to work behind my back, they could never at any time accuse me of acting falsely. This, my dear President, is the true state of affairs. Had I been dealing with the magistrates I should certainly have been better satisfied, for they are familiar with the norms of justice, and are more upright and cautious in their judgements. But when one has to deal with people who are ruled by their imagination, it is only by chance if the truth comes out, even when it is perfectly clear. But the facts remain, even when the stirrings of imagination have died down. And some day my case and that of my adversaries will be judged.

I trust you will pardon this outpouring of my heart, relying as I do on the strength of our friendship.

ROSMINI

p.

⁸⁹ As regards Mgr Luschin's attitude towards Rosmini, see the Vita di A. Rosmini, vol.1, pp.407-439.

199. To Count Francesco Formenti at Riva di Trento

Stresa, 15 October 1836

My dear cousin⁹⁰

Although your letter gave me great consolation, I cannot say it surprised me, because the Spirit breathes where he will. I should like to encourage you to go along with your wish to give yourself entirely to God, because this can only come from a good source. Still, in so important a matter it is well to give it mature thought and to have a salutary distrust of your own judgement.

First, you need to have recourse to God with earnest and persevering prayer, asking him both to make his will clear to you and to give you the grace to follow it. My dear cousin, we must do nothing by halves; so after praying, you need to consider carefully that anyone who wishes to consecrate himself to God in religion has to be ready to make a total sacrifice of himself to the Lord, body and soul, giving up all that he has in the world. 'None of you can be my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.' And this complete renunciation includes also renouncing self, one's own will. 'Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.' So it is not just a matter of withdrawing from the world, but a great deal more.

So I would advise you, after you have done these things, to make a retreat of eight or ten days, putting yourself under the direction of a wise and holy guide, and frankly disclosing to him the state of your soul. So you will spend this time of retirement, in colloquy with God and with your director, asking for light over your choice of a state of life, in accordance with the wise teaching of the saints for ascertaining God's will.

When you have done all this, write and tell me what the outcome is, and what is the disposition of your soul. Meanwhile I also will pray to God, and get others to pray, that he will give you the light you need. Prayer is able to gain everything: without it we can do nothing.

So I embrace you from my heart, and again urge you to pray much, to be generous, and to make a good retreat.

Your affectionate cousin,

R.

⁹⁰ Rosmini's mother belonged to the noble Formenti family

200. To Don Antonio Rey at Prior Park in England

Stresa, 19 October 1836

My dear brother,

If I am replying rather belatedly to your letter of 6 September, it is because I have been very busy. You must not believe that I fail to understand what you are going through, or that I do not feel great sympathy for you. But it is clear to me that we are dealing not so much with any malice of yours (as you think), but with a force outside yourself which does violence to you and exerts itself against your will; and this force, this power, can only come from the evil one, the enemy of mankind. So for this reason, my dear fellow, even in your greatest trials you must not be alarmed: the devil can bark, but he cannot bite.

The remedies you must apply are these:

(1) You must not exaggerate your own malice (because the enemy wants to dismay you by persuading you that you are worse than in fact you are. Even the strongest temptation is not a sin.) Instead, you must realize your own weakness and ignorance. We can never sufficiently know these, and they produce distrust of ourselves, but not discouragement;

(2) You have to cry out to God unceasingly: Lord, I suffer violence; answer for me. O Lord, defender of my life and my salvation; you must make use of these and other sentiments of utter confidence to be found in the psalms;

(3) You need some diversion, as you say yourself, and something to occupy your imagination, which is the faculty the devil plays with to your harm; you must not get too absorbed in your thoughts — especially gloomy ones;

(4) Avoid too much theorizing of any kind. Let your thoughts be more like those of a child, feeding your affections with simple devotions: love, rather than reasoning. Instead of always looking for new prayers, be content to say the same ones over and over again.

Finally, make the basis of your life indifference to anything but holiness, and distance yourself from the illusions of conceit or human approval. You will win in the end, but the struggle will be hard. Jesus Christ is infinite, you may be certain, and so it would be foolish to say that we have abused his grace beyond forgiveness. There are no limits to his goodness and mercy. So even if I am obstinate and hard-hearted, I can still say with all confidence: I have put my hopes in you. Lord; I shall never be put to shame. No, I shall never be put to shame. Goodbye. May Jesus and Mary enlarge your heart with their unutterable consolations.

Yours,

R.

201. To Don Giacomo Molinari at Domodossola

Chivasso, 25 October 1836

My dear brother in Christ...

Before I came to Oleggio I met Don Pagani, who had taken leave of the seminary and was on his way to join us. So he will soon be at Monte Calvario. Start him on the First Probation, which he is to make faithfully and exactly: make clear to him the seriousness of our Institute. Then, when the Probation is over, put together his certificates, give him your letter of introduction to the Master of Novices, and send him to the Sagra di San Michele.

With a person of his age, learning and piety, the great danger is that he will find it hard to learn a childlike attitude towards obedience; so it is up to you to impress on him the need to become again a disciple and a child. So too he must realize that he will meet with occasions which will require him to give up his own judgement and deny his self-will. I want you to treat him without ceremony or preliminary explanations of any kind, not as a master but as a brother — addressing him with *voi*. And if he addresses you as Master, accept that and go ahead.

All will go well, I am sure; and it is precisely when dealing with people who are already virtuous that it is necessary to treat them more freely and more boldly, with a view to their growth in virtue. As for how long the retreat should last, I leave it to your judgement. Goodbye. So far everything has gone well with us⁹¹. I embrace you, with Boselli and all the others. Pray for us.

Yours affectionately,

R.

⁹¹ He is referring to the novices whom he was accompanying to San Michele, and with whom he stayed the night at Chiasso. See E.C., letters 2943 and 2944.

202. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Tamié

Turin, 26 October 1836

My dear Father,

I strongly urge you not to tire yourself excessively during the coming missions, for fear of harming your health. And it does seem to me excessive for you to give the Lenten sermons after having already given four missions.

For the rest, yes, send Martin to San Michele at the beginning of February. The noviciate has already been moved there. As for Domptmartin, it is no bad plan for him to share the giving of the missions with you. In that way you will get to know him better by seeing him in action, and you can sow the seeds of his future education, if he is called to join us. Otherwise you can let him go after this test. Do not confide too much in him, but speak to him seriously, showing him the true spirit of the Institute, and explaining to him the necessary abandonment which calls for the giving of all that a man has in the world, and above all the denial of his own will. If he seems to understand these things well, send him with Martin to the noviciate. See that he goes there with the necessary certificates, information and references to present to the Master of Novices — if possible after he has been through the First Probation, or at the very least the exercises of the first week which deal with the purgative way.

You must require the Rector at Calvario to give a punctual report, as laid down. If Superiors do not put pressure on their subjects to carry out the rules and regulations, these things will not be done, because of natural human inertia. So Superiors need to be vigilant and firm, and insist rigorously on proper observance. This is because the good to be achieved through the orders depends on these being carried out.

I arrived here yesterday evening, and tomorrow I shall be at the Sagra — but not to stay there: I shall go back to Turin, where I intend to remain for some time.

Yesterday there took place the ceremony of the translation of the remains of members of the Royal House of Savoy.

Soon Don Pagani will be added to the noviciate. I have been somewhat unwell, but today I feel better. Goodbye. I embrace you all and pray that the Lord will bless you.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

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203. To Mgr C. E. Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona

San Michele, 27 October 1836

Most Reverend Monsignor,

There are reasonably good quarters prepared here in this famous abbey for Your Lordship and (if he should come) the good Don Francesco Paoli and any others who may accompany you. At the same time, our own members will be very glad to serve you and see to all your needs, if you do not bring any other attendants. But you will of course act as you think best.

Reflect, according to the light which the Holy Spirit will grant you: consider your decision; and if it is a positive one, come as soon as you can. If it is a question of seeking advice, I am not the one who should give it, for I am an interested party. It would give me extraordinary pleasure should you decide in favour of coming to us, and so I would not wish to dissuade you from doing so. And if I were to persuade you, it would really seem as if my advice came of my keen desire to have you here. I will only tell you that the ascent to this place is harder and steeper than the approach to San Bernardino; but once you reach the Sagra (as the abbey is called), there is a broad view over a wide horizon, and the air is excellent for those who have good lungs, as well as for people born and bred up in the mountains, such as we Tyrolese.

The reasons you give in your letter of the 23rd (which I received today) for preferring to retire to a religious house rather than a private one seem to me good and commendable. The general public would be more edified, and your resignation would appear in a better light. At any rate, if you consult the Holy Spirit he will no doubt show you how to attain what you are in search of.. that which is best fitted to secure your soul's salvation; for the Spirit always answers those who invoke him and ask his guidance humbly and with an upright heart.

The day before yesterday we had a great celebration here. The ashes of the members of the Royal House of Savoy were translated to this abbey, which King Carlo Alberto had chosen as the place where the remains of his ancestors should be preserved. All went well: the ceremony was carried out very satisfactorily, and the royal ministers gave the people a good example of piety and devotion.

The King, it seems, wishes to spend lavishly on this church; the architect he employs told us that it is the King's intention to make this abbey more beautiful than that of Altacomba, where building has been going on for twelve years. Truly he is a most pious king, and wants to follow the example of the great rulers who have shown favour to religion. Happy is he!

With sentiments of deepest respect, I ask your blessing.

ROSMINI p.

204. To Count Giacomo Mellerio in Milan

Turin, 3 November 1836

My dear friend,

The Lord has so far led us smoothly, and it seems that everything is shaping well here. The King has generously provided the initial funds for this foundation: he must have spent thirty thousand francs or more on setting up this house. His piety shines like a jewel amidst the gold of this other virtues.

I thank God who inspires you to take such an interest in these matters as if they were your own: it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you. In this way you act like a true Ascribed Member and brother of the Institute. This is what you told me you wanted to be, and I have accepted you as such with open arms; and looking on your feelings and actions as those of a brother, I am delighted with what you say about the accommodation you offer to me and the Institute, and in no other light — I pray God that he will give you the reward of a disciple, and I pray for you and myself at the same time.

Tuesday saw the translation of the remains of the members of the Royal House of Savoy to the church of the Sagra di San Michele: it was a great ceremony, in the presence of several of the chief dignitaries, clergy from the court, the military and a throng of others. Twenty-two coffins were carried up; they were then prepared for the verification of the remains. Then the keys were ceremoniously handed over to us, the coffins placed in the recesses prepared for them and then walled up. Stone ornamentation and inscriptions will be added above⁹² The earliest of the royal line was Amadeo II; the Queen (Madama Reale), who gave her name to the palace, still bore her mantle of silver linen and the crown of pearls on her head.

There was even food prepared by the royal kitchen staff, and you can imagine the talk and the hurly-burly! Fortunately I arrived there only the following day; but all went well, and the royal attendants showed much piety and greatly edified our brethren.

I was very pleased to hear that my article was well received⁹³. There is a great deal of ignorance in the world, and it would not surprise me to learn that some people drew profit from my speaking out clearly. Let the Lord take care of it —

⁹² The coffins remained walled up there until 1856 when, after the death of Carlo Alberto, King Vittorio Emanuele had them transferred to a beautiful crypt which had been excavated beneath the church.

⁹³ He is referring to an article he had published at the request of his friends, to defend himself against the false and injurious accusations made by Cattaneo, after Rosmini had severely criticized in his *Rinnovamento* the pernicious philosophy of Romagnosi. See *Vita di A. Rosmini*, vol.1, pp.579-580.

-the Lord for whom we do everything that we do, or rather it is he who acts in us and for us. That our Creator should be known, loved and glorified is not for his benefit but for ours; and he rejoices in our good and in that of all his other children.

Give my greetings to the two priests you have in the house and outside it, and also to the Somaglia, Castelbarco and Padulli families and the rest,

Continue to pray for your poor and unworthy —

R. p.

205. To Don F. Puecher at the Sagra di San Michele

Turin, 3 November 1836

My dear brother in Christ,

Pagani will be here tomorrow, along with Alvazzi, and the next day he will go to the Sagra⁹⁴. Treat him with the simplicity which belongs to a novice, and do not call him 'signore'; use 'voi' in speaking to him as I consider all Superiors of the Society should do when they address their subjects. This is because this usage is more open and sincere, putting all on the same level, and doing away with any standing on ceremony which would be out of place when it is a matter of the good of subjects.

For the rest, be sure that God will help you, even when you have among the novices priests who are older, more learned and more holy than you. To be truly helpful to them it is necessary to humble them by treating them exactly like the others, but nonetheless preserving an interior respect for them, and at times even showing this outwardly — since there may be times when a young Superior can greatly humble himself before such men.

As for the altar of the new oratory (I think the altar stone is already there), it seems to me it would be simplest to order it from S. Ambrogio. But anyway, consult Don Carlo. I will send you the catechism you want when I can get it copied. I am waiting for the *Catechesi* [a series of catechetical instructions]: send them when you can, but do not allow this work to interfere with the affairs of the noviciate, which must take precedence⁹⁵.

I hope the ceremonies in the church will yield fruit. I particularly recommend catechism, for both adults and children.

I embrace you all, and bless you in our Lord Jesus Christ, before whom I pour out my heart continually for everyone. Goodbye.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

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⁹⁴ Don Gian Battista Pagani, who had for some time shown a wish to enter the Institute, made the First Probation at Calvario under Don Molinari, and on 6 November 1836 was received into the noviciate at the Sagra di San Michele.

⁹⁵ The catechetical instructions given by Rosmini to the people of Rovereto while he was the parish priest of San Marco were taken down by Don Puecher and subsequently made up into a volume containing the whole series. They are admirable for their simplicity and the solid doctrine they contain.

206. To Don F. Puecher at the Sagra di San Michele

Turin, 6 November 1836

My dear brother in Christ,

I was happy to hear that God has given you the light to realize the truth of the advice you were given, which you read at the foot of the cross of Christ crucified, from whom comes both enlightenment and the power to carry out the advice. I urge you to have great courage and faith, in imitation of Christ who is the foundation of all our trust. You will be helped by saying fervently the psalms, which are full of that great hope which comes to us directly from knowing God.

I have great hopes of Pagani: I was highly satisfied by the sentiments he expressed.

Pray, and get all our dear brethren to pray for me.

I have received the Catechesi. I embrace you all.

Yours in Christ,

ROSMINI p.

207. To Don Giuseppe Roberto Setti at Trent

Turin, 16 November 1836

My dear Don Giuseppe Roberto, beloved in Christ,

Your letter of the 10th shows me that *God* continues to work in your heart — may he be blessed for ever. I am confident that he will satisfy the desires that he has aroused in you. I fully understand the need to plan ahead what is to be done, given the situation you are in. But after taking thought and recommending the matter to *God*, I do not think it would be prudent to give you any further advice at present. Rather, I refer you to what the Holy Spirit himself will say to you, if you make use of every means of hearing his voice.

For now I will only say that I hope soon to have leave from the Emperor to devote myself to the Institute of Charity: a very important person will be my guarantor⁹⁶. If this permission does arrive soon I will let you know.

Thank you also for all the news you give me in your welcome letter; continue to keep me informed, since such news is useful and enlightening for me. I assure you that *God* gives me the grace to find more to my taste in the trouble arising in Trent than I derive from the prosperity and favour that the Institute enjoys in these territories; and this is because I regard it as more valuable for my soul when men are ill-disposed towards me than when they wish me well. The one and only thing I greatly desire is that *God* will love me, forgive my sins, and make me love him more.

Pray continually for yourself, for me, and for all of us. Goodbye. I send you my fondest regards in Jesus Christ.

Yours affectionately,

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⁹⁶ This important personage was King Carlo Alberto. It was through his intervention that Rosmini obtained permission from Ferdinand, the Emperor of Austria, to remain in Piedmont for a period of ten years without losing his Austrian citizenship. He was thus able to devote himself wholly to directing the Institute in Piedmont without having to fear the delays and difficulties which had arisen over the previous passport he had obtained, which was valid only for six months.

208. To Don Francesco Puecher at San Michele della Chiusa

Turin, 18 November 1836

My dear brother,

I foresee that earthly considerations might be a bar to vocations, because the families of the postulants are often not well off, or are moved by self-interest; and because the postulants themselves may be too attached to their families or their money. But I do not want anyone who shows good promise to be turned away because of such considerations. So I urge you to tread very delicately here, so as not to give rise to temptations or alienate beginners from the Institute. I hope rather that what the postulants give will be given spontaneously and of their own free will. So when you have to put them right over these matters and show them that the Institute has no wish to enrich itself, and seeks only the glory of God, they are to be told: 'This is what is needed for your upkeep (showing them what this amounts to); if this is beyond your means, give what you can: Fr General will be asked to dispense you from the remainder.'

I attach great importance to this, because I do not wish that people should be turned away because we are, or seem to be, interested in money. I feel that I have the courage to accept a whole army, should God send one to us, even if they can contribute nothing. It would be utter madness to let ourselves be afraid of poverty, which is the true support of religious Orders.

Goodbye, my dear brother. Give my affectionate regards to everyone. I shall expect Gilardi when he is able to come.

Yours affectionately in Christ,

ROSMINI p.

209. To Don G. B. Loewenbruck at Tamié

Turin, 25 November 1836

My dear Father,

I am consoled by the news about Martin and Domptmartin: I urge you to instruct them thoroughly about the necessity of overcoming self-love. If they succeed in this, not just in words but in deeds, they will be ours.

God seems to be blessing the noviciate at San Michele, where some further subjects have been added. Pray, and get others to pray, for this important work and for our souls. The missions will provide an opportunity for this. I can hardly wait for the time when, God willing, a school can be established at Tamié for missionaries. I hope that all the sermons given there can be checked to see that nothing erroneous, unfitting or inopportune is preached. But when will the good God grant me this favour? It is first necessary for the Tamié house to have a certain number of subjects. In the meantime, write to me if you feel you could take on this ministry during the six months of the year during which you will be living there; and say whether you would like to give each day at some fixed time a class in Sacred Eloquence. During this, the sermons of all could be read, and if necessary corrected, so as to embody sound theology, with effective eloquence and elocution. If in fact you think this feasible, I will then let you have a detailed plan and rules. I wish those destined for the ministry of preaching to know how to frame their words differently to suit the different needs of country people and townspeople. Goodbye. Do all you can to promote the faithful carrying out of the rules and regulations.

Yours in Christ,

ROSMINI p.

210. To Don Alessio Martin at Tamié

Turin, 25 November 1836

My dear brother in Christ,

From your letter, which I have only just received, I gather the consoling news that God has given you his holy light, enabling you to see the value of renouncing self-will in everything, and has inspired in you a determination to acquire this humility through obedience. Yes, my dear brother, this is the only true good, and there is nothing else to be wished for. Happy is the man who has given up all his possessions for the sake of Jesus Christ; and blessed is he who for the love of God has become a child. But meanwhile nature puts every possible obstacle to prevent our obtaining such happiness; and while nature shudders and recoils, the faithful heart tastes the sweetness of God. So show constancy when you are put to the test! Let everything else go, but gain the victory. It is sure to come, because Christ never lets us be tempted beyond our strength. If we suffer wounds during the fight, we must not be disheartened; provided we take up the struggle again, the prize will finally be ours. Pray for me, the most wretched of men. I send you all my greetings in *osculo sancto* [with a holy kiss].

Yours affectionately in Christ,

R.

211. To Professor Don Sebastiano de Apollonia at Udine

Turin, 28 November 1836

My dear friend,

Only today I received your letter of the 19th, and I am replying at once. Knowing that you wish to be with me is certainly pleasing but can it come about? Over this I have grave doubts. When I was in my own home, had you asked to stay with me I would not have hesitated for a moment to write to you and say, 'Yes, come: come soon'. But for some years now I have been like a refugee in this world, because the Lord, before whom I stand, has so disposed things. So I can see no other way in which you can be with me unless God calls you directly to the religious life and to the Institute of Charity. But I do not advise you to take this step unless you feel ready to make, with God's help, an important resolution: because when a man becomes a religious, that is a grave step. If you do not feel an inspiration from on high, and a sincere wish to do this, I can think of no other way in which you can be personally united with me.

Should God move you to make such a sacrifice of yourself, you would have to make a journey to Turin with your Bishop's consent, so as to see me. I shall, as far as I can tell, be spending the winter here. So it is here that we could discuss this together face to face; you could get to know the Institute better, and we could find a way in which you could carry out your holy desire.

Your old and ever-new friend,

ROSMINI p.

212. To Mgr C. E. Sardagna, Bishop of Cremona

Turin, 30 November 1836

Most Reverend Monsignor,

God can only bless your good intentions, which have no other aim than to do his pleasure. There is nothing better than to put ourselves calmly and entirely into the hands of divine Providence, using however all suitable means to bring about what we believe to be best in God's sight. God will so dispose things that, whatever the outcome, it will always be the best thing for our sanctification and his glory.

For my part, if you have definitely decided to retire to one of our modest houses, I put them all entirely at your disposal. If you want me to tell you which one would seem to me best adapted for this, and where I would most like to have you, then I would say that the one I would prefer to any other is Monte Calvario di Domodossola, the cradle of the Institute of Charity, a very secluded and holy place where, if you wish, I will soon have accommodation prepared for you. I must just warn you that everything is poor there; but perhaps for that very reason the place will be more to your liking — not only because your retirement there would give the greater edification, but also because holy poverty is a wonderful help to anyone who truly wishes to detach himself from everything in this world as to give himself entirely to God. But I say again, you are entirely free to choose any other house. However, should you, like me, have a preference for the Sacro Monte before any other, I would ask you to let me know how many rooms you would need, so that I may soon have them prepared (reminding you that they are small).

As for the community, if you would like to come into our refectory and hear the reading that is given during meals, you will give great pleasure to everyone, and we shall feel ourselves honoured. As regards the life annuity of which you speak, there would really be no need for that at all. But since I understand that you would not be content without some such arrangement, then let me say that you must do as you please in the matter. Whatever you do will be too much. My very best regards to Don Paoli. I humbly ask your blessing on myself and all of us.

ROSMINI p.

213. To Don C. A. A. at Domodossola

Turin, 8 December 1836

I beg you with all my heart not to allow yourself to be deceived by that love of family which blinds us, but rather to have no other family in your heart but Jesus Christ, his glory, his holy Church, and the good of souls. Do not think about enriching your brothers; do not even wish them to be rich, as long as they have enough to live on and remain in God's grace. Keep a guard on your heart: believe me, my dear Don C., we have to break with all earthly affections, and give God all our heart, not just a part of it; and if we do this, we shall not keep back any part of the human goods we possess, unwilling to consecrate them to God. How little there is that we can give to God! And how little generosity we show towards our Creator and Saviour, who has given us all he had, who stripped himself naked for us, and was willing to give us even his blood!

So take courage. Let the principle of giving everything to God once for all be foremost in your mind; and do nothing opposed to this principle. Accept from your mother whatever she gives you in lieu of your inheritance, as long as it is sufficient; but deal with the matter swiftly, with prudence and fortitude.

Be prepared for a distant mission wherever the Lord may perhaps send you; prepare yourself by prayer and by detachment from all things. May God bless you: my fondest regards to you, and at the same time to dear Boselli and Molinari and all the others in the house, called to be saints. Goodbye.

Yours affectionately,

ROSMINI p.

214. To Don Ludovico de'Conti Besi, missionary in China

Stresa, 11 December 1836

For the second time I have the consolation of receiving news from you, and getting your account of things direct. In my heart I accompany you on your distant holy travels. And for the second time I respond by sending you my own news: you are always kind to me. However I am uncertain whether this letter will ever reach you, since I do not know whether you received my last letter. [See letter 138 in this volume.]

I thank God, who in his mercy cares for you and gives you the energy of body and spirit to labour for the souls who still live in the darkness and shadow of death. May the Lord bless you more and more, and console you in the tribulations which I am sure are not lacking as you labour for his holy name. But it is precisely in this that you are blessed, and I am envious of you!

I continue to be busy in the work of which you know, and which (thanks to divine grace) seems to be taking root well. The King of Sardinia recently gave me the famous abbey of San Michele della Chiusa, where the Institute's noviciate now is. So please pray for this work — all the more because, as you know, it has a certain connection with missionary work: we all hold ourselves ready to go wherever the Pope may send us.

Fondest regards. I want you to be sure that the more often you write to me, and the more detailed your news, the greater will be my delight and my indebtedness to you.

Your affectionate friend,

A ROSMINI p.

215. To His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI in Rome

Turin. 18 December 1836

Holy Father,

With my usual trust in your kindness, I venture to offer you my humble thanks for the new favour you have granted to the Institute of Charity by assigning to it the administration and the use of the income of the abbey of San Michele della Chiusa, in accordance with the wishes of His Majesty the King of Sardinia. The noviciate of the Institute is already installed in the abbey; and in addition the King in his great piety has conceived the plan of building there a large house to receive people who, disillusioned with worldly greatness, now wish to recollect themselves in solitude so as to attend to their eternal salvation under the direction of the priests of the Institute of Charity. The Institute, as Your Holiness knows, has for its end the sanctification of its members, and its distinctive character lies in its deep devotion to the Holy See and its service in the closest and most direct manner. There is nothing it desires more than to lay before Your Holiness its Constitutions, so that they may be confirmed and approved; and it hopes that this may be done very soon.

I have in the past ventured to offer Your Holiness whatever I have from time to time published, not only to show my humble attachment to you personally, but also with the aim of signifying my submission in all things to the See of Peter, the chair of truth. And since you have been kind enough to accept my previous works, I ask Your Holiness to allow me to continue this custom; and with this letter I humbly offer two new books, one of which bears the title *Elements of the History of Impiety*, while the other contains a critique of a recent work which to my way of thinking is harmful to sound doctrine⁹⁷.

Prostrate before Your Holiness, with deepest respect I beg the Apostolic Blessing, while with filial devotion and attachment I remain —

Your most humble, grateful and respectful servant,

ROSMINI p.

⁹⁷ The title of the second book was *The Renewal of Philosophy in Italy proposed by Count Terenzio Mamiani and Examined by A. RosminiSethati*

216. To Don G. B. Reynaudi, Founder of the Oblates of Mary. in Nice

Twin, 18 December 1836

Very Reverend Father,

I had a visit yesterday from Father Simonini of the Oblates of Mary, who came to me on your behalf, and gave me some very unpleasant news. He said in fact that the Royal Senate has just issued a decree which is damaging in an essential way to the Congregation you founded and makes its survival impossible. He added that you were therefore thinking of joining me and entering the Institute of Charity; and he asked me whether, supposing that you decided on this step, you would be received. I told him that I was very sorry to hear about the Senate's decree, and that as far as you were concerned, if I simply consulted the great esteem I have for you, I would have answered 'yes' at once, without hesitation. But after considering that everything of this kind must be God's doing, and that when it is a matter of joining a religious institute, the only rule to follow is that of ascertaining what is the will of God, I added that I desired that you should first meditate afresh over the matter, considering it in all tranquillity before God, and recommending yourself to our Blessed Lady, under whose protection we are serving. Further, I wanted you also to think about the nature of the Institute of Charity, and especially its humility — the main virtue which we wish to exercise, since the members of the Institute have for their special aim solely that of thinking first and foremost of their own souls with a view to purifying them and perfecting them more and more with God's help. To this end, a man who joins the Institute intends to make a total sacrifice of himself to God; so that the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius and the missions which the Institute undertakes to give are regarded not as an end but as a means to our own sanctification, according to the words of our Lord, Only one thing is necessary. It follows that a man who gives up himself and all that he possesses into the hands of God submits himself under entire obedience and self-denial, being anxious only to please God, through obedience and humility.

As regards poverty, although the members may, with the Superior's permission, retain their own property, yet once they have entered the Institute they cannot use such property, and the income from it is devoted entirely to works of charity, according to the will of Superiors. After he has taken his vows, a member cannot dispose of what he owns in favour of his relatives, but such things can only be used for charitable works, again according to the will of his Superiors. The Congregation itself is poor, and must remain poor, since it is forbidden to possess anything.

To sum up, then: one who enters the Institute wishes to consecrate to God and his holy service ALL that he is and all that he possesses. There are no special

austerities prescribed, but a member may perform those which he undertakes of his own free will with the approval of Superiors and his confessor.

I wanted to say all this so as to enable you to understand better the nature of the Institute. If I had the honour of speaking to you in person, I could say much more by way of clarification.

Please pray for me to God and our Blessed Lady, and believe that I am always full of esteem for you and am most ready to serve you.

Your humble and devoted servant,

ROSMINI p

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* Neither No.340 nor No. 423 is printed in the *Epistolario Completo*, but both are to be found in *Avvisi spirituali* (Turin 1890). No.340 is at pp.33-41 and No. 423 at pp.47-51. There is an English version of the *Avvisi spirituali* under the title ‘Spiritual Admonitions’ (Market Weighton 1898). In this No.340 is at pp.22-27, and N0.423 at pp.32-35.

This letter appears in a footnote to letter 2632 in the *Epistolario Completo* (vol.V, p.471).